

Reference: 01742252

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

25 January 2024

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information concerning White Space Devices - NP15. This request was received on 28 December 2023 and we have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the "FOI Act").

Your request

"I would like to find out if there are licensed or licence free White Space Devices which may be creating burst interference to DTT on these channels. Higher frequencies are not affected. The effect is a reduction in signal quality for a few seconds, during which the picture breaks up or freezes.

Access to the location database used to prevent a WSD from causing interference does not seem publicly available. I also cannot find any document which defines the areas supposedly free for use by WSD. At the above postcode the only DTT reception is from [REDACTED]. No alternative transmitter is available. This would seem to give free rein to any WSD on any channel. I have remarked before about the inaccuracy of coverage checkers, which are integral to OFCOM's decisions. I note a report from SONY which raised the same issues.

Both Analog and Digital coverage checkers have reported no terrestrial signal at this location, but for 27 years there have been no problems. Indeed, DTT has been of good quality until the past year or two. I have multiple devices which report the same problem, so can rule this out. I also switched off all possible other sources of interference in mu house, Wi-Fi etc, with no change."

Following a response from Ofcom's Duty Engineering Officer, you then stated "what I want to know is related to the allocation and use of WSD in this area."

Our response

Based on the information we hold, there are no current licences that would enable licensed White Space Devices to operate in your area, nor permitted licence exempt White Space Devices.

You may also find the following information to be helpful:

The freeview [coverage checker](#) has identified the location area NP15 with 'very low predicted TV signal levels'. We note that you have told us that you have experienced interference to terrestrial Freeview TV coverage, which you have previously not experienced for 27 years. However, there may be many reasons why you were previously able to enjoy interference-free TV reception despite being located in a 'very low predicted TV signal level' area. One reason may be that you have had a particularly well engineered rooftop aerial system e.g. with a high gain aerial or extra amplification

and/or some engineering solutions to limit interference from other distant TV transmitters. We cannot be more certain on the likely performance of your rooftop aerial system without knowing your house number.

Because you are trying to receive TV in very challenging circumstances (very low predicted TV signal levels), it should be noted that your location is expected to be much more sensitive to interference problems than households in good coverage areas. Some of the possible causes of interference could be:-

1. Unusual (anomalous) weather conditions e.g. high pressure as we have been experiencing for a while.
2. Some deterioration of your aerial system that may not be apparent by a visual inspection (e.g. rain water getting into an amplifier or aerial downlead) or corrosion of the aerial or it being off-bearing as a result of loose/corroded fixings or wind damage. A good quality aerial installer should be able to inspect and advise and measure signal levels (the Confederation of Aerial Industries www.cai.org.uk has a list of its members on its website)
3. Some new source of localised interference (but not White Space Devices). It is helpful to know that you have tried switching off various devices in your home to try to identify the problem. There may be other devices that are not so easy to test that could cause interference such as thermostats in heating systems etc or security lights. These could be in your house or a neighbour's house. The BBC has a [website](#) that can offer advice in such cases of "domestic interference" and you can also find advice at [Advice about receiving TV and radio | RTIS \(radioandtvhelp.co.uk\)](#). There won't be specific information about your location as you are outside predicted coverage
4. Interference from a new mobile service in your area (TV mast head amplifiers can be particularly vulnerable to this). This is only likely to be a possible cause if a new mobile mast within about 1km of your house has launched recently. If you think this might be the cause, you could get help on www.restoretv.uk.

You have mentioned that the interference is noticeable on the lower UHF channels. Unfortunately this doesn't tell us the most likely source of interference as that will depend on the received signal level on each channel and the interfering signal levels on those channels, both of which will vary because of the different patterns of channel usage in your area.

I hope this information is useful and enables you to solve your interference problems. There are other reception solutions you could consider to provide more reliable reception in your area e.g. [Freesat](#) (which is via a satellite connection) or broadband delivery using a connected TV device such as Freeview Play if you can't easily solve your Freeview reception problems.

If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Information Requests

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF