

Consultation on merging and renaming the Text and Streamed genres in the DTT LCN Policy

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Responses: 31st May 2024

1. Executive Summary and introduction

1.1 Executive Summary

Several new hybrid streamed channels launched on DTT during 2023. If new services launch at the same rate this year, the LCN range will become full and new services will be unable to launch within that range.

This consultation sets out our proposals for making additional Logical Channel Numbers (LCNs) available to hybrid streamed services on DTT by merging the Streamed and Text genres. We also clarify to whom we allocate LCNs for hybrid streamed services.

1.2 About Everyone TV

Everyone TV (formerly Digital UK) is responsible for the day-to-day running of the UK's two main free TV platforms – Freeview and Freesat – as well as leading free TV's evolution for a digital age with the launch of our new platform, Freely, later this year. We are owned and supported by the UK's leading public service broadcasters – the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5.

At the heart of everything we do is a belief that everyone should be able to access great quality TV, regardless of location or income. We are the champions of free TV, of what it delivers for viewers and the positive impact it has on wider society.

2. Background

Streamed services use an MHEG or HbbTV application broadcast on a DTT Multiplex to provide access to audio-video content that is delivered over IP. They are often referred to as 'hybrid streamed' channels because they rely on a combination of DTT and IP technologies.

A small number of companies provide hybrid streaming applications on the UK DTT platform. As well as making access to their applications available to third-party channel providers, they may also operate their own content portals. We refer to these companies as 'technology providers'.

An instance of a hybrid streaming application, accessed through a DTT LCN or the DTT EPG, might provide access to one or more linear TV channels from a single provider, linear TV channels from multiple providers, or offer a catalogue of on-demand content.

The DTT EPG features a Streamed genre running between LCNs 260 and 299, and hybrid streamed services launching on the DTT EPG will generally be allocated an LCN in this area. Hybrid streamed services containing Children's or Adult content are allocated LCNs in the applicable content-based area of the EPG for consumer protection purposes.

29 of the 40 LCNs in the Streamed genre have been allocated to services, with 21 new LCNs being allocated in the year to 31st October 2023. Only eleven LCNs are available for allocation and we understand from technology providers that the appetite to launch new hybrid streamed services remains high. We expect the currently available LCN range to be fully utilised by the end of 2024.

2.1 DTT Genres

Channels on the DTT platform are grouped into genres and each genre is assigned a range of LCNs. A table is given in Appendix 1.

2.2 Text

A single Text service – BBC Red Button – operates on the DTT platform, on LCN 250. The remaining nine LCNs in the Text area are unallocated. We consider it unlikely that new Text services will launch.

The Text genre is immediately below the existing Streamed genre.

3. Expanding the Streamed Genre – DTT

We propose making nine additional vacant LCNs available for hybrid streamed services by merging the "Text" and "Streamed Services" genres and renaming it "Hybrid Streamed and Text". This is the same terminology as used on Freely and makes clear that these are hybrid DTT-IP channels, distinct from purely IP-delivered channels elsewhere in the EPG. The combined genre would run between LCNs 250-299, making a comparable number of LCNs available for Hybrid Streamed and Text services on DTT (50) and Freely (49). The impact of the proposed changes is shown in Appendix 2.

This downward expansion would create vacant LCNs at the bottom (lower channel numbers) of the newly merged area. We further propose offering all existing streamed services the opportunity, without obligation, to take part in a one-off 'shuffle-down' procedure. This would fill the lower LCNs and be consistent with the general rule in paragraph 5.2 of Everyone TV's DTT LCN listing policy that new channels should be allocated the next available LCN at the end of the genre. Any LCNs remaining or becoming vacant because of the shuffle-down procedure would be allocated to the next relevant services joining the platform in accordance with paragraph 5.2.

Any new service that would qualify for entry into either the Text or Streaming genres today would be eligible to apply for an LCN in the new combined area.

Q1: Do you agree with our proposal to merge the Text and Streamed genres, rename it "Hybrid Streamed and Text", and conduct a one-off shuffle-down? (This would apply to the DTT LCN Policy only.)

4. LCN Assignment – DTT and Freely

LCNs for broadcast DTT channels are applied for by and assigned to the channel provider. A broadcast channel keeps its LCN when moving between multiplex or transmission provider. Channel providers can also swap their allocated LCNs among their own channels or with others, subject to payment of the appropriate fee.

In the hybrid streamed space, technology providers often provide a range of professional and technical services to offer channel providers a 'turnkey' solution. Managing the relationship with Everyone TV as the platform operator, and applying for and maintaining the LCN, are generally included in these services. Although it is less common, some channel providers in the hybrid streamed space choose to apply for an LCN themselves.

Everyone TV considers LCN applications from both technology providers and channel providers and, in all cases where an application is approved, allocates LCNs to the applicant in accordance with Everyone TV's DTT LCN listing policy. The allocatee is conferred the use of the LCN, including the ability to swap and trade, and is responsible for complying with Everyone TV's LCN Allocation Terms and Conditions.

Everyone TV applies (or will apply) the same approach in Freely as in DTT. We consider that this approach remains appropriate, but we are interested in respondents' opinions.

Q2: Do you agree that it remains appropriate for Everyone TV to treat the party that applies for an LCN as the party that has all associated rights and responsibilities regarding the LCN – whether this is the channel provider or the technology provider?

5. Responding to this consultation

We encourage responses from all stakeholders in the DTT and Freely platforms, including channel and technology providers, multiplex operators, other affected TV platform operators, consumer groups, charities and viewers.

We will publish all non-confidential responses on our website. Please indicate on your response whether none, some, or all of your response is confidential. In the absence of an indication to the contrary, responses will be treated as non-confidential.

To be considered, a response must reach Everyone TV by 17:00 on 31st May 2024, unless Everyone TV accepts that mitigating circumstances apply.

Responses can be emailed to consultation@everyonetv.co.uk or mailed in hard copy to: Nick Jeffery, Head of Platform Operations, Everyone TV, Triptych Bankside (North Building), 185 Park Street, London SE1 9SH.

Appendix 1 – Current LCN Ranges (DTT)

Genre	First LCN	Last LCN
General Entertainment	1	99
Freeview Information	100	100
HD	101	139
General Entertainment	140	199
Children's	200	229
News	230	249
Text	250	259
Streamed	260	299
IP delivered services	300	554
	556	599
Freeview Accessible TV Guide	555	555
Interactive services	600	609
SD Simulcast area	610	669
Adult	670	699
Radio	700	750
Testing area	751	799
Reserved for manufacturer use	800	999

Appendix 2 – Proposed LCN Ranges (DTT)

Genre	First LCN	Last LCN
General Entertainment	1	99
Freeview Information	100	100
HD	101	139
General Entertainment	140	199
Children's	200	229
News	230	249
Hybrid Streamed and Text	250	299
IP delivered services	300	554
	556	599
Freeview Accessible TV Guide	555	555
Interactive services	600	609
SD Simulcast area	610	669
Adult	670	699
Radio	700	750
Testing area	751	799
Reserved for manufacturer use	800	999