

## Digital - beyond the London 'bubble'. (15<sup>th</sup> Aug 2009)

As some of you know, I travel around, during the summer months, the bottom right hand quarter of our fair land in our little caravan.

As I write this piece, I'm attending the Kennel Club International Agility Festival organised by the Kennel Club - the Agility equivalent to 'Crufts'. There are around 800 caravans and tents from all over Europe and some 200 'day parkers', who come just for the day or who live within easy travelling distance - that means up to about 70 miles or an hour.

Although most evenings have organised entertainment (bingo or even a 'disco' - that was last night's effort!), frequently often groups resort to drinking sessions or just watch TV or listen to the 'wireless' - this is where the difficulties start.

Very seldom do we have problems receiving either analogue TV or radio. However, digital TV and radio just don't reach the parts promised.

I know that we are promised 'improvements' once the old TV system is switched off, but that doesn't excuse the poor coverage of DAB when there are lots of spare frequencies available. Did you know that even France still has the old 405 line system in use, when we discontinued it over 20 years ago. Maybe because it actually works!

In fact the arguments for changing are only monetary. Think about it. More channels per radio frequency mean more choice - not more advertising revenue, or revenue for licensing a facility that actually costs nothing. Remember, the fees charged to users do not normally cover the administration cost, only the expected revenue income. When the Home Office administered radio frequencies, it was much more 'revenue neutral'.

What other disadvantages are there? Well, 'high quality digital sound' is actually nothing of the sort, although DVB managed far better sound quality even. DVB pictures leave a lot to be desired mainly because, in the haste to get 'un-required' frequencies into the 'additional revenue' pot, the system will be out of date before the final changeover in 2012. Even DAB uses an obsolete system and naturally, if they change, all our new equipment will need replacing as it is totally incompatible with the better standards being introduced in the rest of the world.

I bet the consultants are rubbing their hands with glee and we end up paying for it - again, for exactly what I ask.

Please sir, can I be a consultant?