

Press Release

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Remote control weather from The Met. Office

Subscribers to digital satellite television can now access instant weather reports at the touch of a button, following a partnership agreement between The Met. Office and Open, the new interactive TV system.

Using their Sky Digital remote control, viewers can choose to view detailed weather forecasts for any part of the UK by choosing a location on an on-screen map. The forecasts provide comprehensive information on the weather for the same day and the day ahead, using data supplied by The Met. Office.

The service also provides climate information for any location around the world, enabling people to choose their ideal departure time for a specific holiday destination for example.

Digital satellite subscribers automatically receive Open. Open is a subscription free service, giving people at home instant access to a range of services and products through a digibox connected to their existing household phone line.

Through Open, users can currently bank with HSBC, Abbey National and Woolwich, shop at stores such as WH Smith, Next, Thorntons, Gadget Shop and Woolworths, book holidays or use e-mail.

According to Rex Roskilly, Head of International Weather Productions (IWP), The Met. Office's media business unit, "This is just the beginning of the new interactive world via the television. Not everyone has a computer, so being able to access services and shop via a television set makes perfect sense."

"Teaming up with Open is a strategic move for The Met. Office. We see new media as a growing outlet for weather information and we aim to be at the forefront of new developments."

Notes

Open is the free interactive digital TV service created by British Interactive Broadcasting and backed by BSkyB, BT, HSBC and Matsushita. Launched on 12 October 1999, it offers home shopping, TV banking, entertainment and e-mail, initially to Sky Digital satellite TV households. It can also be carried on other digital TV networks. Nearly half of Sky Digital's customers access the service at least once a week; at least 8 million visits were made to Open between launch and Christmas, with peak sales exceeding one million pounds per week.

Content providers on Open include retailers ASDA, Argos, Carphone Warehouse, Dixons, Manchester United merchandise, Next, WHSmith, Thorntons, Somerfield 24-7 and Woolworths; internet traders E*Trade, Kitbag, Yalplay, Toyzone and Gameplay; advertisers Ford, Scottish Power, and Unilever; HSBC, Abbey National and The Woolwich for financial services, Blue Square, and First Call for ticketing at theatres and sports events and Going Places and Tropical Places for travel.

Open was granted Millennium Product status by The Design Council in December 1999. For further information on Open go to www.open-here.co.uk

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 THE MET. OFFICE

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