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Sky boxes across the country have surprised their owners with a message about the benefits of open source software - apparently in a bid to head off a legal tussle from free software fans.

Sky+ HD boxes, used to receive the subscription-based satellite TV service, have tonight been flashing up a message when they are first switched on pointing their users at a page on Sky's website about the values and benefits of open source software.

On the page, Sky explains its use of open source software thusly: "Open Source Software is typically developed by communities that share an interest in that software and actively use and support it. This passion leads to high quality, reliable software that can be tailored for specific purposes.

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