

RSGB Contest Committee
Report to Spectrum Forum, November 2011

Most of the Contest Committee activity this year has been rather inward-looking, in that it was generally a dialogue within the committee, and between committee and contesters. This has been added to recently by more comment and dialogue with the outside world, which is covered towards the end.

The committee is working to achieve more consistency between contest rules above and below 30MHz, insofar as this is possible. There are differences in our three Field Days, for example, in such things as the maximum height allowed for antennas and the definition of Low Power. Another difference: on HF, most contests are single-operator, whereas on VHF most are multi-operator. We are beginning this aim for consistency by combining the General Rules for all RSGB contests, sorting out unnecessary anomalies and restrictions, and by a similar procedure for the Field Days.

As part of this initiative, we will specifically require adherence to band plans, and avoidance of calling frequencies, particularly as those for 40m and 6m have been under external consideration. The idea of moving the QRP CW Centre of Activity on 7MHz would be helpful, although it is more of an issue for non-RSGB international contests. The new 6m band plan will require a redefinition of appropriate 6m usage in contests.

The "Super League" which brings together existing club events on 70cm, 2m and 80m has been extended, after its first successful year, to 6m and 160m. We are also considering adding to the weekday club contests on 80m and VHF, by including (perhaps as a replacement) several 10m sessions. This would coincide with similar Scandinavian events during the Summer (Sporadic-E) season.

There has been interest, and some disquiet, about Comreg allowing the use of 1500w (with some conditions), for Irish amateurs. There have been calls for similar action from Ofcom. This is by no means universally supported in the Contest Committee, as is undoubtedly the case for other UK amateurs, and the committee will debate the matter at its November meeting. The result may be that we will either submit a "For and Against" paper, setting out the arguments, or possibly take no position as a committee.

The committee's web site has been moved to an external server, rather than being at a member's home - a temporary measure (some years ago), which is obviously not sensible in the long-term! Much development is being done behind the scenes on the site to enable better access soon for both newcomers and seasoned contesters.

We have provided input to several other committees and Board members for discussions with Ofcom about the use of amateur bands in the Olympics. Several segments of 70cm, the band of most concern, will be used for hand-held communications. Limitations on amateur usage during the Olympics themselves are not yet clear, but Ofcom have stated that VHF Field Day, which occurs during the testing period, will not be restricted, to the relief of the committee and the many participants involved.

Contest results are now printed and available digitally in the "Contest Review", which lists 2010-11 results for contests not covered already in RadCom. From early next year, this will appear annually, on demand for anyone who wants it. Articles describing larger contests and field days will continue to appear in RadCom.

Activity in RSGB contests has generally been growing steadily, with one or two exceptions. For the latter, particularly when they have a loyal (but small) following, we are reluctant to discontinue them, but rather try combining with other events, or taking steps to give them a more attractive format. The committee has not made great progress in encouraging more UK activity in international contests, one of its aims, and we will emphasise this in 2012.

Ed Taylor, GW3SQX
Chairman, RSGB Contest Committee