

Vintage & Military Amateur Radio Society

Report & Proposal by VMARS to the RSGB Radio Spectrum Forum

5th November 2011

Primary Aims

VMARS has two primary Spectrum aims:-

AM Recognition

5MHz expansion

AM Recognition

VMARS continues to seek full recognition of the use of AM on the HF bands. To quote Don Beattie, RSGB Acting General Manager, writing in the October RSGB Newsletter.

“Amateur radio is often described as a broad church. From those who enjoy microwave experimentation to those who rag-chew; from those who compete in contests to those who exploit digital modes; from those who work with amateur television to those whose joy is QRP; they all have equal rights to the amateur spectrum, and we must welcome them to our ranks.”

AM is part of that “broad church” and it is the aim of VMARS to promote AM from being a footnote to a fully accepted voice mode in those bands where voice communication is allowed. AM is no longer solely the province of vintage radio or military radio enthusiasts. Amateur stations, including Society members, using modern and experimental technology such as Pulse Width Modulation can now be heard on 80m producing high quality transmissions. Our members continue to report abuse and deliberate jamming from uninformed Amateur stations, particularly from mainland Europe, where AM is less popular than it is in the UK. Reminding delegates at IARU regional level conferences that AM is a valued and increasingly popular transmission mode is, in our view, essential if we are to continue to enjoy those equal rights expounded by Don Beattie.

Current band plans are confusing. The IARU Region 1 Band Plan refers to HF maximum bandwidths of “2.7kHz all modes”. Although AM is an allowable mode, no references to it are included. AM operates with bandwidths of around 6kHz. For the uninformed, using AM appears to contravene the band plan and results in some operators behaving badly toward AM stations. We urge the RSGB to make it abundantly clear at both UK and international levels that AM is a fully permitted mode, even though the band plan appears to completely contradict this.

AM Recognition - Proposed amendment to RSGB Band Plan

In support of our members aims for a wider acceptance of the use of AM, VMARS propose that a note to the effect that AM may be used, subject to the usual operating courtesies, in the 2.7 kHz segment allocated for voice modes and added to the guidance notes provided for each band where voice modes are allowed. We would also very much like to see this change at IARU Region 1 level. This change can be made at no cost and will serve to avoid present confusion.

5MHz Expansion

VMARS fully supports the RSGB negotiations with OFCOM for agreement to extend the existing spot frequency allocations in the 60m band to a fixed allocation of bandwidth for general Amateur use. We would like to add a proposal that 60m “notching” of PLT devices is included in any discussions. Our understanding is that this is not a current requirement of manufacturers, although “notching” is undertaken on all other Amateur bands below 30MHz .

Our members would like to be assured that any negotiations between the RSGB, OFCOM and the MoD will include the provision of AM as an allowable transmission mode in any revised 60m allocations. Also, we would appreciate an update of how discussions between all UK parties on this subject are progressing and if there are any discussions scheduled to take place at international level.

Amateur band extensions

The Society has received an e-mail from VMARS member Peter Chadwick, in which he has advised of possible avenues for the extension of existing Amateur bands. These include ideas for extensions to 30, 17 and 12 metre bands, which we understand have been communicated to the Spectrum manager. Of particular interest to many VMARS members are his suggestions for the extension of 80m from 3.8MHz to 3.9MHz, which the Society would wish to be included in any future discussions between the RSGB and OFCOM.

Peter has extensive knowledge and experience of the inner workings of international spectrum agreements and the regulatory frameworks which have been gained both in a professional capacity at CEPT and as a representative of IARU at ITU meetings. His ideas for the expansion of Amateur radio spectrum use are acknowledged and wholly supported by VMARS

PLT *(See also 5MHz expansion - above)*

Our members are reporting increasing problems with local radio interference from a wide range of devices polluting the HF spectrum. In some locations the interference is so bad that operation on HF bands has had to be abandoned. Society members are encouraged to contact OFCOM in such circumstances but many are reluctant to do so for fear of upsetting neighbours. Those who have requested OFCOM intervention have generally reported positive results, although there have been one or two instances where the source of interference has been

identified but OFCOM have declined to take any action. One member was advised that his 1950's vintage receiver was "too sensitive". However, a positive outcome was eventually achieved.

The RSGB has VMARS total support in maintaining efforts to ensure that legal obligations of OFCOM to minimise spectrum pollution are fully adhered to and manufacturers are held fully responsible for ensuring that their products emissions are within maximum permitted levels.

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Chairman VMARS