

HF Manager's Report, October 2013

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5MHz

Following discussions between the RSGB, Ofcom, and the primary user, about 71kHz of spectrum has been available at 5MHz since the beginning of the year on a non-interference basis to NoV holders.

Activity during the first few months was high, which led to a number of reports of poor operating. The main problem, not helped by the segmented nature of the allocation, was out-of-band operation caused by operators not paying attention to, or being unaware of, the transmitted spectrum of their signals. Compounding this is allocations in other countries at 5MHz that are at different frequencies to the UK. An article was published in the March RadCom specifically drawing attention to the 5MHz allocation and the occupied spectrum of a USB signal. A few persistent offenders were referred to AROS. In the last few months, these incidents have almost completely disappeared.

The subject of band planning created much discussion on reflectors, but much less on air. In general, the views ranged from operators who did not believe in any form of band planning to those who felt it was the RSGB's responsibility to create and enforce a band plan. The RSGB has adopted the principle of actively supporting the users of the band to agree a plan. This has been implemented in the RSGB HF band plans as current usage, and provides a guide to where operators may find activity on various modes. This was also presented in a paper at the IARU Region 1 Interim Meeting. As more countries gain access to 5MHz, it is expected that band planning at 5MHz will become an item for discussion in C4 and the RSGB will take an active role in this.

A consultation on 5MHz is currently running on the RSGB website.

The RSGB continues to play an active role at CEPT and ITU on Agenda Item 1.4 for a possible 5MHz amateur allocation at 5MHz.

IARU Region 1 Interim Meeting Vienna

This was held in Vienna in April. The RSGB presented 3 papers covering the removal of the downlink-only restriction in the 28MHz satellite band, endorsing and promoting the DXpeditioners Code of Operating Practice, and promotion of 5MHz in the UK and WRC-15 AI 1.4. All 3 papers were accepted by the meeting. A fourth paper on a proposed revision to the 30m band plan to bring it in line with the Region 2 plan was withdrawn following disagreement within the RSGB and its subsequent rejection by the board.

Other key items discussed were: operation of unmanned stations, discussion on keeping the 3rd weekend in October contest free to support JOTA operation, and various contest issues.

Region 2 Bandplan

The IARU Region 2 band plan at 7MHz was recently revised and is now in line with the Region 1 band plan. This is particularly significant at 7MHz as the data segments are now fully aligned and it is hoped this will end some of the persistent problems of data mode activity outside the current Region 1 plan.

At 10MHz, Region 2 data mode activity starts at 10.130MHz, which is also resulting in significant data mode operation below 10.140MHz in Region 1, in contravention of the current bandplan, as the band offers propagation between the regions for much of the time.

WRC-15

The RSGB continues to work towards the acceptance of Agenda Item 1.4, the consideration of an amateur allocation at 5MHz, at WRC-15. The RSGB has participated at the CEPT PTC meetings in December 2012, April 2013, and October 2013 as a member of the UK delegation, headed by Ofcom.

The RSGB presented a paper on HF Compatibility Studies at 5MHz at the PTC meeting in April 2013 in support of the AI 1.4. Within CEPT the 5MHz agenda item was always seen as a challenging opportunity and it is too early to see whether the RSGB input to the IARU effort will be successful in gaining support from CEPT ahead of WRC-15

The RSGB is fortunate in also having members who participate in the ITU WP1 and WP5 meetings where much of the WRC-15 preparatory work is done.

IARU Region 1 General Conference

The IARU Region 1 General Conference takes place in September 2014. The RSGB intends to submit a number of papers to the Conference. At this time, papers, or suggestions for papers, are encouraged for inclusion in the C4 (HF) meeting agenda.

472kHz

This band has been available since the beginning of 2013 via an NoV. Although there were some discussions regarding a bandplan, the general UK consensus was that it was too early and unnecessary to create a band plan at this stage. A paper from NRRL (Norway) at the R1 Interim meeting in Vienna proposed a suggested usage of the band.

As more countries gain access to 472kHz following WRC-12 (it will become a formal amateur allocation when it enters the ITU Radio Regulations) we would expect IARU Region 1 to agree a plan for the band. The RSGB will play an active role in this and will consult with members and users of the band for inputs.

3.5MHz

The possibility of an expansion to the 80 metre band has been raised on a few occasions. The segment from 3.8 to 3.9MHz is occupied by the same primary user as 5MHz. With the recent negotiations over 5MHz and the work in process for WRC-15, it was felt that asking for further spectrum at 3.5MHz may be counter-productive at this time. It is hoped that the current expanded 5MHz allocation could be used by vintage equipment users (AM is now permitted on 5MHz) and for inter-G contacts. These were the 2 primary reasons given for an increased 80m allocation.