

RSGB EMERGING TECHNOLOGY COORDINATION COMMITTEE (ETCC)

REPORT FOR SPECTRUM FORUM 2014

Purpose

The ETCC functions to develop and enhance the UK Amateur Radio Repeater Network together with Data Communications systems and to promote the introduction and rollout of appropriate new technologies.

Our Main Activities:

- To receive, scrutinise and advise on all proposals in respect of analogue and digital repeaters and data communications systems.
- To process finalised and agreed proposals onwards to Ofcom.
- To liaise with Ofcom and other bodies as required.

Current Issues

Our major task this year was assisting Ofcom in the renewal of all NoVs for both Repeaters and Beacons. The deadline was rather tight as we were asked to start the renewals process with just about one month left before all NoVs expired! With a lot of effort, in particular by our webmaster GM8LBC, the renewals system successfully came on line. By the end of April we had processed more than 400 repeaters and 100 beacons which was quite a feat when it was realised that much of the data on older installations was missing and had to be collated and entered into the database.

Since April we have once again been disappointed by the lack of progress with repeater applications which seems to be down to a lack of personnel to deal with Amateur business. This was confirmed at the RSGB Convention when the Ofcom's Head of Business Radio noted in his presentation that as they had fewer resources their focus had to be on their core role.

At the time of writing of this report there are some 42 NoV requests with Ofcom awaiting clearance.

Primary Users

Following many requests we finally achieved a face to face meeting with the 23 cms Primary User. We have begun dialogue with them to clarify the flexibility that we can offer in terms of bandwidth and frequency and also the limitations that they have in protecting a safety of life service. We hope this will soon yield results and allow progress to be made.

Spectrum Release

I made reference last year to the forthcoming spectrum release programme which is going to significantly affect users of 13 cms. It has now been stated that the Amateur Service will lose access to 2350 to 2390 MHz and although the timescale has not been defined exactly this is likely to happen when the revised Amateur Licence is

issued in April 2015. Ofcom are still considering how repeaters currently operating in this area of spectrum may be accommodated elsewhere.

Datacommunications

Packet Radio has not got a mention for some time as activity seems quite low although APRS continues to thrive. Ofcom recently pointed out that some quite old 'RSGB Letters of Authority' for Packet were invalid and needed to be replaced by proper Notices of Variation (NoVs). A web notice to this effect has now been published on the Ofcom website at:

<http://licensing.ofcom.org.uk/radiocommunication-licences/amateur-radio/licensing-updates/rsgb-letters>

We will shortly be publishing guidance to those who wish to continue operating Packet installations and are still in possession of one of these Letters of Authority.

Emerging Technology

Last year I mentioned a move by some groups away from the dominant Icom Amateur D-Star digital standard towards the commercial DMR standard initially developed by Motorola as MotoTRBO and based on an ETSI TDMA standard. This allows two voice slots per carrier and a worldwide Amateur network known as DMARC is growing up around it.

To add to this growing emergence of digital voice networks we now have the Yaesu System Fusion which uses FDMA, is also capable of standard FM modulation and offers what is described as 'cross communications' between the two modes.

GB3MN the first Fusion repeater in the UK went live as a dual mode repeater in September. We continue to adopt a 'technology neutral' stance to these developments and it will be interesting to see if a winner emerges.

The only downside is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find spectrum to accommodate digital voice while trying to avoid plaguing analogue users with the digital 'buzz saw'.

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Chairman ETCC

www.ukrepeater.net

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