

HF Manager's Report, November 2015

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Summary

The work of the HF Manager in the previous 12 months has mainly been concerned with the ongoing work with CEPT for agenda item 1.4 at the WRC 2015 Conference and implementing changes agreed at the 2014 Region 1 General Conference. Other matters relate to ongoing band planning issues and preparation for the upcoming IARU Interim Meeting next year.

WRC 2015

Two CEPT PTC meetings were attended this year to help support CEPT's position in favour of an allocation to the amateur service at 5MHz. Although this was a hard fought battle with considerable opposition, the final outcome is a CEPT decision supporting an allocation at 5MHz. WRC 2015 takes place in Geneva this November. Although the official UK position at CEPT was neutral, both Ofcom and the MoD have been very helpful to the amateur service with advice and recommendations.

5 MHz

As expected, the current UK allocation to amateurs at 5MHz (and 472kHz) has been added to the full licence schedule so an NoV is no longer required. This, along with more administrations from other countries permitting access to 5MHz, has resulted in increased activity on the band. Close monitoring of the band indicates that activity seems compatible with other services and it is a valuable addition to the amateur HF bands.

Several enquiries have been received related to band planning at 5MHz, usually related to the use of CW on popular SSB frequencies. The RSGB publishes a guideline on its website based on current usage, but does not specify a band plan due to the somewhat complex nature of the allocation and the significant differences in frequencies between countries. It is expected that this situation will remain in place at least until the outcome of WRC 2015 is known. As a general guideline, it should be acknowledged that any mode is acceptable on common international frequencies.

C4 Matters, IARU Region 1 General Conference, Varna

Minor changes to band plan at 29MHz agreed in Varna have been implemented to the RSGB band plan.

At Varna it was suggested that the participation of remote controlled stations in contests or award programmes should be a matter for the various contest or award programme organisers.

This does not seem to have affected any of the RSGB contests.

IARU Region 1 Interim Meeting, Vienna 2016

The next interim meeting will be held in April next year. The RSGB is running a consultation via its website for topics and papers for submission. Issues relating to band planning and contests are particularly welcome as these subjects frequently occupy significant time at meetings and the RSGB is normally in a strong position to influence decisions..

Digital Modes and Band Plans

Issues still remain on some bands and complaints occur about the incursion of digital modes into the CW only segments of the band plan. Although long running issues at 7MHz have largely been resolved since the Region 2 band plan was aligned with Region 1 last year, problems still exist at 10MHz where digital activity below 10.140MHz is common place in Region 1, and on 3.5MHz where JT65 activity below 3.580MHz is also normal.

It has been noted at the IARU that digital mode activity has increased dramatically in the last 10 years or so and that the original RTTY band segments are often too small to contain the increased activity. A complaint was received concerning digital mode operation in the CW segment and requesting that action be taken by Ofcom. It was explained that band planning is not a part of the UK licence conditions.

As has been shown with the situation on 7MHz, it seems likely that the only way to resolve these issues is complete alignment of the HF band plans across all 3 regions, which will probably also require somewhat larger data modes segments in some bands.

28MHz Beacons

Two 28MHz beacons became operational in the last 12 months, GB3TEN and GB3XMB. In line with IARU Region 1 recommendations, the RSGB does not support unattended beacons below 14MHz, but it is felt that 28MHz does have sufficient space and that experimentation and propagation studies should be encouraged.

Awards

The two main awards for HF are presented at the RSGB Convention. This year the following awards were made:

ROTAB Trophy: Michael Wells G7VJR

G5RP Trophy: Jamie Williams 2E0SDV