

RSGB EMERGING TECHNOLOGY COORDINATION COMMITTEE (ETCC)

REPORT FOR SPECTRUM FORUM 2015

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

Repeater abuse continues to be an unfortunate fact of life in the repeater scene. Although many areas are relatively 'clean' a few repeaters have attracted undue attention from offenders who make life miserable both for Keepers and users. It is hard to see what kicks the abusers get from denying service to others. Perhaps some of their satisfaction comes from the reaction to abuse by users so it is always advisable to simply ignore what is going on and carry on normal conversations wherever possible. Not easy of course to do but it is always best if abusers are ignored. The ETCC works closely with AROS who are the official point of contact with Ofcom to ensure that relevant advice is given to keepers with reports passed to Ofcom for investigation. It is unfortunate that as Amateur Radio is not a 'Safety of Life' service it seems to be very low down on the priorities for Ofcom Enforcement.

Primary Users

Some success was achieved this year in getting a few 23cms repeaters through frequency clearance. Part of this progress may have been due however to the desire to see Amateurs vacate the sector from 2350 MHz – 2390 MHz which was part of the MoD Spectrum Release programme (PSSR). As part of the PSSR a new band was licensed with the introduction of a 5.6 GHz receiver to GB3KM.

ATV repeater keepers have been very flexible in reducing bandwidth wherever possible by the use of digital transmission and this does assist when trying to position repeater allocations between the various aeronautical radars. The success in recent clearance was due in part to good relationships that had been established with the CAA. Some key personnel have now moved on and any support that this forum and the RSGB can give in building new relationships would be greatly appreciated.

70 cms clearances have been generally quite rapid in the past year although there are certain areas of the UK in which they have been difficult or sometimes impossible to obtain. Recent proposals have favoured 7.6 MHz wide spaced channels because of the relative ease of filtering but we have had to resort to 1.6 MHz spacing in a few instances where all other choices have been ruled out.

Datacommunications

Following the publication of the notice by Ofcom for NoV holders to reapply for their Packet Radio NoVs there has been a fairly good response and there are now about 140 NoVs issued around UK. There are however reports of stations still in operation who are still using their old paperwork and who are reluctant or are refusing to renew their NoVs, no doubt Ofcom will be following up on this in due course.

In order to free up the GB7nn callsign series for DV repeaters, GB7nn data nodes are being reallocated MB7Nnn callsigns but keeping the same two letter selection when they come up for renewal. There have also been a few frequency changes in the 430 and 439 MHz sub-bands to move packet radio nodes/mailboxes off DVU channel pairs.

Ofcom has requested that the Packet Radio NoV be reworded and we will be taking the opportunity to clarify what is meant by the different classifications of packet stations in modern parlance.

Internet Gateways

These continue to be popular with a total of over 260 NoVs issued. During the year there have been a few changes as follows:

1. **10 metres:** - The few gateways that we have on 10 metres were QSY'd to 29.280 or 29.290 MHz this was to move them off 29.530 and 29.630 MHz which is a 10 metre repeater pair. This change was agreed with the IARU region 1 10 metre co-ordinator [ON4PC]
2. **4 metres:** As mentioned above all recent attempts to get frequency clearance for any stations (Packet or Parrot Repeaters) have been rejected by the primary user right across the UK.
3. **70cms:** We have been separating the Analogue and Digital Gateways in to two sub-bands at 430MHz and 431 MHz and the sub-band at 434 MHz has been assigned as Analogue and Digital on specific frequencies. This work is on-going with the change overs taking place on renewals through until early 2016. This will improve the service to mobile users as they will be able to set their equipment to scan a whole sub-band to find a gateway to use.

Emerging Technology

Competition continues between the various digital modes and although D-Star continues to progress there has been a significant increase in proposals for both DMR and Fusion.

It should be stressed that the ETCC simply facilitates the licensing of the various modes and we do not get involved in what goes on in the networking side of the different systems.

John McCullagh G14BWM
Chairman ETCC
October 2015