

Spectrum Forum Minutes 2004

Spectrum Forum meeting, 10th July 2004

The following papers were submitted for the Forum's consideration:-

AMSAT(UK), BATC, CDXC, DCC, FOC, G-QRP, HF, VHF (Minutes of the IARU Region 1 VHF Committee Interim Meeting 2004), Microwaves, RCVS / Emercomms, Spectrum Forum Website, 5MHz Working Party

1. HF

G3WKL asked whether RSGB should consider submission of a paper regarding 500 kHz activity to the next IARU Region 1 Conference and the Chairman suggested that this would be appropriate. Further, the Chairman stated that since RSGB was an influential Member Society of Region 1, we should continue to be pro-active in this area.

2. VHF

G3USF wished to know what the IARU Region 1 position was with regard to an allocation for beacons at 40 MHz. G0RDI stated that the External Relations Committee (in particular: PB2T) were preparing a positioning paper which would be submitted to the European Radiocommunications Office of CEPT via WGFM (Frequency Management Working Group).

G3USF noted the appointment of DK5YA and DF5AI as SpE /Auroral coordinators and stated that this was most welcome information.

G4MWO noted that the list of known "emergency communications" frequencies had been published on the emercomms web site

3. Microwaves

G3PFR noted that the position with respect to the 1.3 GHz band remained fairly gloomy. It was still uncertain which frequencies the European Gallileo GPS satellite system would employ, and it remained possible that 1265 MHz would be chosen, since objections had been received from USA regarding proposals that this system use the existing NavTex frequencies.

The roll-out of 5.7 GHz wireless local loop systems had begun (in East Anglia) and resultantly it may be that the narrowband segment chosen by IARU 1 (at 5668 MHz) may now need to be adopted by the UK. G3RWL noted that this roll-out may cause particular problems for users of AO-40 should it return to service.

While it is apparent that vehicle anti-collision RADAR in Europe will commence utilisation of the 24 GHz band, CEPT already have plans to migrate this to 76 GHz in 2014. G3RWL wish to understand whether any ulterior motive for this planned migration was apparent, and G3PFR said that there was not, to his knowledge, any. G3PSM stated that RSGB were kept well informed by Ofcom regarding these plans. G3LAS asked how many active operators there were within the UK using this band, and G3PFR stated that there were some 50 – 100, and a smaller number of these was active using EME. G3PFR added that the numbers were higher in Europe.

4. Data Communications Committee

Some discussion ensued regarding the growth of "internet voice gateways" and the ongoing review by Ofcom into the NoV process by which this facility is granted. The General Manager

stated that, after negotiations with Ofcom, it was supposed that the Internet Gateway NoV would soon attract a fee in order to fund processing of the application.

5. Repeater Management Committee

The Chairman asked G3VZV if he could outline the current position with regards to the work of this Committee.

G3VZV stated that it was apparent that usage of the repeaters was declining, and that the current inability to process applications for repeaters within the 430-440 MHz band continues to cause difficulties.

6. Propagation Studies Committee

G3USF asked for views regarding moving from traditional "A1A" identification towards the inclusion of Machine Generated Modes and perhaps (additional) voice identification. G0RDI supposed that on purely technical grounds (necessary bandwidth to accommodate voice) the latter was not feasible, although he wholeheartedly supported the addition of MGM (weak signal) modes. G3PFR reported that even at microwave frequencies the inclusion of voice identification would disrupt the automatic monitoring of beacons to significant detrimental effect.

G3WKL asked whether there were plans for (IARU) allocations for beacons within the 3.5 and/or 7 MHz bands, and G3USF stated that while there were not currently, but IARU policy provides for special permission for experimental beacons in these bands on an unprotected basis.

It is noted that a vacancy exists within the group, and G3USF would welcome suggestions for suitable candidates.

7. 5WG

G3WKL reported that a large amount of data regarding propagation in this band had now been collected, and the 5 MHz beacon had made a significant contribution to this effort. Further 5 MHz beacons were now in planning. Analysis of the data would be commencing shortly, with assistance from a Professor of Mathematics who had offered support.

8. AMSAT UK

G4MWO enquired whether ISS operations were within AMSAT's remit since it was unclear, from studying the website, what the involvement might be. G3WKL stated that this was within their remit, and presumed that the relationship did not receive significant publicity due to the relatively low levels of funding provided by AMSAT UK. Further, G3VZV is planning a satellite BATV project, and it is supposed that this will do much to raise the profile.

The General Manager reminded the meeting that RSGB – along with a number of other Societies – was party to a Memorandum of Understanding in respect of ISS operations. Additionally he pointed out that the future of the whole programme was unclear, since it had a high dependency upon the resumption of the US shuttle programme. Also, an introductory film had been produced as a means of promoting amateur radio alongside ISS, and this, along with GB4FUN operations had proven an invaluable source of publicity.

9. BARTG

The Chairman informed the meeting that no report had been received from BARTG, and that communications from them had been minimal.

10. BATC

G3VZV noted that the difficulties with TV repeater clearances over past months seems now to have been cleared; with only 4 applications remaining outstanding., with one of those considered to be defunct, since the site owner has now left the country. Difficulties over clearances in the 23 cms band continue, and RSGB have arranged a joint meeting with Ofcom and CAA at end of July that should help to clarify the position.

G3VZV also informed the meeting that many 2.4 GHz ATV repeaters – with their outputs in the wireless LAN segment - were becoming active. Good progress is also being made with experimental digital ATV transmissions.

11. CDXC

G3LAS noted that CDXC's current biggest concern is "abuse" of the spectrum. The General Manager noted that AROS – when asked to become involved – are very active, and has an escalation procedure that can lead to Ofcom intervention and subsequent prosecution of offenders.

G4MWO enquired what form this "abuse" took. G3LAS said that there were many forms. G3WKL asked whether CDXC might consider submitting papers to IARU in an effort to promote good operating practices. G3LAS said that this could be done, but a major concern was the visible lack of action regarding these matters.

The General Manager advised that while the position was known to be both complex and difficult, Ofcom were now prepared to identify individuals who had been prosecuted for licence infringements and publicise the facts of their cases.

12. FOC

G3NOH reported that since the requirement for Morse test has removed, interest in learning Morse had, in fact, increased.

G3LAS wished to know whether FOC had considered the introduction of a phone operator's class, and G3NOH responded that this had been available in the past, but was not planned for the future.

The General Manager advised the meeting that there had been some instances where licensees had attended Morse Proficiency sessions and had mistakenly expected to obtain an internationally recognised Morse qualification by doing so. He explained that since the WARC decision has been that individual administrations should decide whether a test should be required or not, Ofcom have decided that a test is no longer required, and will therefore (for legal reasons) no longer endorse any certificates issued.

He also wished to point out that at variance with the FOC report, the RSGB Morse Test Service was self-funding. RSGB remains very supportive of the concept of proficiency testing and is delighted that FOC (et al) are attempting to provide self-funding schemes.

13. G-QRP

G0RDI asked if anyone present knew whether the encroachments by data modes were being perpetrated by UK stations (and therefore RSGB/DCC should investigate) or otherwise. No further information was to hand, so G3XJS should be asked to clarify matters, although

G4MWO supposed that this might be related to (international) PACTOR operators moving into CW sub-bands, since this had been widely mentioned in a discussion group.

14. RCVS

G0RDI enquired as to the confidence level regarding cessation of interference emanating from packet nodes / mailboxes in France, since this had been a long-standing problem. G4MWO said that no further feedback had been received from those groups on the south coast who had been (worst) affected.

15. UKmG

G3PFR stated that this group (now external to the Society) continue to do good work on behalf of RSGB. The General Manager informed the meeting that the UKmG had take over publication of the mWave Newsletter, effective 1st July 2004.

Further, G3PFR noted that the group offers a very good Website, which is also supported by RSGB input.

16. UKSMG

G0RDI said that he had been asked, in his capacity as a member of the UKSMG Committee, to express the Group's thanks for being invited to participate, and it's continued willingness to do so in areas where it could provide subject matter expertise.

17. SPECTRUM FORUM WEBSITE

G3WKL was soliciting comment regarding content, and wished to know whether the Forum agreed the need to have its own Website. G0RDI suggested that, in the current climate, "customers" had come to expect that everyone with whom they came into contact should offer such a facility, and that an informative Website regarding the activities (et al) for the Forum would therefore be (seen as) a necessity.

18. PROTECTION OF EMERCOMMS FREQUENCIES

G4MWO informed the meeting as to the background of his paper, and in particular his concerns regarding frequencies (70.3500, 70.3625 and 70.3875 MHz) which he considered to have been assigned for emergency communications purposes but now appeared to have been annexed by DCC.

G0RDI stated that the VHF Committee in mid-1998 had sanctioned the designation of these frequencies for data purposes and he had subsequently conducted a full consultation exercise thereafter (see RadCom, April 1999, p33 for details). Further, G0RDI wished to propose that designating frequencies as "priority" for any particular purpose was inappropriate, since our band plans were predicated on mode/bandwidth and not "use". He offered the opinion that it would therefore be proper to remove the "priority" marking for all such frequencies from the UK band plans. The Chairman stated he had previously discussed this matter with the VHF Manager, who had offered much the same view as had G0RDI.

The General Manager said that he certainly supported the concept that certain frequencies might be noted as having "secondary" uses, with emergency communications being one such use.

19. PROPOSED PERIODIC SPECTRUM REVIEW

G4MWO had submitted this item for the agenda. He enquired whether there would be a planned periodic review of our use of amateur spectrum in the UK.

The Chairman stated that, in general, our use of spectrum was within agreements reached at IARU level, and as such the matter was effectively under constant review.

20. AOB

IARU R1 HF Band Plan Review

The Chairman stated that it was clear from the recent meeting held at Friedrichshafen that there remained much work to be done on this project. In particular, confusion was apparent and concerns of some member societies regarding maximum bandwidths, digital voice, etc needed to be addressed.

RF SAFETY ARTICLE

G1GQJ informed the meeting that the RAYNET article on RF safety had recently been updated, and enquired whether it was of interest to the Forum. The Chairman stated that it was, and that it might also be shared with the Society's EMC Committee and placed on the Forum Website.

PLT UPDATE

The General Manager gave a detailed and very informative talk regarding the current position with PLT, and the current political climate within the EU as regards the deployment of this technology.

It is apparent that the European Parliament may have now lost patience with the inability of the technocrats to agree a unified policy, and it seems that COCOM have been instructed to deploy PLT since they hold the opinion that it (PLT) operates within parameters detailed in existing directives.

So far as the UK is concerned, current information is that the matter will now revert to DTI since it is now known that Ofcom has plans to close the research facility which was assessing the interference potential.

RSGB will seek assurances from the various power companies that their introduction of PLT into our (own) homes will not increase the noise floor in bands allocated to the amateur service, and the engagement of professional consultants to assist the Society in further negotiations will be under consideration. The cost of the campaign to protect our bands from this interference was likely to be high, and the past Presidents of the Society had been asked to assist in assembling a "fighting fund" for this purpose.

G3WKL said that the HF Convention organisers were part way to setting up a "Question Time" like session with interested parties participation (RSGB, DTI, Ofcom, Scottish Power, etc) and sought guidance as to whether it was thought appropriate to continue with the plans. The General Manager confirmed that, properly constructed, such a session might prove invaluable, and efforts should therefore continue.