

# Radio Society of Great Britain

## SPECTRUM FORUM

### Minutes of a Meeting

*held at Lambda House, Cranborne Road, EN6 3JE on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2007*

#### 1. PRESENT

In attendance were Colin Thomas (G3PSM) - Chairman, John Butcher (G3LAS), Julian Gannaway (G3YGF), Graham Shirville (G3VZV), John McCullagh (GI4BWM), Mike Dixon (G3PFR), John Gould (G3WKL), Trevor Hawkins (M5AKA), Don Field (G3XTT), Dave Lawley (G4BUO), Robin Bellerby (GM3ZYE), Cathy Clark (G1GQJ), Martin Harrison (G3USF), Murray Niman (G6JYB), Iain Philipps (G0RDI), Peter Kirby (G0TWW) – General Manager.

#### 2. OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM and requested that G0RDI take minutes. In his opening remarks the Chairman expressed his delight at the good attendance and suggested that resultantly he expected that the Agenda could be processed in good time.

#### 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from John Pink (G8MM), Peter Barville (G3XJS), Peter Chadwick (G3RZP) and David Butler (G4ASR).

#### 4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

##### HF Manager

G3WKL stated that the position was essentially as per his January 2007 report, although there had been some movement in a few areas.

136 kHz had big issues with interference from the Loran-C transmitter at Rugby. G3PSM had managed to get Ofcom to accept that there was indeed an issue with "out of band" sidebands which needed to be addressed long term. It was apparent that there may be an opportunity for a worldwide allocation in this band; G3PSM thought that this would be approved in time, while G3WKL noted that the Canadian administration had already withdrawn the experimental licences in preparation for a general approval.

500 kHz continues to have an active experimental user base, with 35 Notices of Variation issued and 17-20 stations active. There were 3 NoV applications pending, which were held in abeyance awaiting further information from the applicants. The wider availability of this band (to amateur radio) is potentially an agenda item for WARC 2011. G3WKL is requesting that the Society together with Ofcom investigates the possibility of a power increase from the current -10dBW ERP limit.

Activity in the 5 MHz band seemingly remains high, with around 930 NoVs having been issued. The two main areas of interest appear to be the experimental GB2RS news service and SOTA operations. The volume of "useful" QSO data is declining, with receipt of logs patchy. The availability of a computer logging program ("5MHzLog") has helped in this respect. The emergency communications community continues to make use of this band.

SINPO reporting is to be encouraged, and a draft paper (potentially for the August edition) may raise the profile further.

Little to report in respect of the 7 MHz band, and the possibility of an expansion at the forthcoming WARC was not looking hopeful. G3PSM suggested that there was little (or no) possibility that the additional 100 kHz sought would be released at either the next or subsequent WARC. G4BUO asked whether there were possibility to extend the band downwards to (say) 6.9 MHz. G3PSM stated that MoD and NATO have continuing requirements in that segment, so will not approve amateur use.

Turning to more general matters, G3WKL stated that complaints continue to be received regarding bands being "... full of contesters every weekend", and noted that the key issue was actually one of band plan compliance. G3XTT proffered that any evidence that this was an issue in RSGB-organised contests was purely anecdotal.

Certain IARU R1 member societies have proposed "flexible" bandplans, but RSGB does not support this position, since it fails to address the root cause. Allocations are now according to occupied bandwidth, and the resurgence of data modes (RTTY, for example) is now bringing pressure to bear on the segments allocated. G3XTT notes that interference on and around 7.030 MHz remains a big issue for GQRP.

G3WKL stated that he continues to examine whether there are any steps to be taken by the Society which would ease matters. G3USF notes that issues in the 7 MHz band may be reduced as result of propagation changes brought about by the sunspot cycle.

Also of particular concern is the interference to 14.100 MHz during contests, whereas this frequency is found to be 95% clear outside of those periods. G3WKL informed the meeting that jointly with G3XTT he had produced modifications to the HF Contest Guide to include references to "contest preferred segments". However, the ultimate resolution would be that organizing societies must penalize those found to be operating outside of the agreed band plans.

There was much discussion regarding the growing numbers of "deliberate interference" incidents (mostly to DXpedition stations), which had become "pretty bad" during the N8S operation and "awful" during the Scarborough Reef expedition. It is felt that such behavior is very damaging to the amateur radio hobby. Part of a paper which was submitted to IARU R1 was intended to address these issues but had been rejected, on the basis that education of the "offenders" should suffice. A group is further examining the issues and a further developed paper is to be produced and submitted with the aim of gaining wider support from the HF Managers of other member societies.

G3LAS informed the meeting that while IT9RYH had spent a number of years monopolizing 14.195 MHz, information had been received from OE1WHC which states that ARI recently took action against this station and the operator was severely reprimanded and fined. However, he has now turned his attentions to the 14.260 MHz IOTA frequency. ARI will again take action if sufficient evidence is produced, and OE1WHC advises that RSGB should make a formal complaint to ARI regarding this interference, and G3LAS proposed that the Spectrum Forum should request that the Society makes such a complaint. G3PSM said he had knowledge that the station had been inspected by the Italian authorities and it seems he was found to be operating within local licensing regulations. Further, DK2OM is aware of RSGB interest, and the ARI President is likely to be helpful should RSGB wish to pursue this matter.

EuroLoop would not be an issue for the UK, since Network Rail would not be deploying it here.

The paper regarding HF Beacons that was agreed at Vienna will go forward to the next full IARU R1 Conference.

Echolink is now being used by some Emercomms in the 7 MHz band.

G3PSM thanked the HF Manager for his most interesting and comprehensive report.

### **VHF Manager**

In the absence of the VHF Manager, his report was presented to the Meeting by G3PSM. This is [attached to these Minutes at Appendix I](#)

### **Microwave Manager**

G6JYB presented his report ([attached to these Minutes at Appendix II](#)). An upcoming "point to watch" would be the return to Amateur use of the frequencies which would be "on loan" for the 2012 Olympics. M5AKA noted that several London boroughs had expressed interest in retaining the 10 GHz infrastructure after the event. So far Ofcom had rejected any such possibility.

The Microwave Manager was now the single point of contact for all UK beacon applications. The logjam had been (in the main) due to lack of Ofcom process to issue the Notices of Variation, but it was now apparent that this was resolved.

G3PFR noted that there was evidence that G6JYB had invested a lot of work in this role, and much fruit had resultantly been borne.

### **Data Communications Committee**

G0RDI said that he had no specific report to make, since there had been no movement in the requirements of the data communications community during the preceding year. There were, however, some organizational changes in progress which would be of interest to the Meeting.

G3PSM stated that, by year end, the existing Data Communications and Repeater Management committees would be amalgamated into a single unit which would cover the responsibilities of both current committees. The Chair of the new committee would be GI4BWM and G0RDI would be Vice Chairman. Steve Morton – G8SFR – would be joining from DCC.

GI4BWM reported that, from discussions with G0RDI, it was apparent that this "merger" could take place sooner, rather than later. Details would be published at an appropriate moment.

### **Repeater Management Committee**

GI4BWM presented his report ([attached to these Minutes at Appendix III](#))

## **Propagation Studies**

G3USF stated that he had not prepared a written report since there was no great change in the position since the last Spectrum Forum meeting. However, he wished to place on record gratitude for the progress related to beacons, and in particular the success in getting a 40 MHz beacon authorized.

Currently the team is busy updating the information for the RSGB Yearbook. Work in the area of "grey line" propagation continues, but there remained quite some difficulty in finding partners at the "right" geographic range. However, while no partners had been found in the Antipodes, good results had been recorded with the Falklands. It will be some time yet before the result will be available for publication.

Propagation forecasts are now being produced for the major DXpeditions, and these are found to be helpful. Work on the relationship between solar flares and VLF continues.

One matter of concern – where no progress is being made – is the future development of the NCDXF beacon system, which is now about 20 years old and is showing signs of age with some units non-operational. Additionally these units are not compliant with current best practices for frequency accuracy. NCXDF's attitude to these issues is currently unknown, but PSC would like to see the next generation employ G4JNT technology, if at all possible.

G3WKL enquired whether there is intent to provide stable (i.e. minimum know key-down period) signals. G3USF stated that this was indeed the case, and timings synchronized by GPS receivers were also being sought. As an aside, G3WKL remarked that the introduction of Softrock receivers had made the monitoring of 5 MHz beacons a new sport!

Finally, G3USF stated that there remained significant challenges with beacon co-ordination, with beacons just popping up unannounced. It is clear that negotiation and cooperation can be the only way forwards. Resultantly, maintaining an accurate beacon list remained something of a challenge.

## **5WG**

G3WKL stated that this was still in existence. However, the volume of discussion and reporting regarding emergency communications in this band has dropped off. A draft paper on SINPO reporting has recently been posted, and there had been one or two comments as a result. Rod Wilkinson (Ofcom) joined recently. Administration of NoVs is working well.

## **AMSAT-UK**

M5AKA presented his report ([attached to these Minutes at Appendix IV](#)). In particular, AMSAT-UK would like to thank the Board of the Society for enabling access to the Amateur Satellite Service via the Foundation Licence, since this is undoubtedly beneficial to amateur radio in the UK.

There continued to be a fair degree of sponsorship and support from the European Space Agency, and there is an ongoing appeal for funds to provide antennae for the ISS/Columbus module (1.26 and 2.4 GHz) which will enable ATV repeater and video links for school contacts. ARIS had brought amateur radio to a large number of school pupils worldwide. Resultantly there is now enhanced understanding of opportunities and challenges. Both RSGB and AMSAT have contributed to this program.

AMSAT-UK has supported both the Phase 3E and Mars Orbiter projects and several members are working on a 435 -> 2.4 GHz linear transponder project.

The organization has worked closely with other interested parties in dealing with various regulatory matters. The misuse of 145.800 MHz remains an issue, mainly in Scotland, but it does seem that some are now favoring the use of 144.550 MHz for AM nets now. There are still terrestrial operations on 145.975 MHz which cause issues, and educating users that "just because it's apparently quiet doesn't mean it's not in use" continues to be a significant challenge.

Disappointment was expressed that paper B16 was rejected at the Vienna interim conference for procedural reasons. This will be reworked (if necessary) and resubmitted.

For historical reasons space and terrestrial allocations had been segregated, but the current strategy is to move towards co-location with the weak signal terrestrial modes.

Lots of satellites are now being built – "cubesats" (100 mm cubes) – which make excellent student projects. A major issue is space for antennae, and this coupled with the low power and lack of space for solar panels drives a requirement for allocations at VHF and UHF for these devices. AMSAT-UK would therefore like to see an additional 35 kHz allocation in the 2M band. Also, they would prefer the 50 MHz band made available to the amateur satellite service.

#### **BARTG**

No communication or report received during the past 12 months.

#### **BATC**

The Club wishes to acknowledge the support and offer thanks for the efforts of both the microwave and Repeater Management committees for their assistance with ATV repeaters during the preceding year. There are current 26 active 23 cms devices, 13 x 13 cms devices and 10 x 10 GHz devices, for a total of around 50 active ATV repeaters. This number is not growing, and there are no pending applications.

#### **CDXC**

G3LAS stated that there was little that had not already been covered by HF Manager's report. Some information was shared regarding calculations of when the next sunspot minima might be reached. The current outlook is that this will be March 2008. CDXC now operates an online forum system for its members.

#### **FOC**

G4BUO provided an update on the current status of G3RZP. The Spectrum Forum wishes him a speedy recovery.

It is understood that the Society is to recommence (on a voluntary basis) Morse testing, and this is to be organized by Mark Haynes (MODXR). Final decisions have yet to be made. G0TWW informed the meeting that there is a proposal that the Society would endorse these qualifications and resultantly they should therefore have wide(r) recognition. Additionally, the Morse Practice service is restarting, and there is a Morse Competency service existing in Northern Ireland.

**G-QRP**

"Nil" report received.

**RAEN**

A number of joint exercises (with 2 Signals Brigade) had been run over the past two years, and a 1 day Interoperability exercise had been run during February 2006. Two separate weekend training sessions had been held in East Anglia, in conjunction with TA units.

**RCVS**

GM3ZYE informed the meeting that complaints had been received regarding Raynet group operations on ATV talkback frequencies, but he believed that the matter had now been resolved.

G0TWW enquired whether anything was known about the emercomms operator reported to have been injured in the incident at the 11 mile point in the Isle of Man event. GM3ZYE informed the meeting that this was an independent group that was providing cover for this event, and no information was available to him at this time.

**UKuG**

G3YGF circulated his report ([attached to these Minutes at Appendix V](#)). Mostly the issues had been addressed by the Microwave Manager's report. Efforts are continuing with beacons, and the series of Beginners' Workshops had been successful; more of these were planned. The Round Table sessions were ongoing, with a major topic of discussion being "the threat from the Olympics".

G3PFR stated that he had attended two of the workshops and found these to be well attended and well presented.

G3PSM noted that this was an excellent initiative and all concerned were to be commended.

**UKSMG**

No report had been received.

**Spectrum Manager**

In respect of WRC07 G3PSM stated that largely matters had already been covered by other reports. There would be a review of the 4-10 MHz segment of the spectrum, and this will clearly be of interest to amateur radio users. Matters concerning the spread of microwave usage to support mobile technology were also on the agenda. G3PSM, LA2RR and PB2T would be attending at IARU's expense. This would be a very busy conference, with a number of items already having been deferred until 2011.

## **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 5.1 G3PSM will be retiring from his position as Spectrum Manager at the end of 2007 as he is President Elect for 2008 – 2009, so it would be necessary to seek a replacement. Applications from those interested are invited, and the position will be advertised in RadCom.
- 5.2 G3YGF noted that the EMC Committee were concerned regarding interference from low power devices and the "non protected" status of amateur users in the microwave bands. G3PSM advises that, in practice, amateur radio is protected by EU legislation G0TWW states that Ofcom now operate (what amounts to) a triage service, and where evidence of a specific item causing interference was available they would indeed take necessary action.

Additionally G3PSM informed the meeting that Homeplug had been specifically cited and Ofcom had sent samples of these back to Germany for re-testing.

- 5.3 G3XTT remarked that little had been heard regarding the status or disposition of the 10 MHz band for some time, and also there was no information about it in the HF Manager's report. Since we have now had use of this band since WARC79, should we now not be rather more assertive with our use of it? G3WKL said that in conversation with PB2T it was clear that IARU had concerns regarding current behaviour in this band, and there was evidence that operations by the Primary User had been disrupted.

PB2T has been clear that it remains imperative that interference to the Primary User is avoided, and G3PSM said that there had been at least one instance of an NGO being "flattened" by DX pileups, and this band is heavily used in certain parts of Africa for point-to-point links. He thought that while there was much merit to G3XTT's suggestion, progressing this matter would require a change in IARU policy, and resultantly it had been agreed to concentrate efforts on the 5 MHz for the time being.

- 5.4 G6JYB said that he understood that we would hear something from Ofcom regarding spectrum assignments for the 2012 olympics at some time this summer. G0TWW stated that so long as the requests for "borrowed" spectrum are within reason, the Society would not be minded to complain too vociferously. The results of the related spectrum consultation are due to be published during July this year, and information will be published in RadCom as it becomes available.

## **6. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chairman stated that this would be fixed by the incoming Spectrum Manager at a later date. All present were thanked for their attendance at a most interesting, useful and productive meeting.

## **7. MEETING CLOSED**

At 14:15