



Amateur Radio Observation Service & Intruder Watch Report to the Spectrum Forum

October 2016

General

Vince Shirley, G0ORC was appointed to the role of Deputy AROS Co-ordinator following a recruitment campaign at the end of 2015, however, Vince has now stood down from this role and Mark Jones, G0MGX, is currently solely responsible for coordinating the monitoring activities of the AROS Observers across the country and managing the interface with Ofcom for which a formal process has been defined and agreed between all parties.

AROS and Intruder Watch was combined earlier in 2016 so we are now covering both roles jointly and receiving reports from the RSGB IW internet pages. We are waiting for Ofcom to respond to requests to meet with them to agree a more formal process for this aspect of the work.

The Amateur Radio Observation Service is an advisory and reporting service of the RSGB which is intended to assist radio amateurs and others who may be affected by problems which occur within the amateur bands or which develop on other frequencies as a result of amateur transmissions.

The service investigates reports of licence infringements, or instances of poor operating practice which might bring the Amateur Service into disrepute. Reports, complaints and associated supplementary information are accepted from any source and the contents of each communication are regarded as confidential material.

The RSGB Monitoring System, more popularly known as the Intruder Watch, forms part of the IARU Monitoring System and as such it submits reports of non-amateur transmissions heard on the exclusive HF amateur bands to both the Ofcom Monitoring Station at Baldock and IARU Region 1.

Observers

The number of observers registered with AROS continues to increase through RadCom advertising and the RSGB website; following the presence of the AROS Co-ordinator at the 2016 Hamfest the number of observers continues to rise and now stands at 120.

Although the Observers are spread across the country there is still a need for more observers to effectively cover the UK particularly the south east of England.



Cases

Since the beginning of this year there have been 58 unique recorded complaints. In some cases there have been many complaints about the same event.

A few of these were resurrected cases from previously reported incidents which had not been resolved or their history was known to AROS. So far this year 3 of the 58 cases have resulted in letters being sent by AROS to suspected culprits advising them that their behaviour is subject of complaint. They are advised that AROS has reasonable cause to believe that their call sign/identity is associated with the bad behaviour and has been recorded by Observers.

Generally the letters appear to have been received in a positive way in that the behaviour appears to have been modified and the complaints have ceased. One of the letters was acknowledged and an apology received.

There are a number of on-going and persistent cases of repeater abuse which AROS is involved with. One case has been used as a test case and significant work has been undertaken to provide Ofcom with detailed reports and supporting information. This has resulted in Ofcom visiting the prime suspect but no formal action; the abuse continues unabated.

Reported cases have included:

- Misuse of 5 MHz bands with TX outside allocated frequencies (esp JT65).
- Sending offensive SSTV images.
- Abuse of repeaters.
- Three cases relating to repeater abuse referred to Ofcom.

Repeaters

The vast majority of the reported nuisance activity is taking place on the repeater network and appears to be involving the same abusers on a regular basis. The reported behaviours include apparent drunkenness and foul language; abuse aimed at fellow amateurs; silent keying and jamming frequencies with music or verbal ranting.

Some repeater keepers have turned off the repeaters for a period of time in an attempt to discourage their abuse. Some repeater keepers appear unable to monitor their own repeaters and investigations are being conducted into the requirements of the NoV over this aspect of repeater keeping so that accurate advice may be issued under these circumstances.

Ofcom consider that enforcement within hobby radio is of lower priority than issues affecting protected, emergency services or safety of life issues. This can lead to situations where AROS has full knowledge of the source of a specific problem, but no formal enforcement activities are being undertaken.

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