

UKSMG Spectrum Forum Report 2016

Despite the disappointing solar maximum, activity on the 50MHz band has continued to thrive. The lack of sustained F2 propagation has been countered by increased activity, particularly in Europe but also in other parts of the world, aided by wider exploitation of the available propagation modes and the increasing deployment of digital techniques.

UKSMG continues to be the leading group for six metre operators world-wide. This year we have continued to take a more pro-active role in promoting activity on the band and in working to enhance the enjoyment of operators by disseminating information, providing enhanced support systems like the UKSMG DX Desktop and sponsoring activity from remote and rare locations. The group has also tentatively begun to expand its activities to include 70MHz, initially with a new dedicated column in Six News.

Overall membership of the group is reasonably stable and currently stands at 666 (hopefully not an unlucky number!), of whom 270 are outside the UK. It may be of interest to note that an increasing proportion of the membership, currently about a third, now take our quarterly magazine in digital form only.

In support of promoting activity, interest and of course membership of the group, in 2016 UKSMG has mounted stands at Friedrichshafen, Newark, Newbury and the RSGB Convention. At the RSGB Convention we also supplied two sessions for the lecture programme. Peter, G3ZSS gave an excellent talk entitled "Making the most of six metres during the downward cycle", which drew an audience of about 100 people and was very well received, including 15 minutes of questions from both beginners and experienced ops. Even better, it seems to have inspired a number of people to try the band and to join the group. Also Chris, G4IFX gave a talk entitled "Polarisation on 50MHz" which was also well attended considering it's a rather more 'niche' subject; it was good to see how much interest there is in propagation and propagation research in the six metre community.

A major development this year has been the activation in July 2016 of the upgraded 50MHz GB3MCB beacon in IO70, using hardware developed by the OZ2M Next Generation Beacon group. The new transmission sequence has a 1 minute cycle comprising carrier, call-sign in FSK and data in PI4 format. A particular advantage of working with the OZ2M team is that dedicated monitoring software for PI4 is available and this is now under evaluation, using both GB3MCB and OZ7IGY as signal sources. GB3MCB is currently still on its original frequency of 50.043MHz but it is hoped that in due course it will move to become the first beacon in the UK to become part of the 50MHz synchronised beacon chain. The upgrade was funded by UKSMG.

Further information on the Next Generation Beacon project can be found here:

<http://www.rudius.net/oz2m/ngnb/index.htm>

Chris Deacon

Chairman

15th October 2016