



UK Six Metre Group (UKSMG) Spectrum Forum Report 2017

Activity on the 50MHz band continues to thrive both globally and in the UK, assisted this year by an improvement in sporadic-E propagation as we approach solar minimum.

Long-haul sporadic-E has been really good this year, including a considerable number of openings from Europe to the Far East and the welcome return of multi-hop Es across the Atlantic after three years of comparative drought. The rapid increase in the use of digital modes has made a huge difference too and it has helped us to dig weak openings out that previously we would never have found. Digital modes are not everyone's cup of tea, but to those who worry that there's going to be nothing left on SSB or CW, a more balanced perspective is that FT8 and JT65 are just the current 'flavour of the month' and we'll almost certainly get back to a more balanced picture in future years. But digital modes are here to stay and they are pushing the boundaries of what can be worked.

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 improved support systems like the UKSMG DX Desktop, and sponsoring activity from remote and rare locations.

Overall membership of the group is reasonably stable and currently stands at 663, of whom 269 are outside the UK. Digital membership (downloading Six News from our website) continues to grow as a proportion of the membership and is now just over 35% of the total.

In support of promoting activity, interest and of course membership of the group, in 2017 UKSMG has mounted stands at Friedrichshafen, Newark, the G3WOS 50MHz BBQ and the RSGB Convention. At the RSGB Convention UKSMG members G4IFX and G3YLA gave a well-attended update on developments in their research into the polarisation of 50MHz signals and into the correlation of long-haul Es openings with the location of the jet stream.

UKSMG has continued to work with the Spectrum Manager to promote the development of the 50MHz Synchronised Beacon Program. The first beacon cluster is now partially populated, with GB3MCB (two periods), EI0SIX and OZ4BHM now operational on the 50.005 shared frequency and with another beacon from Italy on 50.006. GB3MCB is frequency hopping during the 'off' periods to its standard IARU frequency of 50.443. The upgrade to GB3MCB was funded and implemented by UKSMG.

During the aurora of 8th September 2017, EI7BMB reported that both GB3MCB and EI0SIX were decoded via aurora, using the PI-RX software. It appears that this mode/software combination has considerable potential for propagation research in the future.

As and when the 50MHz band is enlarged in Region 1, UKSMG will be very happy to work with BATC to promote digital TV on the band. This will apparently need to be the wider DVB-T (1 MHz bandwidth) rather than DVB-S because the latter is unduly sensitive to the sort of multipath effects regularly seen on 50MHz. While we're on the subject of collaboration with other special interest groups, a plan currently is under development for a jointly-promoted 50MHz Digital Contest next June, in collaboration with BARTG.

Chris Deacon
Chairman
19th October 2017