



## RSGB VHF Manager's Report

John Regnault G4SWX, October 2018

The VHF Manager, John Regnault G4SWX is responsible for RSGB spectrum matters for the VHF and UHF amateur bands 50-432MHz.

### Highlights

- Ofcom have agreed a new streamlined process for Special Research Permits (SRP) and have now issued the first applicant with a Notice of Variation (NoV) permitting the use of higher power on 144MHz subject to a number of conditions.
- Ofcom have agreed to access being granted to the 71 MHz experimental spectrum by NoV rather than SRP. The RSGB have implemented a revised NoV process for 71MHz. Subsequently a number of Reduced Bandwidth Digital Amateur Television (R-B DATV) contacts in excess of 50Km have been made.
- The temporary experimental spectrum at 70.5-71.5 MHz and 146-147 MHz will be renewed for another year.
- A presentation on 146MHz High Definition Reduced Bandwidth Digital Amateur Television (HD R-B DATV) attracted significant attention at a meeting of Ofcom's Business Radio Interest Group.

### Lowlights

- The general level of traditional VHF/UHF amateur activity continues to cause concern. Many amateurs citing the increase in their noise floor for not coming onto the bands. Newcomers with cheap equipment also cite the lack of stations active on FM.

### General Matters

Regarding WRC-19, objections raised by a number of countries to the IARU R1 case for a harmonised allocation for the amateur service at 50MHz has resulted in very considerable work to support IARU R1 build the amateur case.

The VHF Manager again wishes to thank the ETCC, for the work done by the ETCC in effectively dealing with the large number of repeater and gateway issues. In particular, in addressing the difficulties and the large amount of work required to deal with the Primary User of the shared bands. However; I am concerned that incompatible digital technologies are using up the majority of repeater and simplex channels and dividing activity into isolated silos. It is also a great shame that newcomers to the hobby can obtain a Chinese made VHF/UHF FM handheld transceiver for around £25 and find it difficult to make many contacts.

The VHF Manager would again like to thank BATC and in particular Noel Matthews G8GTZ for the ongoing work in supporting the RSGB case being made to Ofcom to renew the temporary VHF



spectrum allocations at 70.5 and 146 MHz. A presentation showing a clip of High Definition Reduced Bandwidth Digital Amateur Television transmitted in the 146-147 MHz band was shown to Ofcom's Business Radio Interest Group. The very high level of interest and questions extended the 10minute presentation slot to nearly one hour! The perceived value from such amateur experimentation should not be underestimated as it certainly played a very significant part in the renewal of access to experimental spectrum at 70.5-71.5 and 146-147 MHz.

## Outlook

### WRC 2019

Considerable work remains to support IARU Region 1 is making the case at WRC-19 for a harmonised allocation for the amateur service at 50 MHz (Agenda Item 1.1). Currently the spectrum 47-68 MHz is allocated to broadcasting in ITU Region-1, whereas Region-2 and Region-3 do have formal ITU amateur primary allocations. The proposal is to make 50-54 MHz an amateur allocation - the case for 52-54 MHz is based on the development of innovative new amateur digital services. The RSGB experience in developing temporary experimental amateur spectrum at 70.5 and 146 MHz has proved to be very valuable in this context.

### IARU R1 Interim Meeting Vienna 2019

The IARU Interim meeting will be in Vienna on 27/28 April 2019. At present, the RSGB is not proposing to submit any papers proposing substantial changes in the VHF/UHF band-plans. Rather the RSGB will be mainly concentrating on issues which will impact amateur radio at WRC-19. We will however thoroughly review and establish a RSGB position on papers submitted by other member societies.

### Innovation at VHF/UHF

To date most of the amateur activity on the experimental 71 and 146 MHz bands has been testing existing technologies not normally deployed at VHF. This does not reduce from the achievement by BATC members with RB-DATV. However there has been almost no evaluation of new data communications technologies since AX25 was trialled over FM in the early 1980s. Likewise, all of the digital voice technologies that have been shown to work well at VHF are proprietary with encumbering IPR. Even with narrowband communications many of the digital modes which work well at HF fail when there is multi-path propagation at VHF. Amateur radio is in a unique position in having spectrum which is dedicated to experimental transmission techniques; we need to make greater use of it.

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