

## UKSMG Spectrum Forum Report 2018

UKSMG continues to be the leading group for six metre operators world-wide. This year we have continued to take a pro-active role in promoting activity on the band and in working to enhance the enjoyment of operators by disseminating information, providing support systems like the UKSMG DX Desktop, sponsoring beacons, and supporting activity from remote and rare locations.

Activity on the 50MHz band continues to thrive both globally and in the UK, assisted in recent years both by an improvement in sporadic-E propagation as we approach solar minimum, and by the advent of FT8 - which has improved the DX possibilities in terms of range and by extending the duration and sheer detectability of openings. Long-haul sporadic-E has been really good from most of the UK this year, particularly to the west but also including some openings to the Far East.

Organisationally there have been challenges for UKSMG this year. The Editor of our magazine 'Six News' resigned in April with immediate effect for personal reasons, so several members of the committee had to work together to pull together an 'austerity' issue of SN to get us back on track. Fortunately, in the process of all that we also found an excellent new Editor! But more was to come because then we had to find someone new to mail out the printed copies of SN for us. Then most recently we needed to quickly find a new US Country Manager. The good news was that each time, several keen people put their hands up to help and each time we found someone perfectly qualified to take on the role. Quite an impressive response from the six metre community.

Less positively, and for reasons which we don't yet fully understand, overall membership of the group has fallen significantly in the past year and now stands at 566, of whom 215 are outside the UK. Digital membership (downloading Six News from our website, with no paper copy) represents just over a third of that total.

Perversely, the other difficulty we have at the moment is finding enough good causes to fund. UKSMG is far from broke but we want to spend our members' money wisely and we are always careful to vet requests from, for instance, DXpeditions. There's no point us funding an expedition which has no specialist 6m/4m operator and doesn't give the band the focus it needs. Sensible suggestions welcome.

UKSMG also tries to represent the six metre community with the RSGB and with the UK authorities, when the opportunity arises. So it was that we submitted a detailed response to the Ofcom consultation ahead of the ITU World Radio Conference in 2019, trying to encourage them to be a lot more proactive in supporting the proposal to extend the 50MHz band in Region 1. Whilst RSGB has to maintain a diplomatic approach in order to keep their relationship with Ofcom on an even keel, UKSMG can afford to be rather more 'direct'. Hopefully the two approaches are complementary.

In order to help substantiate the case for extending the six metre allocation to include 52-54MHz as proposed by WRC 2019 agenda item 1 – even if only in the UK and a limited number of other administrations - we expect to be collaborating with BATC soon on some short range 50MHz digital TV tests.

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