



RSGB HF Manager's Report Nov 2019

The RSGB HF Manager, Ian Greenshields G4FSU, is responsible for spectrum matters for the amateur bands below 30 MHz.

Summary

Activity on digital modes continues to grow dramatically with the popularity of FT8 and FT4, which is at the expense of CW and SSB modes where activity outside of contests and DXpeditions is in decline. More contests and DXpeditions are starting to use FT4 mode, further increasing an overall trend towards digital modes. There is a growing concern that the newer digital modes of FT4 and FT8 do not coexist well with other modes and as their adoption is far faster than the IARU band planning process, conflict does occur.

At the bottom of the sunspot cycle, activity increases pressure on the lower frequency bands while large allocations of spectrum on the higher bands are very lightly utilised, if at all.

IARU Region-1 Interim Meeting, Vienna 2019

The RSGB presented two papers on HF topics at this meeting, providing inputs and support for harmonising the band plans across the IARU regions as much as possible. Considerable time and discussion was spent on the increase in the popularity of digital modes, especially FT8 and FT4 and band planning implications. The desirability of retaining CW exclusive segments in the HF bands continues and was vigorously defended.

3.5 MHz and 10 MHz

The digital segments of the 3.5 MHz and 10 MHz band plans are now aligned with Region 2. On both bands, the expansion of the digital segment has been at the cost of the CW exclusive segment. There are still some issues on 3.5MHz where digital activity continues to extend down into the CW exclusive segments even after the realignment.

5 MHz

The WRC-15 allocation at 5 MHz is now implemented in most countries and contains almost all of the amateur activity outside the UK.

While the UK enjoys wider spectrum and higher power at 5 MHz, access to the full 15 kHz WRC-15 segment in the UK is becoming more important. The current UK permissions have a confusing overlap with the amateur allocation, which still results in poor operating practices, including out of band operation.



Digital mode activity worldwide is now centred in the 5357-5360 kHz segment, with the exception of the UK. This means UK stations, unable to transmit above 5358 kHz, cannot legally participate in most international digital activity on 5 MHz.

Similarly, most CW operation on the band takes place in a segment not available to UK amateurs (5351.5 - 5354 kHz), again restricting participation of UK amateurs in international contacts.

Wireless Power Transmission (WPT)

At the time of writing, the outcome of WPT resolutions from WRC-19 is still being studied. It is expected that significant work will still need to be done over the coming years to minimise the impact these systems will have on the HF noise floor.

IARU Region 1 General Conference 2020

The Region 1 General Conference takes place in October 2020. Inputs for topics on HF matters are requested. Work will continue on band plan harmonisation and defence of the amateur HF spectrum.

Of greater concern is the overall decline in activity using traditional modes such as CW and SSB and topics and ideas to address this trend are extremely welcome.

Other Issues

Harmonisation of 1.8 MHz still remains a desirable objective, not only to increase the allocation in some countries to the full 1810 - 2000 MHz band, but also to resolve the power limitation above 1850 kHz.

No further expansion of the HF amateur bands is expected in the next WRC cycle.

The HF Manager is a de facto trustee of the RSGB DXpedition Fund, which raises money for DXpeditions through sales of raffle tickets at the RSGB Convention and individual donations. A number of DXpeditions were funded throughout the year; full details are reported by the DXpedition fund.

Awards

The two main awards for HF are presented at the RSGB Convention. The nomination process and committees are managed by the HF Manager. For 2019, the following awards were made:

- ROTAB Trophy 2019: Darren Collins G0TSM
- G5RP Trophy 2019: Tom Jones M5NEX

Ian Greenshields G4FSU, RSGB HF Manager

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