



RSGB HF Manager's Report

Report for Spectrum Forum, November 2020

Summary

This year has been dominated by the events beyond amateur radio. Lock-down restrictions in many countries have led to an increase in general activity on the bands, although contest operation has been affected by the limited ability of multi-operator and portable stations to participate in many events.

The Region 1 General Conference was held virtually for the first time; the RSGB presented two papers on HF matters at the conference, which were both approved.

IARU Region 1 General Conference 2020

HF matters are discussed in committee C4 at the conference. Band planning is always one of the main topics. Key issues that were discussed included the desirability of retaining CW exclusive segments, and harmonising band plans across regions. There was also discussion on changes in operating activity, largely the increase in the use of FT4 and FT8 at the expense of other modes, which has the effect of compressing activity into small, crowded 3 kHz segments and leaving other parts of the bands devoid of activity.

There were also proposals and discussion on allowing wider bandwidth experimental modes in the HF bands; this could include modes that traditionally operate below the noise level and are thus not obviously present to narrower band users. The decision was taken to remove the 6 kHz maximum bandwidth restriction from parts of the 10 metre band plan above 29 MHz, although proposals for wider bandwidths than are currently in the band plans below 29 MHz were not approved.

No other significant band plan changes were made, other than minor changes in the amateur satellite service at 21 MHz, and further notes discouraging beacons on frequencies below 14MHz.

5 MHz

The RSGB is still requesting access to the WRC-15 secondary allocation at 5 MHz in the UK. Although the UK has access to wider spectrum and higher power levels at 5 MHz, being able to use the full 15 kHz WRC-15 segment in the UK is becoming more important. The current UK permissions have a confusing overlap with the secondary amateur allocation, which results in poor operating practices, including out of band operation, especially on frequencies above 5358kHz.

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.



Wireless Power Transmission (WPT)

The RSGB is strongly supporting the work of the IARU in ensuring adequate protection to the amateur service from this threat and there is still significant work to be done on this item. Full details are covered in other groups within IARU but it is mentioned here as the HF bands are particularly vulnerable to interference from WPT if it is not adequately regulated.

Other Issues

The HF Manager receives many emails and questions on HF matters. Often these relate to cases of poor or possibly illegal operation. It is often necessary to point out that neither the RSGB nor the IARU has regulatory powers, and any legal action is the responsibility of Ofcom. It is also important to note that operation outside of agreed band plans is not in itself an illegal operation as band plans are only advisory.

The ITU WRC-23 conference has no specific agenda items for the amateur service at HF. This means that the current frequency allocations are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Whilst this is good news for our current allocations, it also means that any extensions to the 3.5 MHz, 7 MHz, or 10 MHz bands are extremely unlikely. For as long as the amateur service allocation at 160 metres remains primary only from 1810 - 1850 kHz, it also continues the annoyance of having much lower power restrictions above 1850 kHz, although a number of countries are finding ways to address this particular issue.

HF Awards and DXpedition Fund

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 although many were cancelled or postponed due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic; full details are reported by the DXpedition fund. Due to the lack of a physical RSGB Convention, the sale of raffle tickets to raise funds could not take place.

The two awards for HF are presented at the RSGB Convention, held on-line this year. The nomination process and committees are managed by the HF Manager. For 2020, the following awards were made:

- ROTAB Trophy 2020: Peter Bacon G3ZSS
- G5RP Trophy 2020: David Keay MM7DWK

Ian Greenshields G4FSU, November 2020