

REPORT TO RSGB SPECTRUM FORUM NOVEMBER 2020

Introduction to RAYNET

RAYNET-UK encompasses all groups involved with voluntary and emergency communications in the United Kingdom. Despite the impact of COVID-19 on public service events, membership has remained broadly stable with ~1750 members in a national network of 109 local groups

Spectrum Utilisation

Although the various lockdowns have devastated the Public Service event calendar, RAYNET-UK continues to make use of all the allocations provided within the RSGB Band Plan to meet the needs of the User Services. A particular concern of groups at the moment is the proposed sharing of the upper part of 50MHz with experimental wide bandwidth data modes. Our usage of the band falls under the radar with some groups reporting use of the frequencies shown for 'Emergency Communications and Community Events' for 'Clause 10' remote control purposes while others who operate on large events with military involvement have been driven to use 6m as other bands are not permitted for use in that area. Noting the emphasis on 'sharing', the management of these proposals is of great interest to us.

In last year's report I mentioned that some groups had been approached by local authorities with regard to Brexit planning and support. While there was no need last January, it is uncertain where or how we may be asked to support the authorities to meet any needs since planning has been disrupted by the pandemic. In the meantime, groups are still planning to use the 70cm 'wide split' frequencies (flexed by $\pm 12.5\text{kHz}$) will be used for Talkthrough purposes together with non-standard frequency splits between existing frequencies in the bandplan noted as 'May be used for Emergency Communications'.

The 'lockdown' has encouraged groups to experiment with other modes or develop existing usage. To this end, a dedicated DMR server has been set up provide a space for members to develop their digital mode experience, primarily by linking local low power hotspots to the system. Testing will expand this to having decentralised servers at local level which could link hotspots in a way we saw used at HamRadio 2019 in Friedrichshafen by DARC. The RAYNET Technical Team has a number of New Packet Radio modems in 70cm which are being looked at with a view to providing wider area data networks when time permits.

Future Developments

There is still some interest in the potential for using the QO-100 Narrowband transponder for emergency communications use and this is being co-ordinated through IARU Region 1 with other communication groups in region.

We will be repeating the Technology Survey undertaken within groups which was last held in 2017. Partly to discover whether the '5 year predictions' from Groups in the last survey have come true but also to gauge a direction of travel in technology and frequency use for the future.

We noted with interest the inclusion of RAYNET in the RSGB 'Beyond Exams' documentation, though the mechanics of how we were to facilitate this were not discussed and have become more problematic with the disruption caused by the Pandemic. A reinvigorated Training Team within our organisation is however working on more formalised new member training which may help us deal with any influx of new members from the scheme.

Greg Mossop
Trustee, RAYNET-UK
1st November 2020