



UK Six Metre Group Spectrum Forum Report 2020

UKSMG remains the leading dedicated group for six metre operators world-wide. This year we have continued to take a pro-active role in fostering the global six-metre community by promoting activity on the band and working to enhance the enjoyment of operators by publishing our quarterly journal Six News, providing our website including the UKSMG DX Desktop, sponsoring beacons, and supporting activity from remote and rare locations.

Six metres is booming and the sporadic-E season this year has been exceptional, with a very early start and a long tail well into October, even including an hour-long transatlantic opening on 29 October, which is a very rare event indeed. FT8 is now the dominant mode for DX working on six metres and it has had the effect of 'pushing the boundaries' both in terms of increasing the distances worked and by reducing the proportion of openings which are missed. Finally, following early implementation by some administrations of the WRC-19 expansion of 50 MHz in Region 1, a number of new countries have already appeared on the band, including several stations from Saudi Arabia.

The advent of FT8 has led to a continuing increase in activity and enthusiasm for the band, but we also want to promote non-digital activity. For that reason, our Summer Contest, held every year on the first full weekend in June, remains non-digital only. Our Winter and Summer Marathon events, on the other hand, do not have any restriction on modes and needless to say the scores are now dominated by digital operation. We are considering changes for 2021 and those may include separate 'digital' and 'non-digital' sections, to level the playing field a bit. We will also be making it clear that unattended 'robot' operation is against both the letter and the spirit of our contest rules, even though individual cases will be difficult to prove.

Membership is broadly stable with a slight increase since this time last year, and now stands at 585, of whom nearly 40% are from outside the UK. Digital-only membership has continued to grow steadily and it now represents 35% of the total, but the majority of members still opt for the paper version of the magazine. As ever, most of our income comes from membership fees but a significant supplement comes from advertising in our magazine, and we'd like to thank Mike Devereux, Martin Lynch and DX Engineering for their continued support.

UKSMG funds are strong and we continue to support beacons, DXpeditions and home-base activity from new and/or rare locations, with significant success in promoting activity. This year we have provided support to DX operators in rare countries including 6Y5, V51, EL and 3D2. We have also made our regular donation to the ON4KST chat page, which is such a great facility for six metre operators and others. The main limitation to our sponsorship activity has, as usual, been finding enough good causes to support – we want to spend our members' money wisely, so we are always careful to vet requests from, for instance, DXpeditions. There's no point funding an expedition which won't give the band the focus it needs.

Like everyone else, our ability to make presentations at local clubs or attend at events has been seriously constrained this year, with only one club presentation and that delivered by Zoom. We were pleased, though, to be able present 'The Magic of Six Metres' as part of the 'Introduction to' stream at the RSGB Online Convention. We're hoping to be able to use the recording in our outreach activities from now on, potentially offering a Zoom or Skype Q&A session after the video.

At this point I would have liked to make a pitch for 40 MHz or 60 MHz privileges in the UK, to follow on from Ireland and other countries, but sadly, it seems that is extremely unlikely any time soon. Nevertheless, there is an exciting future ahead on our favourite band, and UKSMG will continue to be at the heart of it.

Chris Deacon
UKSMG Chairman
4 November 2020