

REPORT TO RSGB SPECTRUM FORUM OCTOBER 2021

Introduction to RAYNET

RAYNET-UK encompasses all groups involved with voluntary and emergency communications in the United Kingdom. Although COVID restrictions impacted our normal support to public service events, the number of local groups has grown to 113 and membership has remained broadly stable with ~1750 members. For emergency purposes, the UK operates the principle of subsidiarity where liaison with Emergency Planners is at a local rather than national level.

Spectrum Utilisation

The removal of COVID lockdown restrictions caused a surge in public service events, but as organisers tried to make up for lost time, so we continued to make use of all the allocations provided within the RSGB Band Plan to meet the needs of the User Services.

The pandemic remained a medical, rather than a communications emergency and in general groups assisted locally driven volunteer efforts or signposted enquiries to more appropriate communications providers (e.g. PMR or satellite providers).

The expiry of the Brexit transition period did not cause any Groups to be called out as planned, however the ability to use the 70cm 'wide split' frequencies (flexed by $\pm 12.5\text{kHz}$) for Talkthrough purposes together with non-standard frequency splits between existing frequencies in the bandplan noted as 'May be used for Emergency Communications' remains in our operating philosophy.

RAYNET-UK participated in exercises organised by IARU Region 1 at either end of the usual spectrum scale using the QO-100 satellite and also testing JS8call on HF, with a great deal learned. It is hoped that there will be repeat exercises over the next few months to cement our international links.

Use of our dedicated DMR server continues to grow, providing a space for members to develop their digital mode experience, primarily by linking local low power hotspots to the system. Further expansion into data modes continues with groups developing mesh networking capabilities.

Future Developments

The changes to Ofcom licence conditions with regard to EMF exposure limits caused a great deal of discussion amongst members. Members are being referred to the RSGB information on this matter given the tacit approval of the RSGB calculators and pre-assessed configurations.

As Local Resilience Forums return to 'business as usual' it is hoped that local exercises with the User Services will return to 'pre-COVID' levels as confidence returns in organising large scale 'live play' events. These are normally in the week so should not cause any spectrum congestion.

Greg Mossop
Trustee, RAYNET-UK
29th October 2021