



RSGB VHF Manager's Report

Report for Spectrum Forum, November 2022

The VHF Manager, John Regnault G4SWX is responsible for RSGB spectrum matters for the VHF and UHF amateur bands 50-432MHz.

Issues:

- A recent report to Ofcom on the experimental work at 70.5MHz and 146MHz highlighted the latest developments particularly the work with reduced bandwidth DVB-T and data over OFDM. The RSGB is still waiting to see if Ofcom will renew the temporary experimental spectrum at 70.5-71.5MHz and 146-147MHz another year.
- As a result of a campaign of disinformation by several amateurs over the issuing by Ofcom of Innovation and Trial licences for the 40MHz band the RSGB approached Ofcom for a statement which confirmed that such licences and operation on 40MHz are not amateur radio.
- The long-term decrease in VHF/UHF activity continues despite a modest increase during the Covid pandemic.

40MHz

Ofcom has made it very clear for several years that there was no likelihood of UK radio amateurs gaining any access to 40MHz (8m) which includes NoV (Notice of Variation) to a UK amateur licence or an amateur SRP (Special Research Permit). As a result of a campaign of disinformation by several amateurs over the issuing by Ofcom of Innovation and Trial licences for experimental transmissions in the 40MHz band RSGB approached Ofcom for a statement. Ofcom's reply is included again below to remove any doubts that some might still have:

"We have been approached by a couple of individuals wanting to conduct experiments in the 40 MHz band. Like all other research and innovation requests Ofcom receives we have put these through our Innovation and Trial licensing regime. If the coordination checks are passed, they are being issued with an Innovation and Trial licence. These are issued for up to 12 months on a non-interference, no protection and non-operational basis. These are not Amateur Radio Special Research Permits and licensees do not fall under the Amateur Radio licence terms and conditions. Therefore, applicants are not required to have passed an amateur exam or hold a callsign. Although we are allowing this experimentation, we would like to make it clear that we have no proposals to allow wider amateur radio access to the 40 MHz band.

*Clause 9(6) of the UK amateur terms states "The Licensee may receive Messages from an overseas amateur or from an **Amateur duly authorised by Ofcom** on a frequency band not specified in Schedule 1 but the Licensee may only transmit on a band specified in Schedule 1 which is authorised under Clause 9(2)."*

Users of 40 MHz under an Innovation and Trial (I&T) licence are not authorised under the Amateur Radio licensing regime and there is no requirement to have passed an amateur radio exam to obtain such a licence. Clause 9(6) of the Amateur licence is designed to cover additional frequencies, such as 70 MHz and 146 MHz, which are not contained in Schedule 1



of the Amateur Radio licence but Ofcom has authorised via a Notice of Variation (NoV). We would like to make clear that we have not duly authorised any amateur to use a frequency band not specified in Schedule 1 through this process. Reception of transmissions authorised under an I&T Licence should therefore be treated the same as those authorised under other licences that Ofcom issues such as business radio or maritime.

We would also like to make clear that I&T licences do not permit operational or commercial use. These licences are designed to support individuals and companies in carrying out research, development, testing and demonstrations of equipment. Therefore, the use of the 40 MHz band under this licence should be for these purposes only. The licences are granted on the basis that the user will be carrying out such research and not operating on the band in a similar way to the frequencies listed in Schedule 1 of the licence.”

Ofcom’s view is very clear. Any operation on 40MHz in the UK is not Amateur radio and therefore cross-band contacts to such stations by UK radio Amateurs operating on the bands licenced for amateur radio are not permitted.

Repeaters

Discussions have been held with ETCC concerning a request for more repeater channels on the 144MHz band. There are concerns that there is not enough spectrum to allow all requests for the increasing number of incompatible digital modes and that some NoVs, although issued remain unused. The VHF manager is seeking a process with Ofcom whereby they can more easily revoke unused NoVs.

Outlook

There are concerns that the proposals being made to WRC 23 concerning spaceborne RADAR will cause an increase in the noise floor in the amateur 50MHz band.

The demand for UHF spectrum in the UK by a range of commercial uses is likely to increase pressure on the 432MHz amateur allocation.

John Regnault G4SWX, November 2022