

Ofcom Amateur Radio Consultation: Updating the amateur radio licensing framework

- An overview



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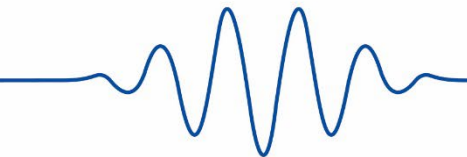
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Radio Society of Great Britain

Advancing amateur radio since 1913



Introduction

- The Ofcom Plan of Work for 2023/24 includes a major review of amateur licensing and related call sign policy.
- The Ofcom Consultation was launched on 23 June 2023
- Reply by 4 September 2023
- **Find out more:**
www.rsgb.org/licencereview
- The RSGB page has links to background, Ofcom consultation page and will feature additional info/guidance in due course



Updating the amateur radio licensing framework

An approach for today and tomorrow's radio amateurs

All radio amateurs are strongly encouraged to read the consultation on Ofcom's website – and reply to Ofcom individually

- Don't assume RSGB will do it all for you
- Don't clone other replies!

Background and scope

The current 'lifetime' licence was a major replacement of old BR68 in 2005-7

Two licence updates since:

- 2014/5 PSSR (Public Sector Spectrum Release) Changes...
 - Added 472kHz, 5MHz, reduced 2.3/3.4GHz and also slightly modified location/operating wording - and tried to amend/reset RSLs
 - 2020 EMF Changes...
 - Added Schedule-3 and requires assessments for all usage >10W eirp
-

2023: Technology and regulatory approach has changed over ~15 years+

- It is timely to modernise/simplify, but the scope is wider....
- Call sign policy has never been consulted on and had become confused
- Substantial growth in NoVs (repeaters, gateways etc)
- Ofcom also has changes to staff and IT and keen to reduce their workload

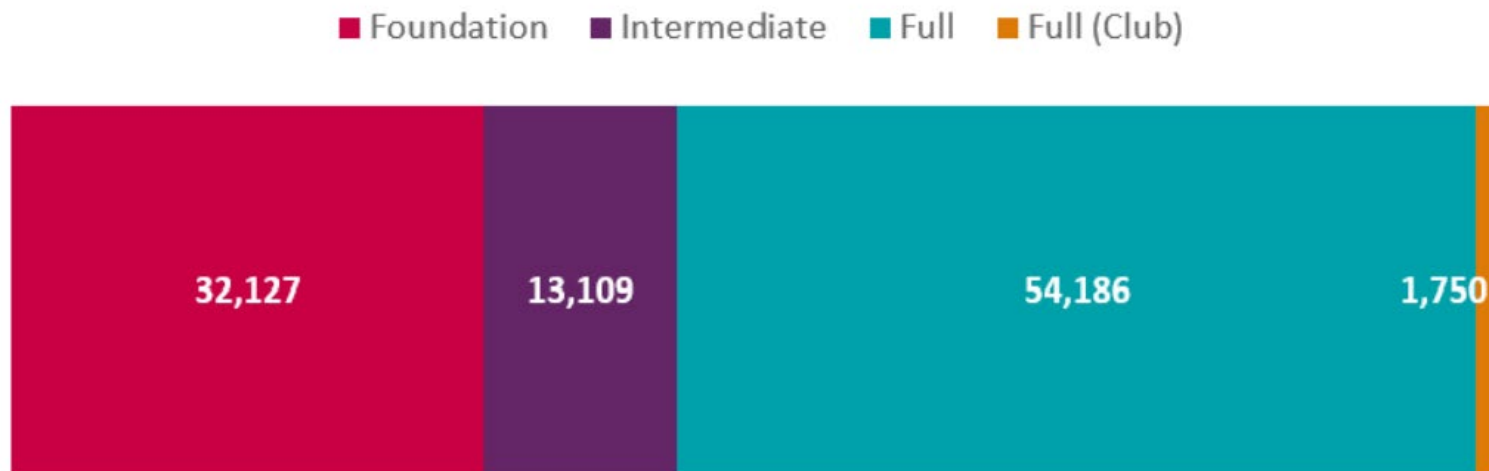
UK amateur licensing

The UK has an active amateur radio community.

As shown by Ofcom online open data:

- 101,000 licences on issue...
- Authorising almost 70,000 licensed operators.

Currently many lower calls retained as you progress through the system
Some folk will also be holding a club licence as well



In brief #1: The overall framework

Ofcom propose to update the overall licensing framework:

- Maintain the existing 3-tier licensing framework while streamlining (reducing) Notices of Variation (NoV)
- Maintain lifetime licences while updating the mechanisms for revalidation
- Allow anyone to operate amateur radio equipment under a licensee's supervision
- Only permit licensees to hold a single individual licence, requiring surrender of lower licences as they progress

In brief #2: Call sign assignment

Ofcom propose to streamline and modernise call sign assignment:

- Update call sign allocation policy in a number of areas including:
 - i. Changes to the rules on the reissuing of callsigns
 - ii. Changes to the number of callsigns that can be held
 - iii. Enabling licensees to change their callsign
 - iv. Expanding the use of suffixes (/M, /P, /A, /MM)
 - v. Introducing a new M8 and M9 Intermediate call sign format (retire 2E etc)
 - vi. Making Regional Secondary Locators (RSLs) optional
- Simplifying the process for using a special RSL (e.g. for Royal events)
- Simplifying rules around Special Event Stations

In brief #3: Technical conditions

Adjust technical parameters to reflect the evolving needs of the hobby and provide radio amateurs with greater operating freedom:

- **Power:** Increase the maximum permitted transmit power to allow 20 Watts for Foundation, 100 Watts for Intermediate licensees in most bands; and 1000 Watts for Full licensees in bands where amateur radio has a primary allocation
- **Remote:** Allow Foundation and Intermediate licensees to use the internet for remote control operation
- **Deployment** of repeaters, beacons and gateways without requiring a NoV in most cases; (But subject to other terms if >5W erp)
- **Foundation licensees** to build their own equipment and have low power access to the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz bands
- **Airborne:** Enable low power airborne use in some bands at 0.5W max eirp

In Brief #4: Updated / Clearer rules

Ofcom is aiming to provide clearer updated rules (terms and conditions which are easy for everyone to understand):

- Align various terms and conditions with other licences that Ofcom issues
- Simplify conditions to remove unnecessary complexity and make them clearer
- Remove provisions not needed for spectrum management purposes

Summary:

- *“Ofcom is proposing to update the amateur radio licence to enable amateur radio to continue to develop as a hobby, within a simplified regulated framework that supports optimal spectrum use”*



Modernise our policies and rules to allow greater operating freedoms



Clarify and streamline our rules and processes

Ofcom
Summary
Part-1

Proposed changes to amateur radio licence		
Review of licensing framework proposals		
Licensees should only hold a single personal licence		✓
Allow greater supervised third-party use of radio equipment	✓	
Proposed changes to call signs		
Introduce a new M8 and M9 Intermediate call sign format		✓
Make the use of Regional Secondary Locators (RSL) optional, with simpler rules	✓	✓
Permit the optional use of the RSL 'E' for all licence classes when operating in England	✓	✓
Simplify the process for authorising special RSLs	✓	✓
Simplify licence terms on the use of call sign suffixes and allow their use on an optional basis	✓	✓
Allow old call signs to be reissued online	✓	✓
When our new licensing platform has been implemented we could allow licensees to change their call sign periodically	✓	✓
Consistent rules on the number of call signs that can be held		✓
A unified, more flexible Special Event Station NoV	✓	✓





Modernise our policies and rules to allow greater operating freedoms



Clarify and streamline our rules and processes

Ofcom
Summary

Part-2

Proposed changes to amateur radio licence		
Technical parameters review		
Increase the permitted transmit power for all licence levels	✓	
Enable all licensees to use internet-based technologies for remote control operation	✓	✓
Allow the deployment of most beacons, gateways and repeaters without the need to apply for an NoV	✓	✓
Liberalise the Foundation Licence to allow them to build their own equipment and gain access to the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz bands	✓	
Allow low power airborne use in some bands	✓	
Licence terms and conditions review		
Update the amateur radio licence to have greater alignment with standard Ofcom format and licence conditions		✓
Minor changes to the licence template to simplify and ensure consistency with CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-01		✓
Update the licence terms and conditions to remove unnecessary complexity and make them clearer	✓	✓



Timing

Consultation Deadline: 4 September-2023

Statement: 4th Quarter (and then notices of variation to new licence terms)

Changes rolled out in three phases:-

- a) Phase 1: changes which can be implemented through current licensing platform
- b) Phase 2: changes requiring minor modification to the current licensing platform or other specific action from Ofcom (but not the new licensing platform)
- c) Phase 3: changes requiring the new licensing platform to be in place

Note Phase-3 is likely to be in FY2024/25 as it is dependent on wider IT updates

Ofcom Consultation questions...

- 1) Do you agree with our proposal that each licensee should only be able to hold one personal licence?
- 2) Do you agree with our proposals to permit greater supervised use of the radio equipment by others?
- 3) Do you agree with our proposal to use M8 and M9 for Intermediate licensees going forward?
- 4) Do you agree with our proposals to change our policies on the use of RSLs?
- 5) Do you agree with our proposals to allow the use of any suffix?
- 6) Do you agree with our proposals to allow a change of call signs?
- 7) Do you agree with our proposals on the limits to how many call signs can be held
- 8) Do you agree with our proposal to simplify special event call signs?
- 9) Do you agree with our proposals to increase transmit power?

Ofcom questions continued

- 10) Do you agree with our proposed changes to remote control operation?
- 11) Do you agree with our proposed changes to Beacon operation?
- 12) Do you agree with our proposed changes to Gateways?
- 13) Do you agree with our proposed changes to repeaters
- 14) Do you agree with our proposed changes to allow Foundation Licence holders to build their own equipment and access the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz frequency bands?
- 15) Do you agree to Ofcom's proposals to permit some limited airborne use
- 16) Do you agree to Ofcom's proposed changes in licence format and the alignment of standard terms and conditions?
- 17) Do you agree to Ofcom's proposed changes to the licence terms and conditions?

TIP-1: Questions may cover multiple topics – check the paragraphs for full context

TIP-2: Comments or alternative suggestions should be clear and succinct

Finally...

Remember:

- Reply by 4 September 2023
- Find out more: www.rsgb.org/licencereview

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making communications work
for everyone


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