

# Ofcom Amateur Radio Consultation: Updating the Amateur Radio Licensing Framework



## Session 1: A focus on Full Licence issues

31 July 2023

# Scope:

The Ofcom Consultation has wide scope, but the focus here is on the following:

- Background
- Power Changes (and EMF/EMC)
- Callsigns - incl expiry, recycling
- RSLs
- SES / SSES
- NoV Systems – Gateways, Repeater etc

# Background:

## Current Licence:

- 400W limit – changes based on EMF; and can also be limited in secondary allocations (e.g.160m)
- RSLs – mandatory – but not in ITU Radio Regs/enforceable - change is driven by Ofcom legal duties
- RSLs – amendments were proposed in 2015 – that retreat led to the ‘#’ reset in 2016
- Restricted remote control for Foundation/Intermediate

## Outside of Current Licence – NoVs

- SES – automated but too many manual applications
- SSES – manual with additional criteria
- SCC – largely managed by RSGB, but also dependent on Ofcom expertise
- Beacons, Gateways, Repeaters etc – ~1000 NoVs
- Other NoVs include experimental spectrum, PSES, GB2RS newsreaders etc

## Notes:

- Call sign policy has never been consulted by Ofcom and had become inconsistent
- Ofcom also has changes to staff and IT - and keen to reduce their workload, increase automation

# Power / Frequency Schedule:

- Power Changes:
    - Foundation 10W becomes 20W
    - Intermediate 50W becomes 100W
    - Full 400W become 1kW - **in Primary bands only**
    - **Note:** The EMF threshold is 10Weirp/6mins, so may need to be (re)assessed
  - Aeronautical in Primary bands, 0.5W eirp
  - No change to 1.8 MHz, 5MHz - *disappointing – feel free to ask!*
  - Foundation gain 1W low power access to 2.4 & 5GHz
  - Definitions for optional suffixes such as /M, /P etc removed, so /xyz is ok
- and Remote Control for Foundation & Intermediate liberalised, but some extra RC conditions

# Standard Callsigns:

- Individuals – will be single call/licence only (ignoring club or add-ons)
- Lower calls would be expired as you progress from Foundation
- Clubs – up to 5 calls – *to be clarified*
  
- Timing/Recycling: call signs may be resurrected/changed after 2 years!
- Any other period (such as 5 years) will apply to all cases
  - so if you want SK ones to be left longer – that timing applies to other cases
  
- Only post-war 3-letter calls (no more short 2-letter ones)
- Intermediates moving from 2x0 / 2x1 to M8 / M9 - to close all 2-Series

# Regional Secondary Locators (RSLs):

- Ofcom proposes they all become optional, but remain fully defined in the licence
  - see para 4.17 - they are not a legal requirement, so comments need to be on other grounds
- Club RSLs remain optional/defined
- Celebratory RSLs would be enabled by Ofcom web notice, without NoV
- Optional E-usage/equality for all licence classes - resolves Intermediate issue if they become M8/9
- **Risk** – even optional RSLs could be swept out by the Ofcom legal team if the wrong fuss is made of them, in line with their minimalist/enforceable approach
  
- Replies to Ofcom on this topic should be calm/clear/careful - e.g. by Nations, avoid new compulsory 'E'
- Some in Ofcom know it's a sensitive topic, but not all
- Not all amateurs favour their mandatory retention - - especially new folk, digital/mobile users etc
- If they go optional, could be mitigated by enhanced Operating Practice or Contest Rules
- No Ofcom appetite for new/extra RSLs – see risk above

# Special Events - SES / SSES

- Ofcom has long wanted to change this and fully automate applications
- Standard SES already online, but complexity involved with Special-SES
- Ofcom propose a new single longer format based on GBxxxxcccca
  - More flexible usage, lower time limit, online applications
- Numeric and other based formats out of scope (such as 2MT, 2LO)
- This doesn't prevent some very special ones under an NoV, but that is already less likely

# Beacons, Gateways, Repeaters etc

- Strong push from Ofcom re moving these into main licence to reduce NoVs
- 'QRP' seen as low risk – thus a new 5W erp category - broader than just gateways
- RSGB coordination/Callsign process retained for >5W erp – so little practical change
- Conditions apply! – not a free for all, but does need further refinement, catch-alls etc
- Changes include:
  - Compulsory contact marking and closedown time limit clauses in new licence
  - A new 5W repeater category is created, inc for clubs, adhoc usage etc
  - Definitions are spectral to cater for other apps (eg Beacons may cover WSPR, APRS)

Category	Definition	<5W erp	5-25W erp	>25W erp
Beacon	Tx Only	Any	Callsign	Full & NoV
Gateway	Tx/Rx on same frequency	Any inc Foundation	n/a	n/a
Repeater	Tx/Rx on different freqs	Intermediate/Full	Full & RSGB	n/a