

Ofcom Amateur Radio Consultation: Updating the Amateur Radio Licensing Framework



Session 2: A focus on Foundation and Intermediate Licence issues

7 August 2023

Scope

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

- Foundation changes
- Intermediate changes
- Implications for exams
- Development / Outreach opportunities

Updating the amateur radio licensing framework

An approach for today and tomorrow's radio amateurs

Note: Our Overview and Session 1 videos on our YouTube channel cover other topics and Full Licence issues

Foundation overview

If Ofcom confirms its general proposals (if not the finer detail) then Foundation Licensees would be able to:

- Build transmitting equipment more freely than before (but may need safety/spectral guidance)
- Sail out to 12 miles (Territorial waters operation)
- Fly with 0.5W eirp (in Primary allocations only)
- Use more Power - 20W rather than 10W (based on EMF adherence)
- Internet remote control (provided it fails safe)
- Use 2.4/5GHz at low power
- Have an open low-power hotspot/gateway (previously closed-mode only)
- Can directly supervise guests

It is not all liberalisation though. A few things have been clarified/tightened to address some previous grey areas

Foundation Callsigns

- No real change to the series in use – M3, M6 and M7
- No proposals for a new series
- However old Foundation calls will be cancelled as you progress higher, freeing capacity (notably in the M3 series)

Intermediate overview

If Ofcom confirms its general proposals (if not the finer detail) then Intermediate Licensees would be able to:

- Sail out to 12 miles (Territorial waters operation – same as Foundation)
- Fly with 0.5W eirp (in Primary allocations)
- Use more Power - 100W rather than 50W (based on EMF adherence)
- Internet remote control (provided it fails safe)
- Can directly supervise guests
- Potentially be a repeater keeper

What isn't changing:

- There are no other changes to the frequency schedule
- The 3-tier system remains - Foundation , Intermediate and Full

However:

In contrast to Foundation, Ofcom does propose major changes to Intermediate call signs...

Intermediate call signs

- Ofcom has a legal issue that 2x0 / 2x1 call signs do not fully align with international rules
- Currently this is solved by the compulsory Regional Secondary Locator (RSL) such as 2E1xxx, 2M0xxx
- For consistency, Ofcom proposes a major change to M8xxx and M9xxx replacing the 2-series
- A non-trivial exercise given that there are ~13000 Intermediate call signs in issue

Proposed Changes:

Under the proposals the current 2#0 / 2#1 formats would become M8 / M9

- For new licensees – immediately
- For existing licensees – optional, based on reserving/mapping the last three letters - So: 2E0xyz → M8xyz; 2E1yx → M9yx
- For all licensees – eventually – ending all 2-series
- But don't leave it too late – the M8/9 reservation will expire after 3 years, letting anyone else have it

Also:

- Lower level Foundations calls would be cancelled; and likewise your Intermediate call would be if you upgrade to Full
- The prospect of parallel running both 2-series and M8/9 series over an extended period, may be complex
- Ofcom proposals for optional Regional Secondary Locators only apply to M8 & M9, but stay compulsory for legacy 2-Series

Ofcom Reference: Consultation document Paragraphs 4.7 - 4.14 ; and Ofcom Question-3

Implications and opportunities

Training and Exams:

- As licence changes are extensive, the consequential syllabus changes have to be focused on those affected by Ofcom proposals, to deal with workload and the challenging timeline to update material
- Greater licence freedom and more possibilities can lead to syllabus creep/overload – but Exams Group are very aware

Intermediate:

- Intermediate with 100W may reduce some incentives to upgrade to Full
- Better aligns with multimode HF+50MHz equipment
- Intermediates continue to grow as a proportion relative to Full licensees (based on exam pass rates and demographics)

Outreach/Development

- Construction and supervision changes open up extra possibilities, including for public events, Special Event Stations
- A visitor could build a kit and use it on air under direct supervision
- Family/public/ (honoured guests etc) can directly operate under supervision
- New possibilities for Club events/outreach - and collaboration, Regional Team enthusiasts etc.

Finally...

Remember:

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

- **Responding to Ofcom:** 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 people's replies!
 - Questions may cover multiple topics – so check the paragraphs for full context – and be specific
 - Comments, concerns or alternative suggestions should be clear and succinct

Updating the amateur radio licensing framework

An approach for today and tomorrow's radio amateurs
