

## The IARU Region 1 Conference, Sun City, South Africa



EMC Working Group in session.

In August 2011, IARU Region 1 made history by holding its first ever full conference on African soil in Sun City, South Africa. The host society was the South Africa Radio League (SARL), who had worked tirelessly to organise everything. The fruits of their labour saw the opening plenary addressed by Brahim Sanou, Director of ITU-D and, indeed, amateur radio development proved to be a key theme throughout.

Before anyone jumps to conclusions, being that far south of the equator in August means winter had only just finished and eleven hours on a plane seat there and back was not too much fun either! The distance and costs involved led to smallest RSGB delegation in recent years, consisting of just Murray Niman, G6JYB and Graham Shirville, G3VZV, who funded his own trip. Advice, however, was on tap from two other Brits wearing their IARU-R1 hats in the form of Ian Greenshields, G4FSU (acting as secretary for the IARU C4

HF Committee) and EC Member Colin Thomas, G3PSM. Prior to the conference, RSGB had submitted papers into both the HF and VHF committees and had conducted a fairly extensive assessment of all the inputs in conjunction with the RSGB Spectrum Forum members, as well as external forums and WebEx/Skype sessions.

IARU Region 1 conferences are organised along a number of key streams: C2 for Credentials/Finance, C3 for General Development/Policy, C4 for HF matters and C5 for VHF/Microwave matters. Both C4 & C5 consider contest rules, technical standards, spectrum matters and band planning. In addition to the principal committees, the conference also provides a venue for specialist Region 1 Working Groups for EMC, Eurocom, ARDF, ARSPEX (Space), High Speed Telegraphy etc. In this edition of *RadCom*, some of the results of C4 and C5 are particularly visible in the changes to several band plans. However we will first cover some of the other topics...

**WORKING GROUPS.** Prior to the opening plenary a particular interest was taken in the EMC and Eurocom Working Groups. PLT was of course a major talking point in the EMC meeting as it coincided with views regarding a draft PLT standard that includes notches. RSGB helped stiffen the resolve, but it did highlight that politics can be as important as engineering. The other key discussion was on the growing trend to statutory

antenna registration and EM field assessments, which are increasingly featuring in many countries (including the UK if you apply for a Special Research Permit). Updated calculation software is on the IARU-R1.org website to assist.

Immediately following the EMC meeting was the Eurocom working group. Here, a more radical approach was taken as RSGB supported a DARC proposal to replace Eurocom with a new more powerful Political Relations Committee (PRC) that was subsequently endorsed by the main conference. This stronger and better funded group will handle interfaces not just to the European Parliament as Eurocom did, but has a wider remit that includes equivalents in Africa and around Region 1. In this respect the PRC will be a better matched companion to the Region 1 External Relation Committee (ERC) that handles technical/regulatory matters such as CEPT & ITU.

The imminent WRC-12 conference and the prospects of an amateur MF allocation near 500kHz allocation were also addressed in a session led by Colin Thomas, G3PSM. WRC-12 will be held in Geneva from 23 January to 17 February, so fingers crossed!

**FINANCE & DEVELOPMENT.** RSGB was amongst the few societies to be privileged to participate in C2. This covered decisions on modernising proxy procedures, a probing discussion on budgetary matters and a well deserved nomination of Tafa Diop, 6W1KI for the G2BVN Roy Stevens Trophy. In the event, some programmes such as STARS (for developing amateur radio in areas of Africa & Asia) saw major governance reform, but money was also set aside for the new PRC. Provision was also made for new CGI training materials and development projects based on the C3 proceedings – though subject to approval of formal proposals and project plans.

**HF MATTERS IN C4.** Whilst the number of HF papers was more modest than some previous conferences, the heat of debate was as lively as ever. The 40m band, which had been re-planned in 2008 at Cavtat following the 7.1-7.2MHz expansion, saw a reversal and loss of the contest preferred CW segment in return for stronger contest rules. There was also a considerable discussion about the rules and merits of remote stations, contest procedures/QRM and pressure to find room for additional repeaters on 10m. Spectrum expansion at HF (such as 30m) was also discussed, although the immediate WRC cycle does not favour this in the short term.

The ongoing issue of digimodes and CW in 40m was discussed and the 2012 RSGB band plan more explicitly addresses this. The relocation of the 10m FM section to ▶



IARU-2011 group photo.

► make a more formal provision for repeaters should also be noted by operators. RSGB and IRTS had some success on abuse of remote operation (highlighting for instance that it is not covered by T/R61-01), though several aspects are expected to feature in future meetings.

Whilst not all matters went to according to our preference, one where influence was successfully applied was to a QSO debate where Murray, G6JYB highlighted that the definition previously developed by the C5-VHF committee would be the only acceptable choice (assuming one was even needed). This has the desired effect and left far more time for more substantive matters!

**VHF/MICROWAVE IN C5.** With a substantial set of inputs, the C5 committee continued its reputation for teamwork and innovation, web streaming much of its proceedings. Its outputs proved significant as the DX section of both 6m and 4m were totally overhauled. A dedicated working group tackled the 50MHz re-plan to resolve growing demands, recognising its international nature and the potential for controversy. Extensive homework by RSGB and UKSMG proved to be advantageous, with many of the ideas being implemented in the new 50MHz band plan. The result is a more logical 100kHz block structure to accommodate growing activity. This has been achieved by moving traditional beacons and some activity such as EME/MS up the band to create space, but making provision for a major new synchronised beacon project at the bottom. Pressure by other European countries also resulted in changes to the 4m band plan, though these may have to be addressed again at some future point as restricted national allocations develop. Over the last few months the *RadCom* VHF/UHF column by David, G4ASR has covered many of these changes and the UKSMG has produced a video of the new 50MHz band plan.

Compared to the UK, it was a pleasure to see how high 2m activity levels in Central and Eastern Europe required a more flexible 145MHz band plan to accommodate congested

VHF contests. IARU microwave contests will now feature a similar 'rover rule' to UK Microwave Group contests for working portable stations. More controversial though was a decision to sacrifice a pair of simplex frequencies for extra repeater channels in 2m (notably for countries who have far less repeater options than we do in 70cm). CTCSS will become the default access for all analogue repeaters to improve sharing/overlap situations. Developments in beacon technology were also welcomed and incorporated into the latest IARU-R1 guidance.

Escalation, coordination and sanctions procedures were agreed for cross border repeater issues including the protection of 145.8-146.0 for ISS/satellite activity. Graham Shirville, G3VZV (who also is an IARU Satellite Coordinator) saw success as his new chapter for the *VHF Handbook* was adopted wholesale.

Further up the bands, RSGB also made progress with 23cm reforms and found itself with active friends at 134GHz where a new band plan and contest multipliers were agreed to support growth in innovative construction and operating. As the conference concluded, a kick-off discussion was held for the new IARU-AC study group for 'bands above 148MHz' where pressures on spectrum are increasing.

**SUMMARY.** Space in *RadCom* does restrict the detail but the Society saw the vast majority of its objectives met and will no doubt consider further work starting with forthcoming interim meetings. Despite the distance many delegates were present and Sun City successfully generated many recommendations that update bands and procedures, hopefully underpinning another three years of growing activity. The conference can be proudly considered a major achievement by the host society SARL. The next Region 1 conference will take place in Varna, Bulgaria in autumn 2014. Thanks to all those who contributed to the discussions in both the Society and the various affiliated specialist groups.

## 2012 BAND PLANS – Implementing the Sun City and other UK changes

With quite a number of band plan and other changes resulting, activity continued after the end of the Sun City conference in August. The Society initiated an open consultative process on the band plan changes that peaked at its November Spectrum Forum meeting, to ensure their implementation was attuned to UK needs. In addition to the IARU recommendations, additional quite significant changes are present in 50MHz and 23cm that are UK specific. Minutes from that forum meeting are on the RSGB website.

**HF CHANGES. 7MHz / 40m:** As discussed earlier – and more notable by its absence – is the removal of the fixed contest preferred designation in the 7MHz CW section. It is also important that digimode activities such as PSK31/RTTY, finally migrate to their correct home in the band and to this effect a more explicit footnote has now added that they should be at 7.040MHz and above, leaving the very bottom free for CW Telegraphy. All users are encouraged to take note and allow the 2008/9 changes to finally bed in.

**29MHz / 10m:** The main change is that the FM simplex channels have been relocated downwards to 29.1-29.2MHz, slightly reducing the all-modes area. This permits a modest expansion of the 10m FM repeater channels.

**VHF / MICROWAVE CHANGES. 50MHz:** The 50.0-50.5MHz DX section sees considerable changes as described elsewhere and in last

month's VHF/UHF column. The band plan has immediate effect so please spread awareness – though with a transition time for the beacon changes that runs until 2014. Further up the band the Society, in conjunction with VMARS and RAYNET, has restructured the all-modes and repeater areas. This will facilitate new 6m repeaters to be IARU aligned with easier to build wider splits and designates a pair of channels that are 25kHz aligned for military kit and AM operation.

**70MHz:** Changes in 70MHz are also present in the lower parts of the band such as the expanded beacon section. Given the fragmented nature of many other countries' allocations a footnote has therefore also been added as this may affect actual activity.

**145MHz:** Whilst many countries have followed the Conference recommendation, RSGB's ETCC has decided to pursue a carefully phased approach to achieve maximum efficiency first. Note that toneburst access will cease and all FM repeaters will be CTCSS-only by 2014. Use of the new channels elsewhere in Europe (typically for D-Star) is indicated by a new footnote.

**70cm:** The opportunity to incorporate some modernisation results in MPT1327 designations being deleted, a centre for new DATV experimentation at 437MHz being introduced, and the 9MHz-split DV repeaters are now indicated. Please note that some temporary additional restriction/changes are likely for the summer period spanning

the Olympics and Paralympics, which we hope to confirm in due course.

**23cm:** Sun City and its predecessors have given us the framework for some long-awaited changes in this shared band. A root and branch reform sees packet and analogue TV make way for a major restructuring to support successful licensing of DATV, DV, DD and better compatibility with Primary Users. This will be supplemented by coordination/migration arrangements with the existing analogue ATV repeaters. A new feature is the amber zone at 1250-1290MHz. Whilst many are familiar with the pink/red 'keep-off the beacons' designator, the new amber warning for the middle of the band indicates that particular caution is needed as that area is home to several CAA/NATS air traffic radars (but note that some systems exist outside of the yellow zone elsewhere in the band).

**HIGHER BANDS:** Further up, 2.3GHz (which is subject to major spectrum release pressures) has some interim adjustments and the Sun City changes result in 134.928GHz being adopted for narrowband work (thanks in no small part to *RadCom* microwave columnist Sam, G4DDK).

**RAYNET:** Across the VHF bands one further change is that the RAYNET usage designations are now indicated by a more generic terminology for 'Emergency and Community events'.