

Spectrum Forum Report - FOC

Anticipating the removal of the Morse requirement for access to HF, RSGB asked FOC to set up a programme of voluntary Morse testing, and some time later this has become the Morse Proficiency Programme.

It was realised that former volunteers from the Morse Testing Service represented the best source of manpower for the task, and at the beginning of 2004 concerns about data protection were overcome so that those former MTS who consented had their details passed to FOC.

This enabled us to set up an email discussion group to move the programme forward, and the group currently comprises approx. 120 volunteers. Morse tests under the programme have already been conducted at a Marconi centenary event at Fraserburgh and at the Kempton Park rally. Several local groups are planning to run tests and we also wish to conduct tests at the Leicester show and at the RSGB HF Convention, but in both cases availability of a suitable room is a sticking point at present.

Tests under the programme consist of 3-minute passages intended to test sending and receiving, at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25wpm. A generic design of certificate has been produced which can be overprinted to reflect the level attained.

The question has been asked whether the 5wpm test might be acceptable to those overseas administrations which continue to require a Morse pass for access to HF. The General Manager has said he thinks that establishing this would be virtually impossible as it would need help from Ofcom and the Foreign Office. This is regrettable.

There is much feeling among the team that we should not limit ourselves to proficiency tests: Morse tuition and general promotion are arguably of greater importance. However the transition from an MTS supported and funded by RSGB HQ and centrally directed, to a purely voluntary programme requiring local initiative, is proving enough of a challenge at present.

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