

VHF MANAGER REPORT FOR THE SPECTRUM MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2008

NATIONAL MATTERS

BAND PLANS

A few enquiries from radio amateurs regarding the VHF and UHF band plans have been received so far this year (January-September 2008).

The recommendation that 50.570MHz, 70.260MHz, 144.570MHz and 432.570MHz be used as “centres of a.m. activity” appears to be working successfully.

Some concern has been voiced regarding the apparent lack of f.m. telephony simplex frequencies within the 70MHz band. This has arisen because UK Usage of the All-Modes sub-band (70.294 – 70.500MHz) indicates that the majority of channels are ‘used’ by digital modes, internet gateways or emergency communication groups. However that does not mean you cannot use these channels for f.m. telephony. It is simply a case of listening on these frequencies to ascertain locally whether they are in use or not. If nothing is heard then you may conduct your f.m. contact on any appropriate channel within the All-Modes sub-band.

Considerable concern was expressed (July 2008) that a UK station was operating an Internet Gateway on 145.975MHz within the Amateur Satellite section of the 145MHz Band. Although this situation was quickly resolved it is a concern that Band Plans, although voluntary, are often ignored. Perhaps more publicity should be made as to the reasoning behind band planning and their usage.

On a similar tack it has been noticed that interference is occasionally being caused to Emergency Communication Groups (located on the south coast) by an errant French repeater operating in the All-Modes section of the 145MHz band. There are standing IARU Region-1 regulations that require co-ordination between VHF Managers in neighbouring countries to reduce or eliminate this type of cross-border interference. In this instance however it appears that the French group have simply activated a local repeater without any co-ordination at a local level. In these circumstances it is often difficult, if not impossible, to move the offending repeater to the correct section within the 145MHz band.

SPECIAL RESEARCH PERMITS

The SRP/NoV process continues to work well with the exception of the 432MHz band. The number of enquiries however has reduced somewhat from that experienced in the same period in 2007.

UK VHF BEACONS

Two beacon units using the call sign GB3RAL are currently authorised to operate on 40.050MHz and 60.050MHz. OFCOM have restricted the beacons to a 2-year period on a non-interference basis. Sometime within the next 12-months it has to be ascertained whether any interference has indeed been reported. A request for the long-term continuance of the extremely useful propagation/research beacons will need to be made, presumably before the summer of 2009.

70MHz BAND

Nearly 2-years ago (January 2007) I submitted a request to the joint RSGB/OFCOM meeting for a +4dB power increase within the 70MHz band. The reasoning behind this was two-fold. To bring the power level in line with other VHF/UHF bands, ie 400W and more importantly to secure a power increase before the next Sun Spot maximum period circa 2010. During this period and in the run up to solar maximum the MUF will rise to up 70MHz region. Contacts over 10,000 kilometre paths with stations in South Africa (and other world-wide locations) via Trans-Equatorial and F2-layer propagation will be possible.

This request is still outstanding – the latest suggestion being for a limited number of ‘channels’ to be made available for higher power operation. The audit of MoD frequencies currently being carried out may bring about some changes in this respect.

Co-ordination has also been carried out with SARL to ascertain suitable frequencies for such experiments. In South Africa the 70MHz band is shared with commercial users.

INTERNATIONAL MATTERS

As a member of the IARU Region 1 VHF/UHF/Microwaves Committee I have represented the RSGB in International VHF/UHF liaison work. This has been mainly been regarding band planning issues although other aspects such as 70MHz authorisations and Contest matters have also been dealt with.

70MHz BAND

Early in 2008 the Irish PTT COMREG submitted a proposal to the WGFM meeting that includes the 70MHz allocation as a footnote in the E.C.A.

Following that submission I provided a briefing document to the IARU Region-1 representative attending the W.G.F.M. in Athens.

There were some IARU issues that I have addressed in a paper to the IARU C5 committee – details of which can be found in the attachment along with this report.

IARU REGION 1 CONFERENCE – CAVTAT – NOVEMBER 2008

Seven VHF & UHF papers have been submitted by the VHF Manager for consideration by the IARU Region 1 Committee C5, as listed below.

- * 70MHz Band within IARU Region-1 (Information Paper)
- * Changes to EME & FAI recommendations and frequency usage in the 145MHz Band Plan.
- * A change to the exclusive usage of EME communication between 144.000-144.035MHz.
- * Deletion to the usage of FSK441 communication between 144.160-144.180MHz.
- * Transitory Weak Signal Reflection Procedure for VHF, UHF & Microwave Contacts.
- * VHF Beacon Definition.

It may be useful to note that the paper “Increased Amateur Satellite Service 2 Metre Usage” is authored by the IARU Region-1 Satellite Co-ordinator Graham Shirville G3VZV. It was submitted (and supported) on his behalf by the RSGB although technically it is not an RSGB paper.

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