

## Minutes of VHFCC Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> December 2020

### Attendees:

Andy Cook, G4PIQ (Chair),  
Ian Pawson G0FCT,  
Pete Lindsay G4CLA,  
Richard Baker, GD8EXI,  
Mike Goodey, G0GJV,  
Mike Tubby, G8TIC,  
John Quarmby, G3XDY,  
Richard Staples, G4HGI,  
Stewart Bryant, G3YSX (Board Liaison)

### Apologies:

Martin Hall, GM8IEM

### **1. Introduction**

This meeting was specifically held to review the outcome of the consultation exercise and to set the rules for 2021.

Decisions already taken for 2021 rules from the meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 continue to stand. For clarity a full set of rule changes planned for 2021 are listed in Appendix A.

Full results of the survey are attached at Appendix B.

**Action: G4CLA to draft these rule changes into the master XML file and elsewhere as necessary ready for review.**

### **2. Special Contest Callsigns**

The decision on whether to allow the use of special contest callsigns in RSGB VHF contests was very finely balanced, with a narrow vote in favour of not allowing their use. In spite of our general desire to align HF and VHF rules, in this case we decided to make no change to the current position, other than to allow the use of special contest calls in the 4m Trophy which was an omission.

The point was made within the survey verbatims that if we were to allow these to be used at VHF, there should be a wider range of VHF based qualifying events. It is not in VHFCC's gift to make that change since this has to be negotiated with OFCOM.

### **3. Christmas Cumulatives**

There were very clear votes in favour of moving to one band per day and one point per km scoring, and a slightly less decisive (55% of those expressing an opinion) vote to allow

stations to operate in different sections on different bands. Consequently, we will make all of these changes.

#### **4. SHF UKAC Power Levels**

From those that expressed an option, there was a clear desire to change the power levels, so we will run with the boundary between Open and Restricted in the SHF UKACs at 25W on 2.3 GHz, 10W on 3.4 GHz and 5W on 5.7 GHz and 10 GHz

#### **5. 10 GHz Trophy**

From those expressing an opinion, there was a clear desire to separate the 10 GHz Trophy and the 432 MHz Trophy, and to support the 10 GHz event on the Sunday. However, several people commented in the verbatims that a 0600 start was too early. After discussion on the likely impact of a later start and the possibility and impact of missing the dawn opening, we agreed to move the timing to 0800 – 1400 on the Sunday.

#### **6. Monthly MGM Contests**

We asked two questions on MGM contests. One was on what we should do with the existing 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday events. The vote here was clear to split into separate 6m and 2m events.

The second question was about whether we should signpost the new IARU co-ordinated monthly Wednesday evening MGM contests, or whether we should run events co-ordinated with them. The clear preference expressed was that we ran events co-ordinated with the IARU slots.

We didn't believe that we should run BOTH the existing 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday events and new Wednesday evening ones – and this comment was made in a number of verbatims.

We have been in discussion with the team co-ordinating the IARU co-ordinated events and understand that they are planning not just 2m and 70cm events in 2021 on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesdays respectively, but also 6m and 4m events on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays respectively.

We believed that it would represent too large an increase in the number of contests if we were to run events in parallel with all of these slots. We have seen activity levels to be highest on 2m, and so came to the decision that, as an experiment for 2021, we would run a 2m event every month.

If entrants want to take part in one of the events, which we are not running, they are fully able to directly enter the IARU co-ordinated event.

The IARU co-ordinated events look likely to run from 1700 – 2100 UTC each month. This is too early for the UK, so we propose to run 1900 – 2100 UTC.

Similarly, we will run with the well proven UKAC scoring system and UKAC sections.

There will be no club element to these events.

We recognised that there may be occasional clashes between these dates and some HF evening events, but felt that in this experimental mode, this would not be significant, and we are not able to influence a change to the IARU co-ordinated dates.

These decisions are preliminary since discussions with the team setting the IARU co-ordinated rules are on-going.

## **7. Other Feedback and Decisions**

We also received a substantial number of written comments for which we are very grateful. Key points raised were

- Should we allow the use of stacked yagis in the Restricted / Low Power sections?  
We have consulted on this previously and the clear decision at the time was to retain the status quo. Single yagis are significantly mechanically easier to handle than a stack. But we will consider re-consulting for 2021.
- The point was made that we should not forget the entrants who would have received their trophies at this year's cancelled face-to-face convention. We agreed
  - to update and better signpost the hall-of-fame, **Action: G0FCT**
  - to discuss with the Rad Com Editor whether we can get a piece printed in there, **Action: G0FCT**
  - to consider whether we can squeeze some form of additional presentation / photo opportunity at any face-to-face convention run next year – bearing in mind time constraints and that only the 2021 awardees would be able to retain the trophies. **Action: G4PIQ to discuss with G6XSY and any Convention chair**
- There were a few requests for additional CW events, or promotion of the use of CW. We felt that we are already doing quite a lot for CW with the CW Championship and the 2m, 4m and 6m events, none of which are particularly well supported relative to general contests. CW was recognised as a very useful element within all contests, and we thought that perhaps we should promote its use within these events – but recognise that in may be more productive to call CQ on CW within the SSB/CW section of the band.
- There were a small number of requests to ban the use of assistance (ON4KST in particular) or place it in a separate section. Again – we have consulted on this previously and landed on our current position, and we have introduced a number of un-assisted only contests (Low Powers and Backpackers). We agreed that we should not ban the use of assistance – it is too important for keeping the contest enjoyable for many stations. We will continue to discuss if there is a practical way to split assisted and un-assisted to some extent and consider consultation again in 2021.
- We received further comments on a desire to restrict team sizes in the UKACs. At this time our position remains consistent that we believe that the current structure maximises activity. We will keep this under review.
- There were a number of comments citing that there are too many contests. This is noted and we will keep levels of activity under review and remove contests where possible.
- There were some comments asking that we do not allow MGM to be used in the 4m and 6m events. We don't believe that these contacts are having a significant impact on the

overall results and again they make the contests much more enjoyable to those at the fringes of activity.

- There were a small number of requests asking for more specific clarify on penalties for infractions of the rules. We have previously agreed to produce some public guidelines and that is already under development, and we hope to have it in place for the new year.

**Action: G0FCT to draft for review**

- Some of the recent discussion on signal quality has apparently put some stations off taking part – being concerned that their stations are not suitable for contesting. Although these communications and discussions have not come from the committee, we need to be careful in how we communicate on the issue. We are fully supportive of the excellent work that has been carried out which is critical to maintaining harmony between stations on the band in congested areas, and is essential to allow us to have a standard to measure stations up to where necessary. But – equally – as a committee, our primary concern about signal quality is when stations are causing issues for other stations. We absolutely do not wish to drive away the majority of users of standard barefoot rigs into modest antennas from less than ideal locations. If they are not causing other stations on the band issues, we have no real problem with them running standard equipment. We recognise the communications issue and need to consider how we manage this nuanced message effectively. **Action: G4PIQ to schedule for further discussion.**
- We need to do more to attract newcomers. The FMACs are OK if you are in an area of reasonable activity – but if not - they are something of a frustrating event. We need to deliver more accessible material for beginners – perhaps with a simple set of the key rules. **Action: G4PIQ to schedule for further discussion and consider how we engage with newcomers.**

## **8. Multi Operator Contesting in 2021**

We confirmed the agreement made at our October 31<sup>st</sup> meeting that multi operator contesting should re-start from January – subject to entrants meeting all the COVID regulations in their area. This has been agreed with HFCC and common wording agreed as below.

*"All Entrants must fully comply with all COVID-19 local restrictions and advice including but not limited to social distancing, meeting people outside of their household/bubble and travelling that apply to the location where they are operating and at the time of the event. Any enclosed operating space (e.g. car, tent) will be considered to be an indoor location."*

A text box confirming this condition has been met will be added to the entry pages.

## **9. AOB**

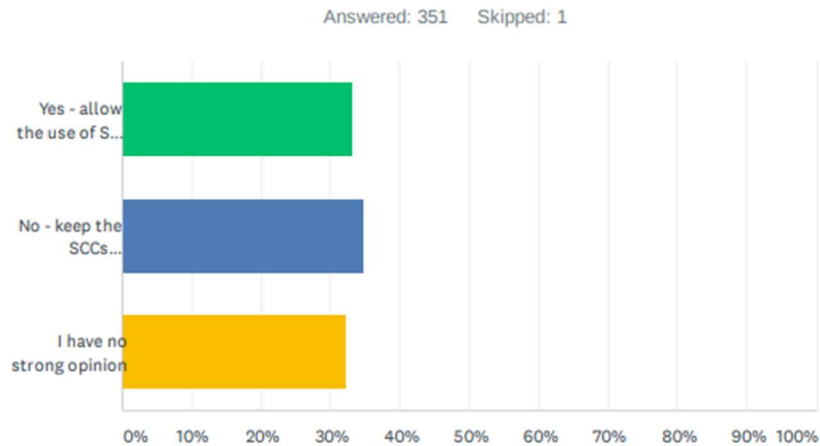
- We discussed the two 24 hour MGM events and agreed that these were not delivering high activity. We agreed to move to a single event in 2021 aligned closer to the Perseids.
- We had a discussion about a number of reported rule infractions currently under investigation and updated the committee on actions in progress.

## Appendix A – full list of rule changes for 2021

- We will adopt the HFCC rules for remote operation and add a check box to the entry form to capture any remote operation details as is done for HF.
- We will add a 6 hour section to the 432 MHz section in October which already has a parallel section in IARU.
- The VHF CW Championship will be clarified as Single Operator only and we would score based on operator callsign – regardless of station callsign.
- We will only award one trophy per entrant per contest.
- We will not allow non-UK stations to contribute to club scores in the VHF AFS contests, although they can still enter as individuals. We will not change the UKAC rules in this respect.
- We will allow the use of Special Contest Callsigns (SCCs) in the 4m Trophy
- We will explicitly protect the 50 MHz Centre of Activity in the rules for next year for consistency, but, other than 144.250 MHz (when in use for GB2BS / GB2CW) - we will not protect any other dedicated spot frequencies other than the Centres of Activity.
- We will change the Christmas Cumulatives to be one band per day, 1 pt/km scoring with multipliers for both squares and countries, and allow individual stations to enter different sections on different bands
- We will move the boundary between Open and Restricted sections in the SHF UKACs at 25W on 2.3 GHz, 10W on 3.4 GHz and 5W on 5.7 GHz and 10 GHz
- We will move the 10 GHz Trophy to run 0800 – 1400 on the Sunday of the first full weekend in May
- We will establish a new set of monthly MGM (FT8) contests aligned to IARU on 2m on the first Wednesday of the month from 1900 – 2100 UTC using UKAC scoring and sections, but with no Club elements.
- We will terminate the 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday MGM contests
- We will remove the 24 hour MGM events in April and December and replace them with a single event in the full weekend on or before the peak of the Perseids in August.

## Appendix B – Results of Consultation on Rules for 2021

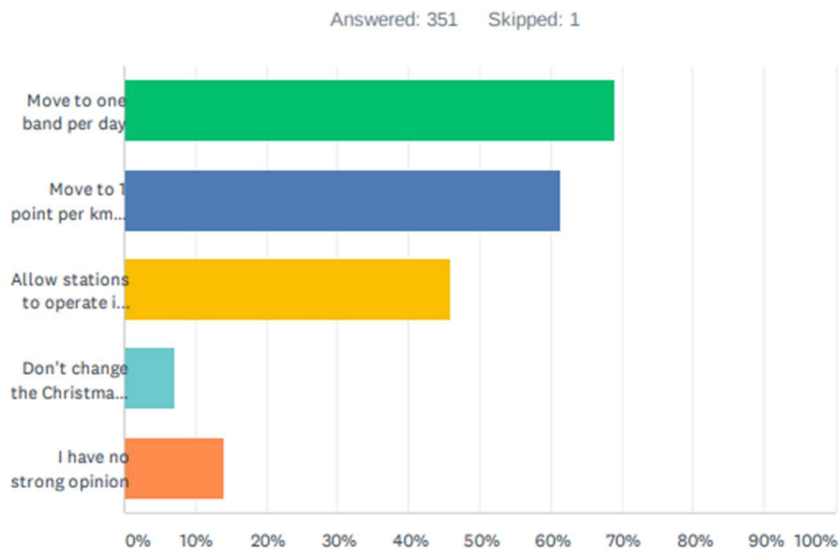
Q1 Currently, there are only a limited number of VHF events where we allow the use of short Special Contest Calls (SCCs) like M6T. At HF, they can be used in any RSGB contest. Should we allow the use of SCCs in all RSGB VHF contests?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes - allow the use of SCCs in all RSGB VHF Contests	33.05%	116
No - keep the SCCs constrained to their existing contests + 4m Trophy	34.76%	122
I have no strong opinion	32.19%	113
TOTAL		351



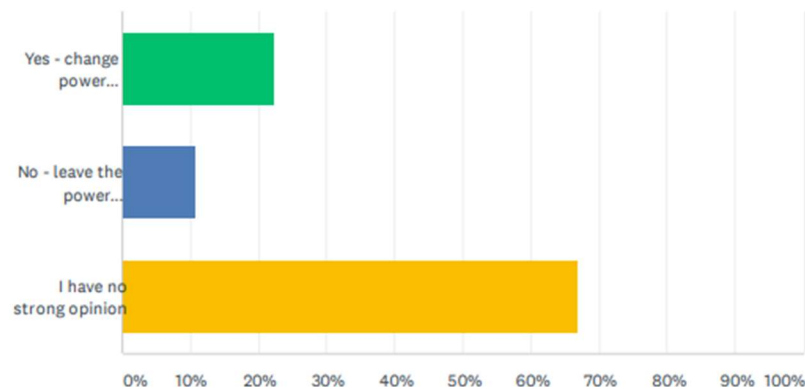
Q2 Currently the Christmas Cumulatives consists of four x 2 hour contests, each covering 4 bands (6m, 4m, 2m and 70cm) simultaneously. This is tricky to juggle and tends to focus activity on 2m. This year's Lockdown VHFNFDB, where only one band was active at a time appeared popular, and we were wondering if this would prove a more popular format for the Christmas Cumulatives - 1 band per day. We would retain the rule where only the best three days out of the four count to the final score. We also wondered if a move from 1 pt / QSO to 1 pt/km scoring (retaining the square and country multipliers in all cases) would help encourage more activity from the edges of the country. It has also been suggested that we allow stations to operate in different sections (Open, Restricted, Low Power) on the different bands while still contributing to a single overall score. Should we (select all options that apply)



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Move to one band per day	68.95%	242
Move to 1 point per km scoring	61.25%	215
Allow stations to operate in different sections on different bands	45.87%	161
Don't change the Christmas Cumulatives (4 bands per day, 1 pt / QSO)	7.12%	25
I have no strong opinion	13.96%	49
Total Respondents: 351		

Q3 Currently the power level boundaries between the Open and Restricted sections in the SHF UKACs are set at 50W on 2.3GHz, 10W on 3.4 and 5.7GHz, and 5W on 10GHz. We have been considering whether we should move these boundaries down a little in order to line up better with the power outputs from commonly available commercial equipment, and to provide a more even split between the two sections. Should we move to a 25W boundary on 2.3 GHz, 10W on 3.4 GHz, and 5W on 5.7 GHz and 10 GHz?

Answered: 349 Skipped: 3

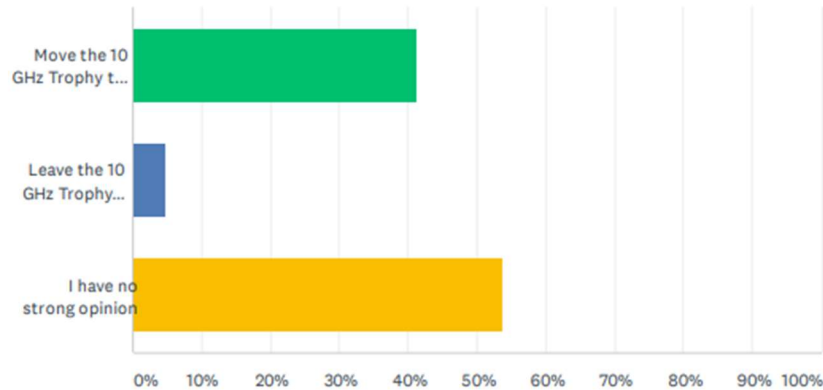


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes - change power boundaries for the SHF UKACs	22.35%	78
No - leave the power boundaries for the SHF UKACs as they are	10.60%	37
I have no strong opinion	67.05%	234
TOTAL		349



Q4 Currently the 10 GHz Trophy runs in parallel with the 432 MHz Trophy during the first 8 hours of the May UHF Contest. This makes it impossible for Single Operator stations to successfully focus on both bands. We are considering moving the 10 GHz Trophy to 0600-1400 on the Sunday of that weekend. Should we

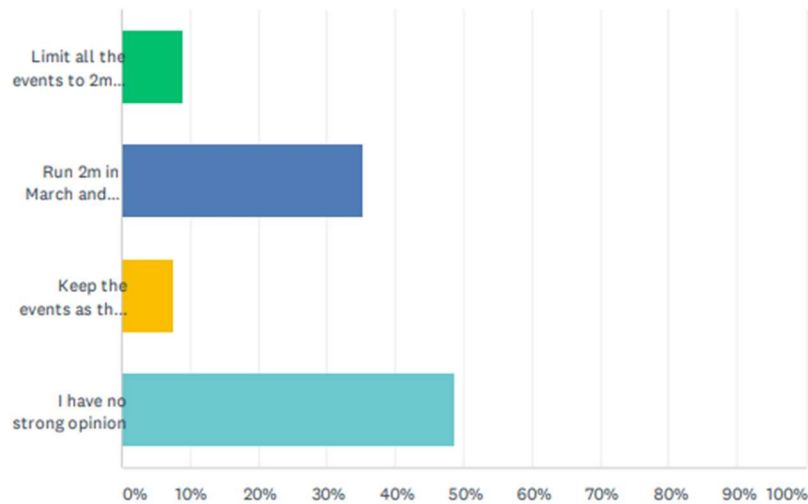
Answered: 351 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Move the 10 GHz Trophy to the Sunday	41.31%	145
Leave the 10 GHz Trophy where it is	4.84%	17
I have no strong opinion	53.85%	189
TOTAL		351

Q5 Our MGM activity contests continue to run with only moderate interest. Our current 2.5 hour evening events, run in months where there is a 5th Tuesday (March, June, August and November for 2021) and operate as standalone 6m and 2m events in parallel. Activity levels are higher on 2m than on 6m, and some entrants have suggested running both bands is counter-productive. Should we

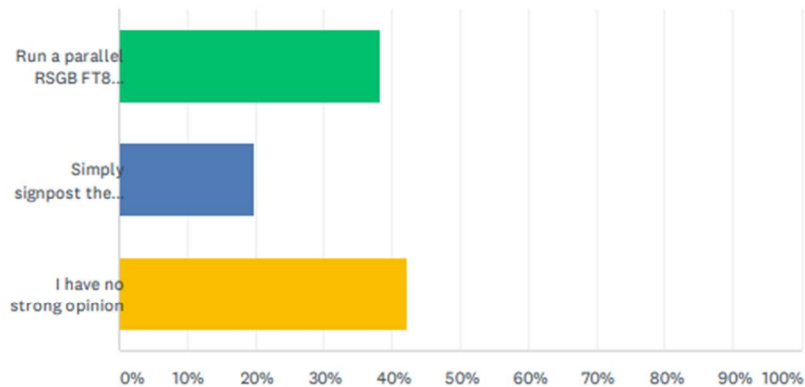
Answered: 348 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Limit all the events to 2m only	8.91%	31
Run 2m in March and November and 6m in June and August	35.06%	122
Keep the events as they are	7.47%	26
I have no strong opinion	48.56%	169
TOTAL		348

Q6 At the recent IARU Conference, it was agreed that IARU would support co-ordinated FT8 contests on the 1st and 2nd Wednesdays of every month (2m and 70cm respectively), either by running a parallel event, or by at least signposting these events to their members. The European events currently run from 1700 - 2000 UTC (<http://www.ft8activity.eu/index.php/en/>). If we were to run a contest in these slots, we might make the start time later - certainly in the winter. Should we -

Answered: 350 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Run a parallel RSGB FT8 contest alongside these events	38.29%	134
Simply signpost the European event for RSGB members to enter directly	19.71%	69
I have no strong opinion	42.00%	147
TOTAL		350