



Minutes of VHFCC Skype Meeting 17th July 2020

Attendees:

Andy Cook, G4PIQ (Chair),
Ian Pawson G0FCT,
Pete Lindsay G4CLA,
Richard Baker, GD8EXI,
Mike Goodey, G0GJV,
Martin Hall, GM8IEM
Stewart Bryant, G3YSX (Board Liaison)
Jacqui Goodey, G6XSY (Trophies)

Apologies:

John Quarmby, G3XDY,
Richard Staples, G4HGI,

1. Feedback on COVID-19 responses

After our decision to open up single operator portable contesting from early July, we noted that activity levels have exceeded the record levels set in the UKACs during lockdown. Feedback from entrants has been good.

The next major decision that we have to make is when controls on multi-operator contesting can be released. It is recognised that change is happening at a fast pace, particularly within England where the vast majority of leisure facilities will be open from August, although other regions if the UK are moving more cautiously. We would expect to follow our previous approach of only relaxing controls when the vast majority of the UK are able to take part, but it is yet not clear when this will be the position, and what social distancing measures we will need to mandate. The next impacted significant contest will be the 2m Trophy. IARU will not make a decision on whether to allow multi-operator entries to this contest until mid August, and VHFCC will return to the decision for UK contesting nearer that time and will also take into account UK Governments' guidance / rules at that time. **This position will be agreed with HFCC to align with SSB Field Day – Action G4PIQ.**

The IARU decision for the October UHF contest will be made in mid September.

2. Format of September contest

One suggestion we have received is to run a multi-band VHF NFD replacement contest in the September 2m contest slot – if multi operator contesting were to be viable by then. We discussed this and, because this is not a multi-band European VHF/UHF contest and because of the alignment already in place with HF SSB Field Day, this contest will remain 2m only this year.

3. Backpackers

When we made the announcement around releasing single operator portable contesting, we recognised that the 3rd Backpackers would not run, leaving two events in the calendar and asked for feedback from the community about whether there would be any support for some additional Backpackers' events before September. All feedback received was negative, so we will run the remaining Backpackers #4 and #5 and propose to award the trophies based on the outcome of those two events. Because this is a change of the Trophy award conditions it requires Board approval. **Action – G0FCT to request permission to change award criteria from the Board.**

4. 4m Trophy & RSGB Low Power Contest

We noted that once again the 4m Trophy and RSGB HF Low Power contest have clashed – this was not the intention. We must avoid that situation next year. There is an IARU paper in play which is suggesting that the 4m IARU event is separated from its current position as being the same weekend as the 6m event. We would intend to align with this IARU event (probably the first 6 hours if it is 24 hours long) and are discussing with the IARU C5 Contest Committee. **Action – G4PIQ to agree calendar with HFCC.**

5. IARU C5 Papers

A set of IARU C5 papers have recently been published for discussion. We agreed the following positions

C5_08 – Separation of 50 MHz and 70 MHz contests – **supported**

C5_20 – FT8 in MGM Contest Classes – **not supported** – we don't believe that FT8 should currently be used in traditional contests – but in separate events

C5_21 – Digital Activity contests – proposes a 2m and 70cm activity contest on Wednesday evenings. **Supported in principle**, though we might not organise our own events at least initially due to contest volumes, but point entrants to the VERON ones. We suggested that 50 MHz would be more appropriate than 432 MHz.

C5_23 – VHF-UHF-MW Contest rules – strengthening of rules around database and WEBSDR use for IARU contests – **supported** – our rules already broadly apply – though we will review our rules applying to WEBSDRs

C5_24 – Contest entries to final victory – a proposal to require fast log submission to IARU events for possible award winners – **supported**

6. Use of Contest mode in MGM contests

Feedback from the three MGM contests which have run this year has all commented on confusion and operational difficulties caused by the use of EU Contest mode in these events. For this reason, we will revert to standard non-contest mode exchanges for the rest of the year. **Action – G4CLA to revise the rules. G4PIQ to ensure publicity.**



7. Band Plans

Currently we only exempt contest operation from 50.105 – 50.130 MHz, and 70.200 MHz, 144.300 MHz and 432.200 MHz +/- 5 kHz. It has been pointed out that the 6m centre of activity on 50.150 MHz is missing from this list. On review this is a typo. We discussed whether we should add that to the list – although it is really rarely used and doing so would create an odd hole in the middle of the usable band. We deferred this decision until setting the 2021 rules.

There have been tremendously high activity levels on 2m recently and some stations operating below 144.150 MHz and between 144.295 MHz and 144.305 MHz. They will receive penalties and we will remind stations that this is not allowed and that there is additional spectrum available in the All Mode section if necessary.

8. Consultation

No obvious plans or need for big changes this year.

Lockdown NFD was a remarkable hit. One suggestion was to re-use some of that format in the Xmas Cumulatives – so they become 1 band per day with a club element – we'll ask that question

Action G4PIQ - review once again last year's comments to see if there is anything further which should be taken up – to be discussed by e-mail.

9. Convention

This year's convention has been announced as a 1 day virtual event. We are considering running an interactive contest forum borrowing from the technology used for Tonight @ 8. We propose to do so on Sunday rather than Saturday to avoid clashing with the other streams. We propose to include virtual trophy presentations and perhaps a talk of some kind. **Action G4PIQ – co-ordinate with HFCC Chair.**