



Minutes of RSGB VHFCC Meeting (Audio Conference)

Friday 10th November 2017 @ 2000

Directors or Attendees: G4PIQ (Chair), G0FCT, G0GJV, G3XDY, G4CLA, G4HGI, GD8EXI, GM8IEM, G8TIC

This meeting was help to review the output of the most recent consultation which ran during October, and to formulate rule changes and proposals informed by that survey. The results of the quantitative questions in this survey are included below.

Question 1

VHF NFD currently has a sweeper section where fixed stations can enter and work anyone for points, but only registered UK portable stations count as multipliers. At present the fixed stations are not allowed to call CQ, and can only find the portable stations through search and pounce operation. This rule was intended to avoid changing the character of VHF NFD, but it can make finding some of the smaller portable stations very difficult. Should we:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Allow fixed stations to call CQ. Any stations who reply can be worked for points, but only contacts with stations on the list of registered portable will count as valuable multipliers.	45.21%	99
Retain the current rules	41.55%	91
I have no opinion	13.24%	29
	Answered	219
	Skipped	4

This question had a narrow vote in favour of moving to allowing fixed stations to call CQ. The comments were polarized, as expected, between those who were concerned that this would have a negative impact on the character of the contest, and those who thought that the idea would make the contest more enjoyable for all.

A similar change has been made at HF with no sign on a change in character of the contest. There is also a very strong multiplier element in the scoring which makes QSOs with the registered UK portable stations many times more valuable than those with other stations.

For these reasons, and taking into account the comments raised, we will implement a rule to allow fixed stations to call CQ for a trial period of 1 year and review the impact.

Action: G0FCT & G4CLA

Question 2

In 2017 we introduced a set of FM activity contests on 4m, 2m and 70cm, aimed at encouraging newcomers into contesting using simple equipment. These events run in the hour prior to the associated UKAC contest on weekday evenings. It has been suggested that 6m is a band where many stations are equipped for FM. Should we add an FMAC for 6m?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes - add a 6m FM Activity Contest	58.26%	127
No - do not add a 6m FM Activity Contest	10.55%	23
I have no opinion	31.19%	68
	Answered	218
	Skipped	5

The responses to this question were firmly in favour of introducing a 6m FMAC, and we will therefore implement this.

Action: G4CLA

Question 3

Should we add a new contest to the calendar which only allows the use of machine generated modes (MGM – e.g. FSK441, JT65, FT8 etc.) and/or CW?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Add an MGM only event	35.19%	76
Add a MGM and CW event	15.28%	33
Do not add any new event of this type	27.31%	59
I have no opinion	22.22%	48
	Answered	216
	Skipped	7

On the basis of the results above, we will look to do this, and it will be an MGM only event and will not include CW. Full details of this contest were not defined on the call, but G4HGI will lead a group to draft the rules.

The notes below describe what was discussed on the call, but these details may change through subsequent discussion as the rules are fully defined.

There were two trains of thought within the comments – some suggesting that this should be a UKAC like event, and some that this should be a longer format event. Given that a significant focus of MGM QSOs are long distance contacts, often via meteor scatter, it is unlikely that a short event will allow the full capability of this to be realised, so we will look to an event of around 12 hours. To make the meteor scatter more effective, we will also look to align with a minor meteor shower to ensure reasonable activity.

We also discussed the possibility of running two events during the year in different showers, perhaps around April and October.

Initially the contest will run on 2m to maximise activity.

The contest will not stipulate mode directly (other than CW will not be considered MGM) because new modes can grow from nothing to high popularity very quickly. The use of EME was discussed, possibly with a maximum points score.



Scoring would be on the basis of points per km with a locator square (IO91, JO01 etc.) multiplier.

The exchange will be defined loosely enough to support a variety of digital modes, but will include an exchange of callsigns, reports (of some appropriate kind) and 4 digit locator. The principle of exchanging location information off-air was considered important to allow straightforward adjudication (especially for stations away from their normal location) and to follow a principle of reasonable information exchange as part of a QSO.

Scoring will be from the centre of one square to the centre of another.

Action G4HGI

Question 4

Currently entries to the 6 hour section of contests require the operating time to be split into no more than 2 operating periods with at least 2 hours separation between the periods. This aligns with the current IARU definition. We have considered changing this to a more flexible definition where the only stipulation would be that the off-time between operating periods must be at least one hour. This is the same sort of definition as commonly used at HF. For example - you could operate between 1400 and 1523 (1 hour, 23 minutes), resuming at 1624 (1 hour gap) until 1641 (17 minutes), resuming at 1830 for 4 hours 20 minutes, giving a total operating time of 6 hours). For IARU co-ordinated contests, RSGB 6 hour entries which did not comply with the current IARU 6 hour definition would be entered into the 24 hour section for the IARU event only. Should we:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Retain the current 6 hour rule	31.19%	68
Change to the above proposed 1 hour minimum off-time	45.87%	100
I have no opinion	22.94%	50
	Answered	218
	Skipped	5

On the basis of this feedback, we will implement this change.

The feedback from the forum at the RSGB Convention was noted where the concept of recommended activity times to try and help provide a concentration of activity was noted. For 24 hour contests, we will suggest that 6 hour activity concentrates in the periods 2000 – 2200, 0700 – 0900 and 1200 – 1400 local time. These times are not mandatory periods of operation, but suggested times that UK stations can congregate to concentrate activity.

Question 5

The SHF UKAC contests cover many bands (2.3 GHz and above), and some entrants find making QSOs across all the different bands time consuming. Should we extend the time of these contests beyond 2.5 hours. Note that due to OFCOM restrictions, operating times on 2320 MHz cannot start until after sunset, so operation on 2320 MHz only tends to be shifted later during the summer months.

Answer Choices	Responses	
A - Retain contests at 2.5 hours (2000 - 2230 local time)	16.06%	35
B - Extend contests to 3 hours (1930 - 2230 local time)	11.01%	24
C - Extend contests to 3 hours (2000 - 2300 local time)	9.63%	21
I have no opinion	63.30%	138
	Answered	218
	Skipped	5

Only a relatively small number of people answered this question, and this is likely representative of those who take part.

On this basis, there was a majority for extending the period of the contest (45 for a change : 35 against), and a narrow result in favour of starting 30 minutes earlier rather than finishing 30 minutes later. It was also noted that a 2300 local time finish is very late for those going portable. We will therefore implement Option B for 2018.

Question 6

In all the UKACs, stations receive a normalised score between 1 & 1000 based on their position in the results table. Where there are very few entries in a section, this can distort results with very low points scores resulting in quite large normalised scores. For the SHF UKACs only, we have been considering moving to a more traditional normalised score system where the normalised score is awarded based on a station's points score rather than their position in the results table. In the SHF UKACs only, should we

Answer Choices	Responses	
Retain a position based normalisation system as we have now	16.28%	35
Move to a points based normalisation system	43.72%	94
I have no opinion	40.00%	86
Do you have any further comments?		37
	Answered	215
	Skipped	8

This was a very clear result, and we will implement points based normalisation in addition to a move to the normalised score being based on the number of entrants to a section rather than the number of positions (important when there are many stations who are equal last on a band). We believe that this will more fairly reward distance based achievement on the SHF bands while continuing to encourage activity and innovation on those bands.

Question 7

The monthly FM Activity Contests are intended to provide an opportunity for stations who do not normally enter contests to dip their toes into the water with simple FM equipment. While there are some newcomers entering, entrants are rather dominated by stations warming up for the UKAC events which follow immediately afterwards. What can we do to encourage more new entrants into these contests?

There were a wide number of varied suggestions over what to do here. One of the major themes was around encouraging the use of vertical polarisation to make sure that the new entrants who we are aiming at (and who may have only omni-directional vertical antennas) have a maximum change of making a useful number of QSOs. We did not feel it was sensible to constrain all antennas to vertical omnidirectional types since one of the appeals to new entrants is the opportunity to work distant stations on FM.

For 2018 we chose to keep with 2 sections, but to have a 10W section limited to omni-directional vertical antennas, and a 50W section with no antenna restrictions, although we will recommend vertical polarization. Publicity of these contests was another important theme that we will progress.

Question 8

To encourage participation in the weekend contests, this year we introduced an Affiliated Societies section to the VHF Contest Championship where entrants can contribute their individual scores to an overall year-long score for their clubs. Does this encourage you to enter weekend contests? What can we do to make this more attractive?

This open question also generated a wide range of answers, but there were a significant number of respondents for who the introduction of this championship section was encouraging them to come on for weekend contests.

Publicity was another key thread with regular reminders just before a weekend event, and with more widespread promotion of the club element of the championship because it was not well recognised. We will follow up both of these suggestions.

Question 9

Do you have any other points around VHF/UHF/SHF contesting more broadly which you would like to raise with the committee?

There were a number of points raised here about Tuesday / Thursday UKACs and the use of MGM. We have already communicated why we are not planning to make changes for 2018 in these areas.

One of the other themes which came out was fairness in sections in weekend events – should single operator portables (who seem to be on the increase – probably as a result of the UKACs) compete with the multi-op portables. Furthermore, there is huge disparity between station sizes in the different sections, but the UKAC contest structure of Low, Restricted and Open appears to work well and is popular.

Consequently, for a number of our weekend events, for 2018 we will trial moving to a section structure of Low, Restricted, and Open, with the definitions in-line with the UKAC definitions.

Another thread which came out of this question was how to deal with poor signals. This emphasises the need for us to complete the re-work of the guidance notes.

Action G8TIC, GD8EXI and G0FCT to draft

The meeting closed at 2130