



Minutes of VHFCC Meeting 31st October 2020

Attendees :

Andy Cook, G4PIQ (Chair),
Ian Pawson G0FCT,
Pete Lindsay G4CLA,
Richard Baker, GD8EXI,
Mike Goodey, G0GJV,
Martin Hall, GM8IEM
John Quarmby, G3XDY,
Richard Staples, G4HGI,
Stewart Bryant, G3YSX (Board Liaison)
Jacqui Goodey, G6XSY (Trophies)

1. Review of actions from Meeting of 17 Jul 2020

- G4PIQ to align COVID position for 2m Trophy and SSB Field Day with HFCC. **Complete**
- G0FCT to request permission to change award criteria for Backpackers Trophy from the Board. **Complete**
- G4PIQ to agree with HFCC a plan to ensure separation of 4m Trophy and HF Low Power contests for 2021. **Ongoing**. See later for notes of impact of new IARU 4m contest.
- G4CLA to update rules to reflect deletion of contest modes from MGM contests, and G4PIQ to ensure publicity. **Complete**.
- G4PIQ to review plain text comments from last year's consultation to identify any significant common themes and feed into this year's rules discussion. **Complete**.
- G4PIQ to discuss contesting representation within virtual Convention with HFCC. Didn't appear feasible on the day of the event, nor straightforward to run in a sufficiently well controlled manner. **Complete**.

2. Review of Possible Rule Changes for 2021 and Consultation

- To align AFS rules across all contests, 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.
- There has been some inconsistency in the way that overseas stations have been treated in results tables and in contest write-ups. When placed in a common table with the UK stations, they should not have a position number allocated to them, and if they come at

the top of a table, they should not be referred to as overall winners or runners-up. **Action G0FCT to brief all CSC members.**

We did discuss whether overseas stations should always appear in a dedicated table as they do in events where they form a major part of the entry (e.g. 6m Trophy), but concluded that this would generate many tables with only one or two entrants.

- We will allow the use of Special Contest Callsigns (SCCs) in the 4m Trophy
- We will **consult** on allowing the use of SCCs in all RSGB VHF contests
- We will **consult** on whether to change the Christmas Cumulatives to 1 band per day (similar in format to the successful Lockdown VHF NFD held this year)
- We will **consult** on whether to change the scoring in the Christmas Cumulatives to 1 pt/km
- We will adopt the HFCC rules for remote operation. **Action – G4CLA to add a check box to the entry form to capture any remote operation details as is done for HF.**
- Based on a proposal received, we had a long discussion about whether to change or consult on putting limits on UKAC club entry levels. We concluded that, given the relative success (measured by participation levels) of the unconstrained team size format compared to contests with constrained team size, and the absolute levels of success of the UKAC (and 80m CC) format, we will not make any changes at this time, but keep this under review.
- We received a proposal to change the power level thresholds in the SHF UKAC. We will **consult** on this since some of the boundaries seem to be set a bit high at the moment. We would try to align the section split broadly around boundaries set by off-the-shelf equipment and to achieve a roughly 50/50 split in the sections.
- We received a proposal to split the time allocation in the SHF UKACs by band. We agreed this would be counter-productive since the normal mode of operation of stations with multiple bands is to attempt all the bands with one partner before moving onto another station due to antenna alignment etc.
- We received a proposal to re-introduce the 6m and 4m FMACs. As a committee we have seen little demand for those contests to support the effort necessary to run them, and we believe that the needs of new licensees (who we would like to target) are better met by the 2m and 70cm events at present
- We received a proposal to add extra bands (4m and 70cm) to the MGM contest and turn them into a series. At present, we are not seeing a great and growing demand for MGM events that would support yet further diversity. We do recognise that some stations don't like both 6m and 2m running together. There was also a resolution passed at the IARU conference which asks societies to support / align with a set of contests currently largely run out of PA and YO on the 1st and 2nd Wednesdays of the month (2m and 70cm respectively). We will **consult** on some changes around this.

- We received a proposal to have a 6 hour section in all 24 hour weekend contests. We support the principle of this, and all weekend contests (other than VHF NFD) do have a short section of one kind or another – whether it be the embedded 432 MHz , 1.3 GHz, 2.3 GHz and 10 GHz Trophy contests in May and October UHF/SHF, or specific 6 hour sections. We don't believe that in general adding additional 6 hour sections to the UHF/SHF contests will materially increase activity and will generate far more fragmented results tables with many tables with only 1 or 2 entrants. One exception to this is the 432 MHz section in October which already has a parallel section in IARU. **Action – G4CLA to add a 6 hour section to October 432 MHz for 2021.**
- We discussed the 10 GHz trophy and its current clash with the 432 MHz Trophy (both on the Saturday of the May UHF event). It felt practical to move the 10 GHz event to the Sunday morning without significant detriment to stations entering the multi-band contest, and it would allow single operator entrants to properly focus on both bands. We discussed whether the contest should be shortened to 6 hours – but the view from those experienced was that it should remain at 8 hours to allow capture of the widest spectrum of propagation. We will **consult** on whether to move the 10 GHz contest to 0600-1400 on the Sunday of the May UHF contest.
- We discussed the VHF CW Championship and agreed that it should be Single Operator only and we would score based on operator callsign – regardless of station callsign. **Action G4CLA to build into rules for 2021.**
- We discussed awards of Trophies and whether one station should be able to win more than one trophy in a contest. We have some small rule and trophy award specification inconsistencies which can allow this to happen in unusual circumstances (where a single op entry beats the multi op entries). We felt that a single trophy per entrant per contest should be awarded, thereby allowing trophies for both sections. **Actions – G0FCT / G6XSY to review trophy award criteria, agree with Board as necessary, and update rules. G4PIQ to follow up around 6m Trophy for 2020.**

Action – G4PIQ / G0FCT to draft overall consultation for agreement and distribution.

3. COVID-19 Response

We recently issued some guidance which moved from trying to have a universal position across the whole of the UK & CD for portable operation and COVID, to simply requiring stations to follow their own local rules and guidance (text attached below for record), recognising that this will vary across the country. We agreed this as the position we will take going forwards at this point. If a full English lockdown was issued (this meeting was held hours before that announcement was made) – we would simply require stations to follow their local Government rules / guidance.

As we're all well aware, the diversity of COVID restrictions across the country continues to increase. We've received some enquiries asking if we intend to make any further changes to our restrictions on portable operation. At this time, with so much change and variation in the rules across the country, we believe the best approach is simply to require stations to strictly follow their local COVID restrictions and advisories. We're keen not to simply enforce another total ban on portable operation - as we enter what is likely to be a difficult winter period, we'd rather that as many people as possible are able

to gain the mental health benefits of doing a little bit of what they enjoy.

The individual rules are so complex and changing so frequently that we can't list every situation here in detail, but we believe the principle is clear. Some examples of expected behaviour would be

- if you are under 'essential travel only' conditions (e.g. Northern Ireland and Wales once it enters firebreak conditions) – don't travel to take part in a contest
- If you are in an area with advisories or rules against travel beyond its boundaries (e.g. areas in England under Tier 3 restrictions, Central Belt of Scotland) – don't travel outside of the specified area for a contest
- Don't enter an area under a travel advisory or rules (e.g. Tier 3 in England, Central Belt in Scotland) for a contest

We'd also like to remind people of the requirement that these are true single operator operations, with any setup assistance only from members of the same household or support bubble.

These rules apply to both HF and VHF RSGB contests.

73,

Andy, G4PIQ & Nick, G4FAL
Chairs RSGB VHF and HF Contest Committees

Action - G4PIQ to agree with HFCC an update to go to Facebook and Reflector regarding the impact of any new lockdown

Going forwards into 2021, we discussed how we might address multi-operator contesting and felt that we are now reaching a position where it is best that we allow multi-operator contesting to re-start – but only strictly following the local regulations. This needs to be agreed with HFCC. **Action – G4PIQ to discuss with HFCC.**

We will add a box to the log submission template immediately to ask entrants to confirm that they have complied with all COVID rules and guidance. **Action – G0FCT to circulate draft wording for agreement and G4CLA to implement.**

4. Adjudication Penalties

We had a discussion about whether we could have a set of standardised public penalties for particular offenses and what the penalty should be for out of band-plan operation. We discussed some difficulties in implementing a penalty based on the number of QSOs made out of band (how can we be sure which ones were out of band). We also discussed how there we are unable to predict all future circumstances where a penalty needs to be applied. Nevertheless, we agreed that it would be good policy to have clear pre-set penalties for particular infractions of the rules, but it needs further refinement beyond what we could achieve on the call. **Action – G0FCT re-work some existing internal guidance to make it less complex and submit for discussion.**

We also discussed the challenges in adjudicating the MGM events. The move away from the specific contest modes for FT4/8 in WSJT-X and similar software has made the contests easier to operate and has been well received by entrants. However, because the transmitting software does not always accurately record the final report sent where re-

transmissions are required, it becomes impossible to accurately adjudicate signal reports in FT4/8. Consequently, we have agreed to ignore signal reports in MGM contest adjudication. This ruling does not apply to the use of 'slow' MGM modes like FSK441 to exchange 'standard' contest reports in our non MGM contests. **Action – G0FCT to include within adjudication principles for adjudicators.**

5. IARU Conference

There was a virtual IARU Region conference held 2 weeks ago. There were a number of papers and decisions which impact us

Separation of 50 MHz and 70 MHz contests.

It was agreed that the 4m and 6m IARU events would now be held on different dates. The Contest Working Group (CWG) will now agree a date for the 4m event. We are lobbying for this to be held on the weekend of our 4m Trophy, and we would propose to align the 4m Trophy with the first 6 hours of the contest – on the Saturday – thus removing the clash with the HF Low Power contest on the Sunday. We did discuss extending the 4m Trophy beyond 6 hours based on possible much higher levels of activity in Europe – but agreed not to do so at this point. There is nothing to prevent UK stations carrying on and entering the full 24 hours of the IARU event if they wish to. **Action G0FCT to agree dates in CWG**

MGM in IARU Contests Classes

At present, MGM is allowed in the 4m and 6m IARU events, but not in the 2m and UHF events. The decision was taken at IARU to remove MGM from the 4m and 6m events – so any RSGB entrant who wishes to enter the IARU event will need to remove any MGM contacts from their log prior to submission to IARU. The EDI format submitted to the IARU robot must now include the appropriate mode field.

IARU will introduce new MGM events during 2022 – and will consult in 2021 on how these should look. **Action – G0FCT to follow in CWG.**

Digital Activity contests

IARU have agreed a 2m and 70cm MGM (FT8) activity contest on Wednesday evenings. We will consult on this as described earlier in the minutes.

Overall IARU Championship Contest

IARU are proposing to run an overall Championship event, including the sub-regional events (– e.g. March, May, July) which are typically run as all band - 2m through to SHF - in Europe, while we run a more restricted selection of bands on each weekend. We don't yet know the structure of this IARU Championship – but are not currently proposing any changes to our calendar as a result.

6. AOB

- 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 had a discussion about possible running of a year long event (not directly a contest), perhaps similar in format to the German DOK awards. **Action – G0FCT to discuss with G3YSX.**