

Rule Change Proposal White Paper 2014

Change History:

26-05-2014 Issue 1

30-06-2014 Issue 2 NFD Proposal added (H9)

This document outlines suggestions and proposals for rule changes for both HF and VHF contests in 2015. Comments on these items are invited. Please send your comments to committee@rsgbcc.org no later than 14th August 2014. All comments will be reviewed by the RSGB Contest Committee during August and September and revised rules for all RSGB contests will be published by the date of the RSGB Convention in October (with an aim to publish the rules by the end of September 2014) to take effect on 1st January 2015.

The new, revised process for rule changes for RSGB Contests is as follows:

1. Rules for the contest year will be “locked- down” and published no later than the date of the RSGB Convention in October for implementation in the following year. No further changes are permitted except for:
 - a. Typo corrections
 - b. Changes brought about by external events (e.g. license changes by OFCOM)
2. Proposed changes to contest rules will be considered at the Contest Committee (CC) meeting in March/April.
3. A ‘white paper’ summarising the proposed rule changes will be published on the CC website and publicised in the May CC newsletter.
4. Links to this document will be posted on (at least) the uk-hf and uk-vhf reflectors.
5. Comments/consultation on the proposed changes will be invited from the contesting community.
6. The comments on the proposed changes will be reviewed at the CC meeting in September and the rules for the following year locked-down at the end of this meeting.
7. The locked-down rules will be posted on the CC website.
8. No further consultation will be entered into on the locked-down rules, and no changes will be made except as noted in (1) above.

The rule change suggestions and proposals are below. The letter ‘V’ in the title means this is a suggestion or proposal that affects contests above 30MHz, ‘H’ means this affects contests below 30MHz and ‘B’ means this affects all contests.

If the title includes the word ‘Proposal’ then this is a definite proposed rule change. If the title includes the word ‘Suggestion’ then this is a more speculative proposal. In both cases, feedback from the contesting community is sought!

Proposal B1 – Declaration of Equipment (including antennas) in HF & VHF contests

Background: At VHF, declaration of equipment has long been accepted as mandatory and conditional to the acceptance of an entry. At HF, this has not traditionally been mandatory, except in the case of Power and, occasionally, antenna. However, most HF contesters are happy to talk about their equipment. Refusal to supply details of equipment makes it difficult for the Committee to deal

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with complaints of signal quality from an informed position; it has also been noted to create an atmosphere of suspicion and of there being “something to hide”.

Proposal: It is proposed to make the declaration of ALL equipment (including antennas) mandatory as a condition of acceptance of an entry for all RSGB contests. This information is primarily provided for Contest Committee use and an entrant may withdraw consent to this information being published in the contest results by means of tick-box in the Robot entry form during the log submission process. Please note that describing your rig as “a rig” or your antenna as “an antenna” and all such similar descriptions will be regarded as attempting to subvert the intention of this rule and your entry will not be accepted.

Proposal B2 – Foundation/Intermediate Certificates

Background: Under the present rules, where special merit certificates are offered the award of the certificate is mandatory, regardless of whether or not the qualifier actually merits one. An example might be the sole entrant in a particular section who operated only for a few minutes and makes only a tiny fraction of the QSOs he/she might have expected to make had he/she taken part seriously.

Proposal: It is proposed that the adjudicator is given the discretion not to award such certificates if the qualifier was clearly not deserving of one. Note that the default position will be that a certificate is awarded unless circumstances show that an award is not merited.

Proposal B3 – Enforcement of IARU Region 1 Band Plans

Background; The IARU in Region 1 have requested all Societies include the specific frequencies to be avoided, including guard bands (translated into “dial frequencies” if appropriate), in their contest rules. Contest preferred segments should also be included in relevant contest rules.

Proposal: All relevant band plan frequencies and contest preferred segments will be included in the relevant contest rules.

Suggestion B4 – RSGB Data Contests

Background: Apart from the 80m CC data leg (RTTY and PSK) legs, there are no RSGB Contest Committee sponsored data contests on HF or VHF.

Suggestion: It would be possible for the RSGB Contest Committee to run a full-length Data Contest at HF and/or VHF to augment those run by BARTG. The contest Committee would like to receive comments on the viability/desirability of this suggestion and what bands and modes are considered to be appropriate for HF and VHF contests.

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Suggestion B5 – Rewarding ‘perfect’ logs

Background: The current adjudication system used by the RSGB Contest Committee penalises any errors in the recorded information in the entrant’s submitted log by the loss of all points and multiplier credit for that contact. A suggestion has been posted recently on the uk-hf internet forum that a multiple of the points should be deducted if an error is found to encourage accurate recording of contact information.

Suggestion: Rather than penalising errors by deducting a multiple of the points claimed for that contact, it is suggested that it might be better to have a sliding scale of ‘bonus points’ to reward the most accurate logs. For example:

perfect log (a log with no detected errors) = maximum available bonus,
log with up to x% errors = awarded 75% of the maximum bonus,
log with more than x% and up to y% errors = awarded 50% of the maximum bonus,
log with more than y% and up to z% errors = awarded 25% of the maximum bonus,
log with greater than z% errors = no bonus points awarded

Proposal B6 – Fair distribution of Trophies

Background: It is possible for one station to be awarded multiple trophies in the same contest. It is considered by the contest committee that this is not a desirable state of affairs. This proposal seeks to address this issue.

Proposal: Each station may win only one trophy in any given contest and for each contest where there it is possible for a station to win more than one trophy, an order of precedence for the trophies/awards will be published. Where a station qualifies for a second trophy further down the order of precedence list, this trophy will be awarded instead to the next highest-scoring station.

Proposal H1 – Addition of Single Operator Assisted category

Background: There is an anomaly around the use of assistance (DX Cluster etc.) in contests, culminating with the fact that, in the 2014 Commonwealth Contest, the true Multi-op stations have been outnumbered, almost 10-to-1, by single-ops who wanted to use the Cluster.

Proposal: Single Operator Assisted and Single Operator Unassisted entry categories will be added to all HF RSGB Contests that currently do not have these categories. The relevant definitions will be added to the HF General Rules. All existing single operator trophies will be awarded to single operator unassisted entries. New trophies will be sought for the single operator assisted sections.

Proposal H2 – Non-club stations in 80m AFS

Background: 80m AFS contests have been traditionally team events and, until the arrival of the log submission Robot, it was not possible for non-club-team stations to enter because all logs had to be

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submitted by an official of the club that they represented. All other logs were taken as checklogs until 2013, when some overseas logs in the SSB leg were included by mistake in the main listing, setting the precedent.

Proposal: A separate section for non-club-related entries, with the award of certificates as appropriate will be created for all AFS contests (not just the 80m AFS contest). The main awards will be reserved for members of competing teams.

Suggestion H3 – Possible solutions to overcrowding in 80m AFS

Background: It has been suggested that the 80m contest segment was impossibly overcrowded during AFS SSB 2014. Analysis performed by the Contest Committee has shown that stations that were able to claim a run frequency from the start and hold it through the event were also likely to be amongst the leaders. Snips from a number of entrants' soapbox comments also attest to the overcrowding. The introduction of a 100W power limit has been suggested but is unlikely to be an effective solution. Also, the 80m AFS contests have always been 'knock-down, drag-out' events and are the only truly Open events in the club calendar.

Suggestion: Three alternative suggestions to resolve the situation are given below. The Contest Committee requests feedback on these ideas; the one considered most practical (or popular) will be considered further.

- (1) Introduce 40m and run with split bands
- (2) Only selected stations (e.g. one station per club) should be allowed to CQ in the early stages (e.g. the first hour) of the event
- (3) Introduce a Sprint element

Note: If you consider these contests (80m AFS SSB and CW) are not 'broken' and would like to see them continue unchanged, please let the Contest Committee know!

Suggestion H4 – Timing of the 80m AFS contests and operation from GM

Background: GMOWED had submitted a number of detailed emails to the Committee in which he complained that GMs, particularly those farthest north, were severely disadvantaged by the present timing of the AFS contests, due to the times at which the sun set. He proposed that these contests should run between 1600 and 2000.

The Contest Committee appreciate the difficulties experienced by the GM supporters of the event, but moving the contest back so far would effectively destroy its character for over 90% of the entrants, and would also cause unnecessary annoyance abroad.

Suggestion 1: The start time of the 80m AFS events is altered by 30 minutes so the contest runs between 1430 and 1830.

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Suggestion 2: The start time of the 80m AFS events is altered by 1 hour so the contest runs between 1500 and 1900.

Suggestion 3: Do nothing; these contests will continue to run between 1400 and 1800

Suggestion H5 – Improving UK participation in 160m Contests

Background: Participation in the 160m contests has been increasing slowly since 2008, but is still not satisfactory. Two suggestions to bolster participation are given below (either, neither or both could be adopted):

Suggestion 1: These events are reduced to three hours in duration.

Suggestion 2: These events are changed to ‘everyone-works-everyone’

Proposal H6 – Revamping the 21/28MHz Contest

A Proposal for RSGB 21 / 28 MHz Contest

Submitted by G3LET, G3PHO, G3SJJ, G3TBK and G4FAL

Background: We firmly believe the event should stay in the calendar but recognise it would benefit from updating in terms of publicity and a greater depth in the award structure to encourage participation, which we are prepared to organise at no cost to the Society. There was a noticeable increase in the number of logs received for the 2013 event, 251 in total, overseas entries were up by 50% on recent years. Of the 85 UK logs submitted, 83 were Full licensees but only 1 Intermediate and 1 Foundation, an aspect which needs attention.

The Rationale for Our Proposal:

- 1 - This is a long established RSGB contest with dedicated trophies and a distinguished list of participants and winners.
- 2 - It has a recognised national and international slot in the contest calendar.
- 3 - The 12 hour format is conducive to domestic harmony and there are many 24 hour contests for those that want them.
- 4 - It is a DX contest which presents the opportunity to work more difficult longer distance countries.
- 5 - It is educational both in terms of geographical locations, bearings and importantly, propagation paths.

Proposal:

- 1 – The basic rules stay the same in terms of date, time, exchange and main scoring.

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- 2 – The Powditch Trophy to be awarded to the leading multi-mode station. Other currently unused trophies could be awarded to the leading stations in the Restricted and QRP categories.
- 3 – Sponsored plaques to be awarded to leading Foundation and Intermediate individual entries in all three categories (subject to individual licence restrictions.). Plaques will also be awarded to the leading non-UK entrant each in Continent.
- 4 – The concept of a UK “HQ” station to be introduced as in the Commonwealth Contest with points available for UK entrants as well as RoW.
- 5 – The RSGB CC suggests that the rules are modified to make all UK to UK contacts eligible for points and multipliers.

Proposal H7 – Station inspections

Background: The VHF General Rules contains a provision to permit station inspections by members of RSGB Contest Committee or its representatives (VHF General Rule 3h).

Proposal: VHF General Rule 3h will be added to the HF General Rules.

Suggestion H8 – Improving support for HF weekend contests

Background: It is apparent that weekend contests are lacking in support when compared with their shorter weekday counterparts. The 80m CC events were originally conceived as ‘starter’ events for newcomers to contesting. Unfortunately, the expected natural progression from these starter events to the longer weekend events (ultimately to the 48 hour international contests such as CQ WW/WPX, ARRL DX contests etc.) does not appear to be happening. A method of encouraging participation in weekend contests is sought.

Suggestion: It is suggested that a club element be introduced (the exact mechanism still to be finalised – suggestions welcome!) into the RSGB HF events throughout the year. This will be addition to the existing club events (80mCCs, Sprints, Field Days and AFS).

Note: It is recognised that these suggestions could increase ‘peer’ pressure on club members to participate in club events, possibly at the expense of family and other interests. However, the apparent lack of migration from short weekday to longer weekend contests does concern the Contest Committee.

Proposal H9 – Changes to NFD rules (NEW)

Background: HF NFD entrants have a choice of 4 sections / categories: Open / Restricted – Complex Antenna / Restricted – Simple Antenna / Low Power. These offer a progression of options from a simple low functionality station to a complex high functionality one, allowing entrants to put on an entry which best suits their capabilities. There have been concerns that the progression of features

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between sections needs rebalancing: in particular that the Restricted – Simple Antenna category may be too demanding. This proposal seeks to make a smoother progression between the sections.

Proposal:

1. Multiple transceivers will no longer be permitted in the Restricted – Simple Antenna category: only a single transceiver will be allowed.
2. On site skimmer will no longer be allowed in the Restricted – Simple Antenna category.
3. As the differentiator between the two categories in the Restricted section now goes beyond antennas, the word “Antenna” will be dropped, and these categories will now be re-designated Restricted - Simple and Restricted - Complex.
4. While not related to the above change, since the Low Power section now permits a maximum power of 5W (thus complying with the international definition of QRP), the opportunity will be taken to re-designate this section QRP.

Proposal V1 – Changes to the UKAC multiplier system

Background: There was a strong perception within some sections of the Contesting Community that the M5 multiplier system (only UK locator squares (IO91 etc.) count as multipliers) had adversely affected the UKACs, particularly for stations in South-east England. Input had also been received from the Continent to the effect that operators there felt that they were being deliberately side-lined. There are three different proposals listed below. Please provide feedback as to which proposal is preferred (and why).

Proposal (a): Do nothing and retain the UK only squares multiplier system (M5)

Proposal (b): Modify M5 so that each UK locator square counts as 2 multipliers and non-UK squares (including all wet squares) count as 1 multiplier.

Proposal (c): The UK locator squares multiplier system will be replaced by a callsign prefix multiplier system. For example, the following UK prefixes are all multipliers:

G(*) (#)

M(*) (#)

2(*) (#)

where * = regional letter e.g. none, E, M, W, D, J, U, I, X, P, T, H, N, S, C and B (for special event stations)

and # = number e.g. 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 etc.

e.g. if you work stations with prefixes G0, GM0, GW0, M3, MD3, 2E0, 2E1, 2J0 and 2J1, this will count as 9 multipliers.

Justification for Proposal (c): There are potentially about 200 different multipliers in the UK alone (compared with about 35 locator square multipliers). Prefix multipliers can also be obtained by working non-UK stations. Hence, if you work F, D, HB, OZ, LA, SM, PA, PE etc. stations, all of these

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different prefixes also count towards your multiplier total. Proposal (c) will both encourage UK stations to seek out Continental callsigns for multipliers and leave room for the application of contest strategy to maximise scores by searching for UK multipliers. Since all entrants' logs are rescored during the contest adjudication process, there is no requirement for logging software changes although many logging software packages will already have 'WPX' style scoring options.

Proposal V2 – Use of Internet chat facilities (such as ON4KST)

Background: The active use of internet chat facilities and DX Cluster (active use is monitoring these sites and being free to post messages not containing contest data – signal reports, serial numbers etc.) is only permitted in some VHF contests. For example, full use of internet facilities is permitted in the AX section of UKAC contests below 23cm and in all UKAC sections on 23cm and above. Passive use of internet chat facilities (that is monitoring internet chat sites without posting ANY messages during the contest period) is permitted in all VHF contests. There appears to be some confusion about active and passive usage to the extent that some entrants do not monitor ON4KST or the DX Cluster just in case they are disqualified for acting on information on the chat sites or DX Cluster etc. Also, there is some confusion about the status of stations that enter the AX section of UKAC contests but do not appear to be using any internet facilities.

Proposal: The Cluster/Chat Dos and Don'ts FAQ (frequently asked questions) will be amended to make it clear that stations entering the AX section are not obliged to use any internet chat or spotting facilities. The FAQ will also be amended to make it clear that passive monitoring is permitted.

Suggestion V3: Permitted modes in contests above 30MHz

Background: IARU Region 1 rules for contests above 30MHz restrict the permitted transmission modes to A1A, J3E and F3E/G3E. To prevent confusion between what was permitted in RSGB contests and IARU contests (several RSGB contests run alongside IARU contests), this rule was adopted for all RSGB contests above 30MHz a few years ago. Recently, it was become apparent that the adoption of the rule may be preventing entrants from exploring the contest potential of different machine generated modes (MGM) that are intended for DX use. However, to make full use of these modes, the use of the internet is sometimes required.

Suggestion: Remove the IARU mode restriction in all AX, SAO, SAR sections and in the AO, AR and AL sections on 23cm of the UKAC series of contests.

Suggestion V4 – Improving support for VHF weekend contests

Background: It is apparent that weekend contests are lacking in support when compared with their shorter weekday counterparts. For example, competitors in a full-length 2m trophy contest are able

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to make about the same number of contacts as could be made in a single 2m UKAC leg. The UKAC events were originally conceived as 'starter' events for newcomers to contesting. Unfortunately, the expected natural progression from these starter events to the longer weekend events (ultimately to the major V/U/SHF IARU contests) does not appear to be happening. A method of encouraging participation in weekend contests is sought as the apparent lack of migration from short weekday to weekend contests does concern the Contest Committee.

Suggestions to address this problem from the UK Contesting community are requested.

Please send your comments about any of the proposals or suggestions to committee@rsgbcc.org no later than 14th August 2014. All comments will be taken into consideration when the contest rules for 2015 are set.

73,

RSGB Contest Committee