

Response to the Ofcom consultation document published 23/11/2004

By the Harwich Amateur Radio Interest Group (H.A.R.I.G) which meet on 12/1/2005 to discuss the document with relevance to the allocation of the radio spectrum for amateur radio use.

There were 13 members present, 12 licensed and one listener. Each member was encouraged to make their own individual response in addition to the joint club response.

From the Document it would appear that Ofcom would like the amateur radio spectrum to move from the command and control portion to either the licence exempt or market forces portion of the spectrum. Discussion on both options took place.

Licence exempt – all were vehemently opposed to this option with many reasons given, a few are listed below.

1. Certain loss of existing amateur bands due to commercial pressure.
2. With no licence requirement the standard of operation would certainly fall, with resulting inappropriate language and topics of conversation on air.
3. There would be an increase in the likelihood of interference being caused by incorrect use of equipment by non-technically competent operators to a wide range of services such as TV and radio services of all types.
4. There would be no safeguard and possibly recourse to intrusions into the allocated amateur bands.
5. Manufacturers may produce “one size fits all” equipment which could lead to illegal out of band operation or illegal use.
6. There would be a devaluation of the hobby due to the above and other points, this could lead to decrease in use and eventual decline of the hobby as noted in the UK citizen band use.

If this is the preferred option, we feel that there must still be regulations in place for operation, emission and power level control and not left to solely to self-regulation of the operator.

Market forces option

All members realise that the present £ 15 licence fee does not realistically cover the cost of administration, the real cost is much greater than this figure but that a significant increase would seriously reduce the number of applicants for new licences and existing renewals with a result of the law of diminishing returns. Also commercial pressure on the amateur band allocations would certainly increase.

Conclusion

Whilst all members were in agreement that the existing licensing conditions were deemed to be the most suitable most agreed that changes of some description were inevitable and if this were to be the case then all agreed that control and administration of licensing should pass to a third party with powers similar to Ofcom at present.

