



International Amateur Radio Union Region 1

Europe, Middle East, Africa and Northern Asia

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SUBJECT	The role of special interest groups		
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In 2003, the RSGB changed its structure, winding up several of its committees, particularly the Spectrum Committees, and combining them to form the RSGB Spectrum Forum. In the Spectrum Forum, the Spectrum Committees are represented solely by their respective, former, Spectrum Managers.

It is believed that this course of action was necessary in order to streamline communications between the RSGB and the newly formed Office of Communications (Ofcom) which replaced the functions of the former Radio Communications Agency (RA).

It was felt necessary to form a UK microwave SIG in order to better support, coordinate and represent the special needs of UK microwave operators to the RSGB, Ofcom and IARU.

The Annexe to this information paper describes these changes in some detail and how an existing group of UK microwave amateurs adapted to them, resulting in a new "Special Interest group", the UK microwave Group (UKuG), similar in function to other SIGs already affiliated to RSGB, notably AMSAT (UK) and the British Amateur TV Club (BATC).

The UKuG is properly constituted and, in mid 2004, affiliated with the RSGB. It now provides a valuable and "independent" link between the Spectrum Forum and microwave operators in the UK.

With the agreement of the RSGB it has effectively assumed most of the roles of the former RSGB Microwave Committee.

An additional benefit is seen to be better, more representative collective (consensus) communication between UKuG, the national society (RSGB), Ofcom and, hopefully, IARU Region 1.

*It is **recommended** that a similar course of action be followed by other national societies where the need may arise.*

The role of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) within national and international Amateur Radio Administration Frameworks

Introduction

This paper looks at recent administrative changes that have taken place in the RSGB which, in turn, have affected the support given to microwave activities in the UK.

This has resulted in the emergence of a new Special Interest Groups (SIG), the UK Microwave Group (UKuG), independent from the National Society (RSGB) but affiliated to it and closely linked to its' Spectrum Forum.

The UKuG has three principal objectives:

- to support UK microwave operators in the same way that affiliated SIGs AMSAT (UK) and British Amateur Television Club (BATC) support their special interests.
- To continue the work of the former RSGB Microwave Committee.
- to provide topical and educational information related to microwave operating.

It is presented here as a model for other radio communities around the world.

Background History

Until 2003, the RSGB had three individual spectrum committees (HF, VHF and Microwave) and several other specialist committees. Each committee consisted of an appointed Chairman and perhaps up to a dozen members, together (in the case of the Spectrum Committees) with a Manager for that particular area of the Spectrum.

The work of these committees was essentially that of amateur spectrum management and liaison with the UK Regulatory Authority (then the Radio Communications Agency [RA]), on spectrum-related matters.

The RSGB Microwave Committee was different insofar as it undertook much technical development work, together with promotion of kit sets, provision of components, publication of specialist articles and books, a monthly Newsletter, organisation of activity events such as contests and microwave conventions ("Round Tables"), and the provision of trophies and awards to encourage all aspects of the amateur microwave hobby. The writer of the bi-monthly "Microwave Column" in the RSGB's monthly publication RadCom was traditionally a member of the Microwave Committee.

In mid-2003 the RSGB changed its committee-based structure and, as a consequence, abolished its three Spectrum Committees and several other related committees.

The three Spectrum Managers were retained and the Spectrum Committees were replaced by the **RSGB Spectrum Forum**. This comprised representatives of each of the former committees and aims to deal with spectrum issues across the whole range from LF to microwaves, principally by correspondence, an active/interactive website and e-mail. The three Spectrum Managers form the second tier of the Forum's structure (see diagram).

For UK microwave operators these changes meant that access to the RSGB was only possible via the Microwave Manager, its sole representative on the Spectrum Forum. The other non-spectrum functions of the former RSGB Microwave Committee effectively ceased to exist, since the former Microwave Committee members were no longer members of the new Forum.

For the previous three years the UK Microwave Group (UKuG) had been in existence. This was a body of over 100 microwave enthusiasts who met at various microwave “round tables” sponsored or organised by the Microwave Committee. Up to mid 2003, the UKuG had not achieved national recognition since the RSGB Microwave Committee had handled almost all of the matters relevant to UK amateur microwave operation.

At its AGM in November 2003, the Group resolved to apply for **Affiliated Society** status with the RSGB and to negotiate the handing over of the non-spectrum tasks of the defunct RSGB Microwave Committee. This included the monthly Microwave Newsletter (now renamed “Scatterpoint”), seen to be of major importance in raising public awareness of the Group and UK amateur microwave activities in general. “Scatterpoint” is believed to be a unique, topical publication devoted solely to amateur microwave technique and operation.

Annexe

The present role and position of the UK Microwave group

In **April 2004**, the Group became an Affiliated RSGB Society.

In **July 2004**, it took over the following functions from RSGB HQ:

- Publishing the former RSGB “Microwave Newsletter”. It is now published ten times a year as “Scatterpoint”.

As a result, membership of the group has rapidly multiplied to over 250 microwave enthusiasts and includes members in some 19 DXCC countries. The group charges a very modest membership subscription, which includes an emailed copy of “Scatterpoint” (those who prefer a paper version pay an extra charge to cover production costs). Scatterpoint, which runs to 20 pages, is highly regarded throughout the world as an up-to-date source of amateur microwave news and technical developments.

- The Microwave Column in RadCom is now compiled and edited by a member of the UKuG Committee, ensuring the continuation of the strong link between RSGB and the microwave community. There is an ongoing exchange of material between the editors of Scatterpoint and the Microwave Column.
- The Group has assumed the role of microwave contest and activity organisation and the production of certificates and the trophies for these events.
- In addition, it works with educational and research establishments to arrange annual microwave meetings (“Round Table”), the best-known of these being at BT Adastral Park in Suffolk (November) and at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratories near Oxford (April).
- UKuG is preparing educational information for newcomers to microwaves in the form of a CD and booklets.
- The Group has its own **website** (www.microwaves.org) and has established a microwave “internet reflector”, open to all microwave enthusiasts regardless of their UKuG membership status.
- UKuG is closely linked with the RSGB Spectrum Forum. The Group chairman is a corresponding member of the Forum and receives all communications via the Forum’s email reflector, and the RSGB Microwave Manager is a member and corresponding member of UKuG.

Advantages of the UK Microwave Group over the former RSGB Microwave Committee

- The group can operate independently of the National Society and yet still have representation at the RSGB level via the Spectrum Forum.
- The “grass roots” membership of UK microwave operators have direct access to the Group Committee in a way that did not exist previously, and have the power to change the Group Committee by election at its Annual general meeting if they are not satisfied with the committee’s work – something they could not readily do with the former RSGB Microwave Committee!
- Projects and activities are directly funded by the Group’s membership rather than by RSGB and value for money is therefore expected more readily.

- The “radio politik” associated with spectrum matters is now largely outside the group as it is the function of the Spectrum Forum and the RSGB Microwave Manager. This leaves the Group’s committee with more time to deal with the day-to-day practical aspects of amateur microwaves such as operating, technical developments and projects, publications and microwave conventions. **Nevertheless, the Group committee is on hand to assist the RSGB Microwave Manager whenever help is needed.**
- The UK microwave community now feels more closely connected to the people who are working for them at committee level, perceiving the group to be an “open” organisation.
- Interest and activity in UK amateur microwaves has received a major boost as a result of the changes outlined above. This was made plainly obvious at the recent highly successful Microwave Round Table (Convention) held at BT Adastral Park, Suffolk, in November 2004. it was attended by some 110 microwave enthusiasts from the UK, as well as Germany, Holland, Belgium, Sweden and the USA.

Conclusions

- If they do not already exist, Special Interest amateur radio groups should be encouraged and fostered by the National Society of each member country.

Such groups, whether they be microwave, VHF, Low frequency or non-spectrum in outlook have a major role to play in the future of both Amateur Services.

- They encourage a feeling of belonging in a way that perhaps the more formal structures of the National Society may not be able to do.
- Special Interest Groups must be properly constituted and affiliated to the parent National Society to allow a direct throughput of enquiries and ideas from the ordinary amateur enthusiast.
- When Special Interest Groups work in co-operation with the National Society, then the Society itself can benefit from the expertise and enthusiasm the group generates.

Attachment: (next page)

Chart showing the Structure of the RSGB Spectrum Forum

Spectrum Forum

