

What successful measures has the Board implemented to discourage contests from interfering with normal on air discussions, particularly at weekends, and contests dominating significant portions of intra-UK bands?

Henry Ehm, MOZAE

Answered by Stewart Bryant, G3YSX

The Board delegates the design of contests to specialist teams that fully understand both the broad and the detailed issues specific to the event. It delegates the adjudication of the events to another committee that has specialist skills of that aspect of contesting. The Board input is limited to general policy, which is to encourage diversity in amateur radio activity so that RSGB Members can participate in and enjoy all aspects of the hobby. Where a contest is organised by the RSGB and is expected to be a high activity event, a proportion of the band is normally set aside for non-contesters. This is clear, for example, from the popular winter AFS SSB event in which nearly 300 UK stations participated this year and which sets aside some part of the band for non-contest use. Similarly, on the 2m band, for example on 2m SSB events, a proportion of the band around the calling frequencies and the GB2RS frequency is prohibited from contest use. The CSC Contest Support Committee monitor infringements of these protected frequencies and take appropriate and proportionate action where needed. Additionally, where possible, contest use a single mode, for example freeing up the CW and data sections for the bands during phone contests. In terms of long duration weekend contests and considering HF SSB events, which I suspect is the central concern of the question, the RSGB organises a tiny number of such contests and, even then, does not always have full control over the rules. Overwhelmingly, the contests causing the concern noted by the questioner are arranged by organisations over which the RSGB has no influence. The problem is made worse at the moment due to the poor propagation conditions on the upper bands which has driven more activity down to 80 and 40m. Hopefully as Cycle 25 develops this congestion will reduce as activity migrates back to the higher bands. Unfortunately, until that happens, the only mitigation is to use non-contest bands such as 60m or to use VHF or to use a technology such as remote receivers to enhance the range achievable on other bands, for example perhaps 10m.

