

Notes of the Presidential Review of Contesting Workshop held on 22 Jul 2015 at the Arden Hotel, Birmingham.

Participants

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Facilitator: Deborah Neame

Scribe: Graham Coomber G0NBI

Introduction

Deborah emphasised the importance of the day as an opportunity to create momentum for taking forward the work undertaken in groups in preparation for the workshop.

It was recognised that the outcome was not likely to satisfy all participants, but achieving a greater understanding of different viewpoints would help progress.

Contesting Vision & Strategy

Vision

Contests are an excellent vehicle for encouraging innovation, personal improvement and the development of all aspects of the hobby. They are also an important opportunity for attracting newcomers to the hobby.

The RSGB will promote, organise and administer a range of contests appealing to a broad spectrum of the membership, which are well administered and which are actively supported by a significant subset of the Society membership. In doing so,

- Participants will have fun.
- Operating excellence will be encouraged.
- Newcomers will be attracted to the hobby and contesting.
- Contests will be designed to appeal to stations of all types drawn from all parts of the UK.
- RSGB Membership will be encouraged. In respect of member/non-member participation, it is noted that probably the majority of positions in contest rankings are open to non-members (ie those entering AFS and UKAC)
- The needs of non- contesters will be recognised.
- Innovation will be encouraged.
- Band Usage will increase.
- Operators will be trained in readiness for major global contests
- The frontiers of relevant technologies will be explored and tested

This will require

- Consistent adjudication using simple, clear and transparent rules which are adhered to and which will allow personal measurement of contest performance year-on-year and provide a personal yardstick for improvement
- A mentoring culture amongst the contest community to encourage and enable new contesters.

Challenges

How to encourage participation?

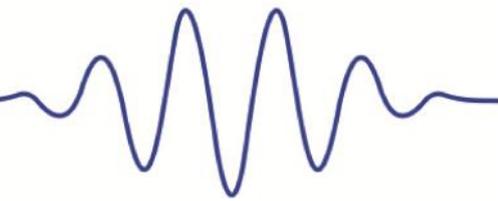
- Young people are attracted to competitive activity. The potential for linking with schools should be explored
- Maximise the use of Social Media, something that young people in particular engage with
- Include contesting in the syllabi for the Foundation and Intermediate Licence exams
- Traditional radio clubs are not always the best vehicle for encouraging new blood
There is a role for an evangelical regional contest representative
- RSGB should facilitate a national, virtual contest club where local clubs are not engaged in, or supportive of, contests
- Increased mentoring

How to satisfy the need for effective communication (within and without the contest community)?

- Identify a specific communication role within the Contest Committee structure
- Improve RSGB/CC websites
- Re-write contest rules and produce a new calendar
- Clear, consistent and open adjudication, maybe real-time on-line scoring
- Publish results soon after the end of each contest. This implies the use of automatic scoring techniques which should reduce the workload of the CC.

Do we have the right number and format of contests?

- Amateurs have limited time for their hobbies and there is a danger of dilution. The CC should take bold decisions where necessary, bearing in mind the traditional importance of some contests.



Structure

HF and VHF contests are different. The CC structure should recognise this diversity but not encourage unnecessary duplication (eg IT, comms). This should be achieved by the establishment of two sub-committees within the CC structure – HF and V/UHF, sharing common infrastructure resource on IT and PR/communications.

The current relationship between the Board and the CC is appropriate. It is important that the CC has the authority to run contests without day to day interference.

CC Membership

- Committee Members should have current contesting experience (and thus credibility) as well as diverse views.
- Members should be selected rather than elected in order to appoint people with the right skills and qualities. Vacancies nonetheless should continue to be advertised.
- The role and function of the CC should be promoted, together with information about how to volunteer. The RSGB Comms Manager is available to assist where required
- “Churn” is important to contribute fresh ideas, as is succession planning. It is the role of the CC chair to encourage new recruits. RadCom/website adverts are insufficient to attract new blood - proactive networking is needed. A “turnover target” should be agreed and the CC chair should review each CC member’s contribution on a three year basis (potentially applicable to other committees)
- There is a need to increase geographic input and representation. Consideration should be given to appointing regional “corresponding members” or representatives, perhaps linked into the Regional Management structure.

Other points

The White Paper process is welcome, noting that the respondents are self-selected. There is, therefore, a danger that the views expressed are not representative of the wider contest community. It is a consultation, not a vote.

Whenever new rules are introduced, there should always be a clear explanation and rationale for the decision including a historic change log.

Complaints and appeals procedures should be clear including the facility to escalate unresolved problems.

IARU. There is a need for UK to be more proactive in influencing IARU in contesting matters.

Principles and Processes

Rules

- The rules need to be simpler (for newcomers), clear, compact and concise.
- Rules should encompass all levels of ability.
- The spirit of contesting is paramount and needs reinforcement/definition.
- UBNs should not be published because they are of little interest to other than the entrant (and potentially embarrassing to new contesters) but logs should, subject to either the specific agreement of the individual participant (NB Current White Paper proposal) or that agreement to publication should be a condition of entry.
- Adjudication. The direction of travel should be towards automatic adjudication (but the software may not be suitable yet) to facilitate the reduction in administrative effort in the CC and as a by-product, faster publication of results. The submission time for logs should also be reduced. The principles of adjudication should be published.
- The details of log adjudication need further discussion.
- Cheating should be publically acknowledged and penalised, but the details of transgressors should not be published.
- Geographical disadvantage. It is difficult to achieve fairness across the UK and there is a danger of adding to the complexity of the scoring system. A practical approach is to do the right thing for the bulk of the population at the same time as taking all reasonable steps to eliminate bias.
- The ability to measure personal progression requires reasonable consistency of rules, year on year.

AFS CW

It was agreed that the dispute about the adjudication of the 2015 AFS CW contest had resulted from an unusual set of circumstances, related to the overlap of an RSGB activity limited contest with another club's activity competition.

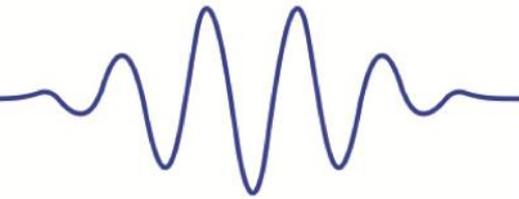
A partnership approach with the club concerned is most likely to achieve a satisfactory outcome to the current dispute.

Contact should be made with the club to suggest

- the suspension of their club activity during future RSGB AFS CW contests.
- that a joint approach be made to all club members to explain how their activity can distort RSGB contests results, and the effects that this can have on both organisations and their members.
- That any future occurrence would be dealt with under the "Spirit of Contesting" rule with direct appeals
- Notwithstanding the above, casual participation in contests is to be encouraged

For the 2015 AFS contest, it is recommended that

- Rule 3d (which is to promote fairness) should remain



- The contest scores be recalculated applying Rule 3(d), but contacts disallowed only where there is evidence that a non-entrant has made contacts exclusively with members of their own club or society
- Careful communication of the reasons for this change is essential

UKAC M5/M7 rule

For 2016

- No Multipliers
- Move to bonuses (method to be determined)
- MGM allowed
- Use of ON4KST allowed
- No discrimination across UK and Crown Dependencies
- consult by way of a White paper

Summary Messages

To the Contest Committee

- Recognition and appreciation of the essential hard work that the committee undertakes and the personal sacrifice that committee members make.
- The committee does much good work that is not fully appreciated by the outside world
- That others are committed to help the committee improve its external communications

To the Contest Community, the contest committee recognises

- the need for substantial change and improvement in certain areas.
- that there is a momentum for change
- that there is a need for volunteers to work with the committee

To the Board

In view of the considerable agreement achieved during the day, the meeting recommends the "Vision" to the Board, and that it should review the Terms of Reference of the Contest Committee once the drafting is finalised

Post Script - Moving Forwards

Four working groups were formed that began to consider the following elements of implementation.

- Vision

- Committee structure & Terms of Reference
- Gap/concept study for automated adjudication
- Log adjudication process including penalties

It was recognised that further development outside the meeting would be required on these and other topics through a number of small working groups formed from members of the contest committee as well as volunteers from the review group and the contesting community.