

President's New Year message



May I start by wishing you all a very Happy New Year. 2022 saw us return to normal after the easing of COVID restrictions and it was good to see the RSGB National Radio Centre and regular events such as the Convention and YOTA activities being well supported once more. 2022 was also an important anniversary for amateur radio, it being 100 years ago that the first transatlantic amateur radio transmissions took place. The RSGB took the initiative in organising "The Transatlantic Centenary Tests", a celebratory event for the whole of the month of December which attracted participation from radio amateurs across the world.

We are now at that time of year when we invite nominations for the President, Board Directors and Regional Representatives and there is still time to put your name forward before the 31 January deadline. The Society prides itself on its democratic credentials and I hope that even if you don't stand for election, you will use your vote to choose who will help to ensure that both the Society and amateur radio thrives and develops over the coming year.

As we begin 2023, we look forward to the coronation of King Charles III and The Queen Consort, and work is underway to ensure that we play our part in those celebrations. We continue to develop ways to encourage newcomers into our hobby and, in conjunction with Ofcom, have introduced the facility for those with suitable technical knowledge to obtain a Full Amateur Radio Licence by sitting a single examination.

For some time the Society, like most organisations, has operated in a fairly benign economic environment. Both costs and revenues were broadly stable and the Society generally achieved modest surpluses on its operations. That environment has now changed significantly for us as it has for everyone. The Society faces substantial increases in its principal costs and pressure on its non-subscription revenues. We are already experiencing a decrease in advertising which reflects the commercial pressures facing amateur radio retailers. Investment returns have also declined, reflecting market conditions.

The Board is clear that costs need to be contained and will be working hard to achieve savings during 2023. For example, we will be limiting travel and physical meetings where possible, and we have already decided that the 2023 AGM will be held online.

Regrettably, these efforts will be insufficient to ensure the Society balances its books and, whilst the membership subscription remained largely unchanged for many years (currently £4.33 per month for those who pay by direct debit), this will now have to increase.

For 2023, the Board has approved a subscription increase of £9.00 per year for UK members (approximately 17p per week) and £14 per year for overseas members (to reflect increased postage costs). The new monthly rate for individuals who pay by direct debit will thus be £5.08. These new amounts broadly reflect inflation since the last increase in 2020.

We are expecting that, despite our best endeavours, operating costs will increase further during 2023 and this will mean further, but hopefully smaller, subscription increases in 2024 and 2025. The Board is conscious that these increases come at an inopportune time but they are unavoidable.

Membership of the RSGB remains strong at well over 21,000 members but it is only with your continued support that we can continue to advance the cause of amateur radio during increasingly challenging times and provide the range of services and activities so valued by you all.

Stewart Bryant, G3YSX, President