

Cover sheet for response to an Ofcom consultation

BASIC DETAILS

Consultation title: **Wireless Telegraphy Act Licence Fee Proposals for encouraging internet licensing**

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Representing (self or organisation/s): **Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society (CARS)**

Address (if not received by email):

CONFIDENTIALITY

What do you want Ofcom to keep confidential?

Nothing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name/address/contact details/job title	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whole response	<input type="checkbox"/>	Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part of the response	<input type="checkbox"/>	If there is no separate annex, which parts?	

If you want part of your response, your name or your organisation to be confidential, can Ofcom still publish a reference to the contents of your response (including, for any confidential parts, a general summary that does not disclose the specific information or enable you to be identified)?

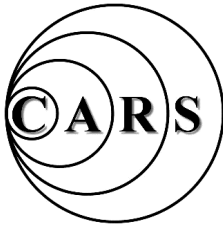
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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DECLARATION

I confirm that the correspondence supplied with this cover sheet is a formal consultation response. It can be published in full on Ofcom's website, unless otherwise specified on this cover sheet, and I authorise Ofcom to make use of the information in this response to meet its legal requirements. If I have sent my response by email, Ofcom can disregard any standard e-mail text about not disclosing email contents and attachments.

Ofcom can publish my response: on receipt once the consultation ends

Name *John Bowen G8DET* Signed (if hard copy)



Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society

Established 1936

Affiliated to the RSGB

Club Callsign: G0MWT

President: Harry Heap G5HF

Chairman: John Bowen G8DET

Secretary: Martyn Medcalf G1EFL Treasurer: Brian Thwaites G3CVI

CARS Ref: 20060514

Web Address: www.g0mwt.org.uk

14-May-2006

Wireless Telegraphy Act Licence Fee Proposals For Encouraging Internet Licensing

About Us

Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society (CARS) is a vibrant club with over 100 active members holding amateur radio licences. Based in and around Chelmsford, Essex, it is nationally recognised as playing a very active role in amateur radio across a wide range of activities including social, operational and development/training aspects. The club is affiliated to the national body, the Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB).

CARS members collectively have a huge range of technical experience and operate from HF to the microwave bands. With roots going back to the 1930s, the club draws much of its membership from professionals in the electronics and radio field.

CARS has a Training team consist of a team of eleven volunteers (tutors and assistants) who have worked hard over the past four years to enthusiastically implement the joint Ofcom/RSGB three-tier training and examination system. **Training amateurs in Licence and Operating conditions and encouraging best practice can only be done in an environment of regulatory certainty and an effective enforcement regime, where the Licence and its privileges are valued.**

We therefore welcome this opportunity to enclose our response to the Ofcom consultation overleaf:-

Question: Do you agree that the simplification and removal of fees for amateur radio and ship radio licences issued via the internet will be beneficial to users of these classes and do you support the objectives for licence simplification?

Answers:-

Many respondents including CARS welcome the prospect of a secure and reliable online licensing system. However we are unhappy on a number of aspects as follows

Licence Fees and Value

Results from the main Amateur Licensing Consultation showed that the majority of respondents were in favour of licence-fees as it underlined the value/status of an Amateur Licence. Many respondents commented on the perceived value of a licence (which nowadays takes upto three exams) and funding support for interference enforcement and international representation. Whilst accepting that a free system reduces internal Ofcom IT/Transaction costs, this fact seems to have been ignored in this new document and the RIA.

Incentives & Discrimination

CARS objects to the introduction of new £20 Charges for Postal applications by U-21s and Over-75s. Many of the latter in particular are unlikely to be Internet users – Given the previous discount that applies to these groups, this also constitutes NEW regulation and will be seen as regressive.

Accessibility

It seems clear that Ofcom blithely assumes that 100% of users not only have Internet access, but are also fully conversant with and can fathom the depths of the Ofcom website. Our regular experience from Club Members and Trainees show that the website is still cumbersome to navigate and has material in the Amateur section which is long overdue for updating and consolidation.

For such a large number of potential users (Amateur and Maritime), Ofcom should give consideration to a dedicated simpler mini-site with a unique top-level url such as 'ofcom-licensing.com' rather than having to click down to several levels.

Amateur Radio Exams & Training

CARS Tutors have put hundreds of candidates through the exam system. Arrangements for handling issue of new licences from the RCF-administered exam system continue to be unclear. As this is currently wholly paper based it would be a major disincentive and seen to be unfair if arrangements are not put in place for an Internet option, and one which includes appropriate verification of exam passes.

NoVs

CARS potentially welcomes free NoVs but remains concerned regarding coordination processes as this is highly dependent on under-resourced volunteer RSGB effort to avoid frequency chaos.

Security and Acceptance

It remains most unclear how secure PDF certificates will be from forgery and how acceptable they will be by foreign administrations.

Citizens Band

Some of our members also hold CB licences that are adjacent to the Amateur 10m band. This consultation seems rather out-of-order in that it pre-empts an un-issued consultation on CB deregulation, nor does it reference the impact of managing the inevitable conflict between CB and new CADS* users – the latter being the topic of a number of pro-active Ofcom activities

*CADS – Community Audio Distribution Systems
See: http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/cads_scheme/