

OFCOM – TIME FOR YOU TO ACT !!!

The formal consultation launched on May-26th with a deadline of 5pm on Aug 18th, but for many weeks most amateurs have held back from replying. If you want to ensure that the future of Amateur Radio is determined by you and not someone else there is only one course of action. Every amateur should respond personally to Ofcom. There are 9 questions and below is guidance on the issues/answers (although of course you are free to your own opinion)

CONSULTATION GUIDANCE NOTES

Q1: *Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a lighter, electronic licensing process? If not, please explain why.*

YES – It is time to modernise the process, but with safeguards for anyone who does not have or is not able/willing to use the internet. It will need sound online security against fraud and spam, as well as valid email addresses.

Q2: *Do you agree with the proposal to issue licences which remain valid for the life of the licensee? If not, please explain why.*

Ofcom prefers a lifetime licence, with minimal checking and a risk of callsign database inaccuracies, email changes etc building up. The RSGB recommend a 5 year period – so State your preference – see Q7 as well

Q3: *Do you agree with the proposal to issue electronic amateur radio licences free of charge? If not, please explain why.*

Electronic licences will undoubtedly be cheaper, but will need safeguards or maybe charges to deter frivolous requests. Any such system costs money to setup and run. Are you prepared to pay? (probably ~£10 a year compared to the current £15). Don't forget that under 21s and 75+ are free at present in any case. Is there such a thing as a free lunch? One idea might be to make new M3 licences (or others upgrading to Intermediate/Advanced) free as an incentive to join the hobby and improve themselves

Q4: *Do you agree with the proposal to apply an administrative charge when processing postal applications for amateur radio licences? If not, please explain why.*

Ofcom do not say what the charge will be. On balance the answer is probably YES to encourage electronic applications which are cheaper to handle. Any such charge though should be at a modest level similar to the present one. It should not discriminate against successful examinees which at present only have paper pass slips.

Q5: *Do you agree that WT Act licence exemption is not currently practical?*

YES AGREED

Deregulation is not wanted

– it would destroy the entire basis of Amateur Radio and its privileges

Q6: *What are your views on WT Act exemption in the longer term*

No thanks !!! – not ever – Deregulation would destroy amateur radio as we know it. Any modification should be fully agreed within the framework of the International Radio Regulations

Q7: *Is maintaining the existing licensing regime but with an extended renewal period your preferred option? If so, please state the renewal period that you believe would be appropriate and explain why.*

The existing annual paper based regime is unnecessary. Ofcom prefers a lifetime licence, with minimal checking and a risk of callsign database inaccuracies building up. The RSGB recommend a 5 year period – State Your Preference (NB this question is about time period - fees are covered in Q3 & Q4 so for example you could in principle have a free licence, but revalidated every 5 years)

Q8: *Do you agree that the current licensing system is over-burdensome? If not, please explain why.*

YES - Although it does not cause too many problems for Radio Amateurs, simplification, plainer-English Schedules and a reduction in paper (compared to current BR68/NoV renewals) would be welcome.

Q9: *Do you agree that [unspecified] admin charges should be applied for NoVs*

At present some NoVs are free (eg Beacons/Repeaters) but the subsidy will be disappearing. Charges are therefore likely but not specified in the consultation document. In your answer you may wish to distinguish between general service Beacons/Repeaters and personal, special event and other short term experimental requests (eg 5MHz). Note that NoV renewals and their charges are likely to be yearly. Modernising NoV requests/revalidation (e-NoVs) needs to be looked at.