

RADIO SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY WHICH
REPRESENTS UK RADIO AMATEURS

Founded in 1913 incorporated 1926.

Limited by guarantee
Member society of the
International Amateur Radio Union

Patron: HRH Prince Philip,
Duke of Edinburgh, KG, KT

Membership is open to all those with an active interest in radio experimentation and communication as a hobby. Applications for membership should be made to the Subscriptions Department from which full details of Society services may also be obtained.

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Honorary Treasurer:

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J Stevenson, G0EJQ - Region 13

Details of the Society's volunteer officers can be found in the RSGB Yearbook and on the RSGB website.

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Website: www.rsgb.org

Members Area: www.rsgb.org/membersonly

Log-in using your callsign in lower case as the user name, and your membership number (see RadCom address label) as the password.

The online RadCom can now be found at
www.rsgb.org/radcom.

Ofcom responds to RSGB Pressure

Following continued pressure from the RSGB on the issue of interference from non-compliant power line adaptors, Ofcom saw fit to issue the following statement in a 'question and answer' format.

What does PLT equipment do?

Power line telecommunications (PLT) apparatus uses a technology that can carry data on mains wiring around the house and is used to connect computers or other digital devices. It reduces the need for additional wiring in the home, offers high data rates and is easy to install. As a result it is proving useful and popular, with around 750,000 pairs of equipment estimated to be in use in the UK today.

Is PLT equipment new to market?

Yes. Although PLT technology has been in existence for some years, its proliferation as a mass market product is a relatively recent development.

How many brands of PLT apparatus are there on the UK market?

There are about 25 brands of PLT apparatus on the market in the UK. The largest supplier is British Telecommunications plc (BT). BT includes Comtrend UK Limited's PLT apparatus as part of its BT Vision package. This apparatus is required to comply with the EMC regulations.

What is electromagnetic compatibility (EMC)?

Electromagnetic compatibility is the engineering process which limits the natural electromagnetic fields produced by electrical appliances. This ensures that household products (for example, television, video or kettle) can all work within the home without disrupting each other.

Most electrical equipment produces an electromagnetic field as a natural by-product of its operation; an "electromagnetic disturbance". That disturbance can in turn affect the operation of other nearby equipment. For that reason, manufacturers aim to keep this disturbance to an acceptable level so that different products, particularly household products, can all operate in the home.

There are legal requirements about acceptable levels of electromagnetic disturbance.

What are the EMC legal requirements?

In common with other electronic products

sold in the UK, PLT apparatus is required to comply with the Electromagnetic Compatibility Regulations 2006 (the "EMC Regulations") which are based on a European Directive.

These regulations aim to ensure that the electromagnetic disturbance generated by electronic equipment does not exceed a level above which other equipment (including radio and telecoms equipment) cannot operate as intended and that the equipment itself has an adequate level of immunity to electromagnetic disturbance.

These requirements are described in the legislation, and are referred to as the 'essential requirements'.

In short therefore, the EMC regime provides a set of rules across the EU to ensure the levels of electromagnetic disturbance are regulated.

Who does the law on EMC apply to?

The person who places products on the market (usually the manufacturer or the importer) is responsible for compliance and must ensure that equipment meets the essential requirements and does not produce an excessive level of electromagnetic disturbance.

Failure to meet this core obligation can result in a criminal offence.

How does a manufacturer demonstrate compliance?

Evaluation of electromagnetic disturbance is carried out by conducting engineering tests. Compliance can be demonstrated through self assessment or by involving an accredited organisation known as a "notified body".

As an alternative to carrying out an assessment, the equipment can be manufactured and tested against reference standards (called harmonised standards because they are harmonised across the European Union). If that is done, then there is a legal presumption of compliance.

What is Ofcom's role under the EMC legislation?

The UK Government department for Business Innovation and Skill (BIS) is responsible for overseeing the EMC Regulations.

Enforcement powers are delegated to Ofcom where there is a radio spectrum protection or management issue. Ofcom can bring criminal prosecutions and can suspend sales if it believes an offence is taking place.

In connection with our functions we engage with BIS, the EU Commission DG Enterprise and other Member States through Administration and Cooperation Groups (ADCO).

What enquiries and complaints has Ofcom received about PLT?

Over the past 12 months Ofcom has received 143 individual PLT interference complaints; all from radio enthusiasts. Of these 121 have been investigated and referred to the apparatus supplier who has resolved 104. The solutions employed include replacing the apparatus, hard wiring and conventional wireless alternatives.

All of the complaints relate to the inability to receive radio transmissions in the High Frequency (HF) band (3 to 30MHz).

There are many other users of the HF Band including long range aeronautical and oceanic communications, the Ministry of Defence and international broadcasters. Ofcom has not received complaints of interference to these services.

Has Ofcom investigated PLT equipment?

Yes. Ofcom has exercised its enforcement functions under the EMC Regulations. Ofcom has investigated alleged breaches of the EMC regulations resulting from the supply of Comtrend PLT apparatus by BT.

What has Ofcom found?

On the evidence, Ofcom has not so far found that there is a breach of the EMC essential requirements. Ofcom has therefore decided against taking further enforcement action at this time. Ofcom is working together with Comtrend and BT to reduce any negative effects in individual cases and we support them in doing so.

It is recognised that EMC compliant equipment may still, in certain circumstances, have the capacity to cause interference to other radio communications equipment. This may happen due to the manner in which it is installed or operated.

Evaluating the complaints received and the evidence so far obtained, Ofcom has concluded that there does not at present appear to be significant public harm arising from this situation.

Is there an EU harmonised standard for PLT?

No. The EU has not yet published a suitable harmonised standard for this type of apparatus. The mass marketing of PLT equipment is a recent development.

Are existing EU harmonised standards for other products helpful?

Existing harmonised standards are helpful only to a limited extent because they are not specifically intended for this type of

equipment. Ofcom believes the electromagnetic disturbance produced by this technology is an inevitable by-product of its operation and not attributed to poor design or manufacturing.

Would the development of an EU standard for PLT help?

Yes. At present, testing and assessment takes place against a backdrop of wider technical uncertainty than is normally the case and there is an increase in the take-up of this apparatus across Europe.

The development of such a standard would be an important step. The standard could be used by manufacturers and Notified Bodies to assess performance against recognised benchmarked values.

If the apparatus complied with the harmonised standard under the Regulations, there would be a legal presumption that the apparatus met the essential requirements.

It is clear that the public interest (and the interests of manufacturers and suppliers) across Europe would be best served by the publication of a suitable standard. This is an aspiration of the EU Commission which Ofcom supports.

Is the EU taking action?

Yes. The EU Commission is aware of concerns resulting from the proliferation of PLT in the EU and in response, issued a mandate (M/313) to the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation (CENELEC) to produce a PLT harmonised standard. Work on this is currently taking place.

(Also, in 2005 the EU Commission issued a 'recommendation' 2005/292/EC giving guidance to Member States on enforcement issues related to PLT.)

Is Ofcom studying the issue further?

In view of the concern expressed by stakeholders Ofcom commissioned an independent study into the likelihood and extent of interference caused by PLT apparatus. This study is due to be completed in November 2009 and will involve consultation with the Radio Society of Great Britain and other stakeholders. We will be publishing the results. It is hoped that the results will increase knowledge about the effects of PLT equipment and contribute to the development of manufacturing techniques and product design.

What else can Ofcom do?

Ofcom can provide advice and assistance to those who complain of interference with radiocommunications equipment. Any individuals who wish to report specific cases that may be caused by PLT apparatus, or

any other source, should contact Ofcom's advisory team on 0300 123 3333 for further assistance.

We continue to liaise with BIS and other interested stakeholders in respect of PLT interference and will provide further updates on any significant developments.

The RSGB were extremely disappointed in Ofcom's statement and lack of action and issued the following response.

"The RSGB notes Ofcom's recent statement on PLT with alarm and concern. The RSGB has been engaged with Ofcom on this matter now for several years and is surprised that it has made such a statement without proper consultation with affected parties beforehand. The statement is dismissive of the issue, inaccurate in many respects and fails to respond to the recent formal, detailed complaint submitted by the Society. While the Society is pleased to hear that it will be consulted as part of the independent consultation that Ofcom intend undertaking, we feel that this can only delay matters further and will add little to the wealth of knowledge already available on the subject."

The RSGB will continue to challenge Ofcom's interpretation of the various Acts and Directives. This may include a legal challenge sometime in the future. A further statement will be issued shortly.

G4O Series – New QSL sub manager

The QSL bureau reports that there is a new sub manager for call signs G4OAA-OZZ, Steve Harwood, G4OWT. All outstanding cards and envelopes were transferred to Steve shortly before Christmas. With the support of the bureau, Steve is trying to contact all G4Os past and present, to pass on a significant number of outstanding QSL cards and also to update supplies of correctly addressed envelopes and stamps.

If you are a G4O, have information concerning G4O silent keys, perhaps changed your address, or have contact details withheld, please contact Steve, G4OWT, detail as per the members website, QTHR or e-mail directly to g4owt@btinternet.com.

IET Conference Paper

Earlier this year, at the IET 11th International Conference on Ionospheric Radio Systems and Techniques (IRST 2009), Dr Marcus Walden, G0IJZ presented a paper on 5MHz propagation of the f2 extraordinary mode.

This paper is now on the RSGB website for other amateurs to read at www.rsgb.org/spectrumforum/hf/5mhzintro.php.

Board and Regional Elections 2009

It is formally announced that the following vacancies will arise in the Board and Regional Council for the 2009 elections.

THE BOARD (4 VACANCIES)

Colin Thomas, G3PSM. The current President and holder of the International and Spectrum Portfolios will be standing down on 31 December 2009, and is not standing for re-election.

David Wilson, M0OBW takes up the position of President on 1 January 2009. He holds the Emerging Technologies Portfolio and is the RSGB Convention coordinator but will have to relinquish these roles on becoming President.

Anthony Vinters, G0WFG is currently co-opted until 31 December 2009. He holds the Education and Training Portfolio.

There is one vacancy due to the resignation of Robin Bellerby, GM3ZYE in March 2009. He held the Community Radio Portfolio.

If you are interested in one of the above Portfolio positions and serving as a Board member you must have been a corporate member of the RSGB for at least two years and need to obtain nominations and supporting signatures from 10 or more

corporate members of the Society in good standing. Members may stand for election without nominating any particular portfolio.

Nationally elected Board members all hold Portfolio responsibilities, they also serve as Directors of The Radio Society of Great Britain (a Company limited by guarantee) and their duties and responsibilities comply with the Companies Act 2006. Full briefing on these responsibilities will be given on request for election papers. Full training and briefing will be given to successful candidates on taking up their appointments.

THE REGIONAL COUNCIL (3 VACANCIES)

There will be vacancies in the following regions.

Region 1: Scotland South and the Western Isles. Position currently held by Gordon Hunter, GM3ULP, who is co-opted.

Region 8: Northern Ireland. Position currently held by Peter Lowrie, MI5JYK

Region 9: London and Thames Valley. Position currently held by Alison Johnson, G8ROG.

All present incumbents come to the end of their terms of office on 31 December 2009, and are eligible to stand again. However,

candidates are welcome for all vacant positions regardless of whether or not an incumbent is standing for re-election.

Members of the Society who wish to stand for the Regional Council and serve as a regional manager must reside in the relevant region and be prepared to play an active part in the region and as a member of the Regional Council. This commitment includes attending a minimum of six Regional Council meetings per annum.

You must have been a corporate member of the RSGB for at least two years and need to obtain the nominations and supporting signatures of at least five, but no more than 10, corporate members in good standing and residing in the region in which the candidate is standing.

Those members standing for election will be presented to the membership in the December 2009 edition of *RadCom*. The election count will take place on Wednesday 9 December 2009. Successful candidates in both the Board and Regional elections will take up their appointments on 1 January 2010, and will serve a three year term of office.

Requests for election papers should be forwarded to Michelina Gramson, PA to the General Manager. Telephone 01234 832 700 or e-mail GM.Dept@rsgb.org.uk. The closing date for the submission of election papers is 30 October 2009.

GB4FUN Project Teams Required



The RSGB is looking to recruit five 2-person teams to deliver high quality presentations to schools and organisations across the United Kingdom using the GB4FUN mobile classroom. The teams would be based in the South West, North of England, the Midlands, Wales and Scotland.

This is a voluntary role but the RSGB will pay travelling expenses and subsistence.

The position would suit active, fit early retirees who are experienced radio amateurs and technically adept. Experience in giving

presentations would be of benefit but is not essential.

The GB4FUN mobile classroom is a bespoke 27ft trailer fitted out with a modern amateur radio outfit that includes HF, VHF, Satcomms and amateur TV. The setting up of the station involves some climbing and lifting.

Candidates must be willing to undertake full training, which will include a CRB check and the Caravan Club Motoring and Driving Course. They must also undertake to meet all booking commitments within their area of operations, which may mean several days away from home.

If you are interested please e-mail GM.Dept@rsgb.org.uk enclosing a CV of your professional and amateur radio experience.



GB4FUN seeks drivers

The RSGB is looking to recruit two delivery drivers for the GB4FUN project.

Based in the Bedford/Milton Keynes, their role will be to deliver the GB4FUN mobile classroom to the GB4FUN presentation teams based across the United Kingdom.

Candidates must be fit and active and have a clean driving licence. Experience in towing



caravans and trailers would be of benefit but is not essential. Candidates must be willing to undertake training

including the Caravan Club Motoring and Driving Course and be prepared to spend nights away from home. The position would ideally suit early retirees.

This is a voluntary role but the RSGB will pay travelling expenses and subsistence.

If you are interested please Email GM.Dept@rsgb.org.uk enclosing a brief CV of your professional and amateur radio experience.