

# Ofcom consultation on making amateur radio licences fit for the future

On 23 June 2023 Ofcom proposed changes to amateur radio licences and policies to make sure the authorisation regime meets the needs of current and future amateur radio users. Ofcom say its changes are designed to provide radio amateurs with greater operating freedoms to reflect how the hobby has evolved. Ofcom is proposing to update the amateur radio licence to enable amateur radio to continue to develop, within a simplified regulated framework that supports optimal spectrum use. This is part of a broader effort by Ofcom to streamline, standardise and, where possible, further automate elements of its licensing work.

Ofcom is proposing to keep the existing three-tier licensing structure but is proposing a number of other changes. These include: allowing non-licensees to use radio equipment provided they are supervised by a licensee; licensees to hold only one personal licence; a number of changes relating to callsigns; increase the maximum permitted power in some bands by allowing Foundation licensees to transmit with 20W, Intermediate with 100W and Full 1000W; removing the need to obtain some NoVs; liberalising elements of the Foundation licence; allowing some low-power airborne use and simplifying the current licence conditions.

Ofcom is asking for comments on the proposals by 4 September 2023, using the response form provided on its website. Following responses, Ofcom plans to publish its decision by the end of 2023. Ofcom has said that if it was to implement these changes it would be done in three phases of work planned over the next couple of years.

The following summary of the proposed changes appears on pages 3 and 4 of Ofcom's consultation:

## What we [Ofcom] are proposing – in brief

We are proposing changes to our amateur radio licences and guidelines to ensure they meet the needs of today and tomorrow's radio amateurs and streamline the licensing processes. Our proposed changes would:

### 1. Update the overall licensing framework:

- Maintain the existing 3-tier licensing framework while streamlining Notices of Variation (NoV);
- Maintain lifetime licences while updating our mechanisms for revalidation;
- Allow anyone to operate amateur radio equipment under a licensee's supervision;
- Only permit licensees to hold a single individual licence, requiring surrender of lower licences as they progress.

### 2. Streamline and modernise call sign assignment:

- Update our call sign allocation policy in a number of areas including (i) changes to the rules on the reissuing of call signs; (ii) changes to the number of call signs that can be held; (iii) enabling licensees to change their call sign; (iv) expanding the use of suffixes; (v) introducing a new M8 and M9 Intermediate call sign format; (vi) making Regional Secondary Locators (RSLs) optional and simplifying the process for using a special RSL; and (vii) simplifying rules around Special Event Stations.

### 3. Adjust technical parameters to reflect the evolving needs of the hobby and provide radio amateurs with greater operating freedom:

- Increase the maximum permitted transmit power to allow (i) 20 Watts for Foundation and 100 Watts for Intermediate licensees in most bands; and (ii) 1000 Watts for Full licensees in bands where amateur radio has a primary allocation;
- Allow Foundation and Intermediate licensees to use the internet for remote control operation;
- Permit the deployment of repeaters, beacons and gateways without requiring a NoV in most cases;
- Allow Foundation licensees to build their own equipment and access the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz bands; and
- Enable low power airborne use in some frequency bands.

### 4. Provide clearer updated rules (terms and conditions which are easy for everyone to understand):

- Align various terms and conditions with other licences that Ofcom issues;
- Simplify conditions to remove unnecessary complexity and make them clearer; and
- Remove provisions not needed for spectrum management purposes.

We welcome responses to our proposals by 5pm on 4 September 2023. Following responses, we will publish a statement setting out our changes to the amateur radio licence.

The overview section in this document is a simplified high-level summary only. The proposals we are consulting on and our reasoning are set out in the full document.



You can find a link to the consultation via: [rsgb.org/licence-review](https://www.rsgb.org/licence-review)