

GERMAN DRAFT ORDER AND UK INTERFERENCE REGULATIONS TO CONTROL PLT EMISSIONS

In October the RSGB's President Colin Thomas, G3PSM, wrote to the Department of Business and Regulatory Reform (BERR) urging them to support the German Government's proposed Order to put in place their NB30 limits to control interference from Power Line Telecommunications (PLT) systems.

The German proposal was being held for three months by the EU Commission while it consulted Member States under the Directive on Technical Barriers to Trade in Goods and Services. Even though the German proposal was to be limited to protect broadcasting and safety services in the first instance, the RSGB nevertheless supported any move by EU Member States to put measures in place to curtail interference from PLT. This was of particular interest as the EU Commission had themselves supported Member States taking individual action after the failure of its own mandate for a Harmonised Standard in 2006.

BERR replied that it could not support the German measure as it appeared to be a de facto product standard that would thus constitute a technical barrier to trade. In reply the Society has said that this clearly could not be the case as the German measure was to be made under the part of their EMC law, reflecting the EMC directive, that permitted special measures to be put in place in well defined spectrum situations; it was an interference resolution measure, not a general product standard. The Society also made the point that BERR's stance went against previous UK policy where they had themselves obtained clearance for similar interference measures at around MW using UK Standard MPT1570, under the Wireless Telegraphy Act, in 2003.

At the same time RSGB also asked Ofcom to reconsider putting WTA Interference regulations in place at HF to counter the PLT threat in UK. This again was against the background that the UK had previously obtained EU clearance for such measures. Ofcom had refused an earlier RSGB request in 2006. Ofcom's answer in November was in precisely the same words, that they thought this was disproportionate and unnecessary and they would need evidence of interference if they were not to act blindly. They also said that there were other parts of the WTA that could be used to counter such interference, although when they have stated this previously they have, when challenged, been unable to point to them. The RSGB's own experts in these matters believe that no such other powers exist.

Nevertheless there may be signs that this position is changing. In response to a Freedom of Information Act request that RSGB has seen, and at a meeting with the UKQRM group last month, Ofcom, has said in effect that they would consider such regulations in the right circumstances and that they were looking into this. The UK amateur community and other users therefore must live in hope.

RSGB President Colin Thomas, G3PSM, said "PLT is a complete misuse of the radio spectrum by inappropriate technology. We will continue to press Ofcom and other agencies to take non compliant power line adapters (PLAs) and other such equipment off the market and to put suitable safeguards in place to protect the spectrum from harmful interference."