

Anything that is free suggests it is of little value to the giver. Suggesting that the Government/OFCOM do not value amateur radio or the amateur radio movement despite its proven track record of benefit to the community over many, many years. A well trained and disciplined group of people who can be relied upon in emergency conditions is a valuable asset which should be treasured and nurtured. Despite it being history, it was this band of dedicated amateurs that provided the backbone of technical personnel to help develop and deploy and man both radar and wireless equipment that was of such inestimable value in the war effort.

Nowadays the threat is of a different kind, possibly from a terrorist act or a violent act of nature, both of which can be swift, unannounced and devastating. A backup form of communications should be considered a valuable reserve asset. When one considers it is there for the asking, why waste it?

Of course you might argue that it is not being wasted. But consider the long term effects of a free license. Anybody can apply. Today it is just the license itself, but how long before it also applies to the examinations? How long before the effort of maintaining a regulatory system of licensing becomes cost ineffective. Or at least cost ineffective in the Government's eyes?

To finish, please consider how much talent is available for emergency use for free. Why not concentrate on harvesting this talent by requiring all radio amateurs to be available for emergency manning of their equipment if required in a national emergency. I believe this condition is written into the United States license. In fact they put such value on their radio amateur movement, that a licensed radio amateur has automatic rights to erect a radio antenna tower. The local authority cannot reasonably refuse any request by such a radio amateur to erect a tower well above the normal restriction (of around 45 feet I believe). Contrast that with the British system of no special concessions. Every application is studied on its own merits without any form of concession because it is a radio amateur making the request. A very blinkered view, in my humble opinion.

On a different note, some European countries, (possibly France and Holland) charge a fee for their amateur radio licence to cover the cost of investigating complaints of radio interference from members of the public. They then investigate these complaints on behalf of the radio amateur with a view to resolving the issue amicably to both parties. So far as I know, we in the United Kingdom are expected to do our own investigation, even where ill-equipped for such a task. This can lead to rancour and ill-will towards the radio amateur movement through either ignorance or lack of effort from one individual. An independent third party might help resolve such issues more positively and to the benefit of all.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I do hope it might persuade someone at OFCOM to vary their stance on this issue.

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