

To: Amateur Radio Club Chairmen  
Somerset Area, UK

26<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Dear Club Chairman

**Transforming Connections for Local Radio Amateurs – Conference proposal**

We are writing to Radio Clubs and individual Amateurs in and around Somerset to invite you and your club members to take part in a day conference in late May or early June to plan new ways of connecting and promoting Amateur Radio.

**Amateur Radio is in decline across the UK.**

Reducing numbers, an ageing population, technological advance, and less activity are all contributing to a reduction in both the profile and the perceived relevance of the hobby. With few exceptions, the structures that have traditionally sustained the hobby are no longer fit for purpose. In rural communities with low population and isolated communities, the problem is even greater.

Without swift evolutionary change it is inevitable that a number of the region's clubs will increasingly struggle, leading to further reduction in access to the hobby, reinforcing decline and the potential loss of bandwidth.

**We can reverse the decline.**

We believe that in a climate emergency, with expanding globalisation, and increasing pressure on local government resources, Amateur Radio is more relevant than ever. And we have both the skills and the technology to reverse the decline. But we need fresh strategic thinking.

Within the Amateur community there is resilience, technical knowledge, and the energy to put in place new structures that can create better connectivity and expand both the relevance and scope of our hobby. However, we need to do this ourselves. No one will do it for us.

**So we are proposing a day conference** at the end of May or beginning of June, located in central Somerset, for Radio Amateurs in the Somerset area to begin to identify new ways of connecting with everyone interested in wireless communication of all types, and to develop a new strategy for for Amateur Radio in the area.

The conference is being organised jointly by the MidSomerset ARC and the RSGB Region 11 team. It will not be simply a 'talking shop'. We plan practical outcomes that will transform the way we engage together with wireless communication. We seek nothing less than

transforming the structures that connect Amateurs and those interested in wireless communication. At the very least, we want to achieve:

1. Increased numbers entering the hobby
2. Increased on-air activity
3. A stronger social network of like-minded enthusiasts
4. A solid and consistent training/assessment/exam offer at a variety of established locations throughout the Region
5. Regional events supported by a larger active community

**But we aim for much more than this.**

We want to explore new ways of strengthening existing clubs so they can become strategic 'hubs' in a much wider network, supporting each other and individual Amateurs, and to explore ways of creating new communities of interest.

This is an initial letter to ask if your club would like to participate. In order to judge the amount of interest, and therefore the level of resources to commit, we invite expressions of interest in this conference. With a small subsidy from the RSGB, we will aim to keep conference costs to a minimum.

Please could you discuss this proposal with your club members, and let us know the answers to these questions:

1. Would your club be willing to participate?
2. Roughly how many members would like to join the process?
3. What would be the level of cost per person you could commit to the conference?
4. If you wish, we would additionally welcome your club's thoughts on the process we are proposing

If there is sufficient support, we will invite new thinking and call for papers to get us started. Please respond by 30th March by registering your interest either on our conference website, [www.wessexham.co.uk](http://www.wessexham.co.uk) where you can download conference documents and follow the development of this process, or by email to [WessexRadioConference@outlook.com](mailto:WessexRadioConference@outlook.com)

With every good wish

Richard Thomas G4JJP, Chairman, MidSomerset Amateur Radio Club

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