

# IOTA RULE CHANGES AND EFFECT ON NEW ISLAND GROUPS

## RULE CHANGES

RSGB IOTA Directory 50th Anniversary Edition, published in May 2014, included a number of changes to the IOTA rules governing the addition of new islands and island groups.

### FIRST RULE AMENDMENT

E.6.4 which previously stated that “the island must be shown on a map with a scale of at least 1:1,000,000 (10 kilometres to a centimetre or 16 statute miles to 1 inch) has been amended to read: “The island **must** be shown and named on either Google Earth or another officially recognised reference map. See Additional Note 8 below.”

Additional Note 8 reads: “The key requirement that an island be shown on a 1:1,000,000 scale map has been dropped because better maps have become available with the arrival of Google Earth and the new generation of digital maps and mapping tools. The map series had its weaknesses as it gave a very patchy picture in many areas of the world and was invariably out of date but it was the best tool we had at the time (2000) to separate out islands for listing. See consequences under Note 7 above [now below].”

### REQUESTS FOR CONFIRMATION THAT AN ISLAND QUALIFIES FOR A NUMBERED GROUP

E.3.3 reads: “As all islands listed as qualifying for an IOTA group count the same for the purposes of the IOTA Programme, there is no special advantage for the IOTA chaser in a DXpeditioner’s activating one island rather than another. The Directory lists more than 15,000 islands and most groups have ample qualifying islands. The processing of every request for an addition to the list takes valuable time, and this is becoming increasingly difficult to justify in cases where the IOTA group already has numerous qualifying islands. IOTA Management will continue to process deserving cases but will now require strong justification to accompany a request for the addition of islands to groups that already have more than 30 qualifying islands. Justification based on the need for an activation of an unlisted island for another award programme or for a holiday or contest or special activity event would not normally be sufficient.”

Additional Note 7 reads: “It means what it says! The removal of the previous key requirement of an island being shown on a 1:1,000,000 scale map (for reasons see Note 8 below [now above]) means that almost every island shown on Google Earth or any other officially recognised reference map has become a candidate for inclusion in the list of qualifying islands. Given the number of islands world-wide (250,000 and upwards) we have to prevent the chore of validating islands taking over too large a proportion of management time. This justifies a policy of turning down requests that have less value-added purpose for IOTA than for another award programme. Rather than allow IOTA to be seen as the world’s store-room of islands, we have to accept that thousands of islands that could count for IOTA will never do so. That is realism.

“We will of course give priority to unlisted islands in IOTA groups that have few ‘counters’, particularly if they are rare and have a DXpedition planned. This may sound ‘discriminatory’ but it is not since one cannot discriminate against something that is inanimate! We need to encourage folk to look at the IOTA list before progressing their plans too far rather than make arrangements only to find that their island is not listed.”

### REMOTE ISLAND DEFINITION AMENDMENT

E.5.3 which previously defined a ‘Remote island group’ as “a group of one or more islands named in the reference atlas which lie more than 161 kilometres (100 statute miles) at low tide from the officially recognised island group to which they belong” has been amended to “a group of one or more islands named in the reference atlas which lie more than 150 kilometres (94 statute miles) at low tide from the nearest island in the ‘officially recognised island group’ to which they belong.”

Explanation: All other distance measurements in the Rules have been made in rounded kilometre figures and mileage figures have been the untidy ones. It would be consistent to use 150 kilometres rather than 161. This is unlikely to have more than a marginal effect on the listings, maybe a handful of new ones, but worth doing for consistency reasons.

### **EXISTING RULE ON ISLAND GROUP ADDITIONS [NO CHANGE]**

E.1.1 reads “The Directory list has been capped at 1200 IOTA groups. IOTA Management will not consider further additions outside its scheduled reviews (see E.1.2), with the rare exception of the occasional new island DXCC entity group that might qualify under the rules for separate listing (E.5.5). Requests for new groups to be added will invariably be turned down.”

Additional Note 5 reads: “Long ago IOTA Management set a limit of 1200 on the number of groups on the IOTA list. The reason for this was to prevent a real risk developing of the IOTA ‘total’ becoming an unmanageable figure if no cap existed. It took the view that an ‘open-ended’ programme would not be popular with the majority of island chasers, primarily for reasons of time and expense. From Management’s viewpoint QSL cards have to be submitted for each credit claimed and there has to be a limit on the work that we ask Checkpoints to undertake.

“For every island that seems to be a good candidate for a separate IOTA group, there are hundreds of other similar candidates elsewhere, each with its own ardent champion! A detailed set of criteria have been used to establish the present list and, while we don’t claim that different groupings might not have been equally feasible, we believe that the present list is fair, provides a useful mix of easy and difficult groups to work and at the same time reflects decisions taken at earlier stages of IOTA Programme development.

“IOTA Management is however committed to reviewing the list every five years, the last such occasion being in 2014. Between reviews, with the rare exception of the occasional new island DXCC entity group that might qualify under the rules for separate listing or of a previously declared ‘barren’ IOTA group found to possess a valid island, it is unlikely that new groups will be added. As for the five yearly reviews, we can say only that, while we do not wish to bind the hands of IOTA Management in the future, we do not currently expect any changes made to be more than minimal.

“For the reasons given we do not encourage requests for new IOTA groups.”

### **NEW ISLANDS GROUP EXERCISE 2014**

The IOTA Committee made the following announcement on 4 April: “The key event at IOTA’s 50th Anniversary Convention, to be held from 4 to 6 July, will be the announcement of 10 new IOTA groups, the first new tranche to be added since year 2000. Two of these 10 will be left for final decision at the Convention on the basis of evidence-supported representations made in person by delegates. All additions to the list will conform with IOTA rules amended in a minor way in the new IOTA Directory to be published in early May.....” The new Directory has now been published.

The main categories of group recognised by IOTA are detailed at E.5.1 to E.5.8 in the IOTA Directory 50th Anniversary Edition with E.5.3 ‘Remote Island Group’ as the one amended from the earlier 2011 edition. This change together with the change to E.6.4 (the ‘1:1,000,000’ First Rule) opens up the possibility of a few new groups, subject to the overriding requirement to keep the number within the 1200 cap. The announced addition of 10 new groups meets this constraint.

The IOTA Committee will announce 8 new groups on 5 July. These will be ones that it considers have the strongest justification for inclusion from among groups that have been suggested at various times over the last few years. Where there are candidates of equal standing, the Committee is taking into consideration the balance between continents. Europe in particular but, to a lesser degree, North America and Oceania are seen as over-endowed with island groups compared with Asia, Africa and South America, so splitting of existing groups in those continents is kept to the most deserving cases only. As regards Antarctica there

has for some time been a strong case to have a number of currently unnumbered groups combined for the strong reason that most will never be activated. If in the future there are to be further additions to the listings, this issue will need to be addressed.

Delegates at the IOTA Convention in July 2014 are invited to propose candidates for the two additional groups left open for decision.

#### **PROPOSALS MOST LIKELY TO FIND FAVOUR**

- A remote island group qualifying under the new 150 kilometre definition above (note: this only applies to remote islands off recognised island groups, not coastal islands that happen to be separated by more than the required 150 kilometres up a coastline);
- An officially recognised island group, previously included in a larger grouping, which by its size justifies separate listing;
- Otherwise, deserving cases in Africa, Asia and South America.

#### **PROPOSALS LEAST LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED**

- Those splitting existing groups in Europe, North America or Oceania, particularly coastal island groups that are easily accessible and provide little or no challenge;
- Those splitting existing recognised island groups;
- Those based solely on non-relevant factors, e.g. resident amateurs, population or lack of it, environmental, geophysical, ecological, or administrative considerations;
- Those that meet the rules only marginally in terms of 200 metre water-separation compliance and the rules relating to largely enclosed bay and causeway islands (E.7 and E.8 cases);
- Those that are so remote or expensive to activate that there is sufficient doubt that an operation once in every 20 years is likely, e.g. in Antarctica;
- Those that present significant political, social, licensing or access difficulties or potential sensitivity issues unless written evidence is produced that these are surmountable;
- *De minimis* cases, e.g. tiny sandbanks, reefs or rocks or cases where a tiny island's sovereignty is split by casual accident of a straight line (cases where the International Court of Justice has ruled on sovereignty are different and may be considered);
- Those that are proposed without any regard to the criteria at E.5.1 to E.5.8.

#### **PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED**

- All proposals should be submitted to the IOTA Manager ([g3kma@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:g3kma@dsl.pipex.com)) by 20 June – we will need to check validity under the rules (in most cases a check on distances and any history of a previous application); proposals submitted at the Convention without prior warning cannot be considered.
- An opportunity to discuss candidate groups with IOTA Management will be provided over the Convention weekend. This will not be in open session since the decision will not be by a vote of delegates – the decision will rest with IOTA Management taking into consideration the strength of the case in the light of the criteria.
- In the case of a single island candidate group, IOTA Management will expect some evidence that access is allowed, i.e. that it is not privately owned.
- If two strong candidate groups are not forthcoming from the delegates' list, IOTA Management reserves the right to nominate two additional groups itself. They will be confirmed at an early session on the Sunday morning at the latest.
- Following previous practice a new group will, on addition to the list, be provisional until an operation after 6 July has taken place that meets the 1000 QSO requirement. After confirmation of the group number previous contacts with a valid station in the group will be considered for crediting or transfer (with some groups this may not always be possible).

Roger Balister, G3KMA  
RSGB IOTA Manager  
17 May 2014

**SEE BELOW**

<u>Stated Category Criterion</u>	<u>Application</u>	<u>Scope for New Group</u>
E.5.2 'Officially recognised island group'	As stated in rule.	Many mini-groups have been absorbed into a larger IOTA group to keep within the 1200 cap. There may however be some scope for the occasional addition but the justification must be strong in the face of worldwide competition for similar treatment. Very low priority. Will only be considered at 5 year review time.
E.5.3 'Remote island group'	<b>Applies</b> to islands at least 150 km from the nearest island in a recognised island group, e.g. the Canary Islands. Situation: Clearcut. <b>Does not apply</b> to coastal island, i.e. islands lying in sectors of coastline where distance between qualifying islands may be more than 150 km. Reason: real problem of defining clear 150 km separation when there may be coastal rocks complicating separation distance.	Yes. Change in rule from 161 to 150 km offers the possibility of a few new ones. Where shown, acceptance is usually automatic subject to 1200 cap.
E.5.4 'Unofficial island group'	<b>Applies</b> to a sector of coastline which the IOTA Committee has categorised as an unofficial island group, often based on local administrative borders.	Yes. There may be some scope for the occasional addition, particularly in the case of a large sector 'box', but the justification must be strong in the face of worldwide competition for similar treatment. Very low priority. Will only be considered at 5 year review time.
E.5.5 'Island DXCC Entity group'	As stated in rule.	Agreement is usually automatic.
E.5.6 'Large Island'	As stated in rule.	Will only be considered at 5 year review time
E.5.7 'Split sovereignty island'	<b>Applies</b> to islands that have sovereignty split between two or more DXCC entities by international legal judgement, e.g. ICJ ruling, or by formal bilateral agreement. <b>Does not apply</b> in other situations e.g. where border is unclear or ill-defined or is regarded as a <i>de minimis</i> case	Yes but very rare.
E.5.8 'Other single island'	As stated in rule.	Very rare.

<u>Balance criterion</u>	<u>Application</u>	<u>Scope for New Group</u>
Responsibility of Management to ensure that a reasonable balance is maintained between continents and between countries in relation to size.	Europe started with a strong bias in relation to other continents. Some closing was achieved in 2000 but there is some way to go. North America and Oceania are close to the right proportion of the capped 1200. AF, AS and SA are a little under-represented.	Yes, where there are suitable candidates, subject to maintaining the cap.