IOTA RULE CHANGES 2014

The new IOTA Directory, published in May 2014, makes a number of changes to the Rules, to take effect immediately. These were mainly provisions that were out of date and no longer reflected IOTA as it is today. A number of small textual changes that do not alter policy or procedures have also been made.

A series of Additional Notes have been added at the end of the Rules section referring back to certain provisions. They are introduced under a sub-heading called Principles. Elsewhere, others might have called them Manager's Blogs!

PRINCIPLES

The IOTA Programme was devised in 1964 by Geoff Watts, a leading English short wave listener. When in 1985 RSGB took it over at his request, the Society decided that any changes it considered necessary to introduce would not go against certain key principles that underpinned the programme that Geoff had created. It remains the Society's view that this is the right approach. These key principles are:

- *the programme is essentially one of personal achievement and this means that all contacts should be made personally by the applicant;*

- *contacts are valid only if made between the applicant and an operator land-based on an island that is accepted as qualifying;*

- *the need for a level playing-field requires the applicant to make all contacts from the same DXCC entity and in a way that is not considered as giving unfair advantage in the performance listings; and*

- *managing the programme is based largely on trust and any faking of island locations, contacts or cards could lead to disqualification from further participation in IOTA.*

It is often argued that amateur radio has moved on technologically since 1964 and that the IOTA programme should reflect this. IOTA Management would respond that it has done so to a significant extent with the adoption of a trailblazing (at the time) on-line system of application, recognition of digital contacts, limited acceptance of remote station operation and credit given, without the need for cards, for contacts made in the IOTA Contest and that it is committed strategically to looking further at the possibility of adopting a wider system of paperless QSLing. However, it does not accept that the basic rule structure of IOTA has to undergo regular alteration to encompass all technological advances whatever these might be. It recognises that participants sign up to a set of prescribed rules and it would not be fair on them to alter those rules in a way that might be perceived as disadvantaging them competitively in a key way.

C.3.8

Previous:

C.3.8   Contacts made using a single remote receiving or transmitting site are permitted if the site is land-based, is contained within a 500 metre (0.31 statute miles) radius circle and is not located more than 50 kilometres (31 statute miles) from the operator's location, and the control system relies on radio for all linkage (i.e. no internet or non-radio links). The operator and the remote site must be located within the same DXCC entity. IOTA qualification shall be determined by the location of the station operator and the transmitter – to count they need both to be on one or, if a remote transmitter, a maximum two qualifying islands for the same IOTA group. They will not count if either is on the mainland. Use of multiple remote sites or a network using multiple sites is not permitted.

Changed to:

C.3.8   *Contacts made by the applicant using a single remote receiving or transmitting site are accepted for credit if the remote site is land-based, contained within a 500 metre (547 yard) radius circle, not located more than 100 kilometres (62 statute miles) from the operator's location and is nominated as being in use on the applicant's personal profile. The applicant and the remote site must both be located within the same DXCC entity. Use of more than one remote site or a network using multiple sites is not permitted for credit. Contacts between fully automated remotes at both or either end of a path will similarly not receive credit. See Additional Note 3 below.*

C.3.9   *Contacts made with a station found to be remotely operated will count for IOTA credit if the station operator and the remote receiving or transmitting station are both located on one or a maximum two qualifying islands for the same IOTA group (i.e. neither is on the mainland).*

Additional Note 3

In 2011 IOTA Management introduced a slightly different version of this rule. It has now amended it in two important respects. It has removed the restriction on the control system that required a radio link since most equipment now available on the market relies on an Internet link. It has also expanded the distance allowed from the operator's location to the remote station from 50 kilometres to 100 kilometres.

IOTA Management is aware of the social needs in society and that, for some people, continued engagement in amateur radio through access to a remote station can make all the difference. In particular, residents of retirement homes can benefit as well as folk who have downsized their homes and those who are space- and / or equipment-challenged. The increase to 100 kilometres provides significantly more leeway for the siting and / or use of a remote station.

Propagation between the two ends of a 100 kilometre path is seldom likely to be sufficiently different as to affect the chances of an IOTA contact on the main HF / LF bands. The proposal occasionally made that there should be no restriction on remote operation so long as it remains within licence conditions cannot be accepted as this would be 'pushing the envelope' and regularly disadvantaging other participants. Unrestricted use of multiple remote sites or a network using multiple sites means effectively multiple location / station use rather than the single location / station use envisaged by Geoff Watts and the practice of using a remote station at distances of thousands of kilometres, perhaps even in a different DXCC entity, would remove all semblance of a level playing-field in fairly obvious ways. In all such cases it breaches the third principle above. The argument that it uses technology to make contacts that would not otherwise be possible may be true but this is not IOTA in the sense that most participants wish it to be. The further argument that such a rule is largely unenforceable is probably also true but Geoff's fourth principle about trust and the consequences of faking contacts applies here.

C.5.1

Previous:

C.5.2   *If you choose to submit your application on paper (we really hope you will go on-line), follow the rules below and in this case you will need to complete Parts 1 and 2 of Application Form for Paper Submission at Annex D.*

Changed to:

C.5.1   *There are now several ways of applying: Manual Entry (with contact details taken from the cards), ADIF Log Upload (cards also required) or IOTA Contest Cabrillo File Upload (cards not required). They can be combined into one application made on-line on the Central IOTA Database. Paper-based submissions, i.e. not supported by entry on-line, are not accepted.*

E.3.3

Previous:

***E.3.3**. 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 qualifiers. The Committee will continue to process deserving cases but will now institute a practice of normally holding over requests to add islands to groups with more than 25 qualifiers to a twice-yearly review, in April and October. Folk hiring a holiday or contest event cottage should note and act in good time but first consider whether or not going to a listed island is just as good.*

Changed to:

***E.3.3**. 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. See Additional Note 7 below.*

Additional Note 7

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 Comment 8 below) 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 as 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.

E.5.3

Previous:

***E.5.3** 'Remote island group' – defined 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.*

Changed to:

***E.5.3** 'Remote island group' – defined as 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.

E.6.4

Previous:

E.6.4   FIRST RULE – *The island* **must** *be shown on a map with a scale of at least 1:1,000,000 (10 kilometres to 1 centimetre or 16 statute miles to 1 inch).*

Changed to:

E.6.4   FIRST RULE – *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

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.

Roger Balister, G3KMA
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