

JOTA 2020

Thoughts and suggestions for running a JOTA station with Covid-19 restrictions

From John M5ET:

- Plan whatever activity you wish to plan, with the assumption that you will not be able to have any youngsters in direct attendance
- Consider options for live-streaming if you wish (HQ have a Zoom agreement you may be able to use to get access to an account, YouTube Live, Facebook Live, maybe even Twitch or other similar streaming platforms all provide options) as you could then potentially share your station with the youngsters and demonstrate operation if they are interested
- Consider whether you could activate a station just to be a presence on the air - other countries may be back to normal operation even if we aren't, and other Scouters may be on the air themselves and looking for contacts
- Encourage your youngsters to make full use of JOTI - there are plenty of ways to communicate with other Scouts and Scouters during that weekend even if radio isn't an option, and most of the JOTI side things can be done at home without specialist equipment

The original JOTA, as thought up by Les in the first years, was a way for Scouts and Scouters to stay in touch and meet every year. Whilst these days it's more in-depth and tends to involve demonstration stations and lots of greetings messages from unlicensed scouts, there's nothing to stop us going back to 'the old way' of licensed Scouters/Scouts making contact with other licensed Scouters/Scouts and 'just having a chat'. It seems almost fitting, that even without being to do the big demonstration pieces, we can still make good use of our licences and get on the air.

My intention is to be on the air during the weekend, and I hope to be able to make contact with some of you even if we can't meet up at 'big' multi-person stations the way we're used to doing.

From Richard Hudson (and others):

One of my thoughts was a virtual station using Zoom (as it's the app of choice over here for most everything) .

From John Ludvig:

With the level being amber and groups of no more than 15 outdoors with no residential, I was working on running our station as a mini field day on our activity field. Usually I run a weekend course with indoor accommodation which is clearly out for this year.

Slots would have to be booked for groups of young people and we would have to do some cleaning between slots and be careful of social distancing and the wearing of masks while operating? We have room to set up stations under event shelters so could reduce the exposure that way.

Might not be able to do the late working we have been used to or the range of activities but would at least get some young people on the air.

From John GM8JBJ:

Imagine a Zoom meeting connected to an HF transceiver with young people talking and listening to other Scouts via short-wave radio. In readiness level Amber, that is going to be JOTA this year for the Borders District in Scotland.

John, GM8JBJ, and Richard, G0REL, successfully completed a simulation of JOTA with Sue, MM3SLB, acting as Zoom controller. Voice quality of Zoom participants was excellent in both directions.

The connection between Zoom and HF was made using an XGGcomms digital interface containing a C-Media CM108 sound card for digital to audio conversion. The interface links the Zoom PC USB socket to the HF transceiver 13-pin facilities socket. Normally digital interfaces use an audio VOX to key the transmitter. An interface was introduced to disable the audio VOX and add a manual PTT.



This interface allows the ham operator to set up the call and virtually ‘pass the mic’ to a Zoom-connected Scout to exchange a greetings message. The Scout can be anywhere. The interface will allow a large number of Scouts to qualify for part of their Communicator Activity Badge, logging 25 stations.

Contact John, GM8JBJ, at john.berry@borderscouts.org.uk for more information.

Jamboree-on-the-Air this year is to be held on Friday, 16th to Sunday, 18th October. The Scouts are currently at readiness level Amber in most of the UK (and Red in some areas) and this will likely persist over the JOTA weekend. This level precludes traditional JOTA operation with the ham located beside the Scout. New methods of operation must be found, such as that described.