

# Start Here

## Renewing your Lifetime amateur radio licence

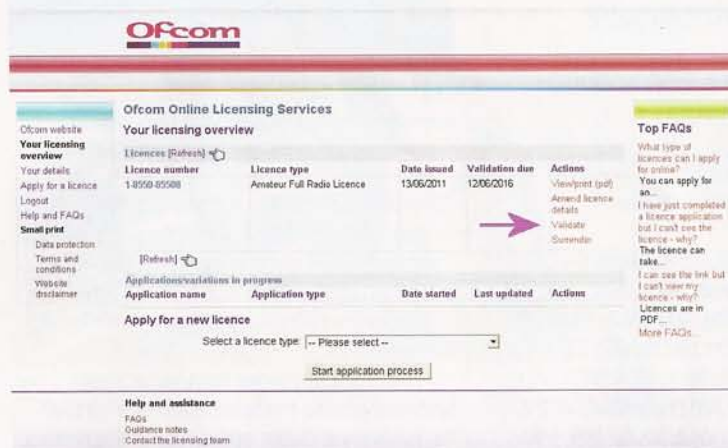


FIGURE 1: The main screen of the Ofcom licensing system, where you Validate your Lifetime Licence.

**INTRODUCTION.** In this month's Start Here, we help guide you through the process of renewing your licence (and also explain what clubs need to do). Although our amateur radio licences are for 'life', we're still required to make sure that our licence details are up to date and to renew it online at least once every five years. As the first Lifetime licences were issued in November 2006, some people will shortly be coming up to that milestone. (However, some the earliest licences have been granted an extension to 6 years – see later).

**WHAT DO I NEED?** In order to get started, you need a computer with access to the internet and the ability to view Adobe PDF files. This could be your home computer or even one at a local public library as the renewal process doesn't require you to install any software. You'll also need an e-mail account so that you can receive an e-mail from Ofcom with your username and password. For those of you who haven't got an e-mail account yet, a good option is a web based service such as Gmail ([www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com)) where you can create an account for free and get to it from any computer that has internet access. Finally you'll need your licence number – this is the one on your 'new licence for life'. This is not necessarily the licence number on the first document you got for your callsign, particularly for those of us who were licensed before 2006, as the licence numbers were updated when Ofcom moved to the current system.

**WHERE DO I START?** Armed with the above information, go to the website <http://licensing.ofcom.org.uk>. Under 'Radio Communications Licences' click on 'Amateur

Radio'. Now click on 'Validate your existing Amateur Radio Licence online'. You should then be presented with a screen informing you about Ofcom's decision to extend by a year licences issued between November 2006 and August 2007 because they expect to

be very busy with Olympic licensing issues in 2012. Click on the 'Validate your Amateur Radio Licence online' link.

We're now asked to login in. For those of you who already have login details, you can proceed to login now. But if this is your first time to the Ofcom website you will probably need to create a new login.

- To create a new login, click Register as a new individual user. You will see a form asking for basic personal details and inviting you to choose a password and security question. Your password needs to be between 7 and 14 characters long and include upper and lower case letters plus at least one number. This places quite a burden on you to remember it, especially given the large number of usernames and passwords we have these days. Rather than using the same password for lots of applications, we suggest you choose a new suitable password and keep it in a safe place, not on your computer. This way if one of your interests was compromised, access isn't automatically given to all your interests!
- Once you've filled in these details, you can click continue where you'll be asked to enter your address (or, sometimes, select it from a list). Note that even if there is just one entry in the list, you still need to click on it to highlight it. After clicking continue, you're required to agree to Ofcom's data protection statement in order to continue. Now we're finally registered and we have to wait (a short while) for an e-mail from Ofcom with our username and password. The e-mail that contains your username and password together is in plain text, ie readable by anyone who has access to your e-mail account. So your licence

details become only as secure as your e-mail access, despite being forced to choose such a secure password on their website. We suggest you delete this e-mail once you've memorised or safely stored the username and password details off of your computer.

**LOGGING IN.** Once you have your username and password, you can now log in. This brings you to an overview page of your licence(s), which shows a table all of your valid calls but not ones that you have surrendered (see Figure 1).

In the right most column you can then click on a link to take the appropriate actions, usually to first 'View/print' the licence so that you can check it. Once you're happy that it's what you expect, click on 'Validate' (arrowed in Figure 1). This brings you to a page where you're asked to confirm your licence details are correct or to amend your details.

If you need to amend your details, click 'I need to amend my licence details'. Some find the amendment process initially misleading, looking like you're requesting a new licence. However, follow through the process, giving the necessary details and, after accepting the licence declaration, it should tell you that your licence details have been successfully updated.

If your details are correct, click on the 'My licence details are correct' button. This renews your licence for another 5 years from the day that you click the button. You can then use the menu on the left side of the screen to return to the overview of your licences. Once you've finished you can choose 'Logout' from the menu on the left to exit.

**WHAT ABOUT CLUB CALLS?** Club callsigns are relatively easy to renew/validate. Since each club callsign is issued to an individual licence holder, when the licence holder sets up a username and password to renew their personal callsign they'll see the club callsign in their licence overview and can renew it in the same manner as their personal licence. However, they are the only person to be able to do this so it may require some careful management to make sure it's renewed on time.

**SUMMARY.** Hopefully, this article has helped you to renew your licence(s) and in the process made you slightly more familiar with the Ofcom website.

In our next Start Here we will begin to demystify some of the jargon that we see in adverts for transceivers.