

HF Radiotelephone Services

Portishead Radio

BT's long-range station (Portishead Radio) is located at Highbridge in Somerset, with transmitters at Rugby, Warwickshire. The receiving antenna site is at Somerton, Somerset.

Directional antennas are employed in order to provide the best possible reception of signals.

Making a call

Portishead Radio maintains a listening watch on all main channels. Please make your initial call on one of these channels unless an announcement has been made that an extra channel is available.

Firstly, ensure that your transmitter and receiver are tuned to correct "paired" frequencies (see chart overleaf). Once this has been done, listen on your receive frequency to ensure that the channel is clear, remember that you will only be able to hear one side of the conversation.

When you are satisfied that the channel is clear, call Portishead Radio clearly, giving your vessel's name and callsign, together with the channel number or identification you are calling on. This helps our operator to retune our transmitter to your frequency if it is tuned elsewhere.

Calling Procedure

When making your initial call, please ensure that the following format is used;

"Ship's name" (3 times)

this is

"Vessel's name (3 times), callsign "XXXX" (the callsign allocated to you) calling on GKU46" (or other channel identification).

When we hear you, you will either be given a turn number, or we will take your call details immediately, dependent on traffic conditions prevailing at the time.

If Portishead does not respond immediately to your call, wait for a couple of minutes before trying again; our operator may be busy on another frequency. If, after numerous calls, you still cannot elicit a reply from us, it may be best to call us on another frequency. Although you may hear us clearly, we may not be able to hear you.

Connecting your call

After contact has been established, you will be asked for the number or service you require. Please ensure that you have the area code available when making your call.

You will be told to stand by whilst our operator connects you, and advised when the line is available. If we cannot get an answer, or the line is busy, you will be told.

You do not start paying for the call until you are told to go ahead.

Paying for the call

This can be done by four methods:

1. By quoting your vessel's AAIC (accounting authority).

2. By the use of a BT Chargecard.
3. By transfer charge. This service only available to the USA, Canada and UK, and attracts a supplementary charge.
4. By "Direct Billing" — similar to the "YTD" facility used on VHF, where a nominated UK number can be billed for all calls. Each time a "Direct Billing" call is required, the name of the person making the call and the name of the person being called are required. There is no supplementary charge for this facility.

Choosing the best frequency

Some basic knowledge of radio propagation is desirable, as this will certainly assist in obtaining calls of commercial quality. You should take into account your vessel's position when calling Portishead, together with the time of day.

As a guide, if there is a daylight path between your position and the UK, then a higher frequency should be used; similarly, if a darkness path exists, then a lower frequency should be tried. Of course, if you are within Western European waters, then it is unlikely that 22MHz will be used; 12 or 16MHz should be used during daylight, with 8MHz or 4MHz being used at night.

For vessels further away, more care needs to be taken in choosing your optimum frequency; listen out for Portishead or any other Western European radio station to ascertain which band is giving the best reception, as this will certainly be a help to you.

Traffic Lists

These are broadcast each hour on the hour on all main channels. British-registered vessels are called first, followed by overseas-registered vessels. Vessels for which we do not hold a callsign are called by their name prior to the list.

It is possible that the traffic list may be delayed due to a call being in progress at the scheduled time; in this case, the list will follow as soon as possible after the call has finished.

To-ship calls

These may be booked in advance by calling Portishead (free) on 0800 378 389. We will need details of the vessel, such as name, callsign and approximate position. The vessel will be called for 24 hours in our traffic lists, and if no response is forthcoming, the call is cancelled.

Medical assistance

Portishead radio can help if you, or someone else on board your vessel needs medical advice.

Call Portishead as described earlier, but state in your initial call that you have a "MEDICO" call to make.

Portishead will give you priority, and connect you directly to the Casualty officer at the Royal Naval Hospital, Gosport, who will advise you what to do.

There is no charge for this service.

Weather information

Portishead Radio does not broadcast weather information by Radiotelephone. However, if you are located outside UK waters, we can connect you directly to the Meteorological Office at Bracknell, who will be able to provide you with the latest forecast for your location.

The cost of this service is as a from-ship to UK call — no supplement is charged.

Autolink

A direct-dial Radiotelephone service is available on certain HF channels. This service is available to suitably equipped vessels, and a "scrambling" facility is available. This service is only available in the from-ship direction. Further details may be obtained on request.

Radiotelegrams

A vessel may send and receive radiotelegrams using Portishead's HF R/T service. Telegrams received for your vessel are held at Portishead awaiting collection; you will be called in our hourly traffic list if we hold any items for you.

Should you wish to send a radiotelegram, the following procedure should be used:

1. When the Portishead operator tells you to "go ahead", you should firstly dictate the preamble. This consists of:
 - i. Your vessel's name and callsign.
 - ii. The serial number of the telegram.
 - iii. The number of words in the telegram (a word consists of a maximum of 10 letters — words of 11 letters or more are charged as 2 words).
 - iv. The date and time of handing in of telegram.
 - v. Your vessel's accounting authority.
2. The address should then be quoted. We cannot deliver telegrams by telephone or fax. Registered telegraphic addresses or full postal addresses are acceptable. Delivery by telex is effected if you quote the telex number of the destination.
3. The text should be dictated. Be sure to spell phonetically any words which may cause difficulty.
4. The Portishead operator will confirm receipt when your message has been checked and any doubtful words verified.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For more information about any BT Maritime Radio services, contact the Customer Services office on;

Telephone: 0278 772253

Fax: 0278 772222

Telex: 46506 BTGKA G

Offices in Europe, North America, and the Far East.

The telecommunications services described in this publication are subject to availability and may be modified from time to time. Services and equipment are provided subject to British Telecommunications plc's respective standard conditions of contract. Nothing in this publication forms any part of any contract.