

# FUTURE DXPEDITION FUNDINGS

**By Bill Horner, VK4FW**

After many long hours of procrastination I sit here and write this article fully knowing that there will be many out there who think that I am a bottle of beer short of a six pack. Never the less, below is what I perceive as a way to ensure that the vast majority of operators throughout the world actually support DXpeditions and get that elusive QSL card. I might add here that I have made a point of consulting other DXpeditioners with these ideas before I sit here now penning them. So here goes and yes I have my flak jacket and hard hat securely fastened.

1. DX organisations need to find a way to recruit more members so that they have sufficient funds to better support dxpeditions.
2. DXpeditions themselves need to be more accountable when it comes to itemised costings and be more transparent financially. When a DXpedition solicits donations they need to fully realise that they are now under scrutiny from the rest of the world. I never again want to see a fiasco like the recent ongoing ZL9HR saga. That simply should not happen in any way.
3. QSLing..... *oh what a touchy subject!* We have the usual operators who will do the right thing and maybe even send \$10 or so to show their support and appreciation to the DXpedition. Then we have those who seem to think it's OK to send \$2 ( which does not even cover postage ) for the 15 QSO's they made, which will take at least 3 QSL cards to fill and then there are the rest who do nothing at all to show any support and expect their card via an out of date expensive buro system. The last 2 examples need to have a total rethink. We have LOTW and EQSL but neither of these are of any help in supporting DXpeditions.
4. I left this till last on purpose. How do we convince most DXers to send a few dollars support to the Paypal link of DXpeditions. Let us remember that 90% of DXpeditioner's are just every day working people who have

a love of being on the end of a good pile up for days at a time. The majority are not rich or even well-off... they are a bunch of hams who are willing to spend the majority of their holiday time operating a rig instead of enjoying their destination. And, believe me, it takes a very special wife to agree to this...whether they go along or not! There has always been a few who profess that since these are 'personal holiday's' that they should not seek any support. But, that is a topic for another article! The focus of this article is simply about the cost of QSLing by the DXpeditioner or their manager. There are small dxpeditions and of course large ones and each and every one of them deserve support from the people that need it for a new one be it for a band or mode or an all-time new one. We all need to remember that if they did not go, the rest of us would not work that entity for a new DXC/band/mode contact.

OK so now how do we actually go about improving all the above?

When you sit and think about it all, it's a tough question to find answers to without offending someone. Well offend or not, we as DXers realistically need to make some serious changes if we expect to be able to still have a QSL system of any kind in 10 years time. If we realistically expect to get on the honour roll, then some of us damn well have to look at just how we think about supporting the QSL systems and DXpeditions.

So let's start

1. For the most part, DX organisations have done a wonderful job at supporting DXpeditions. In saying that, some of the latest criteria points they are using really are a bit over the top. Whilst there is no way to enforce every operator to belong to a DX organisation, it would be a marvellous way to improve funding. DX organisations have got to get back to the grass roots of amateurs and show them why it is important and a necessity for them to become members. I am personally a member of 4 around the world..... that is a choice I make because I appreciate the support they give. The members of these organisations also need to look at how they can foster the growth by getting just one of their friends to join. There is an old saying: many hands make light

work..... Money more than anything else in the world is a classic example of this. The more money you have the easier things become.

2. Accountability from DXpeditions is a must if they expect to solicit donations. There can never be another sage like the recent one. The collateral damage and fall out from that will haunt us for years and that organisation will find it all but impossible to ever get support again from the vast population. How do we become more accountable... how do we make sure that all operators actually share in donations..... yes its time for some radical changes here. All DXpeditions who solicit donations should be required to have a central accountable collection point as an independent agency who will administer funds collected. I would suggest a well to do recognised DX organisation. EG. Let's say that PDX was chosen and the PDX board would select one of its officials to administer it. That would then mean that all DXpedition costings would be sent to that person and all dxpedition funding also. He/She would then distribute the funds as required in an appropriate time frame. If this became part of DXpedition funding criteria and a DXpedition chose not to do this then they would obviously be on their own as such. Now before you all start shooting me just think how well this would actually work..... and yes it would need some deep thought but it would ensure full accountability and the rest of the world would appreciate the open honesty which would result in more donations especially from private individuals.
3. Now for the actual QSLing..... *now this is without a doubt a very large can of worms.....* and as some would say, "Let's see how many feathers get ruffled" with these practical ideas. The current QSL system is so far out of date that it is now costing substantial funds to administer. The average airmail letter around the world now costs more than the good old "green stamp" or two. From Australia it is now \$2.60 to anywhere in the world and that is just for a letter under 50grams. This means while it is still true that a single card can be sent via airmail for AU\$1.75, but if the requestor wants QSO's confirmed, then multiple cards need to be sent, and that means sending them at the regular international airmail rate! To send a direct card from just about anywhere in the world is now a minimum of \$3usd [or equiv] for multiple cards, and still more than \$2

for a single card. OQRS for the most part is \$3-5 basically because of associated costs in administering it..... Paypal take their fee and the manager is up for literally thousands of envelopes. Then there is the out-dated world- wide buro system ..... A package that used to cost me \$11 2.5 years ago now costs me almost \$27 to post..... *that a huge increase by anyone's measure*. Then there is LOTW and EQSL which as an electronic way of getting confirmation is fine expect that the dxpedition receives nil support.

How do we fix it..... *simple* ..... All direct cards continue as before, but allow for the increased cost of postage. BUT...Card requests via the bureau system should now include a \$0.15 fee for each card and paid for by OQRS or direct Paypal arrangement. Dxpediton QSL's should no longer be accepted and responded to by DXpeditioners or their QSL Managers without the minimum \$0.15 per card. Even most bureau's charge their members for outward QSL cards, and some Bureau's will only handle Dxpediton QSL's if the Dxpediton joins their society! Then there are bureaus that will not send cards to non-members...(I would guess it would be in the best interest of the dxpedition to make sure say 4 or 5 qsos fit). Direct cards would get answered in the usual timely manner and buro cards with the \$0.15 fee per card would get answered in say a years time. Cards without any fee paid to cover the actual cost of posting should simply be rejected (after a transition period to notify all members). LOTW and EQSL should insert a fee into their structure which would then go to the DXpedition. Now some I can guess already are thinking "*is this guy plain mad*" ..... No, not mad... just looking at what it takes to improve the way we all support these operations and I am telling you all now the ones who request the QSL should at least cover the cost to print/processing/sending them! With costs of everything increasing, there is no room in this world anymore for freebies. [*Except for those few who use 'pocket change' to fund their Dxpeditons!*] It is finished and has been for a while. If LOTW and EQSL do not instigate some measure of support for DXpeditions and radio in general then, for me, Dxpeditons and DX might as well forget using any form of QSLing except via the DIRECT methods. Currently LOTW and EQSL have achieved is a way that the freebies of this world continue to

get just that and now that DX organisations are insisting that logs are put on LOTW within a set time frame, the actual DX organisation is doing the same. The electronic QSLing system is costing support no matter which way you look at it. We must make changes or find that the majority of DXpeditions will not be able to happen with all the increase in costs. I am aware of a new secure electronic QSL transfer system that will solve all of these problems but at this time I can not divulge any more about it until it has been thoroughly tested for security and user friendliness.

4. Paypal, whilst they take their percentage cut, is without doubt a great way to send money to just about every corner of the globe. Over the last 5 years or so many DXpeditions have requested donations via this medium including the OQRS system. So how do we entice more of us to do so..... I remember years ago when a group went to Spratly Island. The usual donations required went out to us all and many sent many dollars to support the team only to find that they stayed and operated from a bloody 5 star hotel. The outcry from that was huge and thousands publically stated they would never send support again. I personally know of many today that will not support DXpeditions because of that group. Yes they did the wrong thing and I guess they probably know it today. Remember what I said earlier about accountability. At the end of the day operators have got to look at the accountability situation and find a way to send even just \$2. Just imagine what would happen if 15,000 amateurs that need a new one sent just \$2 for every one..... remember many hands make light work. It is not that we should all send \$10 or \$20... it is that we must collectively get behind DXpeditions and if we all did so then it becomes easy. I can hear you saying that we will have more DXpeditions and it will cost a fortune..... No not really you have to remember that the average DXpeditioner is a working class person who utilises their yearly holiday time DXpeditioning. Yes we do have an element of the rich in our midst and yes I get shirting when they chase sponsorship, in fact I get real shirty and refuse to support them at all. I do not appreciate the rich and famous making a mockery of the system or a certain UK DX Club attempting to force their criteria on all Dxpeditons, then if they do not comply, a lot of negative comment is made in the social media.

Now that I have said all of that I have another very radical idea..... But you all better be sitting down first, I do not want to be held accountable for any heart attacks..... Below are a set of figures as a guide only. I have not taken into account Paypal fees or the like. I would certainly administer this whole thing without hesitation and ensure that all costings are made very public..... and yes there would have to be a SMALL admin fee but the word is SMALL. We do not want someone who thinks it is a chance to exploit others. I am sick to death of them types.

5. How would it be if an organisation was to create a major data base that you could use where you could submit your entire wanted list and for every one you submitted you send in \$5. What's that I hear you say..... Send in \$5 for every one I submit..... gee that's going to cost me \$150 ( for 30 ), I cannot afford that. Take a look in your shack, fact is the average person has spent \$7k on radio gear and that is very conservative so don't sit there and say you cannot afford \$5 ..... It's BS. You seriously need to get off your arse and put your hand in your pocket and show support. Now getting back to the idea..... If for the first year there are say 10 DXpeditions that took place that you needed ( does not matter if you worked them or not ) the administrator would automatically send each one a donation of \$5 per station that needed it from the database list. ( if the DXpedition applied for funding ). So if there was 5000 stations said they needed Heard Island then the administrator would inform the dxpedition that there would be 5000 x\$5 coming Obviously we would like to think that the 5000 that needed it got into the log. Now you're all sitting there wondering what happens next year. Simple the data base carries on. Needless to say the money in the trust account would be earning interest. That interest could be kept for the special say top 10 DXpedition and a decision on how much extra would be made by the administrator or a panel of members appointed.

I was requested to put some idea down on paper as part of a collection of views to see if there is some way we can all ensure that DXpedition funding increases. I have done that and whilst the ideas in this article may need some

refining I know that we cannot sit on our hands and do nothing if we expect to continue to work DX from those rare and hard to get places.

Times are changing and costs keep rising, we must change with them or die out.