

The 'How?' And 'Why?' of CLEs

Why do we have 'Co-ordinated Listening Events'?

Because they encourage us to practice our hobby and to learn more about it.
Because they allow us to improve our listening stations and our technique by comparing our results with others.
Because they extend our interest to different kinds of Beacon such as DGPS, Navtex, Amateur...
but most of all -
Because they are **FUN!**

I've not made a CLE log before - how do I start?

First-timer logs are always **very** welcome.
Don't worry about 'doing it right' - the CLE Co-ordinator would re-type a first log if necessary to get it through!
If you use a format similar to that of any of the logs sent to the NDB List, it will be OK.
To get started you could use Word or even type your log as a Notepad file.

There are some excellent log-making programs provided by our members. Alex's 'WWSU' is a popular one which includes a comprehensive database of the NDBs that you are likely to hear. It makes logs which are 'CLE-friendly' of course - I always know I'll not have much trouble when I see a log made that way!

Always include details of your location and your station (receiver, aerial, etc.) so that your log can be of interest to all, whether they are new or old members.

What order should I put my loggings in?

Any order you like.
Most listeners choose frequency order, but, for some CLEs, country order or time order might be more suitable.

Can I show more than one logging of the same NDB?

Yes, but that is seldom done. The combined results would only show one of the loggings, chosen fairly randomly. Maybe better if you can just show one logging - one made by daytime perhaps.

How are all the Logs put together to make the 'Combined Results'?

There is a short and a long answer to this. Here is a short-ish answer!

The Co-ordinator copy/pastes each log into a Notepad (text) file.
He adds an extra record at the start of each one to identify who sent it.
The big file containing everyone's loggings is then processed by a BASIC (!) program which searches for the day, UTC, kHz and Ident in every line of every log.
It writes the records to an output file with these fields always in the same order.
The program seems to have been christened 'The (Combine) Harvester'!

That file of all the reports is then imported as a table into an Access database.
The reports can then be compared with a 'master list' containing all the NDBs and their locations, etc.

There are umpteen Access programs which check for any problems in the reports or in the database and produce the various tables of combined results.

The results from several of these programs are copy/pasted into a skeleton Excel file ready to attach to the results email.

How long does that take?

Most of the job involves launching programs in sequence (each one takes a matter of seconds to run). Mostly I only actually 'do something else' if a program signals a problem that needs to be sorted. The routine part takes 2 or 3 hours for each 'half' (Europe / Others), plus maybe an hour or so sorting the problems. A useful amount of that can be done soon after the CLE ends - sometimes getting back to reporters for extra information if necessary, such as their Lat./Long. location.

An important stage is a 'quick' visual check on all the reports when they have been put in kHz/Ident order. It typically looks like this extract (from CLE87):

Location	Cou	U	X	R	kHz	C/S	Rptr	Details	nm	UTC
Cagliari	SAR				371	CAG	CZE kh	27 00:08 371 CAG 1221 CAGLIARI. SAR "		00:08
Cagliari	SAR				371	CAG	DEU hw	27 00:06 371 CAG SAR Elmas (CA) "		00:06
Cagliari	SAR				371	CAG	SAR gc	27 2032 371 CAG Cagliari SAR 46 "		20:32
Oujda Angads	MRC				371	CNU	ENG bk	28 20:15 371 CNU 0.4 1 (5.5sec) Oujda		20:15
Oujda Angads	MRC				371	CNU	ENG py	27 00:10 371 CNU 1799 Oujda/Angads.		00:10
Frosinone	ITA				371	FRS	CZE kh	27 00:10 371 FRS 904 FROSINONE. ITA "		00:10
Frosinone	ITA				371	FRS	DEU hw	26 22:21 371 FRS ITA Frosinone (FR) "		22:21
Frosinone	ITA				371	FRS	ENG py	27 22:27 371 FRS 1414 Frosinone (fr). ITA		22:27
Frosinone	ITA				371	FRS	FRA vl	27 371.0 FRS 2051 1020 ITA "		20:51
Frosinone	ITA				371	FRS	SAR gc	27 2036 371 FRS Frosinone ITA 447 "		20:36
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	CZE ze	28 2108 371 HAA Hamar/Stafsberg.NOR		21:08
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	DEU hw	26 17:55 371 HAA NOR Hamar / Stafsberg		17:55
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	DEU mz	26 2145 371.00 HAA Hamar/Stafsberg		21:45
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	DNK hn	28 23:34 371 HAA 579 Hamar. NOR "		23:34
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	ENG ag	26 1930 371.0 HAA Hamar/Stafsberg NOR		19:30
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	ENG bk	26 22:34 371 HAA 0.4 1 (7sec) Hamar		22:34
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	ENG br	27 15:04 371.0 HAA Hamar / Stafsberg.		15:04
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	ENG py	27 21:32 371 HAA 1281 Hamar/Stafsberg.		21:32
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	FIN ks	26 13:54 371 HAA 851 Hamar. NOR "		13:54
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	FRA jj	28 05:54 371.00 HAA Hamar "		05:54
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	HOL fg	371 26 20:35 HAA NOR Hamar / Stafsberg		20:35
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	HOL jz	27 23:22 371 HAA NOR "		23:22
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	HOL rb	26 11:35 371.0 HAA 400 1135 NOR		11:35
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	IRL fo	29 0122 371 HAA Norway "		01:22
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	SWE bn	26 1431 371 HAA Hamar NOR "		14:31
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	SWE ld	26 21:48 371 HAA HAMAR NOR 345 "		21:48
Hamar	NOR				371	HAA	SWE tn	27 2100 371 HAA Hamar. Stafsberg NOR		21:00
Djerba	TUN				371	JER	CZE kh	26 23:50 371 JER 1780 Djerba / Zarzis.		23:50
Djerba	TUN				371	JER	DEU hw	27 00:02 371 JER TUN Djerba / Zarzis "		00:02

The 'Location' names and Countries come from my Database, the 'Details' from the actual reporters' logs. Those details are scanned by eye to check that the Database contains suitable Location names. Most 'serious' problems would have been found before this stage, but the narrow columns, headed U, X, etc., would contain an error flag if the program still finds something wrong, such as the Lat/Long missing for an NDB.

Does it need to be so complicated?

No!

I guess another Co-ordinator would allow more 'errors' to get into the combined results, or would require a more rigid format for everyone's log entries. Probably neither of those changes would matter much.

Why do you ask for the CLE No. (CLE87, etc.) in email Subject headings?

I use Outlook Express 'Message Rules' to put all List emails with 'CLE' in their Subject into my CLE folder. (It would also put ones containing 'non-CLE' or 'article' there, so I include extra tests for those too!) With so many List emails these days, that allows me to pick out the CLE ones immediately and there is a much lower chance that I'll miss finding someone's CLE log.

Can I use any format for dates?

Yes - but some are better than others!

Here are examples of all the date formats that were actually used in the CLE87 logs to indicate 26th Jan:

26	Most reporters, especially in Europe (see the table above) use the suggested short
26-Jan	'dd' format, leaving more space for them to show extra information about the loggings.
26/01/2007	
2007-01-26	Apart from that, it is suggested that the formats showing year , then month , then day
26.01.2007	are preferred because the records can then be easily sorted into true date order.
26.01	
26/01/07	It's not easy for the program to 'harvest' all these formats, recognising each one and converting
20070126	them to '26', especially as the UTC entries (themselves also in a variety of different formats)

01/26/07 and the kHz entries could be anywhere in there too - and some Idents start with a number too!
01-26-07
01-26 However, the 'harvesting' accepts all these OK (and others), usually without me doing any re-typing, so there's no need for listeners to change anything if they don't want to!

Why do the day, UTC, kHz and IDENT have to come FIRST in CLE log lines?

The harvester program would 'give up' if it had to expect other things in its search for the main items. E.g. 345 KM could mean beacon 'KM' logged on 345 kHz, or could mean a distance of 345 kilometres. The main items must come first, but they can be in any order - e.g. you don't have to start with the day. Fortunately these first main items are mostly 'fixed length', allowing neat columns whatever method you use to make the log - the Locations are variable length, so they look best more to the right of the lines.

Why do you ask for Plain Text emails?

Rich Text / HTML emails often contain control characters - usually invisible, but definitely not good news if you need to analyse the log records with a program!

The control characters can come from lots of sources - Word, Excel, Access, HTML (Rich Text), etc.

To copy a log from most places into a Plain Text email, just try selecting the records and copy/paste them. That usually gets rid of any/all control characters and still leaves quite a nice-looking list.

Sometimes logs in non- Plain Text emails can also be about 100 times larger than their Plain Text equivalent. I only have slow dial-up here so if a Final log, plus two or three Interim ones, adds up to a MB or more it does slow things down rather (and if the 46 reporters had each done that in CLE87 - - - !).

Logs sent as an attachment are also often large and contain special characters and they are not so readily viewed by members (and some members opt not to receive attachments).

Should I send 'Interim' logs to the List during the CLE?

It's entirely up to you.

Many listeners like to see how others are getting on and that helps them with their own listening.

If you send Interim logs, do please also send a 'Final' one containing **all your loggings** for the CLE.

Why do you not want logs to be sent direct to the CLE Co-ordinator?

There are several reasons for that.

The main one is that all logs should be open for all to see and enjoy - so if a log is only sent direct to me I usually forward a copy of it to the List.

Also, if something goes wrong (e.g. if I make a mistake in handling someone's log) it will be obvious where the fault lies when the user's original log is visible to all.

It gets complicated for me if a user sends a log both direct and via the List - which version should I use?

Has the reporter found something wrong and sent me a slightly corrected version?

How much detailed checking should I do to spot that possibility?

Of course, if your log is very late or seems to have been 'lost', you could send me a last minute copy direct.

Can I send CLE logs made from sites away from my normal location?

Certainly!

It is often very rewarding to try listening from different places, maybe remote from your usual frustrating sources of interference, or using different aerials, portable receivers, etc.

Sometimes listeners send separate CLE logs made from two different places during one event and that's fine too.

You could even try remotely controlling a receiver - maybe make a CLE log of Australian NDBs while you are in Toronto, as Martin has done! This can be controversial, but - rather like Amateur Radio repeaters - it expands the possibilities and interest in the hobby. Of course, credit for the loggings is shared with whoever set up and maintains the receiving station equipment.

Sometimes you send me comments on things I got wrong in my Log - why do you do that?

Everyone makes 'typos' from time to time, or mis-reads some of the details about a CLE. Some of us, however hard we try, find that typos keep on slipping through! It can be tedious for me to prepare and send those details - I certainly don't do it for one-up-man-ship! If I need to change anyone's logging to remove a typo, etc., I think I should tell them what I did. I wouldn't want a Co-ordinator to change my loggings without telling me about it and giving me a chance to change the corresponding records in my database, or to complain if I disagreed.

Sometimes I have to make a best guess at what a listener meant - particularly difficult if NDB locations are not shown in the log. Occasionally I have to 'give up' and cannot use a report.

Why do you show some of the results in the email itself and the rest of them in the Excel attachment?

That's because I hope some of the details in the email will be of interest to non-CLE-ers - members who probably wouldn't bother to open the Excel attachment. Information in the email is more for general interest than a technical record of the event, and it sometimes depends on tentative details such as a listener's location, used to calculate distances to NDBs. I wouldn't want errors (e.g. an inaccurate distance to your closest NDB) to be permanently in the CLE Archives.

Why don't you use my proper initials in column headings in the combined results?

The first two CLEs averaged a total of 14 reporters - there was no problem then with using simple initials. Having allocated initials, I need to keep them for that listener so that all the old records can still be used. For example, I used an Access program to get a list of all Canadian CLE-ers in a few seconds (see Sheet 2). 26 x 26 gives 676 different possibilities for initials, but no surprise that, with over 60 members having each taken part in 10 or more CLEs, there would now be some clashes - e.g. we have three 'dt' members and three 'mt's and lots of ordinary duplicates. But 'qx' is still waiting for a Quentin Xavier!

Why do the names of the combined results files always have a '5' at the end?

That indicates that the files were saved as an old version of Microsoft Excel - '5.0/95'. I do that because it can be read by some members who do not have a recent version of Excel, plus others who are able to open it using Works or other compatible programs.

Can I suggest 'new' kinds of listening event or other ways of running them?

Yes - I'm always interested in ideas for new ways of listening to entertain and test ourselves. I have quite a large file of listeners' CLE suggestions, some of which have been used very successfully.

Every year or so I have asked for your help by replying to a questionnaire on the kind of CLEs you prefer and how you want them to be organised.

We had lots of replies to each of the four questionnaires and they all gave much the same messages:

- # Most of us prefer the 'normal' CLEs based on listening in a fairly narrow frequency range.
- # Other quite popular ones target 'DX' beacons or listening for particular Countries or States.
- # Occasional DGPS and Navtex events are increasingly popular.

Many of us don't want 'specials', especially the more artificial kind, where the NDBs being sought don't have anything very meaningful in common. Unfortunately just a few of us are really keen on that kind! The numbers who have taken part in various kinds of event have tended to confirm these opinions. We should also remember that several of our members do not have English as their first language - some of those are effectively excluded from 'Special' CLEs unless the 'rules' are very simple. Just about everyone agrees that we do not want to treat CLEs as 'Contests' with winners and losers! (Everyone is a winner who takes part and enjoys doing so!).

What information can I get about the current and past listening events?

<http://www.beaconworld.org.uk/cle.htm>

Alan's Beaconworld Website contains this excellent CLE page where you can check on the 'Early Advice' and 'Final Details' about a coming or recent event, you can view the combined results of any of the past CLEs and you can use a link to Martin's REU/RNA site where he provides useful seeklists before each event. The page also includes our Radio Countries list and the list of Awards available from Andy and you can also check out the current propagation and sferic information.

Why are almost all the CLE logs made in Europe or in North America?

What an interesting question - asked by a listener only a few days ago.
I really don't know the answer. We have had very interesting logs from Australia and Brazil, but maybe it needs two or three active members in a new area before things can really 'take off' there?
Surely countries like those, or South Africa, India, Japan, - - have plenty of NDBs and listeners like us?
Or have they not yet discovered how fascinating chasing NDBs can be?

Still reading this?

You deserve an endurance Certificate!
This list of questions is biased - mostly posed by the CLE Co-ordinator and answered from his point of view.
There must be lots of other questions about CLEs - maybe you can think of some to send via the List or direct to me at [cle\(at\)beaconworld.org.uk](mailto:cle(at)beaconworld.org.uk) (replace the (at) with @).
The chances are that others are wondering about the same question as you, but are reluctant to ask it.
There is certainly no reason why the Co-ordinator should have a monopoly on giving answers, either!

Good Listening
Brian
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