GET GOING GUIDE

HFConverse **Dragon Mailbox**

A PTC-style mailbox for the P4 Dragon and DR-9400, run by HFConverse

Issue 3 · November 2026 mw0gbq.hamserve.uk

The P4 Dragon (DR-7400 / DR-7800) and the DR-9400 have no mailbox of their own, so HFConverse runs one for them. It works like the mailbox in an SCS PTC modem. A station that connects to you can leave a message, read the mail you've left for them, or just chat, using the PTC's commands from any PACTOR program.

> **Golden rule:** the mailbox lives in HFConverse, not in the modem. It only answers while HFConverse is running and connected to the Dragon, so leave HFConverse open if you're expecting callers.

Before you start

- **Which modems:** the P4 Dragon (DR-7400, DR-7800) and the DR-9400. A PTC modem has its own mailbox; see the *Modem Mailbox* guide.
- **Who it answers:** only stations that **call you** on PACTOR. A link you start yourself is an ordinary QSO.
- **Where the mail is kept:** on your own PC, in the *HFC Mailbox* folder of HFConverse's data folder (**Help ▸ Open data folder…**). Nothing is lost when the modem is switched off, and there's nothing to back up from the modem.
- **Size:** up to 2 MB of messages. Callers see what's left as *bytes free*.
- **New:** this first came in HFConverse 0.1.4.0 and hasn't had much use on the air yet. If anything looks wrong, send **Help ▸ Report a problem** with the diagnostic log. Every mailbox step is in it as `MAILBOX: …`.

Switching it on

1. Open **Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox**.
2. Tick **Mailbox on - answer stations that connect to me**.
3. Optional: set a **Welcome text** and tick the boxes you want (see *The settings*, below).
4. Press **Save**.

That's all. From now on, when a station connects to you, the mailbox is ready. If you're at the radio, you can still chat with them as normal.

What a caller sees

Callers type mailbox commands with **//** in front, so the commands don't get in the way of an ordinary QSO. Anything else they type comes to you as normal QSO text. Each command needs an over, so that your station can answer. HFConverse sends the reply and hands the link straight back to the caller.

An example, with you as GW0XYZ and the caller as G4QRS:

G4QRS sends (then over)	Your mailbox answers
(connects)	Your welcome text, then `*** 1 new Mail for you`
`//dir`	`Main Directory:`, the folders, `2097152 bytes free`, `PATH: G4QRS>`
`//list`	His messages, numbered, then `PATH: G4QRS>`
`//read 1`	Message 1, then `*** end of message`
`//write gw0xyz Sked`	`*** enter text - end with nnnn, ctrl-z or a changeover`
(his message, then over)	`*** stored: gw0xyz 1`
`//qrt`	`g4qrs de gw0xyz>`, `<qrt>`, and the link ends

A message ends with **NNNN** on a line of its own, **Ctrl-Z**, or simply the **over**. The replies are the ones a PTC sends, so a caller who knows the PTC mailbox will feel at home.

Callers using HFConverse should tick **BBS / Mailbox** on the PACTOR screen before sending commands, so HFConverse doesn't add its `btu … de …>` line to every over. HFConverse suggests it when it sees your mailbox answering, and with BBS / Mailbox ticked a `//` command sent with Enter hands the link over by itself. The *Modem Mailbox* guide covers this in *Using another station's mailbox over the air*.

Commands callers can use

As on a PTC, only the capital letters need typing (`d` is DIR, `del` is DELete).

Command	What it does
`Help`	Lists the commands. `Help read` explains one.
`Dir`	The folders in your mailbox, and the bytes free.
`List` / `List all`	The messages in the caller's own folder, or in the one named.
`Check`	The newest public messages, across all folders.
`Read 2` / `Read all 1-3`	Read message 2, or messages 1 to 3 in ALL.
`Write gw0xyz Title` (or `Send`)	Leave a message in that folder.
`DELete 2` (or `Erase`)	Delete message 2.
`DAte` / `TIme`	Today's date and the time, in UTC.
`Version`	Which mailbox this is.
`LOg`	Your last 16 logged QSOs.
`USer`	Who is connected.
`BEll`	Calls you: a sound plays and a line appears on your screen.
`Qrt` / `BYe`	Signs off and ends the link.

Folders work as on a PTC. A folder named after a callsign holds private mail for that station. Any other name, such as ALL or TEST, is public. A caller can read their own mail, public mail and what they wrote. They can delete what they wrote, and what was sent to them.

Reading your mail

When a caller leaves a message, a short sound plays and a line appears on the PACTOR screen (or in the Terminal, if another screen is open):

```
Mailbox: G4QRS left a message for GW0XYZ - Sked (Mail > Modem Mailbox)
```

1. Open **Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox…**.
2. Click a message to read it. The **NEW** mark goes.
3. **Save to file…** keeps a copy as a text file. **Delete** removes it after asking first, and can't be undone.
4. **Reply…** answers it: a new message to its sender, titled *Re: …*, with the original quoted under your answer; the original stays. **Edit…** is for messages you wrote: change one and press **Save**. Right-click the message for **Copy**.

The window shows every folder, so you also see messages that callers have left for each other.

Leaving a message for another station

1. In **Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox…**, press **New message…**.
2. **To:** their callsign. **Title:** optional. Then type the message.
3. Press **Store in mailbox**.

When that station next connects to you, they're told there's mail waiting (with **Tell callers when there is mail waiting for them** ticked). They read it with `//list` and `//read 1`.

The settings

All are in **Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox**. Press **Save**; they apply from the next caller.

Setting	Ticked means
Mailbox on	Callers can use the mailbox. Off: they reach you only for an ordinary QSO.
Unattended	Answer callers with nobody at the radio (see below).
Only accept mail addressed to me (Box 2)	Callers can only leave mail for you, not for other stations.
Let callers type mailbox commands without // (direct mode - Box 1)	Every line is a command, and the mailbox answers `next?` after each one. Leave it off if you like to chat: in direct mode, QSO text is taken as commands.
Send the welcome text when a station connects (CMsg 1)	Every caller gets your welcome text first.
Tell callers when there is mail waiting for them (MAil 1)	Callers hear `*** 2 new Mail for you` or `*** NO new Mail for you`.
Welcome text (CText)	Up to 249 characters; `%` becomes your callsign.

Running it unattended

Unattended - answer callers with nobody at the radio lets the mailbox run on its own:

- Direct mode is switched on, so callers don't need the `//`.
- A link ends after **5 minutes** with nothing from the caller (`*** nothing heard for 5 minutes - 73`), and after **30 minutes** in all.

> **Check your licence first.** You must keep to your own country's rules. In many countries an unattended station needs a special licence or permit, or isn't allowed on some bands at all. You remain responsible for everything your station transmits.

Quick reference

I want to…	Do this
Switch the mailbox on	Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox ▸ Mailbox on ▸ Save
Read the mail left for me	Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox…, click the message
Leave mail for a station that will call me	Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox… ▸ New message… ▸ Store in mailbox
Only take mail for me	Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox ▸ Only accept mail addressed to me
Greet every caller	Welcome text, and tick Send the welcome text…
Let it run with nobody at the radio	Unattended (check your licence first)
Find the files	Help ▸ Open data folder… ▸ HFC Mailbox

When things go wrong

What you see	Try this
A caller's `//` commands come up as QSO text	The mailbox is off (Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox ▸ Mailbox on), or you called them: it only answers stations that call you.
Nobody gets an answer while I'm away	HFConverse must be running and connected to the Dragon.
My chat is taken as commands	Direct mode or Unattended is ticked. Untick both to chat.
A caller's message wasn't stored	The link ended before the message did. Every step is in the diagnostic log as `MAILBOX: …`.
`*** mailbox full`	Delete old messages in Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox….
Something else odd	Help ▸ Report a problem, with the diagnostic log.

Issue history

Issue	Date	Changes
3	November 2026	New: **Reply…**. **Edit…** is now for your own messages only (DM5TU).
2	November 2026	Callers using HFConverse: BBS is suggested, and Enter on a `//` command hands the link over (DM5TU, VK2NA). New: **Edit…**, and Copy on the message (DM5TU). The BBS tick box is now called **BBS / Mailbox** (Dave G4AON).
1	November 2026	First issue (Dave G4AON, DM5TU).

More detail on every screen and setting is in the HFConverse User Manual. mw0gbq.hamserve.uk · HFConverse is not affiliated with SCS.