

OpenLine

The Newsletter of the Mobile Operators Association Autumn 2009 Edition

Introduction

Welcome to the Autumn 2009 edition of the Mobile Operators Association's *Open Line*. This newsletter is sent to all elected representatives of the Westminster and UK devolved Parliaments and Assemblies, UK members of the European Parliament, and councillors across the UK.

The Mobile Operators Association (MOA) was established in January 2003 to represent the five UK mobile phone network operators (3, O2, Orange, T-Mobile and Vodafone) on radio frequency health and associated town planning issues.

Mobile telecommunications are, more than ever, part of our everyday lives. According to Ofcom in its latest Communications Market report published in August 2009, there are now around 77 million mobile subscriptions in the UK, 3 million customers now access mobile broadband services via a laptop and dongle, and over 8 million people own a 'smartphone' to access internet and web based services.

These statistics show the importance of mobile communications to individuals and businesses across the UK.

This continuing increase in mobile phone usage across the UK is only possible due to the operators' networks which support calls, texts and data usage.

At the start of 2009 there were approximately 51,300 base station sites in the UK. This figure could rise to approximately 52,500 by the end of 2009. Two-thirds of these are installed on existing buildings or structures.

Open Line aims to keep elected representatives across the UK updated on mobile phone network development and RF health and safety issues.



www.mobilemastinfo.com





In this edition we provide:

- Highlights of the latest **Ipsos MORI opinion research** on mobile telecommunications
- Some useful information on the operators' approach to **community consultation** – part of their *Ten Commitments to best siting practice*
- Information on the operators' annual network rollout plans
- An update on the **latest scientific advice** from the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection.

I hope you find this edition of *Open Line* useful and informative. We always welcome feedback on our publications. If you have any comments on the contents of this and future newsletters, please send them to stuartheke@ukmoa.org

Mike Dolan
Executive Director
Mobile Operators Association

Health Physics Society updated Fact Sheet on mobile phones

The Health Physics Society, formed in 1956, is a scientific organization of professionals who specialize in radiation safety. The Society is chartered in the United States as an independent non-profit scientific organization and, as such, is not affiliated with any government or industrial organization or private entity.

The Fact Sheet concludes: "Investigations into possible health effects of mobile phones will continue into the future, and it will be especially important to identify if there are any adverse effects in long-term users or children. The available evidence does not show that the use of mobile phones or exposure to emissions from their base stations causes brain cancer or any other health effect."

The Fact Sheet can be found at:
<http://hps.org/documents/mobiletelephonestatsheet.pdf>

Network consolidation agreements

There has been a significant change in the way in which the mobile network operators have sought to deploy and maintain their networks. These changes are likely to result in a potential reduction in the number of existing mast sites that are required to provide network coverage and capacity for the users of the UK's 77 million mobile handsets.

The deployment and maintenance of the mobile networks is a major part of the operators' annual expenditure. All of the operators are looking at ways in which they can reduce these costs and the most efficient way of doing so is by significantly increasing the amount of network sharing (including mast and site sharing) that is undertaken. There are sound commercial reasons for each operator to increase their network sharing and this will remain a focus for the industry in the coming years.

The UK mobile network operators have all entered into commercial agreements to share some aspects of their networks. As well as improving the quality of coverage across the UK, these initiatives hope to deliver benefits in terms of reducing the overall environmental footprint of masts. Such agreements will also play a significant part in reducing the energy consumption of the operators' networks.

Further information on these agreements is available from the operators.

Planning policy

The MOA and its member companies believe that planning policy should continue to enable the development of the communications infrastructure that is so vital for the UK economy as it emerges from the recession. We do not believe there is justification for seeking to introduce greater restrictions and unnecessary additional regulations which would hinder the operators' ability to continue to respond to increasing consumer and business demand for mobile network coverage, services and capacity.

Additional planning regulations could also hinder the operators' abilities to consolidate their networks and reduce the number of base stations in operation and would jeopardise the delivery of the digital infrastructure that is so important to the UK's economic recovery.

We also believe that the current approach to health considerations is the correct one. The position of the UK Health Protection Agency is that "the assessment of evidence related to possible health concerns associated with exposures to RF fields from base stations is best dealt with nationally." UK Governments all accepted the key precautionary recommendation of the Stewart Report in 2000 that all mobile phone base stations in the UK should comply with the ICNIRP international radio frequency public exposure guidelines. All base stations in use in the UK comply with these guidelines and current planning policy recommends that, as long as a certificate of compliance with the ICNIRP guidelines is submitted with a planning application, no further consideration of health effects is necessary or appropriate.

The Health Protection Agency continues to take account of all relevant research on mobile phones, base stations and health. In addition, Ofcom continues to audit (on request) public exposure to radio frequency emissions from mobile phone base stations. The results of these audits show that typical public radiowave exposure levels from mobile phone masts are small fractions of the ICNIRP guidelines.

Further information on this audit can be found on the Ofcom website:
http://www.ofcom.org.uk/sitefinder/audit_info





Ipsos MORI research

Each year the market research company Ipsos MORI undertakes research amongst local authority planning officers and also amongst the general public. The planners' research looks at planning officers' views on the telecoms planning process and their engagement with the mobile network operators. The general public research looks at public attitudes to mobile phones, masts, planning and health issues.

Some of the main findings from this year's research are:

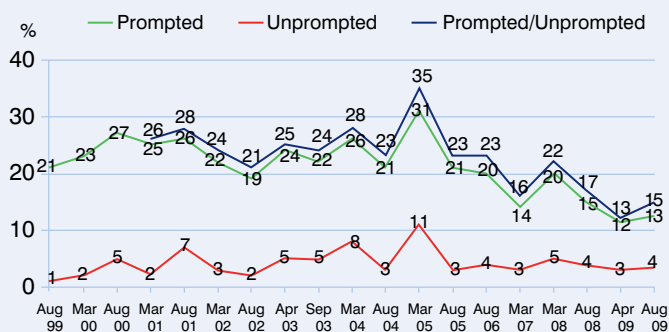
Concern about mobile phones, masts and health is at historically low levels:

Nearly three times as many people are satisfied with the planning system as dissatisfied:

Prompted and unprompted health risks of mobile phones remain low

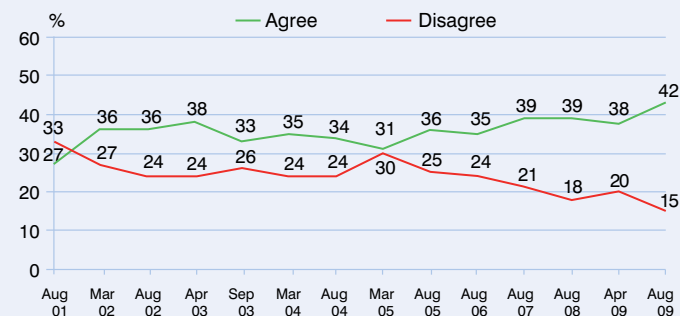
Over 40% now agree that they are satisfied with the planning system: the highest score yet

% mentioning handsets/masts



Base: All GB adults from Q1a/b (2,018) Results for the August/September 2007 waves have been excluded due to inconsistent data collection methodology

Q How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I am satisfied that the planning system effectively controls the siting of masts in my neighbourhood?



Base: All GB adults (2,018)

Almost three quarters of people say that masts are essential:

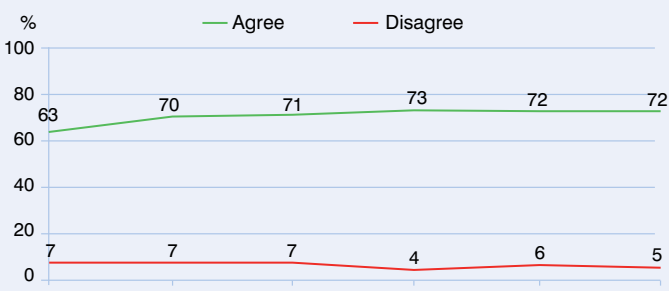
More than two thirds of planners say that the operators provide them with sufficient information:

Almost three in four continue to believe masts are essential for networks to work

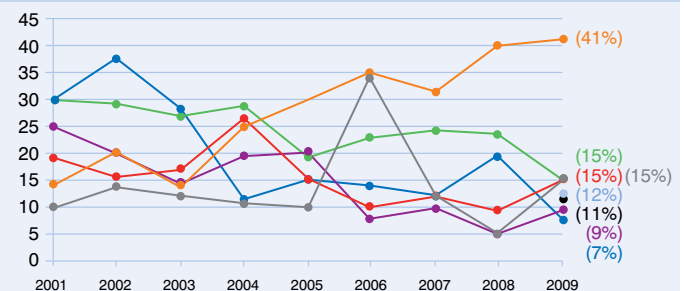
Four in ten say there is nothing more which operators could do to address issues more effectively

Q How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I believe mobile phone masts are essential for mobile phone networks to work?

Q Are there any issues relating to mobile phone base stations which you feel mobile phone operators could be addressing more effectively?



Base: All GB adults (2,018)



Base: Local authority planners involved in base station development c.100, May '01, '02, '03, '04, '05, '06, '07, '08 & '09

- Visual Aspects/effect on landscape
- Health Issues
- Honesty/Clarity of information
- Other
- Mast/site sharing
- Lack of Information/knowledge
- Site/Location issues
- None

Community consultation

A key part of the operators' approach to developing their networks is consultation with communities, planning officers and other local stakeholders on their proposed new developments.

This pre-application consultation is set out in the operators' Ten Commitments to Best Siting Practice, which were developed in 2001 to help address concerns relating to the development of base stations and which are now contained in planning guidance throughout the UK.

The operators use standard procedures to assess both the appropriate level of pre-application consultation required for a proposed new mobile phone mast and the actual type of consultation that is undertaken. This system enables the operators to take a flexible approach to community consultation to ensure that the level of engagement is appropriate for each community and each development.

The level and methods of community consultation will vary in each case, depending on the type, design and location of the proposed new mast. This flexibility enables the operators to ensure the voluntary consultation they undertake (in addition to the statutory consultation undertaken by planning officers) is appropriate in each case. The examples below give a flavour of the ways in which the operators engage with planners, councillors and local communities.

Examples of Community Consultation

Winchester

A proposed new base station in Winchester was the cause of some concern for local residents. The operator undertook a great deal of community consultation due to the close proximity of local housing. All the local councillors and the MP were also consulted. The proposal, which was for a base station on the roof of a Grade 1 listed local church, was also subject to interest from the local media.

The operator held three meetings with local residents to hear about and address their concerns. Leaflets were also sent to local residents and an open meeting held for people to find out more about the proposal.



Through the consultation undertaken on this development, a great deal of trust was developed between the operator, its agent and the local community. The operator was able to explain the need for the new mast and the community was able to influence the final design of the proposal.

While some people objected to the proposal, which was submitted following this pre-application consultation, 20 local residents supported the operator with its planning application. The application was approved by the local planning committee.

Carrick

Pre-application consultation was undertaken by the operator with the chief planning officer and ward councillors regarding a proposed new streetworks 3G mast. No objections to the proposal were received. In addition, following the submission of the planning application, planning officers undertook statutory community consultation with a number of stakeholders.

Concerns regarding the proposal were raised at this stage by local residents and the chair of governors at a local school. The local planning authority refused the prior approval application.

Following an appeal to the planning inspectorate, the application was allowed. However, the operator continued to engage with local community groups to address their concerns. A meeting was held with local residents, at which the possibility of relocating the proposed new mast was discussed. When this was explored in more detail, it was agreed that simply changing the location would not address people's concerns. Following further discussions, a new design was agreed upon, which everyone agreed would further reduce the visual impact of the development.

The operator is now in the process of revising the design and is intending to submit a revised application to the LPA.



The Ten Commitments

More information on the Ten Commitments, including details of the operators' approach to community consultation, can be found on the MOA website: http://www.mobilemastinfo.com/planning/best_practice.htm

Telecoms Training Workshops

In addition to the annual rollout plans, the MOA's long-standing programme of telecoms training workshops for local authorities across the country continues.

Each year the MOA and operators hold a series of free telecoms briefing workshops for councillors across the country. The workshops are designed to increase knowledge of the development of networks, site design and best practice in terms of community consultation. The topics covered include the increase in customer use of mobiles and how that impacts on network development, examples of site design, government health guidance and planning advice and best practice in terms of community consultation. The workshops do not address issues relating to individual base station sites.

Details of councils that have held workshops are available on the MOA website at: http://www.mobilemastinfo.com/planning/mast_briefing.htm

If you think your local authority would like to consider arranging a workshop, Nicola Davies, Council Liaison Manager, would be pleased to hear from them. Councils can contact the MOA at nicoladavies@ukmoa.org or by phone on 020 7331 2015.

Annual network rollout plans

The operators' annual network rollout plans for 2010 have recently been distributed to every planning authority in the UK.

These plans provide an ideal opportunity at an early stage for local authorities to discuss the operators' plans for the forthcoming year and to work together with the operators to find an optimum solution for mobile network development in their area.

The operators have been meeting their commitment to send rollout plans for the past nine years and for the past five years the information has been submitted jointly and electronically through the MOA.

Contained within the rollout plan spreadsheets is information relating to the operators' existing sites and envisaged new proposals for the following 12 months. It provides each local authority with a 'look ahead' at the forthcoming mobile network developments in their area.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the rollout plan information is accurate and current, due to the rapidly developing nature of the operators' networks, this information is subject to change over the course of the year.

Local authorities may also find the rollout plan information useful to update or create their own mast register.

Planning officers are encouraged to share this information with their officer colleagues and with councillors or members of the public at their request or place it on their website.

For further information on the submission of the annual rollout plans in your area, or to find out how you can see a copy of the plans for your area, please contact the MOA on 020 7331 2015 or email info@ukmoa.org

ICNIRP publishes major RF science review

A major international review of the science related to mobile telephony and health was published on 14th July 2009. The International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation (ICNIRP) has published on its website a review of the scientific evidence concerning exposure to high frequency electromagnetic fields (including the radiofrequency fields used in mobile telephony).

The ICNIRP review concluded that:

- “Results of epidemiological studies to date give no consistent or convincing evidence of a causal relation between RF exposure and any adverse health effect. On the other hand these studies have too many deficiencies to rule out an association.”
- “Whilst it is in principle impossible to disprove the possible existence of non-thermal interactions, the plausibility of various non-thermal mechanisms that have been proposed is very low.”
- “The evidence from double-blind provocation studies suggests that subjective symptoms, such as headaches, that have been identified by some individuals as associated with RF exposure, whilst real enough to the individuals concerned, are not causally related to EMF exposure.”
- “The experimental data do not suggest so far that children are more susceptible than adults to RF radiation, but few relevant studies have been conducted.”
- “Although the likelihood is low that fields emanating from base stations would create a health hazard, because of their weakness, this possibility is nevertheless a concern for many people. To date no acceptable study on any outcome has been published on this.”

The review recognises that more research is needed to fill information gaps and recommends ongoing long-term population studies including better exposure assessment with an emphasis on children given the present lack of epidemiological data regarding them.

ICNIRP’s review of science will be part of the World Health Organisation’s risk assessment of high frequency electromagnetic fields and health expected to be completed within the next two years.

In addition, on 13th August 2009 ICNIRP issued a statement reconfirming the 1998 EMF exposure guidelines. The ICNIRP statement concluded:

- “It is the opinion of ICNIRP that the scientific literature published since the 1998 guidelines has provided no evidence of any adverse effects below the basic restrictions and does not necessitate an immediate revision of its guidance on limiting exposure to high frequency electromagnetic fields.”
- “Therefore, ICNIRP reconfirms the 1998 basic restrictions in the frequency range 100kHz–300GHz until further notice.”

The mobile operators acknowledge that it is important to keep supporting high quality independent research in accordance with the WHO research agenda. UK mobile phone network operators are supporting the UK Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research Programme (MTHR) which includes a long term study, COSMOS, on the use of mobile phones and health.

Both the review of the science and the statement on the public exposure guidelines provides further reassurance that the scientific evidence on exposure to radiowaves does not suggest any adverse health effects.





Further information

Further information on mobile telecommunications can be found on the MOA website at www.mobilemastinfo.com or by email to info@ukmoa.org

In particular, you may find the 'frequently asked questions' section of use when dealing with any questions or correspondence from your constituents:

<http://www.mobilemastinfo.com/information/faqs.htm>



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