

**PE1416/E**

**Chief Medical Officer, Public Health and Sport Directorate**  
Public Health Division - Health Protection

T: 0131-244 2711 F: 0131-244 2157  
E: Annette.Stuart@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Stuart Todd  
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee

(by email: [petitions@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:petitions@scottish.parliament.uk) )



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Dear Mr Todd

**PETITION PE 1416**

Thank you for your letter of 23 May 2012 about PE 1416. You have asked for the Scottish Government's view on the question raised by the Committee and these are provided below.

**In your letter dated 3 April 2012 you quote the HPA advice that “a continued precautionary approach” is recommended, and in the new report by AGNIR, HPA states that it “will continue to advise a precautionary approach”. To what extent do the Scottish Government’s current planning guidance / regulations reflect this precautionary approach, particularly with regard to the siting of masts near schools and children’s nurseries?**

The Scottish Government's planning policy on communications infrastructure is contained in the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), which sets out the key issues to be addressed when planning authorities consider applications for mobile phone masts: Paragraphs 248 to 254 of the SPP refer. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/02/03132605/0>

With regard to precautionary measures, a number of these were put in place in the wake of recommendations by the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones and Health in 2000. These included auditing of mobile phone mast emissions, the creation of a publicly accessible database of base stations and their principal characteristics, the adoption of exposure guidelines produced by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection and a research programme looking at potential health effects from emissions, all of which sit outwith the planning process.

In terms of the Scottish Government's planning policy on the precautionary approach, this requires operators to demonstrate to planning authorities that the known health effects have been properly addressed. The Town and Country Planning (Development Management

Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008<sup>1[1]</sup> requires applications for planning permission involving antennas to be accompanied by a declaration that the equipment and installation is designed to be in full compliance with the appropriate ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure to radiofrequency radiation. This statutory requirement delivers on the policy in the Scottish Planning Policy paragraph 252. The precautionary approach is not limited to certain areas.

To assess compliance with these guidelines, both the HPA and the Radio communications Agency (RA) (now Ofcom) have undertaken extensive programmes of measurements of exposures to the radiofrequency emissions from mobile phone base stations. Those conducted by Ofcom have concentrated on schools and the results <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/sitefinder/audit-info>) indicate that exposures are below the relevant guideline values.

**The Committee draws the Scottish Government's attention to the recent submission from Robert Brown regarding the lack of evidence on or analysis of the health impacts on young children by the siting of masts close to residential areas. To what extent did the recent research cover the impact on children?**

The Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research Programme (MTHR) commissioned a number of studies in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of its programme. One such study – an epidemiological case-control study - of cancer incidence in early childhood and proximity to mobile phone base stations ran from April to September 2003. It concluded that there is no association between risk of early childhood cancers and estimates of the mother's exposure to mobile phone base stations during pregnancy ([www.mthr.org.uk](http://www.mthr.org.uk)).

Further to our previous response to the Committee, the Advisory Group on Non-ionising Radiation (AGNIR) 2012 Report on the Health Effects from Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields has now been published and its main conclusion is that, although a substantial amount of research has been conducted in this area, there is no convincing evidence that RF field exposures below guideline levels cause health effects in adults or children. The HPA will undertake another comprehensive review of the scientific evidence when sufficient new evidence has accumulated. The 348 page report can be accessed in full here:

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb\\_C/1317133826368](http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1317133826368)

**The Committee notes that the Sitefinder database is a voluntary scheme and that three major operators have suspended their participation. What is the view of the Scottish Government on how useful this database is in providing comprehensive information to the public on the siting and operation of base stations in Scotland?**

The creation of the sitefinder database was done by OFCOM in response to the Stewart Report and was intended to help reduce mistrust in the community, help inform decisions on applications for new masts and help in epidemiological studies. It is our view that data on Sitefinder are already sufficiently comprehensive to establish that levels of public exposures are demonstrably well below guideline levels.

**ANNETTE STUART**

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<sup>1[1]</sup> See Regulation 9(3)(d)(ii) of the The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 which can be found at [www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2008/432/regulation/9/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2008/432/regulation/9/made)