

Health, Social Services and Housing Panel Telephone Mast Review

WEDNESDAY, 24th JANUARY 2007

Panel:

Deputy A. Breckon of St. Saviour (Chairman)

Deputy C.H. Egré of St. Peter

Senator B.E. Shenton

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

Mr. S. Smith (Head of Health Protection Service)

Deputy A. Breckon of St. Saviour (Chairman):

Welcome, we are back in session. First of all can I say thank you for attending today and also Friday night, it certainly was appreciated. What I will do, I will just go through the procedure of who we are and why we are here. I am Alan Breckon, I am Chairman of the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel and this is a sub-panel that has been set up. The other member are the Deputy Chairman, Deputy Collin Egré, Constable Mike Jackson of St. Brelade and Senator Ben Shenton, who I am sure you know. I will just remind you of the terms of reference. It is a Scrutiny review looking a telephone masts and the terms of reference are: "The sub-panel will consider the concerns of the public relating to perceived health implications as a result of the increase in applications for mobile phone mast installations following the recent expansion of the mobile telephony market. In undertaking this review the sub-panel will have regard to the advice provided by the Health Protection Department, international standards and best practice in respect of health precautions, health concerns raised by the public and reporting its findings and recommendations to the States." That is the terms of reference. I will ask Collin just to remind you of the witness procedure in giving evidence to the panel.

Deputy C.H. Egré of St. Peter:

Please excuse the formality of this particular stage but you will appreciate that for legal reasons I have to read it out verbatim, therefore I say: "It is important that you fully understand the conditions under which you are appearing at this hearing. You will find a printed copy of the statement I am about to read to you on the table in front of you. The proceedings of the panel are covered by parliamentary privilege through Article 34 of the States of Jersey Law 2005 and the States of Jersey (Powers Privileges and Immunities) (Scrutiny Panels, PAC and PCC) (Jersey) Regulations 2006 and witnesses are protected from being sued or prosecuted for anything said during hearings unless they say something that they know to be untrue. This protection is given to witnesses to ensure that they can speak freely and openly

to the panel when giving evidence without fear of legal action although the immunity should obviously not be abused by making unsubstantiated statements about third parties who have no right of reply. The panel would ask you to bear this in mind when answering the questions. The proceedings are being recorded and transcriptions will be made available on the Scrutiny website.” That concludes the formal element but if I could just ask that when you do speak, I am speaking up, that you do speak up as well because it ensures we get a clear recording. Thank you.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Thank you for that, Collin. You did have some questions sent to you and what I will do is I will come on to those in a moment or 2 but although it is a formal process it is fairly relaxed and if there is anything you wish to take your time about or get back to us on then please do. You are not on trial for anything here. It is an exchange of questions and answers and information. What I would suggest as well is if there is anything you wish to say at the end that we may have missed which was relevant to our inquiry then please feel free to do so. I will give you that opportunity. The other thing that Collin mentioned is transcripts. They are being transcribed fairly quickly so within 48 hours you should get a copy of those. If there is anything that you feel is inaccurate that you want to change, you have said 30 when it should have been 50, that is not a problem. That can be done. We are not here to catch anybody out or trap anybody. Without further ado, can I ask you to introduce yourself and your position in the States system and your qualifications?

Mr. S. Smith (Head of Health Protection Service):

Yes, I have had a title change since the report was originally produced in the last year. I am now the Head of Health Protection Service. I work for Public Health Services which is a part of the Health and Social Services Department and my responsibilities are for all matters in terms of protection of health, and particularly with regard to the legislative provisions that Health and Social Services have as a responsibility to the States. My qualifications are I am a fully qualified and chartered environmental health practitioner. I also have an MSc in Environmental Pollution Science.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Is it true to say that your department was formerly called the Environmental Health Department?

Mr. S. Smith:

That is correct. The Health Protection Service is made up of a number of areas and environmental health is the bulk of that.

Deputy A. Breckon:

I wonder if I can start by asking if you could inform us of the circumstances surrounding your report - that is the report that is dated 12th April 2006 on mobile phones and health - on base stations. If you

could give us the background to how that came about.

Mr. S. Smith:

Yes, the background really is a number of applications have been made to the Planning Department with regard to the siting of masts by the second operator, Cable and Wireless. As a result of objections and comments which have been made to the Minister for Planning, Health Protection and Health and Social Services are a consultee at the moment, although not a statutory consultee we are nevertheless a consultee to the planning process. In view of the comments which were made about the potential health impacts of mobile phone masts, we were asked to provide an authoritative answer in respect to the health implications before the Minister wished to make a decision on the masts.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Could you confirm if that was officer to officer or was it Minister to Minister?

Mr. S. Smith:

I was approached initially through officers but I believe, and I would have to check this, that there was a letter from the Minister to our Minister.

Deputy A. Breckon:

You produced that report over what sort of period, Steve?

Mr. S. Smith:

There were discussions over a number of weeks but, in fact, I came back from annual leave in order to undertake the production of the report in order that the matter could be resolved relatively quickly.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Who did it go back to, the Health Minister, to the Planning Minister or it was an officer to officer in the first instance?

Mr. S. Smith:

Initially it was distributed through the officers but clearly that was then referred on to the Ministers and as a result the Minister made his decision over the masts.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Can I just ask you, in there there is a certain number of recommendations and those are on the back page, and the recommendations are States of Jersey should ensure that -- where did that go after that? Did it go to the Council of Ministers?

Mr. S. Smith:

My understanding is that there was a reference to it but it was not referred to the Council as an official report on which the Council made any decision. The Ministers for Planning and for Health made reference to it but I am not sure that it went anywhere other than that.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Just another point on that, there was 6 bullet points in those recommendations, do you know if there was any action plan attached to that or it was just up to the Ministers to decide what they should do?

Mr. S. Smith:

No, I made recommendations on the basis of what I felt should be actions taken by a number of different organisations. The only one of those that I am fully aware has started is the one with regard to the mapping of mobile phone masts. But it has to be said that that is undertaken by the Planning Department and only lists those that they are aware of through the planning process.

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

May I ask, Steve, when you did your study which works did you refer to? Was it based purely on the results of the Stewart report and the ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection)?

Mr. S. Smith:

No, there are a number of areas that we looked at in terms of getting information. Clearly the Stewart report is the initial large scale document of review of evidence of the potential impacts of mobile phones. That was followed up in 2004 by the National Radiological Protection Board, as it was then, who reviewed that and reviewed the evidence that had come forward since the Stewart report and clearly they had very similar views but made recommendations with regard to how the ICNIRP recommendations should be incorporated as well. In addition to that there are also codes of practice through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in the UK with regard to how siting of phone masts should be addressed. Also there is significant information in terms of mobile phones both on the websites and also from the HPA (Health Protection Agency) themselves as a general comment for the public.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

What would you say is the latest definitive information? Would it be the 2003 French report, the OPECST (Office Parlementaire d'Evaluation des Choix Scientifiques et Technologiques) report? Has there been anything subsequent to that that you are aware of?

Mr. S. Smith:

The NRPB (National Radiological Protection Board) report was dated 2004. There have been smaller reports produced in America which have reviewed the NRPB, reviewed the French and other reports and brought in some added knowledge on academic investigations which are ongoing. That was produced in November 2006. I suppose the large scale definitive report really would be the NRPB report of 2004. My understanding is that the Health Protection Agency - because NRPB are now part of the Health Protection Agency and are now referred to as the Radiation Protection Division - are due to look back at the 2004 report and to provide an update next year, 2008.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

You mentioned the HPA, how do we, as an Island, liaise with HPA?

Mr. S. Smith:

We liaise with a number of their different arms because the HPA is a conglomerate of a number of different organisations, if you like. Historically the States have always had a long standing financial arrangement with what is now the Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division when they were part of Guys and St. Thomas' Hospital, to give advice in instances which are non radiological. Since the amalgamation of all of the areas we have tended to deal individually with the various parts of the HPA because it is easier at officer level to do that than it is go through the central organisation in London who then would refer you anyway to an area office or a specific area.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

It has been suggested in fact that Jersey should do its own investigations and its own research in this field. What are your views on that?

Mr. S. Smith:

As I said at the public meeting, the difficulty we have is that we are a small department, a very small Island. To undertake the necessary work to cover all of the various pieces of information that are available would probably take most of my organisation in order to do that. We would not be able to do anything else. Cap that with the fact that while we have an understanding of the subject, we are not experts. We do not have the expertise to be able to do a peer review of what is really academic information in most instances. Therefore I would not be satisfied that we could do that in a justified way. I think we have to rely on people who have far more experience in this area than we do, have already and continue to review information as it becomes available and have done for a large number of years. We would be reinventing the wheel for no particular benefit.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

It has also been suggested that perhaps organisations, like the HPA, are not necessarily as independent as they might be because they are government funded. What are your views on the independence of

those agencies?

Mr. S. Smith:

I think, as I explained to a journalist yesterday, my officers use mobile phones. If there is an issue with mobile phones I want to know about it because I want to protect my officers. I would expect that the HPA and people like that will be using the same technology and I am sure that if there was an issue they would not have their officers using that technology, it is as simple as that. I mean, how far do you go with independence? If you want an organisation that has the financial backing in order to undertake it, you have got to have government sponsorship, it could not happen any other way.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

Going back to the report, if I was to make 3 observations from the report, firstly you do not list at the back of the report the material where you have taken your information from, which makes it very difficult for anyone to cross reference and verify the facts that you state. Would you admit that this is a bit of a weakness of the report?

Mr. S. Smith:

I was not asked, in fact, to provide something that was needed in that respect. Clearly if this was to be a public document - and in my understanding initially it was to be used as a consultation for the Minister - then clearly we would have written this in a slightly different fashion. I take on board your point, yes, there are no references. If we were writing this specifically for the public then quite probably we would have done it.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

Secondly, you make the list of recommendations which no one has taken ownership of, to ensure the implementation of, I know this may be a political question but when you wrote the report were you expecting someone to take ownership of those recommendations?

Mr. S. Smith:

Well, there are a number of areas that it impinges upon. Clearly some of them have been taken on board in terms of what has happened with the planning process because mobile operators have been required to provide completion certificates with measurements as part of the planning process. Planning have set up a map of mobile phone masts within the Island that they are aware of, and clearly that still needs to be expanded. Some of the other aspects, the sharing of masts, I know Planning have also talked to operators about there are significant issues around that, as the officer explained at the public meeting. Emissions from base stations must, as a minimum, meet the guidelines. That is already happening and was happening before. So it was just reiterating that. Probably there are one or 2 there that have not been followed up on but certainly many of them have had some action, even if they have not been

complete actions.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

The testing of emissions is undertaken by the phone company themselves. Would you prefer someone independent to undertake that testing or are you happy with the fact that the phone companies themselves undertake the test?

Mr. S. Smith:

I think we have to understand that there would be a cost in undertaking this. The evidence that has been given to us from the HPA, who have undertaken independent testing of the mobile phone operators, confirms that the information that mobile phone operators have generally given has been correct. On that basis there would seem no reason why the polluter should not continue to pay to measure their pollution. But as the public stated at the meeting, it gives an extra level of independence. It depends how much you believe the phone operators are looking to, if you like, swindle the public really.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

Okay, and finally the report states that the recent proposal to use many of the Martello towers around the Island for tourist accommodation has meant the proposal to use the towers and port as a site for a base station has been withdrawn. Was this withdrawn because of concerns about the health effects on the tourists that may use the Martello tower?

Mr. S. Smith:

It was withdrawn on the basis that the tower was going to be used for housing accommodation to all intents and purposes. My understanding is when the original decision to place the mast was taken there had not been a decision by Tourism then to open up the towers to public use because the tower has not been in use. So therefore its use as a base for a mast was not an issue, but subsequent to that initial decision the decision was made by Tourism to open up the towers and therefore it was felt appropriate not to use that as a site for a mast.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

It has been said to me by more than one individual that that line within the report indicates that there are health concerns and that is why the mast was withdrawn.

Mr. S. Smith:

I think we need to be very clear here about what we determine as health effects. I do not think any scientist in this field will say there will be no effects. It has been clearly stated to me, even by people from the HPA, that they would be surprised if there were absolutely no effects. No scientist would say in any report: "There will be no effects." I think if you look at the issues with regard to certainly the

large masts and the health and safety issues for workers who operate those masts, there are clear issues for those workers with exposure because they are within the range where they are going to be exposed to levels above ICNIRP. Therefore there are health and safety issues. So we know there are impacts. What we say from these though is that the masts that have now been provided are provided in a fashion and to a standard that will ensure that the public cannot be exposed to levels of radiation emission from the mast which is likely to give rise to any health effects.

Deputy A. Breckon:

On the testing equipment, Steve, you mentioned that it would be too much of a burden for your department to go into the detail of that. Can you just confirm that you do not have the equipment to do any measuring?

Mr. S. Smith:

No, we do not have any measuring equipment for this particular type of facility.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Within the States' system, do you know anybody that could do that for you? Do we, within the system, have anybody?

Mr. S. Smith:

My understanding is the Department of Electronics have equipment which can do certainly background emission monitoring for RF (radio frequency), yes.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Have you any idea how much this equipment would cost?

Mr. S. Smith:

I do not. I have had a short discussion with the Head of the Electronics Department, Bill Harris. In fact, following my report we had a discussion about it and that is how I know that they have equipment that they do occasional monitoring with, but they do not do monitoring as a matter of course or as mapping around particular masts outside of the TETRA system.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

If I may just pick up on the comment regarding shared masts, it is quite a keen subject at the moment. I note from the Zmirou report, I think it was a 2001 French report on the sharing of masts, this chap has agreed with the Stewart report to a certain extent and felt that emissions from shared masts could be different. Would you have any observation on that?

Mr. S. Smith:

Yes, they will be different. It really depends on the type of equipment that each mast is provided with in terms of whether it is an omni-directional aerial or whether it is a directional aerial because that will change the footprint of the emissions significantly. So if you add a particular type of aerial that is not already on that particular mast then the footprint will significantly change. If you add equipment then clearly the emission from that point source will be greater as well. It would therefore mean that if you do mast share then it would have to be in circumstances where that increased emission will still mean that the public cannot get any closer than a distance that complies with ICNIRP.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So this would lead, once again, to a suggestion that an independent monitoring system may be more beneficial to the public in general as quite clearly individual companies will only monitor their own emissions, I would think?

Mr. S. Smith:

Yes, these things are additives. It should be relatively easy in order to understand the increases in power and the effects that is going to have. But I agree with you, independence in terms of looking at a number of operators, use of a particular site, might be more prudent.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I am sure we all appreciate that as a government body we have an overall responsibility for protecting the health of people on this Island. You will be aware, as certainly we are, from the public meetings we have had that there are some people in Jersey who are very, very emotionally concerned about the effects of electromagnetic radiations, from whatever source but particularly in this case mobile phones. What is your view on the fact that people suffer from stress as a result of their own perception of risk, and moreover the perception of risk to their children, how can we overcome that perception that there is a huge risk as opposed to a measured risk?

Mr. S. Smith:

I think it is very difficult. It is getting people to try and be rational about what are the overall risks in their life from activities that they undertake and that are undertaken around them. I have always in this argument used the experience of the motor vehicle because motor vehicles are very much like mobile phones. You have an individual piece of equipment, whether it is a handset or it is a car. It requires, in order to operate, a central point at which you get power, i.e. a telephone mast or a petrol station, and they all give rise to health impacts. They have both been encompassed by the public immensely. I mean, 90,000-odd handsets in an Island of 88,000 people. 66,000 cars on an Island of 88,000 people, tells you how they have both been embraced. If you went out to the public tomorrow and said the effect of cars is too great because people are dying, we are going to stop vehicles on the

Island, the outcry would be immensely because people have, over the years, understood, yes, there is a risk but the benefits of being able to carry huge amounts of material, people, very quickly from A to B is too a great a benefit to lose. It is a bit like mobile phones. If you turned around tomorrow and said: "Well, the risk from mobile phones are too uncertain so we are going to stop the mobile telephone market" the outcry would be immense because people rely on them for security, for contact, for ease of communication. So there is a very big similarity. If you go back to the car, when the car first came in, they were seen by people as this huge danger. If you want a car you have got to send a runner out in front with a flag to clear the people and safeguard it. The issues for cars then are not much different to mobile phones now. There is an uncertainty and an understanding there was a risk. But as time has gone on that risk has disappeared and now if you look at cars we worry about people getting knocked down and killed but the bigger issue people now complain about is the fact they create emissions that cause climate change and that is altering the environment.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Your analogy is very well put. As a group of 4 or 5 people here in this room, how do we get that message across to the general public as a whole to put this risk into perspective?

Mr. S. Smith:

It is very difficult and at the moment I do not know that you can. I have tried to do that individually with members of the public who had had that very anguished concern about mobile phones. To be honest it does not go in. I found it is not something they want to hear.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

But with the car and with mobile phones, you have choice. Now if you suddenly have a mobile mast put outside your house you do not have a choice, it is imposed on you. Is there not a subtle difference there?

Mr. S. Smith:

No, because if you have a petrol station set up next to your house you do not have any choice with that either. That emits materials which are known to be carcinogenic and can give rise to emergencies, explosions, death. Benzene as a content of petrol is a carcinogenic.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

But if we were suddenly putting 150 petrol stations all over the Island we would probably be having a similar sort of conversation.

Mr. S. Smith:

Well, at some stage in the past, of course, we have put petrol stations all around the island

Senator B.E. Shenton:

You do have people that are concerned about mobile phones and emissions and so on and they do have mobile base stations inflicted upon them. Now there is not much they can do about that except for move house. So, surely the government should be aware of that?

Mr. S. Smith:

I think the difficulty at the moment is that whereas people know where petrol stations are, and if they do not want to buy a house next to a petrol station they can make that decision, I do not think people are in that position with mobile phones at the moment. People do not necessarily know where they are and if they have a phobia about them they could buy a property tomorrow and then 2 days down the line find that they have got an issue because there is a mobile phone mast on the property next door. People, when they look at property, are emotive about what the property provides for them not what is happening around it. That is our experience from our own work on a day-to-day basis, the complaints that we get about these. People will buy a property next door to a pub and the first day afterwards complain about the noise of the pub. These are things which people need to think more widely about when they go into a huge purchase like a property, but unfortunately people tend not to do that.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

I think in almost every instance where there has been complaints the mobile phone mast has come after the property.

Mr. S. Smith:

You know, mobile phone masts are going up now and most of the properties are already there so, I mean, you are right in saying that with new applications they are likely to be imposed upon people because if you want to have a network they have got to go somewhere. Often that somewhere is picked because it is an advantageous point to provide the best signal for the mobile phone market and also because it is probably the only property they can find within an area which is prepared to accept them putting a mast up. The difficulty also with people is getting them to understand the farther away from them the mast is, the greater the risk to them from the actual handset because the emission is higher. If you have small mobile phone aerials with small emissions sited fairly close so that you are still not within the range at issue, you are at far less risk because your phone works much easier and without the same level of emission.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you consider it would be prudent for all the parishes to advise prospective purchasers of property of the whereabouts of signal masts?

Mr. S. Smith:

I think there needs to be a central database that is readily accessible by the public and it should perhaps be the responsibility of the advocate who acts for purchaser or even an advocate acting for the vendor, to raise that as part of that sale condition. Much as they would raise any issues around, say, closing orders on property or other things that might have a legal bearing on the property itself. That, in my view, would be the easiest way to administer it.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Can I lead you on to TETRA masts. Are you aware of the TETRA system? I am sure you are, but are you aware of the mast locations in the Island?

Mr. S. Smith:

No, I am not. TETRA is something we have had more and more involvement with, in fact my office has just joined the TETRA system by purchasing TETRA handsets so that we can undertake our work more efficiently and certainly in major incidents or emergencies we would be able to still function if the mobile networks were to go down because of over use. Although I am sure I could obtain the siting of every mast tomorrow from the Electronics Department, I do not have data to hand and, in some ways, I would expect it would be confidential or privileged information because obviously it is part of the emergency services for the Island and therefore potentially a target.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Can I just pick up on that statement because obviously it is something we may be looking into? In the United Kingdom where TETRA is used for exactly the same thing as we use it in Jersey, the TETRA masts are positioned so those masts and their outputs are available to the general public. I would be interested in your view that the security threat and the knowledge of the positioning of those masts perhaps is more serious on the UK mainland than it is on Jersey.

Mr. S. Smith:

I put that forward as a proposition as to why it probably has not been made available. I do not personally believe there is any reason why all of this information should not be in the public arena. I do not have a problem with that at all.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Again, talking about locations of aerials, are you aware, at the moment, where all of the - be they macro, micro or pico - aerials are on the Island of Jersey?

Mr. S. Smith:

No, the Planning Department has a map only of those applications that have come in in the last couple of years, any Jersey Telecom masts before that time will not be mapped.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

We have been given information from Jersey Telecom that they have provided Planning with the location of all their masts, all their base stations and, again, by definition their base stations include macro, micro and pico. So, it would appear that Planning are aware of the location of all those sites. Does that surprise you?

Mr. S. Smith:

That was not my understanding from the planning officer. My understanding which I believe, from recollection, was iterated at Friday night's public meeting was that they did not know of the siting of all of the masts.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Can I bring you to emissions once again. Electromagnetic effects on certain members of the population, are you aware of the documented scientific evidence that suggests that a proportion of the population may suffer from electromagnetic effects?

Mr. S. Smith:

Yes, these have been raised in a number of reports and there are studies still ongoing, some of them around hypersensitivity which the University of Essex are undertaking at the moment and will be reporting on shortly. The 2 areas, if you like, that have been explained as around the effects of radiation and its dissipation into the body, which is including production of heat effectively, so like the cooking of the human tissue. The other is around the psychological type aspects that you might get as a result of the radiation effects. They have talked about the potential for cancers and stuff as well. But the evidence that I have seen to date would suggest that the link to cancers is tenuous at this stage.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would you regard it as your role to monitor current science and if there was anything that you deduced should alter the approach made by government would you regard it as your duty to convey that through the proper channels.

Mr. S. Smith:

I think if there were any changes that required a different opinion, either by government or information we should release to the public, then I would expect that to be something my department would do as a matter of course. Down the line, of course, there may be some changes which occur in which case almost certainly they will be actively explored in the media, but I still think that we would - with the advice of the relevant authorities - then provide our own comment.

Deputy A. Breckon:

You mentioned earlier, Steve, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and they maybe had a view on the siting of masts. I wonder if you can tell us if you know if that includes distances and localities to schools and residential areas or is it a planning issue?

Mr. S. Smith:

No, most of it is around planning and what they were recommending is the consultation with communities prior to the picking of a particular site for the siting of the mast. I am not aware of any jurisdiction that has stipulated a distance for a mobile mast because clearly, depending on the type of area, depending on the type of emitter or depending on the topography, that may change significantly and it would be very difficult if we said: "No mobile phone masts within 300 metres of a sensitive site" that might still mean that the footprint of the emission will fall within the sensitive area. It is important really to try and ensure that the footprint of emission is not within a sensitive area. That could need to be no more than 50 metres from the mast.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Have you been asked to give a professional translation of wider opinion on distances from schools and residential areas for planning purposes?

Mr. S. Smith:

Not formally, no.

Deputy A. Breckon:

There has been figures used of, say, 300 metres, are you aware of that? Do you have a view on that?

Mr. S. Smith:

It has been bandied about, yes, but I have to say that I do not agree with that because I do not think it is particularly relevant. The importance is the levels of emissions are below ICNIRP wherever the sensitive premises may be. In our particular instance, are they a magnitude below ICNIRP at the sensitive receptor and what we know from the information that we have had and the monitoring that has been done, that is the case, both in the UK and in Jersey.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

Can I just ask you about schools? All these schools over here are very proud that they have fitted their own wireless networks so that the children can sit in front of laptops all day. Has there been any assessment of this technology at all?

Mr. S. Smith:

Again, it is non-ionising radiation the same as mobile phone technology. The only difference is the emissions are lower. One of the concerns which people have raised is about this electromagnetic fog, if you like, because of the extent of non-ionising radiation. Technology now is increasing rapidly and more and more material is coming on to the market which relies on wireless technology, whether it be wireless broadband within people's houses, whether it be baby monitors, all of these things work on the same principle. If you have those in your property and you have significant amounts of them, it would not take long for you to start to build up to the sorts of level you will have from a mobile phone.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In terms of the planning aspects of the Island, once again, are you aware of any rollout plan or projections over the next year or 2 from either the telephone operators or the Planning Department? Have they consulted you on this in any way?

Mr. S. Smith:

No. The rollout that they have got in terms of the existing planning applications, the information they provide is on the maximum emission from a particular site. If they were to have to increase their network because of increased use then they would need to have to go back to the Planning Department to make a further application because it will require them to site further equipment at the premises. There is a maximum number of users you can have at one time, depending on the type of equipment, and if you want more users you need to put in more equipment. So effectively there is a means of ensuring a limitation on the technology to a degree through that process.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So in terms of mast sharing, as I alluded to before, would you have any comment on that. Do you feel there ought to be more emphasis on mast sharing and do you feel it is your role to guide the operators in that direction?

Mr. S. Smith:

It is possible that mast sharing is suitable on certain sites where you have sufficient distance to comply with ICNIRP and the magnitude below ICNIRP that we have required. There will be some sites where to continually add more equipment and more masts will mean that the site is no longer suitable because it will then be providing a footprint into a sensitive area. Therefore, mast sharing in that circumstance would not be appropriate. But most of the issues around mast sharing, it seems to me and it seemed to be borne out by the comments of the planning officer at the public meeting, was that to have a number of sets of equipment and masts requires a more robust piece of equipment in which to hold all this stuff. That then runs into the issue of aesthetics from a planning point of view.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

If we just go back to the input of the JCRA (Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority) in this. You are aware they issue the licences for the operators over here. Did they consult with you at any stage on the drawing up of those licences or the conditions attached?

Mr. S. Smith:

No, not at all.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you feel Health ought to have any input at the initial licence granting stage?

Mr. S. Smith:

My own personal view is I think that probably the difficulties that we are experiencing now probably stem from the inadequate consultation by JCRA at that stage before the licences were issued. I think the general public were given this impression that the opening up of the mobile phone market was going to be a good thing because it would bring down prices. People saw that in the back of their mind as being the bait, if you like. What I do not think people understood was the opening up of the market would result in the significant increase in the number of masts around the Island and the potential impacts that that might have. That, I do not think, was really explained properly to the public and certainly I am not aware of any public consultation in terms of the proposal before it happened.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Likewise there are indications that the move to 3G (third generation) could stimulate an increase in the need for further masts. Once again has there been any consultation with you on that matter?

Mr. S. Smith:

No.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Again, just talking about emissions, we have spoken on a regular basis over the last few days on the production of larger masts and mast sharing. Also we have been given indications that if we had a greater number of smaller masts the emissions would be less. What are your views on more masts in relation to risk?

Mr. S. Smith:

I think the importance is about having lower powered masts and that will certainly mean a larger number to cover the areas that the public will use. The difficulty with a large macro mast is that it emits over a big area so everyone is affected whether or not they are using a mobile phone. If you have a smaller mast that covers a very short distance clearly you will potentially affect very few people but you will

need more of those masts in order to make the connectivity for people. The emissions are going to be smaller at distance. That ultimately means that the mobile phone handset works less hard, emits less energy and therefore is of less risk to the user.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Steve, I did say at the start if there is anything you would like to say that we may have missed or anything you would like to add to the questions you answered, now is the hour as they say.

Mr. S. Smith:

I think the difficulty we had at the beginning of the process was very much we saw the health effects being used as a tool to prevent planning permission on what otherwise is probably an aesthetic ideal. As time has gone on I am not so sure that is still necessarily the case. I certainly do believe it was the case in the first instance. I think it has highlighted an awful lot of issues, some of which, I am sure, we will be able to address but it does not get away from the fact that currently while there is a low risk in terms of workers, at this stage the evidence to me suggests that there is no issue for the public.

Deputy A. Breckon:

Okay, thank you for that. If there is anything you think of, this is part of a process not the end of it. If there is anything that you think will be of benefit to our inquiry, please feel free to make another submission and thank you for that and for your attendance at the public meeting. I will now adjourn until 11.00 a.m. Thank you.