

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC
Wednesday 14 October 2020

1. QUESTION FROM RHIANNON AUGENTHALER
Re: 5G Spotlight Review update

Regarding agenda item 14 'Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee - 5G Spotlight Review update' and the suggestion to raise a motion to the Select Committee:

Why is DCC making the referral to the Select Committee when public health and illness prevention are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Health, and local authorities have a clear role in safeguarding the public from pollutants?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD

There are several parts to your question, and I will address each in turn:

I recognise Devon County Council's role, along with other agencies in safeguarding the public from pollutants. This role is considered in reviewing how to approach climate change. More information can be found here: <https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/>. Statutory Agencies of which the Council is guided by do not recognise 5G as a pollutant.

Devon County Council Scrutiny does have the power to refer issues to the Secretary of State for Health, this is on the grounds that the health service in the local area have made changes to provision, the legislation is here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/3048/contents/made>. The focus is upon the local NHS consulting and making decisions in line with need for the local population. This is clearly not the case with regard to 5G technology.

Select Committees, much like Local Authority Scrutiny review current law and policy with research and make recommendations to the Government to change. With this in mind it was felt that the Parliamentary Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, but also the Local Government Association, Public Health England and Devon MPs were the most appropriate body to act on the recommendation in the paper.

2. QUESTION FROM PIPPA KEANE
Re: DCC and Next Action for 5G

What will be DCC's next action to protect its citizens from 5G radio frequency radiation if the response to your letters (cited in the agenda point) remains unchanged in that the government follows PHE and ICNIRP (industry compromised) guidelines.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD

We would not second guess the response from the Parliamentary Select Committee. However, you will be aware that the report is recommended to be sent to all Devon MPs as well as other bodies and we would hope for a response from them in addition to any action taken by the Government. We would also reiterate that the spotlight review did not conclude that 5G was unsafe (see part 7 of the report).

There was a variance in opinions shared from those who participated in the scrutiny review, from those who strongly supported greater technologies including 5G to those who strongly did not. Devon County Council has listened and by means of this report and recommendations is taking steps to reflect the concerns of everyone.

3. QUESTION FROM TERE WELLS
Re: Court Action and 5G

Reference - <https://actionagainst5g.org>

Why would it be going to court if it was safe?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD

The Council is unable to comment on court matters, only its own responsibilities and of course the views presented as part of the spotlight review, which did not come to a local determination of safety or security of 5G technology.

As the report outlines, Local Authorities are guided by Central Government direction, law and policy frameworks. The most pertinent of these for 5G and human or environmental health is The International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), the Germany-based scientific body that assesses the health risks of radio broadcasts, which has stated that 5G is safe, and according to the international body in charge of setting limits on exposure to radiation, has updated its advisory guidelines for the first time in more than 20 years.

Public Health guidance is also based upon the guidelines set.

The spotlight review referenced several large scale studies, for example the Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation (AGNIR), Cancer Research UK and the report from Australia in 2016 and it did also report on the view of the World Health Organisation which advocated further research.

The Review felt that the concerns surrounding 5G should be assessed further by national bodies, hence the recommendation of the review to write to those parties and bodies who do have influence to consider the concerns expressed in terms of greater reassurance and evidence that the technology is safe. This action is even more important because the Council's Scrutiny function is not able to address issues of national concern and does not have the ability or power to make recommendations that affect planning policy or national guidance.