

FRIENDS OF THE PEAK DISTRICT
CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

CPRE SY and FPD are concerned about the proliferation of telecommunications masts, especially in natural and sensitive landscapes. Masts can be prominent and highly obtrusive features in the landscape.

THE PLANNING SYSTEM

The current planning policy bias in favour of the needs of telecommunications operators in PPG8 requires us to be strong advocates of landscape protection and to raise its profile in planning decisions. PPS7 maintains that development should be sympathetic to the character of rural landscapes. We must advocate a higher priority being given to the latter guidance. Landscape impacts should be of overriding importance in areas where special designations exist.

The branch will maintain a strong presumption against telecommunications development in the National Park Natural Zone (NZ). Operators generally accept that the NZ is 'out of bounds' for telecommunications development but we will continue to ensure that it remains free of unnecessary telecommunications equipment.

Especially careful scrutiny of applications and imaginative suggestions for designs and locations will be required for the Branch to respond positively to developments in wilder areas with a semi-natural character. In such areas, we should only support development that has virtually no visual impact and wherever possible enhances the landscape.

Masts in other areas must be **appropriately sited, the visual impact should be minimised and the best site selected.**

Guiding principles include:

- encouraging site and mast sharing where the impact is less than a new mast;
- discouraging proliferation where this is becoming harmful;
- encouraging innovative designs such as telegraph poles, micro cellular technology and artificial tree designs in appropriate areas;

- encouraging the use of existing structures such as pylons and buildings;
- encouraging Local Planning Authorities to use Landscape Character Assessments to inform policies, designs and proposals;
- recommending the use of conditions to minimise impact, e.g. by using native hedgerow species to conceal cabins, painting masts an appropriate colour or requiring the removal of redundant equipment;
- balancing the applicant's site selection process against the best environmental option in landscape terms. Consider suggesting alternative sites.

Note: interpreting location maps and elevations (especially in remote areas) requires extremely careful scrutiny in order to provide constructive comments. A very small re-location may have a major effect in reducing visual impact.

OPERATOR BEHAVIOUR

We believe that operators should engage with Local Planning Authorities regarding their network roll-out plans, devising strategic plans that minimise environmental impact and allow greater integration between networks. Operators should work together, share information and commission and fund research into the best way to accommodate telecommunications equipment in sensitive landscapes. An agreement between operators and the Association of National Parks (ANPA) was signed in January 2004 and has facilitated moves in this direction.

Across the Peak District and South Yorkshire area, mobile phone operators should adhere to the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Phone Network Development, which was produced by the Government, local authorities and the mobile phone industry.

In 2001, all UK operators adopted the 'Ten Commitments' set by the Federation of Electronics Industry (FEI). Amongst other things, this aims to improve relations with communities, to work with Local Planning Authorities in pre-rollout and pre-application consultation and to publish criteria on site sharing. This should encourage strategic thinking to help reduce environmental damage although there is no commitment to the protection of sensitive landscapes. CPRE SY and FPD will campaign to encourage operators to implement roaming.

Approved June 2011
Next Review June 2014