



Mobile phone mast is cut down in cancer alert

By Thomas Harding

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A mobile phone mast, 150ft high, which local residents thought was causing cancer has been cut down.

In an operation, which included negotiating a 15ft electrified fence, protesters used an angle grinder to cut through the mast's four legs.

Nearby villagers in Ballygawley, Co Tyrone, believe a number of people have developed cancer as a result of the mast which has 12 phone satellite drums attached to it.

It is thought that the death of a local man from cancer last week, who was in his fifties and had seven children, precipitated a revolt against the mast.

Anthony McGonnell, a local SDLP councillor, said: "There have been a number of other people in that area who have had cancer and obviously local people are very concerned that this epidemic is being caused by the presence of that mast."

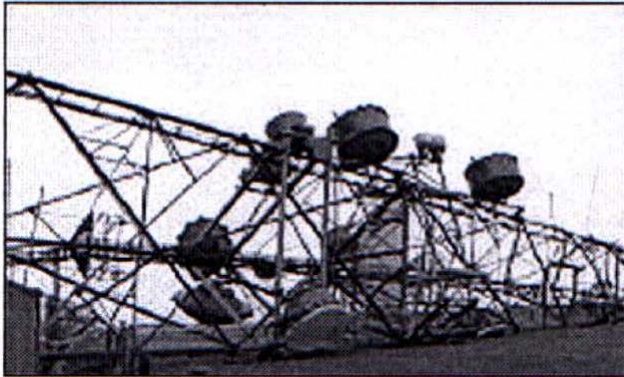
Mike Dolan, speaking on behalf of five mobile phone companies who used the Northern Ireland Electricity's communication system, said the masts had met international guidelines for health and safety.

Research had concluded that exposure to radio waves was "below levels of international guidelines and don't cause health problems for the population".

A Northern Ireland Electricity spokesman said damage was in the "hundreds of thousands" and he said those who had caused it had put their lives at risk.



Health fears over phone mast



The mast forms part of NIE's communication system.

People living near a telecommunications mast in County Tyrone, which was destroyed by vandals, have said they believe it is responsible for cancer-related illnesses in the area.

The mast, which stands in the Upper Cranlome Road area of Ballygawley, was cut down on Saturday evening.

The mast forms part of Northern Ireland Electricity's (NIE) communication system.

It is also used by several mobile telephone companies.

Sinn Fein Councillor Sean McGuigan said the claims should now be investigated.

“ There have been a number of other people in that area who have had cancer and obviously local people are very concerned

Anthony McGonnell
SDLP

"It would take a lot of correlation between doctors and hospitals and records to try and identify the number of deaths that have occurred and try to see if there was a particular thing linking those deaths," he said.

"I think what has undergone in some other areas, south Armagh for example and north Belfast they are trying to do something similar at the moment with regards to telecommunications.

Scientific research

"Hopefully we could link up with those people and see how they went about it and maybe learn from their experiences."

However, speaking on behalf of all five mobile phone companies, Mike Dolan said scientific research proves that mobile phone masts meet international safety guidelines.

"The science on this particular issue has been extensively looked at by groups around the world and by the Stewart group in the UK two years ago," he said.

"That group which comprised about 12 scientists from around the UK concluded that the balance of current research evidence suggests that exposures to these radio waves below levels of international guidelines don't cause health problems for the population."

SDLP councillor Anthony McGonnell said a local man in his 50s with seven children had died last week from cancer.

He added: "There have been a number of other people in that area who have had cancer and obviously local people are very concerned that this epidemic is being caused by the presence of that mast."

Police in Dungannon are investigating the incident.

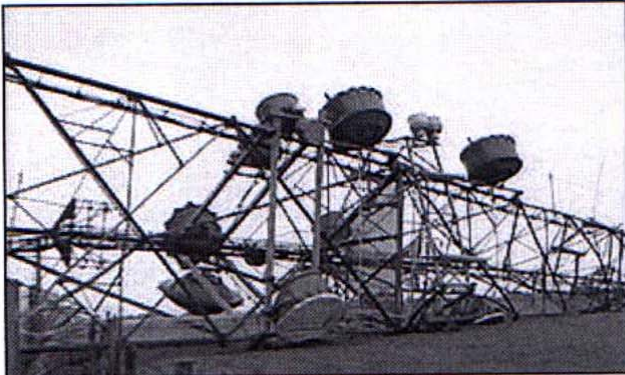
Detectives have appealed for anyone who was in the Upper Cranlome Road area at the time of the incident and who saw any suspicious activity to contact them.

A spokeswoman for NIE said the vandals had put themselves at risk and left the company's communication system vulnerable.

Many communities across Northern Ireland have campaigned against phone masts over fears that low level radiation could pose a health risk to people living near the ariels.



Phone mast is vandalised



It is the second such attack in County Tyrone

A mobile phone mast has been cut down in County Tyrone.

It happened on the Ballyrea Road in Ballygawley on Saturday night.

Damage put at more than £20,000 was caused to the mast.

The mast belongs to a mobile phone company.

Last month, vandals destroyed an NIE mast at nearby Cran Lome.

Local people said they believed the masts posed a health risk and in recent weeks, hundreds of people have attended public meetings in the area.



Anthony McGonnell:
"Genuine concerns in the community"

'Suspicious activity'

The identity of those behind the latest attack is unknown, but local SDLP councillor Anthony McGonnell said there were genuine concerns in the community.

"While I would not condone people taking the law into their own hands... the reason why these acts are taking place is because people are panicking," he said.

The police want to hear from anyone who

noticed suspicious activity at Ballyrea Road before the damage was reported at about 2230 GMT on Saturday.

The previous attack involved a mast which formed part of Northern Ireland Electricity's (NIE) communication system.

It was also used by several mobile telephone companies.

A spokeswoman for the company said the vandals had put themselves at risk and left the company's communication system vulnerable.

Local residents claimed the mast was responsible for cancer-related illnesses in the area.

Many communities across Northern Ireland have campaigned against phone masts over fears that low level radiation could pose a health risk to people living near the installations.