

Democracy and 5G

Previously I covered matters to with health and 5G, with the elections coming up I thought I'd write about democracy and 5G.

To recap, 5G or 5th Generation wireless network incorporates a basket of technologies 3G, 4G, 4G LTE and 5G. It's not to be confused with 5GHz radio frequency which is emitted from many WIFI routers in the home and work.

Like previous generations of wireless networks 5G uses a range of frequencies, however unlike them:

- it has the ability to be beam-forming so rather than spread its signal in all directions it can focus its beam rather like a laser pointer in specific directions very rapidly (think autonomous cars). Also like a laser pointer the power of the beam is concentrated.
- it will require far more transmitters for 5G, so many in fact that they will be on our street lights every 3 to 5 houses apart. So there will be a big leap in the densification of man made radio frequency radiation (RFR).
- it will enable the internet of things to produce AI-driven smart cities

Our Local Democracy

With the advent of 5G, local authorities have less power to object to the way it is being deployed and they cannot refuse 5G infrastructure outright. This is because masts supporting 5G and its associated infrastructure falls into permitted development. The heights of masts allowed under permitted development has also increased, 75m in urban areas and 85m in the countryside.

Recently, there was a consultation across the UK by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to ask whether the permitted development process for the deployment of 5G should be streamlined. The proposal is to do away with prior approval so that just a notification of it going ahead is required. The opportunity to make representations on permitted developments is already very restricted, but even this could disappear. With permitted development people can only object on the basis of visual impact, the impact on health is not considered.

A mast exists on the roof of a Wimbledon College building, Three Mobile wanted to give it 5G capability and make it much larger. Last month, local people succeeded in their objections to it but found the process they had to go through disturbing. Factors which contributed to this feeling were the lack of time to make their case, the limited number of people deemed to be affected and therefore consulted and the development being described as “minor” when the scale of the increase on plans clearly showed otherwise. It was also found that developers can appeal a refusal to the National Planning Inspectorate, bypassing the council, while objectors have no right of appeal if the council approves a development. The experience led people to gain insight into the health implications of 5G and therefore the need to bring the National Planning Framework up to date so radiation concerns can be assessed and listened to by councils according to the precautionary principle. [Here is the link](#) to the case on Merton Council's Planning Portal.

There has been a refusal of a mast development this month in the Hammersmith and Fulham area (W14). The mast was to be near a nursery and homes and this time not just visual impact but health was cited as a reason for refusal. The mast contravened ICNIRP health safety guidelines which is the basis for the government's regulation on radio frequency radiation (RFR). These guidelines, which date from 1996 are subject to a lot of criticism and are not considered stringent enough or even fit for purpose. According to the ICNIRP there is only sufficient evidence of harm from RFR when it causes thermal heating of the body. The UK uses the ICNIRP guidelines for its regulations which is why the allowable exposure in the UK is so high relative to other countries.

[MP for Stroud Dr David Drew](#) is aware of the how the roll out of 5G is impacting local democracy: “The electronic communications code has granted virtually unlimited powers to companies to construct, maintain or develop the current infrastructure without any planning permission. It is all done under delegated responsibility, which means that the general public do not even know what is going on, because normally these things are not publicised. There is little recourse unless the public take court action to stop it, but the means of doing so are limited. Even a private landowner has little authority to stop it. The matter needs to be looked into and properly investigated.” The same forcing through of 5G infrastructure is happening in North America as well.

Despite this, there are councils who have made a stand. A moratorium on 5G based on the precautionary principle has been voted for in Totnes, Glastonbury, Frome, Kingsbridge and Shepton Mallet Council and there may be others. Unfortunately this has no basis in law and central government can ignore them, in fact they have “barrier-busting taskforces” for this purpose. Nevertheless, it makes a strong principled statement, which is shared by others outside the UK, such as the Environment Minister Céline Fremault. Regarding a halted 5G trial in Brussels she said “I cannot welcome such technology if the radiation standards, which must protect the citizen, are not respected, 5G or not...The people of Brussels are not guinea pigs whose health I can sell at a profit. We cannot leave anything to doubt.”

Our National Democracy

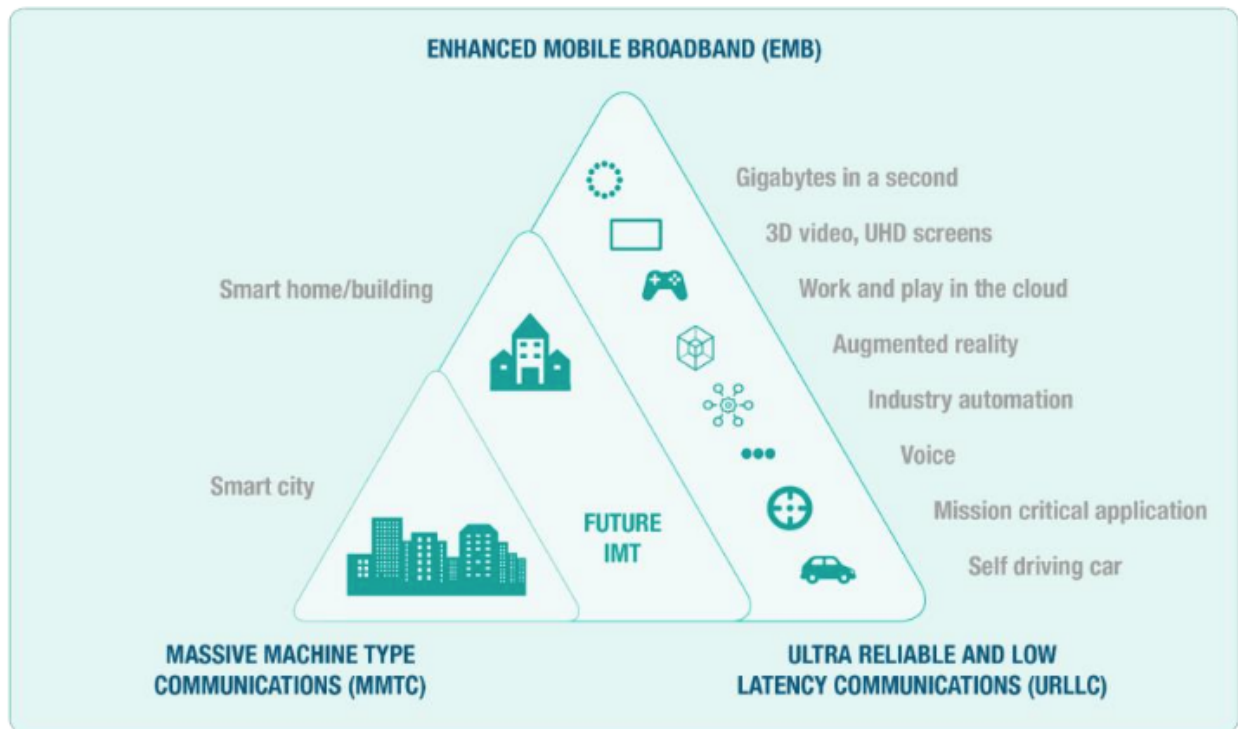
The main focus when it comes to the health and environment appears to be carbon reduction, the roll out of 5G is an element of the government's industrial strategy, so it is keen to roll it out. There is not a market for it, but it would like to create one by doing the R&D creating testbeds in universities and establishing the vision for its use.

“...the business case for the investment required for the deployment of 5G is not yet established.... the Government and wider public sector can therefore play a vital role in driving early demand as a major purchaser of 5G services as well as helping to address issues around public perception...” (DCMS Policy Paper, p8/9, Next Generation Mobile Technologies: A 5G Strategy for the UK, March 2017)

The vision for 5G is not really about faster downloads or more reactive game-play as it is widely thought. Mobile phones are also just a small part. As more and more objects become “smart” they are proposed to be served by 5G. Smart items such as fridges, meters, cars and even bins which are being trialled in the UK, monitor their use and upload your interactions and link with other objects using 5G with them whilst incorporating AI to learn and become “smarter”. Collectively they would form a smart city. This would mean a massive change for society, for quality of life, and a shift in perception of what it means to be a citizen or indeed governed. Yet the implications have not been discussed among the wider public. To my surprise, only Boris Johnson addressed the

topic directly at the UN on 25th September 2019. He warned about the dangers AI and smart cities present to our liberty. The video can be found [online](#), this is the [transcript](#). Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon was part of the UN delegation present at the time. He was receptive to concerns about man-made EMR when he met with BEMRI.org when he was a local councillor.

It was odd to have heard the speech come from the PM because his administration in the form of the Department of Digital Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) is travelling in the opposite direction to his concerns. Their aforementioned vision is shown below:



Source: Next Generation Mobile Technologies: A 5G strategy for the UK- 8 March 2017- DCMS Policy paper

Without Information there is no Democracy

As discussed in the last article the government and our councils rely on ICNIRP/WHO derived guidelines to ascertain safety. Our government uses the Health Protection Agency's document 'Health Effects from Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields' published in April 2012 when responding to public concerns. The latest study it cites is from 2011, however much has been learnt since then. I will not go into its deficiencies in detail as I have touched on it previously. There has been an academic analysis of the document by Sarah J. Starkey, published on 16 Oct 2016, it can be found online, the title is 'Inaccurate official assessment of radiofrequency safety by the Advisory Group on Non-ionising Radiation.

Contained in Boris Johnson's speech to the UN, was the line “we must make our voices heard more loudly in the standards bodies that write the rules”. However they seem so remote from the public conversation, yet they have such an influence on all our lives.

Can the body writing our standards be trusted and why? Microwave News is an independent publication which has been going for 35 years, trawling through its archive you can see the theme of compromised studies and poor reporting of findings across many years. On 30 July 2007 it reported that the founder of ICNIRP and the former director of WHO's EMF project, Mark Repacholi revealed that up to half of WHO's EMF project funding came from wireless and electric

utility industry groups. <https://microwavenews.com/news-center/repacholi-half-who-emf-project-funding-came-industry>. Mark Repacholi's conflict of interest was further uncovered towards the end of the 2007 edition of Panorama called "WiFi Warning Signal" it can be viewed online https://youtu.be/_k5gnA-PeXc.

Very little discussion has taken place about who owns the data fed back by the networks we use or how AI is being applied and what data it will utilise. Neither has there been much public debate, if any, about alternative technology to 5G such as wired networks and/or Li-Fi. Their long term pros and cons are not widely discussed or even known about.

If you'd like to find out more, you can go to 5GinMerton.com and in the resources section you can find the document 5G and the Precautionary Principle, it's quite easy to read and will hopefully answer many questions and prompt others.

If you'd like to ask questions of our government, local and national in a way that their responses are audited, (you can be more sure of a reply and a decent one that way) you can use:

whatdotheyknow.com (good for FOI requests)

theyworkforyou.com (good for writing to MPs and for finding out about their voting record)