

CAMPAIGNS

New maps fuel campaigners' claims of phone mast 'radiation'

By **Rachelle Money**

LOCAL CAMPAIGNERS who insist that mobile phone masts cause health problems may be given an extra shock this week – as a former nurse from Clydebank has revealed maps showing how her neighbourhood is packed with the masts.

Catherine Fraser said she has suffered radiation burns to her legs as a result of the masts which surround her home. She and a friend unearthed the full-colour maps, which show the density of communications masts in her area.

"From the knees down it feels like I'm being microwaved," Fraser told *The Big Issue*. "My legs feel boiling hot and I can't do anything about it. I looked at my foot the other day and I've got radiation burns. I devoted my life to nursing so I know what kind of burns they are."

Fraser along with a friend, whose identity she wishes to protect, trawled public records to construct a map of where mobile and Tetra phone masts were situated within an approximate five mile radius of her Clydebank home. She found there were nearly 100 masts being operated by the likes of phone giants Orange, Vodafone, O2, T-Mobile, and Three, including five Tetra masts – the controversial new mobile communications system for the emergency services.

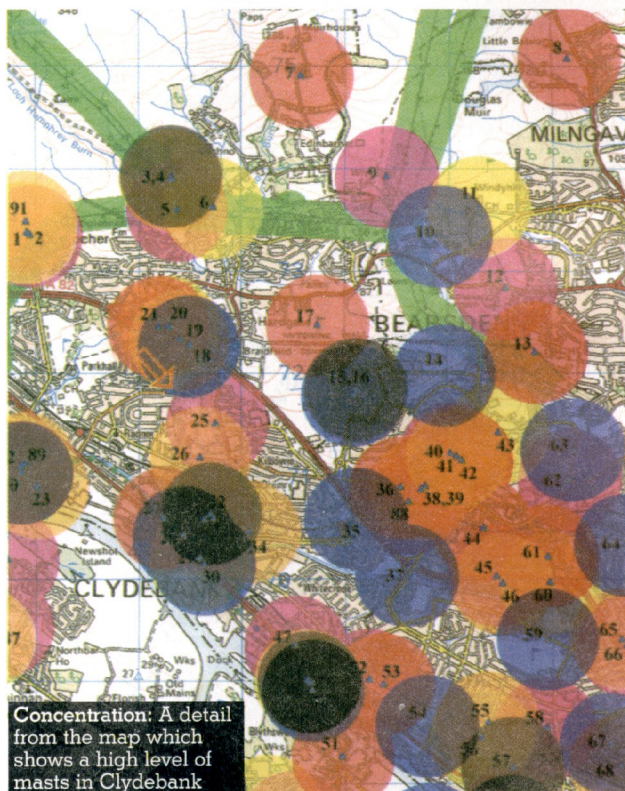
"When I saw the sheer volume of masts around my area I was absolutely shocked," Fraser said. "They are posing a huge health issue but it's an issue that's just being pushed aside."

"The maps were a tremendous help to me. I knew there had to be Tetra masts in my area because I could hear the beats," she added.

Tetra (Terrestrial Trunked Radio) is a communications system rolled out by the Home Office which was contracted out to O2 Airwaves. The initiative was designed to give police and other emergency services a secure communication system. There are currently around 650 Tetra masts erected across Scotland.

People like Fraser who are said to be 'electro-sensitive' have complained of masts giving out low-level buzzing or humming noises.

Fraser said: "The Tetra masts send out this beating sound. At night it's the worst, because that's when the



emergency services are at their worst.

"I have acute hearing but I wish I hadn't. I was a healthy person before all this. I loved to cycle and hike and all of this has come as a real shock."

Catherine Gamba, who has campaigned against the introduction of Tetra masts near her home in Fife also believes her health has suffered.

"I had skin rashes, pressure in my chest, nose bleeds and I couldn't sleep at night."

'It feels like I'm being microwaved. I looked at my foot and I've got radiation burns'

She added: "I have no doubt that the masts are the cause of ill health. There's definitely something going on – it's playing havoc with people's health. It's overwhelming the number of areas and the amount of people who are affected by this."

A spokeswoman from O2 Airwave defended accusations that the Tetra

masts were causing ill health. She said: "O2 Airwave take health and safety very seriously. All O2 Airwave masts rigorously meet international health and safety guidelines and are typically thousands of times below these guidelines. There is no evidence to suggest that the police radio network, or the mobile masts that support this network, cause any damage to the health of police officers or the general public."

Arthur Jarrett, co-ordinator for campaigns umbrella group Mast Sanity Scotland, accused the government of "palming the public off" by continuing to deny the downsides.

"International advisories say everything's fine and dandy," he said, "but they don't properly look at the scientific evidence and the harm these low-level chronic frequencies are doing to people."

He added: "The maps that Catherine Fraser has are a striking illustration, but they're by no means unique. If people investigated just how many masts were in their area they'd be overwhelmed."

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