

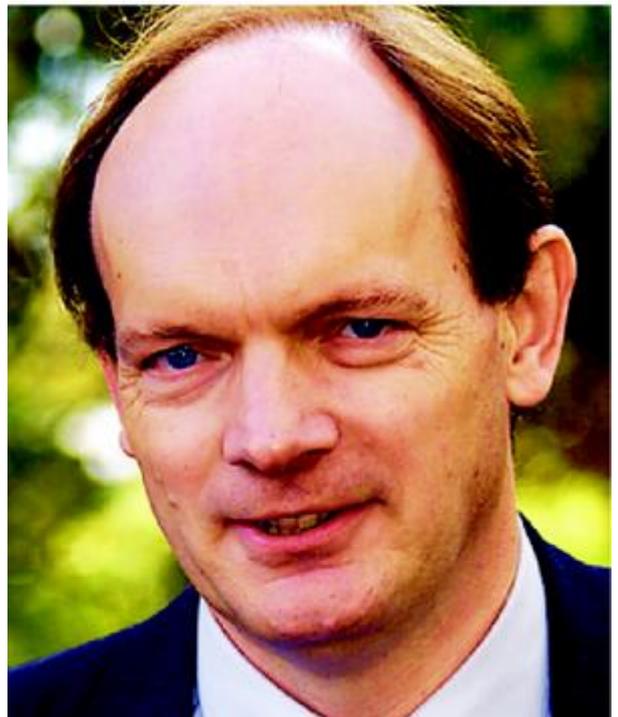
Top scientist casts doubts on TETRA masts safety

By Gordon Berry

ONE OF THE world's leading medical scientists has claimed that the highly controversial TETRA transmitting system "may constitute a health hazard" to people living near installation sites.

The comment has been made in a letter written by Dundee-based top cancer research scientist Professor Sir David Lane as members of Fife Council's east area development committee prepare to give a view on three more applications for sites to be included in a new telecommunications system for Fife Constabulary.

Sir David's home lies close to one of the sites, at Quarry Road in Balmullo, and he and his wife—another leading scientist—have submitted a formal objection to the application from NTL, which owns the mast where the Airwave MMO2 dish would be mounted.



Sir David Lane.

Councillors in north-east Fife recently decided to defer a decision on several similar applications until more is known about claims that the masts—claimed to involve radio signals which pulse at a rate similar to that the human brain—could be associated with health problems.

Fears have been expressed that radio waves could cause calcium to leak from the brain, triggering damage to nervous and immune systems, and that pulsed microwaves can lead to conditions such as leukaemia and epilepsy.

The Home Office has said that there are "no discernable risks" associated with the masts.

After the decision to delay the application was made at a meeting in Cupar there was considerable controversy and anger when Fife Council then decided to take the decision-making process out of the hands of local councillors and into the central strategic environment and development committee.

Local councillors still have to provide a view on the matter, however, and the Balmullo application, which has also attracted objections from other local residents and from the community council, is one of three coming before tomorrow's committee meeting in Cupar.

The others involve sites at the East Lomond, and Prospect Hill at Balmeadowside near Cupar.

Sir David and Lady Lane have raised three grounds of objection, among them the bombshell statement that "this type of transmitter may constitute a health hazard to the occupants of the neighbouring houses."

They said that definitive tests have not been carried out, as it is not known how to do them.

A similar view has been expressed by the community council secretary, Anne Haskell.

“We believe that not enough research has been carried out into the effects a mast would have on both persons and livestock,” the objection said.

“A two mile radius of the mast would incorporate the whole village.”

Sir David is director of the Cancer Research UK Cell Transformation Research Group at the University of Dundee, and is the founder and chief scientific officer at Cyclacel, a company developing drugs treatment for cancer.

He is a fellow of the Royal Society, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Royal College of Pathologists, and a founder member of the Academy of Medical Science.

Lady Birgitte Lane is head of cell and development biology at the Wellcome Trust Building at the University of Dundee.