

Water given away to night drinkers

FREE bottles of water and mints were handed to revellers in Sutton Coldfield last weekend to help combat excessive drinking. Pubs and bars in the town sported posters, beer mats and literature which emphasised the effects excessive drinking can have. Six extra police officers also attended the town centre along with a three representatives from the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT). The event, which reinforced the tough 'Get Caught Go To Court' message against alcohol-fuelled crime and disorder was led by Sergeant Rachel Crump and Trinity Court Councillor David Pears. Sgt Crump, said: "The night was a success and the products were well received - the idea was to engage with everyone and we certainly did that - by the end of the night we actually had people approaching us to talk and get water rather than the other way round." More than 2,500 bottles were given away thanks to funding from the DAAT, the Sutton Coldfield Local Delivery Group, Safer Birmingham Partnership and Road Safety Partnership. Further events are planned for tomorrow (Saturday) and Friday, September 4.



More than 2,500 bottles of water were handed out to revellers in Sutton Coldfield last Saturday.

Time for answers

In April, the *Observer* ran a feature about how a teachers' union was calling for classrooms to be cleared of WiFi until the technology's safety had been proven. Crucially, say their campaigning peers, that is not the same thing as an apparent absence of associated health complaints - the yardstick by which the Government, which follows the cue of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other agencies, dictates policy. Amid the stand-off between these differing burdens of proof, Sutton has been a force in the fight against complacency over the march of technologies - from masts to mobile phones - which allegedly create unsafe electromagnetic radiation. One resident, Eileen O'Connor, launched the national Radiation Research Trust (RRT), a trustee of which is Sutton MP Andrew Mitchell who, shortly before the summer recess, tabled several Parliamentary Questions about the technology. Here, we reproduce in full the questions and the written answers he received - answers which do not substantially move on the debate past the Government's well-worn reiteration of its seemingly unswerving stance.

QUESTION by Andrew Mitchell MP to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families: *What recent assessment he has made of the effects on schoolchildren of potential radiation emissions from wireless local area networks in schools; and if he will direct local education authorities to adopt a precautionary approach to the approval of the (a) installation and (b) operation.*

Answer: The Health Protection Agency (HPA) is the authoritative body on health issues relating to wireless technology. The HPA has consistently and clearly advised schools and local authorities that it does not consider there to be any problem with the safety of WiFi. Its current guidelines state there is no scientific evidence of any health risks from

WiFi or that exposures exceed guidelines and there is no reason schools should stop using them. Becta is the Government Agency with responsibility for providing advice to schools and others on various technologies and their use, including their safe use. Becta follows the HPA's latest guidance in the advice it produces for schools and other education providers.

Becta's current guidance on the use of WiFi equipment in schools is that it provides a useful and flexible option to complement rather than replace hard wired systems. This advice will be reviewed and updated accordingly as and when new guidance is published by the HPA. Becta is engaged with the HPA on elements of the research programme and will monitor closely any emerging findings to ensure that children are offered the best education in a safe and secure environment.

Question to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government: *What guidance he issues to planning authorities on their consideration of potential health effects arising from the operation of proposed mobile telephone masts; what account he takes of the guidelines for protection from such radiation established by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) in establishing such guidance;*

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and if he will make a statement.

Answer: Planning Policy Guidance Note Eight (PPG8): Telecommunications states that health considerations can be a material consideration in determining applications for planning permission and prior approval. Whether such matters are material in a particular case is ultimately a matter for the courts.

It is for the decision maker to determine what weight to attach to such considerations in any particular case. PPG8 goes on to say that if a proposed mobile phone mast base station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public health, it should not be necessary for a local planning authority to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them.

Question to the Secretary of State for Health: *What recent representations he has received on a) the adequacy of recommended safe levels of exposure to electromagnetic radiation and b) the adequacy of guidelines for protection from such radiation established by ICNIRP; what steps the Government has taken to implement the recommendations of the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones and what measures are in place to protect children under the age of 12 years from exposure to potentially harmful radiation from mobile telephones; what discussions he has had in the council of ministers on the recommendations concerning EU member states contained in the*



The Radiation Research Trust, founded by Eileen O'Connor (centre). Andrew Mitchell MP (third from left) has tabled several parliamentary questions on behalf of the RRT, of which he is a trustee. He has shared the responses with (l-r) Dr Graham Blackwell, comedian Jasper Carrott - a staunch supporter of the Trust, says Mr Mitchell - Brian Stein, Graham Phillips and Mike Bell.

EP's resolution of April 2, 2009, on health concerns associated with electromagnetic fields; and to ask the secretary what steps he is taking to a) identify and b) protect against the effects of mobile telecommunications radiation emissions of those categories of people who have particular susceptibilities to them.

Answer: Between June 1 2009 and July 8 2009, the department received ONE letter and ONE email both from the same member of the public that mention guidelines for exposure to electromagnetic radiation.

In 2004, the National Radiation Protection Board (NRPB) recommended adoption of the ICNIRP exposure guidelines for occupational and public exposure to electromagnetic fields between zero and 300 gigahertz (GHz).

The Government response to the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones report was reviewed in Mobile Phones and Health 2004: Report by the Board of NRPB.

A departmental leaflet on mobile phones and health includes advice concerning children's use of mobile phones and can be seen on the department's website.

In response to the Stewart report, the Government has supported research on exposure to radio waves in the independently managed Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research Programme. The HPA report on electrical sensitivity can be found on its website.

UK health ministers have not had any discussions in the Council of Ministers on the recommendations concerning EU member states contained in the EP's resolution of

April 2 on health concerns associated with electromagnetic fields.

Question to the Secretary of State for the Home Department: *What assessment he has made of the effects on the health of police officers from radiation emissions from Tetra handsets issued to police forces.*

Since the roll-out of Airwave radio began in 2001, the Government has made an investment into research into the safety of the Tetra technology. None of the research to date has produced any evidence that Airwave is harmful.

All Airwave terminals comply fully with international safety standards and exposure levels are typically lower than those of the analogue terminals that they replaced.

Nagar making waves in games

BOLDMERE Swimming Club's Hannah Nagar made a splash recently by claiming a hat-trick of medals for Great Britain at the Jewish Community Centre Maccabi Games in San Francisco, writes Shaun Staff. The JCC Maccabi Games is an Olympic-style event held annually for Jewish teenagers aged 13 to 16-years-old. Competing against athletes from five different countries, Hannah was the only female swimmer in the Great Britain squad and swam 12 of 20 events at the four-day gala. The 13-year-old exceeded her own expectations in the events by picking up a bronze medal in

the 200m fly before winning silver medals in the 400m medley relay and the 200m freestyle relay. Hannah said: "We swam in a 25-yard pool which was new for me and possibly an advantage as it was smaller. "I ended up getting medals in the events that I least expected against some stiff competition." She now has her sights set on next year's games in Denver where she will look forward adding more medals to her already impressive collection. She added: "I was extremely pleased with my results and hope to compete again next year."



Boldmere Swimming Club's Hannah Nagar. (5)

about radiation

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