Help close gaps in UK mast regulation

Campaigners seek a European Court-supported settlement



Illustrative visualisation of the proposed lattice tower and container yard. Not a site photograph.

Neil McDougall has asked the European Court of Human Rights when it expects to decide whether the application he and Karen Churchill lodged on 25 August 2026 can proceed. They are seeking a negotiated agreement with the UK Government on how planning authorities should apply the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC) to mast siting. Somerset Council's 23 October approval of a mast at Thomas Way, Glastonbury, shows why they want clarity.

Glastonbury: evidence before approval

Somerset and Glastonbury Town Council both requested exclusion-zone drawings for the 22.85-metre mast. The applicant's agent declined, saying they were unnecessary. Somerset granted prior approval despite evidence from objectors that the calculated zone could reach an upper-floor workplace window. The town council recommended refusal and requested call-in. In their 6 November pre-action letter, campaigners asked Somerset to concede that the approval was unlawful and agree to have it quashed.

Evidence about people, workplaces and wildlife must count.

Safeguards must work where people live

What planners should consider

In August 2019, DLA Piper, acting for Public Health England, said bodies using exposure guidelines from the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) must decide what weight to give those guidelines and what other evidence to consider. Neil and Karen argue that planning authorities should make reasonable inquiries, consider material evidence from the public, weigh a site's benefits against its health and environmental implications, and consider public-health conditions under EECC Annex I(B)(3) where warranted.

Planning policy DM7(1) recognises that matters covered by another regulatory regime can be material where they have land-use implications. It says decision-makers should assume those regimes work effectively "unless there is clear evidence to the contrary". Ofcom oversees spectrum licence conditions and has said it does not check exclusion-zone drawings. Brian Mathew MP is seeking further clarification on the EECC, following questions from Neil Shastri-Hurst MP about exclusion zones. The Government's consultation on permitted development makes that clarification more urgent.

1. Demonstrating compliance where people go

Customers walk between and enter around 150 steel containers next door. Objectors submitted research showing that containers can reflect and scatter radio waves and asked for a site-specific assessment.

2. Assessing effects outside the guidelines

Objectors raised interference with pacemakers and other implants. In Thomas v Cheltenham, the Court of Appeal upheld a finding that an officer wrongly discounted implant-interference evidence. The challenge also questions Somerset's handling of environmental impact assessment screening requests and raises starling flight routes towards Ham Wall and feeding habitat linked to the protected Somerset Levels and Moors.

3. Protecting residents and children

Neil submitted and asked Somerset to consider its implications for residents and children. Objectors identified Tor School about 339 metres away and Fairfield Montessori about 493 metres away. The officer's report said, "There are no schools nearby."

UK workplace regulations set a microwave-hearing exposure limit, and the 1999 Council Recommendation sets a public limit for the same effect. Campaigners asked Somerset to establish whether the mast would meet that public limit in accessible places and use the findings to inform siting, design or conditions.

Support a negotiated settlement

Neil and Karen continue to seek a negotiated settlement and dispute the Government's costs demand. They thank everyone who donated £2,000 this November. If mediation does not proceed and the Government continues pursuing its £8,000 demand, raising the remaining £6,000 will be urgent. The £10,000 raised since 2023 has covered court filing fees and administration.

Donate: gofundme.com/f/admin-fees-for-litigants-in-person

If Somerset does not concede, campaigners intend to file for judicial review by 4 December. Updates: rfinfo.co.uk.