

## Unacceptable Telecommunications Masts (27) – proof they are not needed for safety purposes

### Description



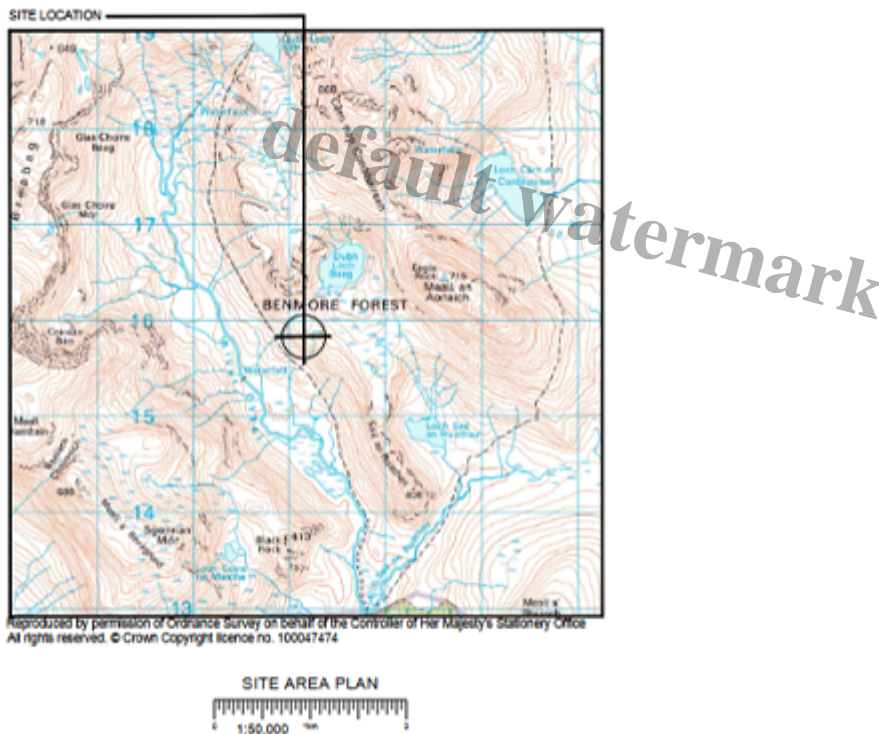
Why would government or mobile phone operators want to wreck a beautiful landscape like this with a telecommunications mast when rescues, like this one, were initiated through a mobile phone satellite call? Photo credit Assynt Mountain Rescue Team

One of the main justifications for the UK Government spending Â£500m to erect telecommunications mast in Total Not Spots, which include many of the important landscapes in Scotland, was for safety purposes. Two days after Ofcom announced it intends to license mobile phone operators to use satellites for standard calls ([see here](#)), which will eliminate Total Not Spots far more comprehensively than any number of masts, confirmation was provided that they already provide the most effective means of calling out the rescue services after a member of the public used their iphone to send an SOS from the famous Bone Caves in Assynt ([see here](#)).

While satellite phones have become a standard piece of kit for rescue teams and the like working in remote areas, they are still relatively expensive. A new iPhone 14, however, costs c£500, an amount which should be affordable to most employers if not to many individuals. As other phone providers and mobile operators follow, however, prices will reduce further.

From a safety perspective the roll out of satellite technology is going to be far quicker than the Shared Rural Network programme which, since it was agreed in 2020, has delivered one working mast in one Total Not Spot (on South Uist).

This, unfortunately, has not yet stopped planning applications for new masts being submitted. A case in point is a recent mast application (Highland Council Ref 24/05020/FUL), just over the hill from the Bone Caves, in what is both a Wild Land and a National Scenic Area:



The Bone Caves are on the west side of the Corbett, Breabag, shown on the top left of the map. Note the altitude of the proposed mast.

The Supporting Statement from Mitie, on behalf of Three ([see here](#) for planning papers), includes among the usual standard justifications for these masts that it will result in improved health and safety:

*“The benefits of reliable 4G mobile connectivity are far reaching and have positive impacts on many aspects of day-to-day life. There are many personal and commercial benefits, as well as positive impacts on healthcare, education, tourism, remote working, and accessing online services, to name a few. In some of the more remote locations, one of the main benefits of the development will be in terms of improved health and safety to those who work or visit the area.”*

The recent rescue over the hill should demonstrate to Highland Council Planning Officers that this and other similar masts are not necessary to deliver improved health and safety and as consequence they

are not justifiable in planning terms given their impact on wild land and the landscape.

Mitie's application for this mast notes that *“The Shared Rural Network programme is regulated by Ofcom, with regular reporting throughout the life of the programme to ensure agreed obligations and targets are met.”* The implication is that in December, when this application was submitted, Ofcom were still driving the programme to erect phone masts in places like Wild Land Areas. Having this week issued their news release claiming they intend the UK is going to be a *“world leader”* in rolling out mobile phone-satellite connectivity, it is time they told UK Ministers to declare the programme to eliminate Total Not Spots by erecting new masts redundant.

If you want to help stop these senseless telecommunications masts, the Shared Rural Network Mast Action Group is an excellent source of information ([see here](#)) and almost entirely the work of volunteers.

### **Category**

1. Other parts Scotland

### **Tags**

1. masts
2. National Scenic Areas
3. planning
4. wild land

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