



## ST in two minds about tower

### Residents asked to participate in survey

DALEEN FOUCHÉ

**A PROPOSAL** to install a Vodacom cellphone mast in Murdoch Valley, Simon's Town, will be decided upon by subcouncil on 19 September.

The City of Cape Town's Department of Planning and Building Development Management has provisionally approved the application to install the 11,5m mast – with two antennae – near the Watsonia Road water reservoir.

Affected parties sent 13 objections and nine endorsements for the mast to the City by the end of the public participation process on the matter in March.

Objections are mostly concerned that electromagnetic radiation in the frequency emitted by cellphones and masts may be harmful to people living near the stations. In a press release, Vodacom cites a World Health Organisation (WHO) fact sheet in response.

"A large number of studies have been performed over the last two decades to assess whether mobile phones pose a potential health risk," the sheet reads.

"To date, no adverse health effects have been established as being caused by mobile phone use."

Even so, the WHO, in a precautionary move, has classified cellphone technology as "possibly carcinogenic".

Vodacom's press release goes on

to claim cellphones emit less radiation in the presence of a good signal. "By ensuring a good base station signal, the exposure from cellphones can be reduced," said Vodacom spokesperson Richard Boorman in the release, which fails to mention the fact that base stations themselves emit a powerful electromagnetic field.

The Electromagnetic Radiation Research Foundation of South Africa, like the WHO, encourages a "precautionary approach", stating on its website that several international studies have found that people living close to cellphone masts suffer from illnesses.

But supporters of the Murdoch Valley mast – among them the Simon's Town Civic Association and the Community Policing Forum – argue that better cellphone reception is urgently needed, especially by business owners who struggle with poor reception.

Janine Genade, operational manager for the Boulders Beach group, says Boulders lost a big customer and revenue of R15 000, because of a lack of cellphone reception at its lodge.

Another Simon's Town businessman had to move his business to Fish Hoek due to poor reception and trouble with internet connectivity.

The CPF also supports the cellphone mast due to the security and health threat that faces residents who are left without cellphone re-



**AVID READER:** This young baboon from the Da Gama Park troop was snapped contemplating the *People's Post* "Out and About" page while he thought nobody was watching.

Photos: Lorna Thomas

ception. A survey to determine the actual demand for the mast is being conducted by David de Jager from Southern Cape Engineering. The survey will target residents and businesspeople in all of Murdoch Valley, as well as Seaforth and Froggy Farm.

Flyers will be sent out to inform those affected, and the survey can be filled in at [goo.gl/vsePm](http://goo.gl/vsePm).

The results will be tabled at a sub-council meeting on 19 September, and the issue will be put to the vote.

Residents in other parts of the City have shown strong protest to-

wards proposed cellphone masts in their areas. A total of 250 Constantia residents marched in protest last month, brandishing placards bearing slogans like, "We don't need no radiation."

The Green Point Residents' and Ratepayers' Association, meanwhile, is taking a stand against a third cellphone mast set to go up on the Romney Park Hotel and Spa in Green Point, citing health risks as a main concern.

All this is set to come to a head after the end of October, which marks the cut-off point for public

comment on a new policy to regulate cellphone masts.

The policy aims to take "precautionary measures" around all telecommunication infrastructure.

According to the City's website, "the aim of the policy is to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems in the city in an efficient, environmentally appropriate and sustainable way".

The policy further aims to implement stricter regulations around cellphone masts in residential areas.



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