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Three years in prison for man who set fire to phone mast after researching 5G coronavirus theories

The damage cost to the phone mast was estimated between £10-15,000

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By [Charlotte Hadfield](#)

13:55, 8 JUN 2020 | **UPDATED** 14:58, 8 JUN 2020



 **Michael Whitty, 47, was jailed today for three years**

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A man who set fire to a phone mast after researching discredited theories linking 5G and coronavirus online was jailed today.

Michael Whitty, 47, carried out an arson attack inside the equipment box of a telecommunications mast owned by Vodafone on Coopers Lane in Kirkby on April 5 after researching theories falsely linking 5G to coronavirus.

The father-of-three, who runs parking facilities at Liverpool John Lennon Airport, **pleaded guilty to arson** over the blaze at **Liverpool Crown Court** on Monday, May 18.

He appeared back in court today, June 8, for sentencing via a videolink from HMP Altcourse.



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The court heard how during the second week of the coronavirus lockdown, at 10:47pm on April 5, a delivery driver reported seeing three men running away from a 5G mast on Coopers Lane in Kirkby - two of them with their faces covered.

The delivery driver did not see the fire being started and was able to stamp it out before the emergency services arrived.

Simon Christie, prosecuting, told the court how the fire was found to have been started inside the equipment box next to the telecommunications mast, which had been forced open, leaving wires exposed.

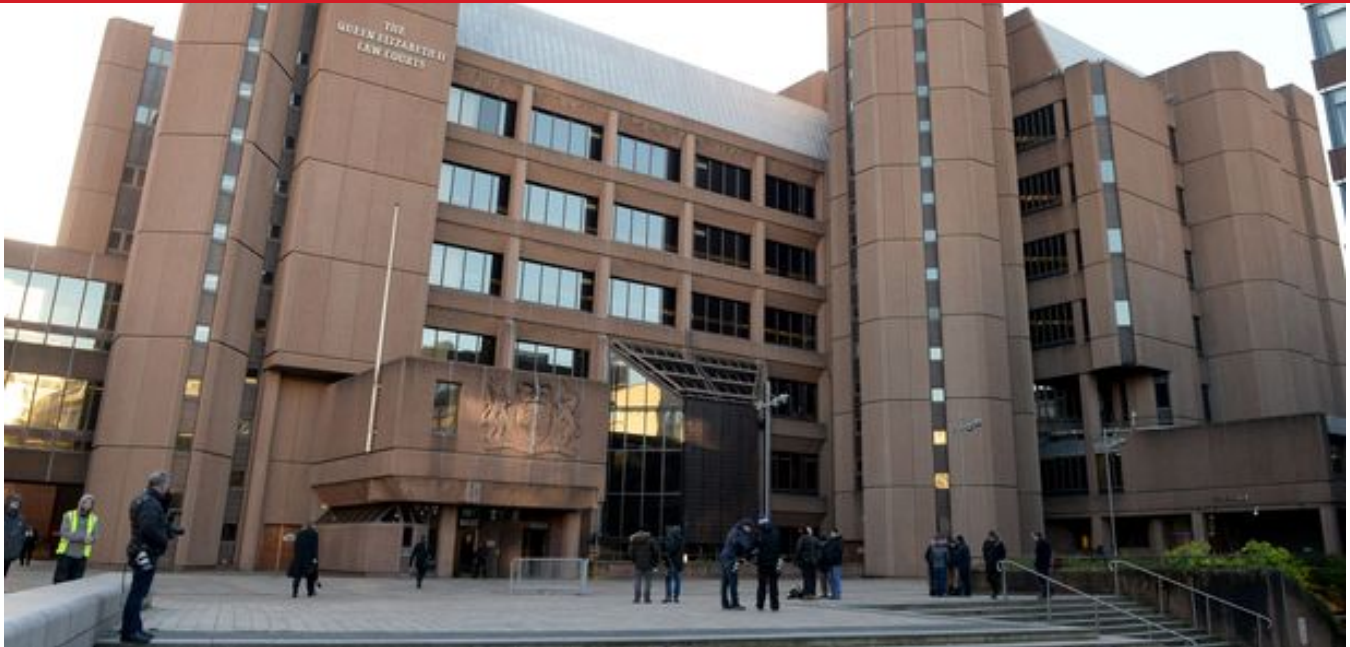
Fire lighters and a pair of partially burnt gloves were found at the scene, and were later found to have Whitty's DNA on them.

On April 17, police attended Whitty's home at Perimeter Road in Kirkby where they carried out a warrant for his arrest.

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During a search of the property, officers found fire lighters and Whitty's mobile phone was seized.

Mr Christie said upon examination of Whitty's phone, police found that "he had spent a considerable amount of time researching 5G technology and discussing it with others in online chat rooms."

Photos and videos of other phone masts around Liverpool were also found on the phone.



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It took 11 days after the arson before the mast was functioning again, with Vodafone customers having "poor service or no service" during this time.

Andrew Alty, defending, said Whitty had a genuinely held view about the potential dangers linked to 5G masts.

Mr Alty said: "That view may or may not be correct, time will tell.

"He acknowledges his response was wrong and disproportionate."

Despite the defence solicitor saying "time would tell", these theories have been widely discredited and those propagating them or suggesting they may have some validity have been told to stop in light of attacks on communications workers.

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The court heard there were references for Whitty from a parish priest and from Jeane Lowe, chief executive of charity Centre 63, praising him for his voluntary work including delivering food parcels to those in need.



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harsher sentence than a paedophile who causes a lifetime of mental and physical pain and yet walks free? Maybe because the court system protects child rapists as though there was some kind of paedophile ring?

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Ian82

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5g fault

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1 | 1



1953john

🕒 18 MINUTES AGO

Good

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4 | 4



AMY

🕒 18 MINUTES AGO

Wow 3 years and pe do s walk free

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6 | 3



tobesomeone

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Whitty has 13 convictions for 29 offences spanning between 1991 and 2019, including for assaulting a police officer and for possession of a firearm, but none for similar offences.

Whitty was also convicted for an offence of battery last year, which he was still serving a community order for at the time of the arson.

Judge Thomas Teague QC said: "In my view there was here a high degree of planning and premeditation.

"There was use of firelighters an, in the sense that the aim was to put the mast out of action, there was intent to cause very serious damage to property."

Setencing, Judge Teague QC said he believed Whitty had showed genuine remorse and his charitable work showed a "positive side" to his character.

Whitty was sentenced to three years in prison.

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