

11

6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein:

said step (d) uses channels at said first base station which are in use at said second base station in response to said handoff requests; and

said step (d) refrains from using channels at said first base station which are in use at said second base station in response to said new call requests.

7. A method as claimed in claim 1, additionally comprising the step of refraining, at said first base station, from determining a presence of or resolving interference conflicts between channels in use at said first and second base stations when said second base station is carrying less call traffic than said first base station.

8. A method as claimed in claim 1, additionally comprising the step of determining, if said second base station is carrying more call traffic than said first base station, whether a conflict exists between a first existing call using a first base station channel and a second existing call using a second base station channel.

9. A method as claimed in claim 8, additionally comprising the step of handing off, if said conflict exists, said first call to a first base station channel which does not conflict with channels in use at said second base station.

10. A method as claimed in claim 1, additionally comprising the step of identifying whether a non-interfering channel is available for use at said first base station, said non-interfering channel being a first base station channel which does not interfere with channels in use at said first base station and does not interfere with channels in use at said second base station.

11. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein said step (d) uses said non-interfering channel at said first base station when said non-interfering channel is available for use at said first base station.

12. A method as claimed in claim 1, additionally comprising the step of sending data from said first base station to said second base station, said data being configured to identify said channel used at said first base station.

13. A method as claimed in claim 1, additionally comprising the step of placing said first base station in a moving orbit around the earth.

14. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein:

said first base station manages a first plurality of channels, including said channel used in said step (d);

said first plurality of channels are grouped into reuse units;

each of said reuse units includes a second plurality of said channels;

each reuse unit is placed in use when any channel included therein is placed in use and is placed out of use when all channels included therein are placed out of use; and

said method additionally comprises the step of handing off a call from a first one of said reuse units to a second one of said reuse units to place said first one of said reuse units out of service.

15. A method for managing radio channel usage among a plurality of base stations in a radio telecommunication system, said method comprising the steps of:

placing channels in use at each of said base stations to support calls from each of said base stations;

notifying other ones of said base stations that said channels have been placed in use;

monitoring, at each of said base stations, call traffic in more than one of said base stations; and

12

identifying possible interference conflicts between channels placed in use at pairs of said base stations;

wherein, for each pair of said base stations, said identifying step is performed at said base station which is experiencing less call traffic within said pair of base stations.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15, additionally comprising, for each pair of said base stations, the step of placing in use, at said base station which is experiencing more call traffic within said pair of said base stations, a channel which interferes with a channel already placed in use at said base station which is experiencing less call traffic within said pair of said base stations.

17. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said placing step places channels in use in response to channel usage requests, said requests being configured as handoff requests and new call requests, and said method additionally comprises the steps of:

sequentially processing, at each of said base stations, said channel usage requests; and

prioritizing said channel usage requests to process said handoff requests before processing said new call requests.

18. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said placing step places channels in use in response to channel usage requests, said requests being configured as handoff requests and new call requests, and said placing step comprises the steps of:

selecting, at said base station which is experiencing more call traffic within said pair of said base stations, channels which interfere with channels already placed in use at said base station which is experiencing less call traffic within said pair of said base stations, said selecting step being performed in response to said handoff requests; and

refraining, at said base station which is experiencing more call traffic within said pair of said base stations, from placing into use channels which interfere with channels already placed in use at said base station which is experiencing less call traffic within said pair of said base stations, said refraining step being performed in response to said new call requests.

19. A method as claimed in claim 15, additionally comprising the step of refraining, at said base station which is experiencing more call traffic within said pair of said base stations, from performing said identifying step.

20. A method as claimed in claim 15, additionally comprising the step of performing an intra-cell handoff at said base station which is experiencing less call traffic within said pair of said base stations to resolve conflicts identified in said identifying step.

21. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein:

channels supported by each of said base stations are grouped into reuse units;

each reuse unit is placed in use when any channel included therein is placed in use and is placed out of use when all channels included therein are placed out of use; and

said method additionally comprises the step of performing, at each of said base stations, an intra-cell handoff between two of said reuse units to place one of said two reuse units out of service.

22. A method for managing radio channel usage between first and second base stations within a radio telecommunication system, said first and second base stations supporting first and second cells, respectively, and said first cell being