

Householder Action against Light Pollution

in the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Introduction

This Information Sheet is for householders who already have, or are thinking about installing, exterior lighting. It sets out simple steps to find out if you may be contributing to light pollution and how to prevent it.

This sheet should be read alongside the *Light Pollution in the South Devon AONB* Information Sheet which explains what light pollution is and describes its different forms.

Quick questions on lighting

1. Do you have exterior security lighting?
2. Do you leave any of your outside lights on overnight?
3. Do any of your exterior lights cast light outside the boundary of your property?
4. Do they light more than the area that needs lighting for the task?
5. Are they uncomfortable to look directly at?

If you can answer 'yes' to any of these questions you may unwittingly be causing light pollution.

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and how it affects you

This Act brought light pollution under the scope of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This means that artificial light can now be categorised as a *statutory nuisance*. In practical terms this means that if light from your property falls onto that of your neighbours' causing light trespass, you could be causing a statutory nuisance.

If you feel that you are experiencing light trespass that is causing you a problem, you

should diplomatically approach the owner of the light(s) involved to try to resolve the issue.

The local Council must take reasonable steps to investigate complaints of such nuisance, but will first want to see that you have tried to resolve the issue with your neighbour directly.

Once satisfied that a statutory nuisance exists, may occur or recur, the Council has powers to issue an **Abatement Notice** against the person responsible for the nuisance or the owner or occupier of the premises from which it emanates. This will usually give the lighting owner a reasonable period within which to rectify the problem.

Do you really need lighting?

Before installing exterior lighting, or if looking at your lighting needs afresh, you should first consider whether lighting is really necessary in each instance. Where lighting is deemed necessary, be clear on its purpose and consider this carefully when selecting lighting solutions.

'Security' lighting

A high proportion of outdoor lighting is installed for 'security' reasons. Security lighting is exterior lighting installed solely to enhance the security of people and property. Whilst this is an understandable aim, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that lighting deters criminals intent on illegally entering or taking property.

Poorly adjusted or overly powerful security lights can be counter-productive, by creating dark shadows in which criminals may hide and discourage potential witnesses from looking in that direction because of the discomfort caused by glare.

Just as with other forms of security, lighting should be restricted to your property.

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Choosing your lighting system

Features to check when choosing lighting:

Feature	Why
It is a 'full cut-off' light, or has a low Upward Light Ratio (ULR) that is less than 5%	So that no or very little light is wasted by shining upwards into the sky where it is not needed & causing sky glow
Motion detector.	So that light only activates when someone needs it.
Motion detector that can be aimed separately to the light (if not choose a light that can be used with a separate detector)	So that detection can be more accurate.
Motion detector is fitted with a timer	To minimise the operation of the light to times when it is most needed and useful.
The light optics are 'double asymmetric'	These lights can be aimed downwards but still spread out over a wide area, reducing light spill and the potential for light trespass.
The lamp is 1000 lumens (150Watts) or less	This is adequate for most lighting needs and will help reduce your energy bill and the potential for glare
Shields, baffles or louvers can be fitted	To restrict the area of light, reducing light spill, glare and trespass.

Will your Lighting Scheme Need Planning Permission?

Maintaining or making improvements or alterations that do not materially affect the external appearance of the building, do not need planning permission. Most work involving lighting particularly of the householder DIY type

will fall within this category. For example home security lights.

However, installing a lighting scheme that would need to be undertaken by specialist lighting engineers could be deemed 'development'. In this case you should contact your local Council's Planning Department for their opinion on whether you need permission.

If the lighting is for a Listed building, consent is required if it may change the character of the building. It is advisable to get the opinion of the Council's Conservation Officer before doing any work.

Checklist for installing exterior lighting

- **Follow** the manufacturer's installation instructions (see *Domestic Security Lighting, Friend or Foe* available from www.ile.org.uk)
- Ensure that you **only** light the area that needs lighting;
- **Avoid** lighting other people's property, including shining light into their windows. Light should not fall outside the boundary of your property;
- Be careful **not to allow** light to fall onto public spaces (such as the road or pavement) or the open countryside;
- Check that motion detectors can only be activated from **inside** your property boundary (you may need your neighbours' help with this exercise). Lights should not be triggered by movement outside the boundary of your property.
- Security lighting should be designed to control glare.

For guidance on how to angle your lights and examples of the difference these simple adjustments can make see the Campaign for Dark Skies webpage www.britastro.org/dark-skies/floodlights.html

Lamp fitted with shield to prevent light trespass.

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Working with your neighbours



What to do if you have a complaint about a neighbour's lighting

If you feel that a light from your neighbour's property is trespassing onto your property, for example into a bedroom, approach your neighbour politely and informally.

Let them know *how* their light is affecting you. E.g. it shines into my bedroom and I have trouble sleeping. It might help your neighbour understand if you can show them the effect of the light from your perspective.

Ask them if they could:

- Adjust the angle of the light
- Use a lower wattage bulb
- Fit or reposition a motion detector
- Switch the light off after a mutually agreed time

Refer to the publication Statutory Nuisance from Insects and Artificial Light (2006) produced by [DEFRA](#) for further information.

These are simple, free or low cost solutions to try first. Try living with the light for a week to see if the solutions have worked. If they do, that's a good result and it has not cost your neighbour any money.

If after a week you are still bothered by the light, speak to your neighbour again. Remember to thank them for trying, but explain that these measures have unfortunately not worked on this occasion.

The next steps involve:

- changing the light shade,
- replacing the light fitting
- removing the light

What to do if a neighbour has a complaint about your lighting

Understand the nature of their complaint and consider the situation from their perspective

Try making simple alterations or modifications to your lighting first one at a time. Assess the effect of your changes each time.

There are some simple and cheap ways to prevent your lighting from annoying neighbours. See Domestic Security Lighting, Friend or Foe (2003), or Guidance Notes for the Reduction of light Pollution (2005), both from the [Institute of Lighting Engineers](#) for details.

In Summary, Good Lighting Practice is:

- Picking the right lighting luminaire for the right task,
- Fitting lighting with the most appropriate type and wattage of bulb to give the minimum required level of brightness,
- Ensuring lighting is both installed and adjusted in the correct way,
- Operating lighting for the minimum required time.

Environmentally responsible disposal of bulbs and fittings

You may find that following your premises audit, bulbs or light fittings need replacement. This task raises a number of issues in its own right. You may decide for example to postpone bulb replacement until your existing bulbs or fittings fail at the end of their life to avoid the disposal of still useful resources. If this is the case you should weigh up the cons of early disposal



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versus the pros of installing new equipment that should be both more efficient, less polluting and less costly to operate. The end decision is yours and should take into account all facets.

The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations apply to bulbs of all types including compact fluorescents (most energy saving bulbs) and light fittings. The regulations require you to dispose of equipment in an environmentally responsible manner. You can take any of this equipment including unbroken bulbs to your nearest local authority waste recycling centre.

A range of other websites and publications provide useful information including:

- Guidance notes for the reduction of light pollution (2005) [Institute of Lighting Engineers](#)
- Domestic Security Lighting, Friend or Foe (2003) [Institute of Lighting Engineers](#)
- An assessment of the problem of light pollution from security and decorative light (2006) Temple. [DEFRA](#) Local Environment Quality: Light Pollution
- [Campaign to Protect Rural England](#) light pollution webpages containing a selection of useful background information including the report *Night Blight*.
- [Campaign for Dark Skies](#) web pages including *Frequently asked questions* and *Solutions and problems: good and bad lighting*.
- CELMA Guide on Obtrusive Light (2007) [European Lamp Companies Federation](#)
- [Globe at Night](#) family activity pack – observation guide, magnitude charts and observation data sheet.
- [Environmental Protection UK](#) Light Pollution leaflet



The constellation of Orion viewed from a dark night sky location in the South Devon AONB

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Acknowledgements

This Information Sheet was prepared by Vicky Tanner-Tremaine www.crimsonbeetle.co.uk on behalf of the South Devon AONB Unit.

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Where can I find out more?

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Other Information Sheets in the 'Dark Skies and Nightscapes' series providing more detail on ideas for action and the South Devon AONB Management Plan, containing the policy framework for the protected area, can be accessed from www.southdevonaonb.org.uk