

## **South Hams Sustainability Group Report of Light Pollution Event held 28<sup>th</sup> March 2006**

### **Purpose of the Event**

The aim of the event was to raise awareness of the problem of Light Pollution and to introduce the new powers under The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, which enable light pollution to be classed as a statutory nuisance. The event was arranged by the South Hams Sustainability Group.

33 people attended the event from across the district and it was chaired by Cllr Bryan Carson, Chair of South Hams District Council.

Alan Stapleton Chair of the South Hams Sustainability Group welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **Introduction - Cllr Carson**

The first UK law tackling light pollution comes into force on 6th April 2006. Exterior lighting will join noise and smells on the list of things that can be treated as a Statutory Nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The new law (Section 102 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005) makes 'exterior light emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance' a criminal offence.

The new law does not tackle all forms of light pollution, only incidents of particularly bad lighting from some types of premises which cause people real nuisance.

The Chairman welcomed the speakers to the event and explained that there would be time for questions after each presentation.

### **Roger English, Project Officer South Devon AONB**

Roger is responsible for co-ordinating data gathering and research to monitor changes in the condition of key features of the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As part of this, he has carried out a light pollution mapping exercise for the AONB using remote satellite imaging.

His research indicates that light pollution seems to be a growing problem across the AONB especially around the main towns of Ivybridge, Dartmouth and Totnes. It is threatening a key feature of the AONB i.e. dark night skies and also wastes energy and can affect the habits of wildlife. Light pollution in the AONB is thought to be mainly caused by;

- Badly illuminated signage and buildings
- Badly illuminated public and private open spaces
- Poorly directed floodlights
- Overpowered lighting

To tackle the growing light pollution problem the AONB want to work with partner organisations to raise awareness of light pollution being a problem. They want to encourage more appropriate positioning, size and power of security and other external lighting. They will continue to monitor changes to this key landscape feature and with partners build a supporting local network of case studies, good practice, knowledge and advice.

**Mark Johnson, Senior Lighting Engineer  
Devon County Council (DCC)**

Mark is responsible for the maintenance of over 82,000 illuminated lighting and sign units. He manages a team of six engineers / technicians who are individually responsible for specific areas of Devon. He is also involved in setting Devon County Council's policy on lighting.

DCC identified that glare and other light pollution needed to be controlled back in 1995 and they drew up a commitment to reduce light pollution. Since then they have only used full cut off lanterns in new housing and highways developments to ensure that light is directed exactly where it is needed and they have changed the type of bulbs used in street lighting to reduce sky glow.

Mark highlighted the need for more consumer advice on what bulbs are best used where and better information on how security and outdoors lights should be fitted to reduce light pollution. A number of organisations including the CPRE and Institute of Lighting Engineers are working on developing guidance for consumers and planners on how to install the correct lighting for the job and reduce light pollution.

Mark and his team are able to offer advice on the design of lighting installations in new development anywhere in the county. The advice often leads to more effective lighting, improved energy efficiency and reduced light pollution caused by spillover. Contact Mark on 01392 382114 or [mark.johnson@devon.gov.uk](mailto:mark.johnson@devon.gov.uk).

**Peter Kane, Crime Prevention Design Advisor  
Metropolitan Police Service**

Peter is a Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor and an expert in lighting in relation to crime prevention. He is working on the new national stadium, Heathrow, Arsenal Stadium and the new Olympic Village.

Peter's presentation highlighted the importance of good lighting to reduce crime levels. Home Office statistics suggest that in an area of high crime the right lighting can reduce crime by 20%. This need for security lighting should not however lead to more light pollution.

The lighting needs of a development should be built into the design stage so that they are an integral consideration and not an after thought. Well planned appropriately positioned lighting can ensure security, safety and comfort, save energy and money and reduce light pollution.

The new law will hopefully make developers, businesses and home owners more thoughtful when installing external lights.

**Questions from the floor**

1. Is there anyone in the Devon & Cornwall Police who acts as advisor on lighting?

Answer: There is not a specific adviser in the Police. Mark from DCC can offer advice to new developers on the types of lights, programmers and fittings they can use. Following the new legislation in April 06 there will hopefully be more information on good light installations in the public arena and general awareness of light pollution should increase.

2. With the introduction of the new legislation will Parish Councils be empowered to request the dismantling of existing bad lighting?

Answer: If there is a persistent light pollution problem from a certain premises in a parish then the parish council should first attempt to talk or write to the premise owners to ask if the light(s) can be redirected, reduced in brightness, removed or turned off at a better time. It may be that the landowner is not aware that the light is causing any problem. Recording when the problem happens and taking photos can help to provide evidence if the issue needs to be taken further.

If the owners of the light(s) refuse to sort out the problem then the next port of call would be the South Hams District Council Environmental Health Team (01803 861234), who have a duty to investigate the situation to assess whether or not a statutory nuisance exists. If a statutory nuisance does exist then an abatement notice can be issued to the person responsible for the nuisance or the owner or occupier of the premises from which the nuisance emanates.

Failure to comply with the abatement notice can lead to fines of up to £5,000 being issued to domestic premises, with a further fine of up to £500 for each day on which the offence continues after conviction. When the nuisance arises on industrial, trade or business premises, the maximum fine is £20,000.

3. With the introduction of the new legislation will Parish Councils have greater influence over the lighting within new development?

Answer: Peter Kane suggested that policies and supplementary planning guidance for lighting systems should be incorporated into local plans. Parish councils should ask their district what policies they are including in new planning documents to avoid light pollution arising from new developments.

4. Can Parish Councils ask for the street lights in their village to be turned completely off at night?

Answer: If Parishes really want to consider having their street lights turned off at night then they should first talk to their local police team to assess the potential increase in crime that may result from this action. If the parish council still wishes to pursue a change in their street lighting policy then they should talk to Mark at Devon County Council on 01392 382114. Parish Council's should bear in mind that if the programming is changed then they will not be able to get the street lights turned back on at a later date, because it will cost too much.

To find out more on light pollution and the new law please visit the following websites;  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/light/index.htm>  
[http://www.nasca.org.uk/pages/environment\\_facts/light\\_pollution.cfm](http://www.nasca.org.uk/pages/environment_facts/light_pollution.cfm)

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the event and for the speakers for their contributions.

The South Hams Sustainability Group would like to thank the South Devon AONB Sustainable Development Fund for supporting the event.