



Dark Skies in the Mendip Hills National Landscape

Dark Night Skies and Light Pollution Position Statement

Lighting – in the right place, the right amount, on for the right amount of time

1.0 Introduction - The Purpose of this Position Statement

- 1.1 The purpose of the Position Statement is to give guidance to developers, land managers, farmers, householders, local authority decision makers, Parish Councils, architects, highway authorities and other decision makers on desirable measures to conserve and enhance the dark night skies of the Mendip Hills National Landscape.
- 1.2 The Position Statement aims to achieve a consistent approach to conserving and enhancing dark skies by using recognised and respected standards developed by the Institute of Lighting Professionals and Commission for Dark Skies.

2.0 Rationale for a Dark Night Skies and Lighting Position Statement

- 2.1 The Mendip Hills National Landscape is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which derives much of its beauty from its qualities of tranquillity, remoteness, and sense of naturalness. Light pollution has the potential to erode and destroy that tranquillity and sense of remoteness, by disrupting views in towards, and out from, the Mendip Hills. Light pollution can have a significant effect on the circadian rhythms of fauna and flora, and adverse effects on human mental, and physical health and well-being from disrupted sleep and suppressed immune systems. Poorly designed or installed artificial lighting can not only be a nuisance to neighbours but can be hazardous to road users.
- 2.2 The Mendip Hills National Landscape has significant and extensive areas of naturally Dark Night Skiesⁱ and remains an area where the wonders of the night sky can be enjoyed as an integral part of its natural beauty. The Mendip Hills National Landscape is home to the North Somerset and Mendips Bat SAC., this designation is largely for greater horseshoe (and lesser horseshoe) bats. Greater Horseshoe bats are extremely light sensitive, the cave systems of the Mendips and the surrounding landscape, provide hibernation and maternity roosting sites



of national importance, together with foraging habitats. Greater lux levels could have major impacts on the value of these habitats for horseshoe bats.

- 2.3 The Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan (2019-2024) ⁱⁱ under paragraph 1.4 sets out a Statement of Significance (a material planning consideration) on the special qualities of the Mendip Hills National Landscape (NL) that create the Mendip Hills sense of place and identity, and these include the dark skies, sense of remoteness, and naturalness of the area, the distinctive limestone ridges and scarp slopes, views to the Mendip Hills and views out and panoramas.
- 2.4 The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership is the advisory committee for the Mendip Hills NL AONB. Its role is to promote the AONB Management Plan "Vision" to help achieve the Plan's priorities and objectives.
- 2.5 Whilst the Partnership recognises that there is a genuine need for artificial lighting for the purposes of security and safety, the Partnership also recognises there is increasing pressure on the dark night skies of the National Landscape through development, commercial and domestic lighting, and street lighting. Thus, the Partnership considers there is the need for coordinated proactive measures to conserve the dark night skies, and to reduce the impact of artificial lighting, in order to avoid unnecessary light pollution.
- 2.6 In accordance with the Management Plan (2019-2024), the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership will work proactively with other authorities, representatives of local communities and special interest groups to adopt and promote common standards that help to establish practical measures to reduce light pollution, in order to enhance and conserve the dark night skies of the Mendip Hills National Landscape.

3.0 Mendip Hills National Landscape Objective: Dark Night Skies.

Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the Mendip Hills National Landscape should have regard to dark night skies by seeking to (i) avoid and (ii) minimise light pollution by;

- 1. Ensuring external lighting shall only be erected or installed in, or within the setting of the National Landscape if it can be shown to be essential for security and safety, and only using the minimum quantity of lighting to achieve it;***



- 2. Ensuring that external lighting should be designed, shielded, and installed to prevent upward, sideways, or outward spillage in accordance with up to date ILP Guidance;**
- 3. Ensuring the colour and intensity of lighting is appropriate for the wider setting;**
- 4. Ensuring that external lighting avoids highlighting a structure or feature that would have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding landscape;**
- 5. Utilising the most energy- and pollution-efficient equipment reasonably available.**
- 6. Ensuring design and quantity of fenestration is carefully selected to minimise light glow and spillage.**

4.0 National Planning Policy Relating to the Significance of the AONB and Light Pollution.

- 4.1 The significance of AONBs as laid out in The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, and Section 85, the statutory duty on all relevant authorities *‘to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function in relation to, or affecting land within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.’*
- 4.2 The significance of the AONB is set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) para 176;

‘Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.’

NPPF (2021) para 185 states;

‘185. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location, taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- i. mitigate and reduce to a minimum, potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life*



ii. identify and protect tranquil area which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and

iii. limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.'

4.3 The Government's Rural White Paper published in 2003 observed that: *"It is not just its physical features which give the countryside its unique character; there are also less tangible features such as ... dark skies and remoteness from the visible impact of civilisation."*

The White Paper went on to state that: *"Increased measures will be taken to promote tranquillity"*. Influences on tranquillity in the countryside identified in the White Paper included light pollution para 9.4.4.

'Light pollution' of the night sky is an increasing intrusion into the countryside at night, and it is an issue that we want all rural local authorities to take into account in their planning and other decisions. Local planning authorities have powers, for instance, to control many external lighting installations.'

4.4 DEFRA's 25-year plan (2017) states in respect of AONBs and National Parks that:

'Over the next 25 years we want to make sure they are not only conserved but enhanced. Many of the policies set out in the rest of the Plan will contribute to making all areas more beautiful.'

DEFRA policies commit not just to minimising additional pollution but to *'cut all forms of pollution'* – including light:

'Over the next 25 years, we must significantly cut all forms of pollution and ease the pressure on the environment. We must ensure that noise and light pollution are managed effectively.'



5.0 Further Policy and Information on Light Pollution includes;

Planning Policy Guidance: Light Pollution <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution>

Commission for Dark Skies [Commission for Dark Skies - Enquiries](#) [Restoring our natural, starry skies, by reducing inefficient lighting \(britastro.org\)](#)

Institution of Lighting Professionals 'Guidance Note 1 for the reduction of obtrusive light 2020'

<https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-1-for-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2020/>

Information from the Bat Conservation Trust on artificial lighting, and Eurobats guidelines for consideration of bats in lighting projects

https://www.eurobats.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/publication_series/WEB_EUROBATS_08_ENGL_NVK_19092018.pdf

The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) – Society of Light and Lighting (SLL) Code for Lighting

<https://www.cibse.org/knowledge/knowledge-items/detail?id=a0q20000008l6xiAAC>

The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) – Society of Light and Lighting (SLL) Lighting Guide 6: The Exterior Environment

<https://www.cibse.org/knowledge/knowledge-items/detail?id=a0q20000008K5EsAAK>

The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) – Society of Light and Lighting (SLL) Lighting Guide 15: Transport Buildings

<https://www.cibse.org/knowledge/knowledge-items/detail?id=a0q0000000CzUERQA3>

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ⁱ <https://www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/FINAL-Mendip-Hills-AONB-Management-Plan-Review-2019-v1.pdf>