



Northumberland Dark Sky Park

Living in Northumberland Dark Sky Park

What does it mean for me?

Northumberland Dark Sky Park is the largest area of protected night sky in Europe. The International Dark Skies Association (IDA) has given the park its “Gold-Tier” status, its very highest level of award in recognition of our starry skies and the sustained effort over many years to protect and share this asset for the region.

But what does Dark Sky Park status mean for residents?

Being in a Dark Sky Park does not mean you have to turn lights off. Rather it is about encouraging the use of high quality eco-friendly lighting, which is not only more effective in shining light where it is needed, but also reduces light pollution and carbon emissions and is also better for nocturnal wildlife. Protecting the night time environment is not just about starry nights.

Northumberland Dark Sky Park covers 1475 square kilometres and to ensure we minimise light pollution and retain Northumberland's rural character a Lighting Management Plan (LMP) has been produced. This has been endorsed by the park's two planning authorities – Northumberland National Park Authority and Northumberland County Council.

This plan is not a legal document – but it will be used by both planning authorities as guidance when considering domestic, public and commercial planning applications within the Dark Sky Park. For example if you want to build new premises or expand existing buildings you should consider whether you need external lighting at all and if you do how to make it dark sky friendly. That means using lighting which is suited to the job and which is fully shielded. Such lighting is invariably less expensive to operate over the long term and requires less maintenance than older lighting technologies.

The Dark Sky Park covers a big area, embracing wild remote areas and small settlements. Because of this the Lighting Management Plan includes different guidelines for different areas. Uninhabited and non-development areas of Kielder Water & Forest Park are deemed to be in the “EO-0” zone, which means we want to keep skies pristine and no new lighting is permitted. Kielder Water and villages like Greenhaugh, Kielder, Elsdon and Alwinton are designated EO-50 zones, where the guidance takes account of public safety and convenience. In between there is an EO-250 zone with tighter guidelines on external lighting.

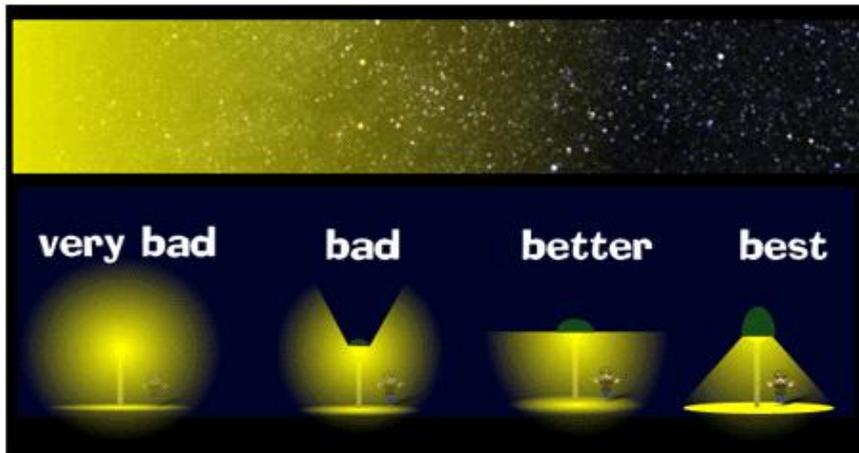
What happens if you have a security light in the garden or want to erect one?

Residents will be encouraged to confine the spill from external lighting to within their property boundary. That could be done by simply adapting or modifying your existing unit, for instance, by tilting lights down. We may also be able to help you replace units which cannot be modified. (See below for some examples). If you want to erect a new unit consider using a low wattage bulb, or use dark sky friendly lighting units, which are well shielded. We can provide you with advice. There is no compulsion in any of this. But to keep our skies dark and retain our status as Europe's largest Dark Sky Park, we need your co-operation.

What about street lights?

Moves are already underway to improve street lights in Northumberland Dark Sky Park.

Northumberland County Council has an “invest to save” scheme getting underway next year to replace 16,000 lights across the county with new LED units. These are well shielded and shine light down rather than allow it to spill upwards. They can also be dimmed. Some communities have already had LED lights fitted.



I want to expand my business and want external lighting for security on new premises.

Dark Sky Park status will help local businesses, especially those in the service and hospitality sectors. If you are planning a new building or extension, or want to create a parking area, then when you draw up your plans take advice on the best kind of dark sky friendly lighting to use. The planning authorities will refer to the Lighting Management Plan when they consider your planning application. So it's a good idea to demonstrate that you have thought about keeping light pollution to an absolute minimum.

There are now a range of ‘fully cut-off’ or ‘fully shielded’ lights available. Some examples are shown below.





What can I do to keep our skies dark?

In addition to the steps above consider whether you actually need external lighting at all. Perhaps lights can come on in response to movement or turned off after 10pm, or be reduced in intensity. Gaining Dark Sky Park status has been a big partnership effort. We need to build on that and we encourage you to join our effort in ensuring Northumberland retains its magical skies and unique character.

To reiterate, free guidance will be given on the type of lighting (low wattage) that is preferred, and how lighting fixtures should be installed. We hope that everyone will see the benefits, not only from being able to see the beauty of the night sky, but through cost savings by reducing wasted and unnecessary lighting.

For more information contact: Duncan Wise on 01434 611521 or duncan.wise@nnpa.org.uk
Valuable guidance can also be found at: www.britastro.org/darkskies