



DEBATE PACK

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Dark skies in Cornwall

This pack has been produced ahead of the debate to be held in Westminster Hall on Wednesday 29 November 2017 from 4.30-5.30 on Cornwall's dark sky status. The debate will be opened by Sheryll Murray MP.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. Background

Bodmin Moor in Cornwall was designated an International Dark Sky Landscape by the [International Dark Sky Association](#) in October 2017.¹

What is International Dark Sky status?

The Dark Sky Places programme was started by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) in 2001 to encourage communities to preserve dark sky sites through responsible lighting policies and public education.²

Dark Sky Places are designated by the Association following an application process, which requires applicants to demonstrate community support for dark sky protection and how the programme requirements will be met in the specific location.³ More details about what is involved in achieving dark sky status is provided below.

Dark Sky Places in the UK

Over 65 Dark Sky Places are certified by the International Dark Sky Association across the world.⁴ The following Dark Sky Places or Communities in the UK are certified by the Association:⁵

- [Moffat Dark Sky Community](#), Scotland.
- [Galloway Forest Park](#), Scotland.
- [Exmoor National Park](#), England.
- [Moore's Reserve](#), South Downs, England.
- [Brecon Beacons National Park](#), Wales.
- [Elan Valley Estate](#), Wales.
- [Snowdonia National Park](#), Wales.
- [Northumberland National Park and Kielder Water & Forest Park](#), England.
- [Coll](#), Scotland.

See the section below on the [UK Dark Sky Discovery partnership](#) which identifies areas that are ideal for star gazing in the UK ('Dark Sky Discovery sites') which includes other areas in addition to those certified by the IDA.

Why is dark sky status important?

The International Dark Sky Association lists three main benefits of dark sky status:

- 1 *"It helps attract more visitors"* through star gazing tourism holidays and public education.⁶
- 2 *"It brings economic benefits to surrounding communities"*⁷

¹ Cornwall Council, [International dark sky designation](#), 23 November 2017.

² International Dark Sky Association, [International Dark Sky Places](#), [accessed 27 November 2017].

³ International Dark Sky Association, [International Dark Sky Places](#), [accessed 27 November 2017].

⁴ International Dark Sky Association, [Our work](#), [accessed 27 November 2017].

⁵ International Dark Sky Association, [Find a dark sky place](#), [accessed 27 November 2017].

⁶ International Dark Sky Association, [3 Benefits to a dark sky](#), 23 October 2015.

⁷ International Dark Sky Association, [3 Benefits to a dark sky](#), 23 October 2015.

The IDA stated that an “economic impact assessment” report of the dark sky area of Galloway Forest Park in Scotland found that for every £1 spent on installing dark sky friendly lighting in the area produced a return on investment of £1.93 due to increased tourism.⁸

3 *Night skies get darker*

Benefits of reducing light pollution

Dark sky status requires a commitment to reduce light pollution in order to ensure good visibility of the night sky and stars. The IDA report that high levels of light pollution can have negative impacts on health and wildlife by disrupting natural day-night patterns. This may, for example, disturb nocturnal animals and insect populations or affect the migration patterns of birds.⁹ In addition, excess light pollution is also often considered energy inefficient or wasteful.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) also campaigns for the protection of dark skies in rural areas on the basis of benefits to health, wildlife and energy efficiency.¹⁰

Dark Sky Status Requirements

The International Dark Sky Association provides the following description of a Dark Sky Park (such as Bodmin Moor):

Dark Sky Parks: Must be public or private land, accessible to the public in part or whole, that is legally protected for scientific, natural, educational, cultural, heritage and/or public enjoyment purposes. The core area must provide an exceptional dark sky resource, relative to the communities and cities that surround it, where the night sky brightness is routinely equal to or darker than 20 magnitudes per square arc second.¹¹

In the International Dark Sky Association guidelines for Dark Sky Parks provides a set of minimum requirements for lightscape management in the area as well as requirements to demonstrate a commitment to public education.¹² The IDA periodically reviews Dark Sky Parks and regular status updates to the IDA are required to ensure that designated places continue their commitment to dark sky preservation.^{13,14}

Cornwall Council’s application set out the Council’s plans for meeting dark sky requirements. Reduction of night pollution is intended to be achieved through neighbourhood planning. While recognising that artificial light is essential requirement for modern life and businesses, new developments will be expected to avoid adverse impacts of light

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ International Dark Sky Association, [Light Pollution Effects on Wildlife and Ecosystems](#), [accessed 27 November 2017]

¹⁰ Campaign to Protect Rural England, [Dark Skies](#), [accessed 27 November 2017]

¹¹ International Dark Sky Association, [How to become a dark sky place](#), [accessed 28 November 2017]

¹² International Dark Sky Association, [Dark Sky Park Programme Guidelines](#), October 2015.

¹³ International Dark Sky Association, [Dark Sky Park Programme Guidelines](#), October 2015.

¹⁴ International Dark Sky Association, [International Dark Sky Places](#), [accessed 27 November 2017].

pollution.¹⁵ Street and highway lighting is also expected to be designed to reduce light pollution by reducing upward spillage of light. All lighting is required to be in line with British Standards to ensure safety is not compromised.¹⁶

No private residences will be required to change their lighting, the application stated:

Nobody will be required to change their existing lighting. Cornwall Council will however be promoting the International Dark Sky Landscape if it is achieved and will be advising that improving lighting is a “win-win” for both light pollution and efficiency savings – as well as providing benefits for health, wildlife and enjoyment of the stars. Good practice will be encouraged and advice will be provided for when lights need to be replaced.¹⁷

The application mentions that artificial light is a potential statutory nuisance, which would enable Cornwall’s Environmental Protection Team to take action in cases of damaging or harmful artificial light.¹⁸ More information about light pollution and planning, and artificial light as a statutory nuisance are provided in section 2 below.

The guidance also provides plans for educational outreach and access to the area.

UK Dark Sky Discovery partnership

The [UK Dark Sky Discovery partnership](#) is a network of national and local astronomy and environmental organisations in the UK. Dark Sky Discovery aims to support the development of dark sky places, and to promote dark sky awareness and tourism.¹⁹

Dark Sky Discovery maintains a map of [dark sky areas in the UK](#). The map includes sites certified by the International Dark Sky Association as well as other areas recognised by Dark Sky Discovery as being the best spots for stargazing in the UK. This means that the areas are away from local light pollution, provide good sightlines of the sky and have good public access, including wheelchair access.²⁰

Dark Sky Discovery accepts applications for nominations for new Dark Sky Discovery Sites. In particular, applications from schools, community groups, local authorities and charities that own or manage potential sites are encouraged. Guidance and criteria are provided on the Dark Sky Discovery website, which includes requirements for darkness rating, public access, safety and size of the area.²¹ Dark Sky Discovery has also published guidance on how to develop an area’s dark sky potential.²²

¹⁵ Cornwall Council, [International Dark Sky Landscape for Bodmin Moor](#), March 2017.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Dark Sky Discovery, [About Us](#), [accessed 27 November 2017].

²⁰ Dark Sky Discovery, [Where to see the stars](#), [accessed 27 November 2017].

²¹ Dark Sky Discovery, [Dark Sky Discovery Sites: Guidelines and Criteria for nominating sites](#), [accessed 27 November 2017].

²² Dark Sky Discovery, [How to develop Dark Sky potential](#), 21 November 2011, [accessed 27 November 2017]

2. Protection from light pollution

2.1 Light pollution and planning

Bodmin Moor's status as a Dark Sky Landscape will require efforts by local authorities to keep light pollution to a minimum in the area in order to preserve the night sky. The following provides information about planning guidance regarding reducing light pollution.

The Government's Planning Practice Guidance for England has a section on [Light pollution](#), aimed at those taking planning decisions. It lists a number of factors that should be considered when assessing whether a development proposal might have implications for light pollution. One of the factors listed for consideration, for example, is whether the development is "in or near a protected area of dark sky or an intrinsically dark landscape where it may be desirable to minimise new light sources."²³

If implications for light pollution are identified, then the local planning authority is then directed to consider:

1. where the light shines;
2. when the light shines;
3. how much light shines; and
4. possible ecological impact.²⁴

Further information about how to consider each of these factors is provided in the [online guidance](#). Local Planning Authorities can consider using planning conditions to help mitigate any adverse effects of a proposed development.

Some local planning authorities have adopted their own specific planning guidance for their area aimed at protecting dark skies. An example of this is the South Ayrshire Council, [Supplementary guidance: dark sky lighting](#), adopted August 2016.

2.2 Artificial light as a statutory nuisance

In England, Wales and Scotland, under section 79 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1990* "artificial light emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance" can be a form of statutory nuisance. In Northern Ireland the law is contained in the *Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011*.

For the artificial light to count as a statutory nuisance it must do one of the following:

1. unreasonably and substantially interfere with the use or enjoyment of a home or other premises;

²³ Gov.UK Planning Practice Guidance, [Light Pollution](#), Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 31-002-20140306, Revision date: 06 03 2014

²⁴ Gov.UK Planning Practice Guidance, [Light Pollution](#), Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 31-002-20140306, Revision date: 06 03 2014

2. injure health or be likely to injure health²⁵

There are no set levels for light to be considered a statutory nuisance. The rules do not apply to number of different types of light emitting facilities, including bus stations, airports and railways.²⁶

If a local authority determines that a statutory nuisance is happening, has happened or will happen in the future, it must serve an abatement notice. This requires the person responsible to stop or restrict the light. The notice will usually be served on the person responsible but can also be served on the owner or occupier of the premises.

It is not an offence to cause a statutory nuisance in itself (unless by doing so, other legislation is breached). An offence occurs if someone fails to comply with any abatement notice or court order served on them in relation to the statutory nuisance.

Guidance, which sets out the full list of premises and explains how action can be taken by a local authority when artificial light is a statutory nuisance can be found in Defra's guidance on [Statutory nuisance from insects and artificial light](#).

²⁵ Gov.UK [Artificial light nuisances: how councils deal with complaints](#), 7 April 2015

²⁶ Gov.UK [Artificial light nuisances: how councils deal with complaints](#), 7 April 2015

3. News items

Cornish Times

Bodmin Moor wins dark sky status

10 July 2017

<http://www.cornish-times.co.uk/article.cfm?id=110541&headline=Bodmin%20Moor%20wins%20dark%20sky%20status§ionls=news&searchyear=2017>

Times [subscription]

Bodmin Moor to become 'dark sky park' with views of Milky Way stars

8 July 2017

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bodmin-moor-to-become-dark-sky-park-with-views-of-milky-way-stars-5c9l0scdj>

Falmouth Packet

Plans to protect the dark skies of west Cornwall

26 February 2017

http://www.falmouthpacket.co.uk/news/15118861.Plans_to_protect_the_dark_skies_of_west_Cornwall/

BBC News Online

Cornwall gains two stargazing Dark Sky sites

10 January 2014

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-25681064>

4. Press releases

Cornwall Council

Bodmin Moor is designated an International Dark Sky Landscape

The International Dark-Sky Association has officially designated Bodmin Moor as an International Dark Sky Landscape. This follows [an application prepared by Cornwall Council and Caradon Observatory](#).

Role of the Designation

Recent light readings show the quality of the night sky over Bodmin Moor is amongst the best in the world. The purpose of achieving a designation is to capture the wide-ranging benefits of conserving this natural asset including:

- Scientific advantages – enabling enhanced conditions for astronomy;
- Educational outreach – facilitating both formal education (at all levels) and more informal activities;
- Enjoyment and appreciation – improving quality of life and provide creative inspiration;
- Health – promoting improved sleep patterns and reducing stress;
- Wildlife – providing a more natural environment for both nocturnal and diurnal animals; and
- Energy efficiency – reducing wastage from unnecessary or excessive lighting.

Where is the designation?

The Core Area is the extent of Bodmin Moor which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There is also a 2 mile Buffer Zone around this in which good lighting practice will also be encouraged and where communities are also expected to reap some of the benefits.

- [Detailed Map](#)

What's the catch? None!

We want to encourage people who live and/or work on the Moor to manage lighting better and make sure it does what it needs to without harming the night sky.

Nevertheless we will not make anyone change their lights. We all need to see what we're doing and feel safe as we go about our business. Too often however lighting is overly bright, needlessly spills upwards, poorly aimed and creates shadows – making it harder to see as well as being wasteful and harmful to the night sky. Well considered light can be much more effective.

We'll produce a quick guide for Dark Sky friendly lighting for when fitting new lights or replacing old. We will encourage:

- Installing lights that point down not up;
- Turning lights off when they aren't needed, maybe use a timer; and
- Only lighting where you need to.

What about street lights?

Both Cornwall Council street lighting and Highways England trunk road lighting have been assessed as part of this project. Cornwall Council lighting has been upgraded across the county as part of the Invest to Save scheme which has improved efficiency and reduced light pollution. We are also looking at where additional adjustments to street lighting would be appropriate on Bodmin Moor.

FAQs

A list of [frequently asked questions](#) has been produced based on discussions with members of the public and other stakeholders.

Newsletters

Please email us at darksky@cornwall.gov.uk to subscribe to our electronic newsletters. Past newsletters are available to download below: Past newsletters are available to download below.

- [Newsletter no. 4 - August 2017](#)
- [Newsletter no. 3 - April 2017](#)
- [Newsletter no. 2 - March 2016](#)
- [Newsletter no. 1 - December 2014](#)

What about other places in Cornwall?

Good lighting practice is encouraged across Cornwall. There are also community-led efforts underway for an international designation for west Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. View their [Dark Skies Facebook page](#).

Caradon Observatory

Dark Skies for Cornwall

28 August 2017

On 7th July, it was officially announced that Bodmin Moor and the peripheral areas had been designated as an International Dark Skies Landscape. This was the culmination of three years' arduous work collecting vast amounts of data which led to a comprehensive application, jointly submitted by Cornwall Council and Caradon Observatory to the International Dark Skies Association, in Tucson. Significantly, this was the first time that an Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) had been successful.

The application itself ran to 148 pages, with technical data about air clarity and the wonderfully dark night sky. It also says that *'feedback from residents, businesses, landowners, farmers, astronomers, educators, environmental bodies and other statutory and charitable organisations has helped shape the proposals. Enthusiasm is such that there have already been calls to widen the buffer zone'*.

This last point is significant, because other areas of Cornwall will find it somewhat easier to gain corresponding status for themselves by being peripheral to an already established International Dark Skies Landscape. Penryn has already stated that they wish to use the designation of Bodmin Moor to assist them with their own application, and other areas of Cornwall will also want to follow suit.

One key fact that may not be immediately apparent is the benefits that International Dark Skies status can bring to a local economy like Cornwall's, with a significant seasonal summer tourism period.

In conversation with someone involved in the successful bid for Galloway Forest in Scotland to become an International Dark Skies park, they remarked that they also had had a reliance on summer tourism to sustain them through other times of the year, but, by focusing on using and protecting their night skies, they had seen an increase in bed-nights during Autumn, Winter and Spring; for every 1000 bed-nights pre-IDA designation, there were 2,400 bed-nights post IDA designation. This was not only good for hotels, guest houses and b&b's, but also for the businesses providing support services and the like, and the whole local economy benefitted.

Cornwall Council say in the application that the

dark night sky is a tremendous natural asset' and that 'residents and visitors ... tell us that they cherish the clarity of the sky over the moor and agree that international status would offer great potential for the local area and Cornwall'. To 'maximise the enhancement of an International Dark Sky Landscape ... we believe a true partnership approach is essential. This is central to the management plan'. They add that the designation of Bodmin Moor would become 'an inspiration for other places. We already know that communities elsewhere in Cornwall are becoming increasingly interested in protecting the night sky and eager to see what can be achieved.

Cornwall has a perfect opportunity to play to its strengths here. It may be that the disposable income of London and the Home Counties may exceed that of Cornwall, but their extra income can't buy the air clarity and beautiful dark skies that we have in Cornwall.

The only way Cornwall be effectively challenged by other areas that don't have dark sky advantages is if Cornwall manages to negate those advantages, and these come into three broad categories:

- One way would be to over-inflate the prices for staying in Cornwall. In 1999, there were stories in the press of holiday lets being offered at £5000 for eclipse week, which had a hugely negative effect.

- A second way would be to try to entice into Cornwall industries which are major air polluters, and so adversely affect the very air clarity needed for the IDA designation.
- A third way would be to increase light pollution, whether it be huge neon signs, or floodlit sports arenas, or unnecessary street-lighting in rural areas.

Our wonderful Cornish environment, plus the unstinting work of many people over the last three years, has given a real opportunity to boost the local economy, and the people for whom Cornwall is home. Let's focus on welcoming the many Dark Skies visitors we could get if we offer them the natural night beauty of air clarity and low-level light pollution. The combination of beautiful Cornish landscapes by day, and the glories of the constellations and the Milky Way by night, should make visitors want to experience this again and again and again.

Other areas of the world have done this, and so should Cornwall.

International Dark Sky Association

Bodmin Moor First UK Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty To Achieve IDA Dark Sky Park Status

8 July 2017

Bodmin Moor has been designated an International Dark Sky Landscape, confirming its status as one of Cornwall's star attractions and making it the first International Dark Sky Place in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Following a bid by Cornwall Council and Caradon Observatory, the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) has awarded the prestigious designation in recognition of the exceptional quality of the night sky over Bodmin Moor, commitments to avoid light pollution and the provision of educational outreach.

While other sites in the UK have previously received International Dark Sky Places accreditation, today's announcement of Bodmin Moor's status as an International Dark Sky Park is especially noteworthy,

said IDA Executive Director J. Scott Feierabend.

Its position within the Cornwall AONB clearly establishes that the conservation of dark night skies is wholly compatible with the notion of protected landscapes where people routinely live and work.

Bodmin Moor International Dark Sky Designation covers the portion of the moor within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty plus a two-mile buffer zone around it. As an AONB, Bodmin Moor is one of the UK's most cherished and outstanding working landscapes. Its Dark Sky status is expected to boost tourism and the local economy, especially in the darker spring, autumn and winter months when star gazing opportunities are at their best.

The designation will also bring health benefits for both people and wildlife in the moor's living landscape by helping to keep artificial light at a very low level. Within the designation area residents and businesses will be encouraged to protect the night sky from light pollution by managing their lighting better. No one will have to change their existing lights. Instead people will be provided with a guide for dark sky friendly lighting to help them choose appropriate lights when they need to replace old lights or fit new ones. They will also be encouraged to only use lighting where it's needed and turn off lights when they aren't needed.

Sue James, Cornwall Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection, said:

I'm delighted that Bodmin Moor has become the first AONB to become an International Dark Sky Landscape. Most people love a starry sky, and thanks to its low levels of light pollution Bodmin Moor has some of the darkest skies in the country. This designation will support the varied wildlife living on Bodmin Moor as having defined day and night is essential for many species to survive.

Ken Bennett, founder of Caradon Observatory, said:

Caradon Observatory is proud to have sponsored Bodmin Moor for International Dark Sky status and worked with Cornwall Council on a truly comprehensive application. We're keen to build on the area's Dark Sky designation and are now aiming to become a research grade observatory so we can offer more comprehensive education and community outreach opportunities in the future.

Anita Grice-Goldsmith, Director of CPRE Cornwall said:

We are delighted with today's news that Bodmin Moor has been recognized as the jewel in Cornwall's crown that it so deservedly is and pleased that data gathered for CPRE's interactive Night Blight maps was used as complementary evidence for the bid. Bodmin Moor offers exceptionally dark skies and its designation as an International Dark Sky Landscape means that 80 square miles of spectacular open countryside will now be protected from the intrusion of damaging artificial lighting. Hopefully this will act as a catalyst for education and good lighting across Cornwall. We all know that Cornwall is a great place to spot celebrities but now it's also the ideal place to go star spotting for the real stars of the night sky!

Malcolm Bell, Chief Executive of Visit Cornwall, said:

Cornwall is famous for its quality of environment and this latest designation will help build our reputation, but most importantly assist the wonders of Bodmin Moor and the amazing dark sky which many of our urban dwelling visitors would have never seen in its full glory.

Campaign to Protect Rural England

Bodmin Moor awarded Dark Sky Landscape status

7 July 2017

CPRE is very pleased by [today's announcement](#) that Bodmin Moor in the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has been awarded Dark Sky Landscape status by the [International Dark-Sky Association](#), the first AONB to gain this recognition. Such places are designated by the international body if they meet standards for night sky quality and natural darkness in a core area, with a peripheral area that supports preserving the dark sky at the core.

The International Dark-Sky Association works to give people the opportunity to experience the wonder of a natural night sky; and to lessen the impact of artificial light on human health, wildlife and climate change.

Emma Marrington, senior rural policy campaigner at the Campaign to Protect Rural England, comments:

We are delighted that Bodmin Moor, the largest part of Cornwall AONB at over 80 square miles, has been internationally recognised for the quality of its dark skies. This is a huge achievement led by Cornwall Council and Caradon Observatory, to achieve lasting protection for the stunning night skies above Bodmin Moor.

We are particularly pleased that the bid was enhanced by CPRE's Night Blight mapping, which is the first time a Dark Sky bid has used the maps as complementary evidence. The maps, created by LUC, were launched last year and showed that Cornwall is the 4th darkest county, with the Cornwall AONB having 63% pristine night skies, free from light pollution, compared with 22% of England overall. The maps showed that the skies above Bodmin Moor are exceptionally dark.

We hope this will inspire people to visit Bodmin Moor to enjoy the experience of a truly dark starry sky; an opportunity denied to many of us who live under the constant glow of light pollution. This huge achievement means that the exceptional darkness of these skies will be protected for the benefit of current and future generations.

CPRE hopes other AONBs will pursue Dark Sky status - and use our [Night Blight maps](#), given that our mapping found that 40% of England's pristine night skies are above England's 34 AONBs. Detailed maps are available for all English counties, districts, AONBs, National Parks and National Character Areas, along with an interactive map for Britain.

5. Useful links

Cornwall County Council's application *International Dark Sky Landscape for Bodmin Moor*

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/27321676/application-for-an-international-dark-sky-landscape-for-bodmin-moor-27-march-2017.pdf>

International Dark Sky Association *Bodmin Moor Dark Sky Landscape (England)*

<http://www.darksky.org/idsp/parks/bodminmoor/>

thatsmycornwall.co.uk *10 best stargazing spots in Cornwall* 28 October 2016

<http://thatsmycornwall.com/top-10-stargazing-spots-in-cornwall/>

Dark Sky Discovery

<http://www.darkskydiscovery.org.uk/>

Campaign to Protect Rural England – Dark Skies

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/countryside/dark-skies> #

Campaign to Protect Rural England – *Shedding Light Survey of local authority approaches towards light pollution in England* (2014)

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/dark-skies/item/3608-shedding-light>

British Astronomical Association

<https://www.britastro.org>

British Astronomical Association Commission for Dark Skies

<http://www.britastro.org/dark-skies/index.php>

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