

South Downs ‘Moore’s’ Reserve IDA Report Oct 2018

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Summary

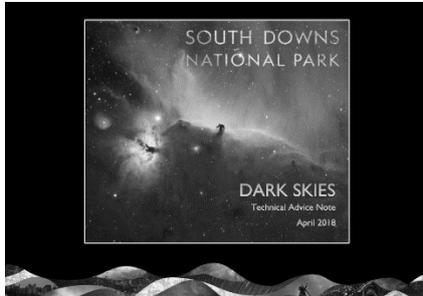
The SDNPA has consolidated its first year by continuing much of the media and outreach from the first year. An important milestone has been the publication of the Dark Skies Technical Advice Note which provides – in detail – design guidance for those applications that would fall under planning control. It has been endorsed by the IDA, the Commission for Dark Skies (CfDS), The Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) and the Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies (SAGAS) – all of which adds weight to the authority requirements that developers must use when submitting applications with lighting elements.

We have also begun scoping out a partnership with other landscape based dark sky reserves and the Commission of Dark Skies to explore common issues and consistent messaging. We have repeated our DNS festival, and the popular event is firmly established within our calendar. Finally, our surrounding regional authorities report LED upgrades schemes and part night lighting schemes.



Planning Policy

Technical Advice Note and Local Plan



The South Downs Local Plan was submitted this year along with a substantial suite of core documents, which includes the Dark Skies Technical Advice Note. The guidance has been endorsed by the IDA, the Commission for Dark Skies and the Institute of Lighting Professionals which all adds to its weight when used in planning applications.

Feedback from local authorities and the odd developer will require some small updates to the guidance, mostly on the impact of internal spill from glazing. This will include adding more details on assessing the immediate built up environment and the use of dormer windows rather than roof lights which will try and encourage blind use and prevent less light going directly upward.

General Planning

With the release of the Technical Advice Note, local authorities now have the information to deal with many planning applications in house, rather than within the South Downs. Called-in applications (those with a greater potential impact to the Downs) will likely remain within the South Downs are usually dealt with – or at least consultation - by the Dark Skies Officer.

In general, planning applications continue as normal ranging from small domestic applications (mostly for glazing extensions) to larger scale developments including housing and retail developments outside the park in the Shoreham area. In all cases the principles and policies of the technical advice note have been applied consistently throughout. Training has been given to some local authorities planning department .

Improvement of regard and quality in planning applications

What has been noticed is that the quality of pre-applications provided by applicants has substantially improved since the designation. Before, applications rarely had any regard for dark skies or any mitigation for light pollution. Now, many larger scale applications use the guidance and design for dark skies before final submission. This is somewhat of a triumph as it now only shows the effectiveness of the guidance but that our promotion of dark skies is having the desired effect.

Media, Events and Outreach

DNS Festival – Star Gazing South Downs



The second DNS festival was held from 10th Feb to 26th under rainy skies. Building on the success from the first year we included a 'dig the moon' sand pit and a dressing up selfie stand which were well received. BBC South Today weather team held an interview at Old Winchester Hill for the evening news to promote the festival. It was recorded 1st Feb and aired a few days later.

Despite the downpour approximately 600 people attended and many more to the two week programme of star parties across the Downs with our astronomical partners.

Parish Workshops

The SDNPA holds annual parish workshops yearly. Held in three geographical areas throughout the park (Western, Central and Eastern), the workshops are an opportunity for the authority to raise and promote issues with local residents and to allow residents to do likewise. Dark skies was one of the issues on the agenda this year to which we received feedback. A dominant (and well known consistent complaint) problem was domestic lighting. While this is not a particular threat to the general sky quality, it shows that more needs to be done to mitigate this. The SDNPA will be generating some farming and domestic guidance to help in this respect (see projects).

General Events



In addition to the main showcase events of the year, we continued to hold star parties and a year round provision of talks. Some highlights include a Brighton comedy club, the UK National Park Conference, Bury School Summer event (in 36°C heat where the telescopes were sinking into the melting tarmac!), Portsmouth Dockyard, South of England STEM festival and Ditcham park school with some very eager kids. We also be attended the Herstmonceux Astronomy Festival in early Sept, as we do every two years.

Education Team

The SDNPA education team have also had a busy year, raising the issue of dark skies within schools and larger regional STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) events. These have included: Brighton Science Festival, Eco Summit events tour, Big Bang STEM events (Bognor, Eastbourne, Ageas Bowl and Ardingly). Cumulative attendance to these events will be in the low thousands. The events kit was similar to that described in the previous report, and this year featured an interactive activity using high focusing torches and long exposure photography to show disruption to bat foraging behaviour.

Project Developments

SQM Permanent fixtures – Skyglow Monitoring

The development of the permanent SQM site in Clanfield is still ongoing and is being tested. Initial results are favourable and some of the measurements show improvements in sky quality after the Hampshire PFI street lighting changes. Despite being less than 2km from Clanfield measurements of above 21 magnitudes per second² have been recorded (after midnight).

Dark Sky Discovery Sites

The externally run scheme seems to have faltered recently, so we are waiting to see if it continues before submitting further sites. Coldwaltham is the next on the list, but we won't submit until we know that the scheme is still working.

Communities - IDA Community Toolkit

The community toolkit project has faltered a little, mainly due to the uncertainty within the parish. Although they are keen, the parish are a little reluctant to pursue full community status.

Consequently, the focus on the toolkit may change from one that aimed for an IDA status, to one that encourages good designs and advice. This could tie in with the CLA Advice Factsheet (below) and some general guidance for domestic needs.

CLA Advice Factsheet

In order to mitigate against one of the more rural problems of farming lighting, the SDNPA is in discussions with the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) to produce some guidance. It will specifically target farmers and provide advice on how to install lighting properly. The reason why this guidance is needed is that lighting on farms is permitted development and does not need any pre-application to install.

IDA Chapter/CfDS partnership – Dark Sky Alliance

There has been some discussion about setting up a partnership between other UK based dark sky places and the Commission for Dark Skies, based on a working interpretation of the IDA chapters. The aim of the partnership is to provide some link between the CfDS's historical role, the IDA and the existing and emerging landscape parks within an interest in dark skies. Though the partnership is very much in the initial stages, all those approached are interested as a means to raise common issues and develop future collaborations. There should be some development of this in the coming months.

VR experience

We are in the formative stages of exploring VR headset experiences with DNS. This would incorporate some form of 3-minute 360° narrated video about dark skies and astronomy. The video should be compatible with planetarium software, and so will be of interest in those facilities.

Other – Wider afield

Portsmouth Street Lighting LED Improvements

Portsmouth City Council is currently undergoing through an upgrade programme to its street lighting. Though it is some distance from the National Park and therefore not a statutory consultee to have regard for dark skies, the plan nevertheless aims to avoid upward light pollution and change old SON and SOX lighting to LED linked to a central control system. On first draft it appears to be consistent with the Hampshire Street lights which mostly used Philips Luma warm and neutral white variants.

Hampshire Street Lighting Part Night lighting Consultation



Hampshire County Council has submitted a consultation for a part night lighting scheme across the county. This would include towns within the National park and close to the core (Petersfield, Liss, East Meon, Clanfield) and presents a substantial improvement to sky quality post-midnight. As consultee the South Downs NPA has provided comments and offered to measure the difference in sky quality should the scheme be adopted.