



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Rebecca Pow MP
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Cllr Sue Cooper
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Dear Sue,

Thank you for your letter of 14 May to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government about light pollution. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area. I apologise for the delay in responding. Defra is currently dealing with high volumes of correspondence.

As the department responsible for protecting and enhancing our urban and natural environment, Defra plays a co-ordinating role across Government. You may be aware that, last December, I was invited to address the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dark Skies and received a very positive reaction for the Government work in this area that I outlined at that time. We welcome the work of this group in highlighting this important area.

We are very proud that England's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) include some of the best dark skies across Great Britain and attained some of the earliest designations in Europe. Exmoor National Park, in 2011, became the first International Dark Sky Reserve to be designated in Europe, followed by the South Downs National Park in 2016, and Cranbourne Chase AONB in 2019. Bodmin Moor was successfully designated an International Dark Sky Landscape in 2017. The designation of the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park has made a hugely positive impact on the local economy, in addition to benefiting biodiversity; and in December 2020, the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors were named international dark sky reserves, creating the largest dark sky area in the UK and one of the biggest in Europe.

Defra is committed to the recovery of our native wildlife and has put legislative controls in place for protected species, such as bats and their roosts. Defra has published and contributed to assessments of the impact of artificial light on insects and wider biodiversity. Together with our external partners, including leading scientists, we are keeping under review studies in this area to ensure we continue to address the key drivers of biodiversity loss.

The Government has put in place a range of measures to ensure that light pollution is effectively managed through the statutory nuisance regime which means that under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, local authorities have a duty to investigate complaints about light emitted from premises which could constitute a nuisance or be harmful to health, and have powers to take action where there is a problem.

Defra also works with departments across Government whose policy areas affect the use of artificial light. The Department for Transport encourages all local authorities to replace their street lighting with LED lighting where it is economically feasible to do so. Importantly these new, modern luminaires can reduce the amount of glare emitted, reducing light pollution as a result. Highways England, which manages our motorways and major roads, is also working actively to minimise light pollution.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) leads on lighting policy in the planning regime. The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution on local amenity, dark landscapes and nature conservation including where there may be impacts on wildlife and eco-systems. Defra has worked with MHCLG in producing their Light Planning Policy Guidance, which emphasises the importance of getting the right light in the right place at the right time, which helps local planners and developers to design in ways that avoid glare and intrusion.

Finally, Defra's 25-Year Environment Plan includes a commitment to cut all forms of pollution and ease the pressure on the environment, including ensuring that light pollution is managed effectively.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write about this important issue. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance with this or any other matters in the future.



REBECCA POW MP