

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **1. What can I do about the light from my neighbour's security light shining in to my windows?**

Domestic security lights can be a great help to people in protecting their property, but if badly designed, installed or maintained they can have a major detrimental effect on the lives and health of neighbours. In most cases light intrusion from domestic security lights can be remedied by relocating the offending light, by readjusting its aim or by fitting a screen to control the spread of light; all that is needed is to make your neighbour aware of the problem. If this fails or your neighbour refuses to redirect, adjust or screen the light then there is very little else one can do to mitigate the situation. Many DIY security lights come with a 300W lamp fitted which is usually too powerful for most applications and can be replaced by a 150W lamp with the same physical length. These lamps are readily available, inexpensive and use only half the electricity used by the 300W lamp. Light unlike noise and dust is not considered in law to be a nuisance and nor do domestic security lights require planning permission. Therefore, there is very little recourse to the law to stop your neighbour from shining light at your property. However, recent legal actions have demonstrated that the law is now starting to consider that light can be a problem and it may be possible to take out a private court case against a neighbour. This should only be considered as a last resort due to the expense and the animosity it will cause between you and your neighbour. Try showing your neighbour the Institution's leaflet "[Domestic Security Lighting, Friend or Foe?](#)"

### **2. My local sports club wishes to provide floodlighting to their playing areas. What can I do about this and how can I reduce the impact on my property?**

The provision of floodlighting to a playing area generally requires planning permission before it can be installed and operated. If you become aware of a proposal to provide floodlighting then you are able to make representation to the local planning authority expressing your concerns over the impact that this lighting may have on the enjoyment of your property. The local planning authority when taking a decision on the provision of floodlighting or other exterior lighting should take account of such complaints. Many planning authorities now have supplementary guidelines for the control of exterior lighting and should ensure that any proposals comply with these requirements. The Institution's "[Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Light Pollution](#)" 2000 edition gives good advice for overcoming and mitigating many of the problems of light pollution.

### **3. The local shop wishes to put up an illuminated advertising sign on its frontage. What can I do about this and how can I reduce the impact on my property?**

Illuminated advertisements are subject to planning approval and therefore if you become aware of the proposal before the sign is installed you can make representation to the planning authority stating your concerns as to the effect the sign will have on the enjoyment of your property. Once the sign is installed there is very little that can be done other than to ensure that the planning approval and any conditions attached are being complied with. Where fluorescent lamps are used there are rarely any light trespass, glare or light pollution problems. This is not necessarily so for tungsten

halogen floodlights and you could ask your Planning Authority to attach a condition to the planning consent. Such a condition would typically be “The lights must be positioned on site to minimise light trespass and glare, and maintained in such position through the working life of the installation.” Further details on illuminated advertisements are available from the Institution’s “Technical Report No. 5, Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements, Third Edition”.

**4. Why are streetlights on all night?**

Streetlights are generally operated throughout the hours of darkness as a service to the residents and road users of the area. There is very little difference in the cost of operating a streetlight all night as against part of the night and it is generally considered that the additional cost is more than offset by the added benefit of greater security to people and property, the potential reduction in traffic accidents and the assistance provided to the emergency services by the all night operation of streetlights. In residential areas there is very strong evidence that providing light significantly reduces crime.

**5. What are the correct operational hours of a streetlight?**

There are no specified hours of operation for street lighting, however it is now generally considered sensible to operate street lighting all night e.g. dusk to dawn, approximately 4,100 hours per annum. The most common way of ensuring the light is lit when required is to use a photo electric cell which measures the level of light, switching the lamp on at dusk and off at dawn. See also answer to Question 4.

**6. What is the cost of operating a streetlight?**

The lamps used in streetlights vary in both size and consumption (typically between 35 and 250 Watts) depending upon whether they are lighting a residential area, main road or a town centre. Therefore, there can be no one answer to this question. The average cost of operating a streetlight inclusive of energy costs, lamp replacement and maintenance is calculated as between £30 and £50 per annum – less than £1 per week. The forthcoming Best Value Indicator required by Government should give a better indication of the cost in future years. See also answer to Question 7.

**7. How much energy does a streetlight use?**

The energy consumption of a streetlight is affected primarily by the wattage of the lamp, see Question 6 and by the location of the streetlight in the country, which determines the number of hours of operation each night. It is generally assumed that the average wattage of a streetlight is about 80 watts. Assuming an average number of hours that the streetlight is on per annum as 4,100 then the amount of energy consumed by an average streetlight over one year will be 328 units of electricity, approximately 4.5 pence per night or £16 per annum. See also answer to 6.

**8. How many streetlights are there in the Country?**

The Institution of Lighting Engineers in its leaflet “Protecting a Vital Asset, 2000” determined that there were approximately 6.2 million lighting columns in public ownership.

**9. Why is the light from a streetlight yellow/orange?**

One of the major concerns of the lighting engineer when designing new lighting systems is to ensure the most cost effective lamp is used for the particular level of lighting to be provided and the location. Unlike the bulb in your house, lamps used in street lighting emit light produced from a gas discharge lamp. Gas discharge lamps produce light more efficiently using less electricity. The chemicals used in the discharge give a colour to the light. Low pressure sodium lamps, traditionally one of the most efficient converters of electricity into light, use sodium. However, this results in the light emitted being a strong yellow/orange colour. Modern lamp developments such as the high pressure sodium lamp which emits a pale honey coloured light when combined with high efficiency lanterns, allow economic lighting systems to be provided without recourse to the use of yellow/orange low pressure sodium. It is believed that these lamps, together with further developments in lamp technology giving white light, allowing grass to be seen as green and red cars to be seen as red, will become the future choice for street lighting.

**10. Is there any legislation governing the provision of street lighting?**

A local authority does not have a duty to provide street lighting; however, once provided the local authority does have a duty to maintain the system in a safe condition. The standards of lighting provided on different streets is currently determined from British Standard 5489 but will in the future be determined from the new European Standard BS EN 13201.

**11. How can I persuade the council to provide a streetlight outside my property?**

As stated above (Question 10) local authorities do not have a duty to provide street lighting although it is now common for local authorities to require developers, particularly house builders, to provide lighting to an agreed standard on all new developments which will be adopted by the local council for maintenance at the public expense. Where there is no street lighting a request should be made direct to the Highway Authority, generally the County, City or Metropolitan Borough Council to see if they will provide lighting. However, as Highway Authorities are primarily concerned with the safety of the highway and have to operate under financial restraints they will normally only provide lighting where it can be demonstrated that it will reduce night time accidents, and then usually as part of a lighting system rather than an individual streetlight. If you live in a village it is generally worth asking the local Parish Council who may, as the Lighting Authority, be prepared to install an additional streetlight for amenity. However, if the road on which the streetlight is to be installed is a public highway the Parish Council will still require the approval of the Highway Authority to install and operate the streetlight.

**12. How can I persuade the council to remove a streetlight from outside my property?**

Street lighting is generally installed for the benefit of the public and as such local authorities are reluctant to remove streetlights. However, if a streetlight is causing you problems of access or is causing intrusive light in to your property then you must first establish who the owner of the streetlight is (try your local Council), and then discuss your problem with them. If you wish to have the streetlight resited to allow

you access to your property then you may be required to pay for the resiting of the light to another location. Only the local authority can arrange for this work to be carried out.

**13. What can I do about the light from the streetlight outside my house shining into my windows?**

Street lighting is designed to light the surrounds to a road, as well as the road itself; this is so that road users (drivers particularly) can see potential hazards such as other road users likely to come onto the street, for example bikes, children and cars. It also lights pavements and frontages of property for security. Some old streetlights tend to spread light all around and in many cases upward as well. Modern streetlights have a much better controlled distribution of light placing it on the highway where it is required. If a streetlight is causing problems due to excessive intrusion of light you should first establish the owner of the light (see Question 12) and then talk to them about the problem. It may be that the simple change of the lantern to a more modern one may reduce the problem. This does not always work and it may become necessary to shield the light by blanking out part of the lantern bowl or by attaching a screen to the rear of the lantern. However, it is not always possible to fully reduce light intrusion as to do so would render the streetlight non-functional, therefore it is often necessary to compromise.