



### Campaign for dark skies: I

## Fighting light pollution in the corridors of power

In 2003 February, the Science and Technology Select Committee of the House of Commons, which investigates matters of public concern in the field of science, chose light pollution as its main topic for 2003. The eleven MPs of the committee invited evidence from all the major astronomical organisations in the UK. On June 4, representatives of the BAA and its Campaign for Dark Skies, of the Royal Astronomical Society, and of various amateur astronomical groups joined the Committee at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich.

Bob Mizon and Chris Baddiley of CfDS gave presentations to the Committee on the loss of the night sky and the concomitant energy waste. Helen Walker of the RAS spoke on behalf of professional astronomy in the UK. After these talks, the party moved to the dome of the 28-inch Greenwich refractor, and most of them managed to see the Moon through it before the clouds rolled in. Then the staff of the Royal Observatory gave a planetarium show, dramatically illustrating the transition from a pristine night sky to an orange haze with just a few stars visible.

On June 9, the Committee met in formal session in the Houses of Parliament, and evidence was taken from BAA President

Guy Hurst, CfDS' Bob Mizon and Chris Baddiley, Prof Paul Murdin (PPARC) and



Select committee member Tom Harris MP at the eyepiece of the Greenwich 28-inch refractor. Photo: Michael Franks

Dr Helen Walker (RAS). Later, the Astronomer Royal, Sir Martin Rees, and his Scottish counterpart, Prof John Brown, also gave evidence. The meeting was chaired by Dr Ian Gibson MP, and its tone was very positive. Discussions ranged far and wide, from energy considerations, national science targets and astronomy education, to lighting design and the aesthetic aspects of the starry sky. Tom Harris MP (Glasgow Cathcart) is himself an amateur astronomer, and assured the delegates that the Committee would take great pains to present a fair and positive report to the Commons in September 2003. CfDS will keep readers informed on this subject; see [www.darkskies.org](http://www.darkskies.org)

**Bob Mizon, Coordinator**

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### Campaign for dark skies: II

## Campaigning worldwide for dark skies

On 2003 May 19, Reg R. Wilson, director of the International Dark-Sky Association's Australian branch, stopped off on his long journey from New South Wales to London at the William Herschel Museum at 19 New King Street, Bath. The discovery of Uranus in 1781 was made from the garden of this house.

In Herschel's kitchen, next to the workshop where the great man created his speculum mirrors, Mr Wilson met with Bob Mizon and Mike Tabb, of the BAA Campaign for Dark Skies, and Nigel Pollard, of NEP Lighting Consultancy, Bath. Mr Pollard is a great friend of the CfDS, and notes were compared on the progress being made in improving lighting standards in both Australia and Europe: the Australian specifications have inspired

those of the CIE (International Commission on Illumination). Also discussed were the recent CPRE initiative on light pollution, supported by the BAA; the meeting of BAA/CfDS personnel with the Parliamentary Select Committee in June; the tragic destruction by fire of the Mount Stromlo Observatory in spring 2003; and efforts to decrease skyglow from Sydney, which is affecting observatories up to 300km away.

The CfDS continues to develop links with dark-sky movements in many places outside Europe. There has been recent correspondence with India, Malaysia, Canada, South Africa and elsewhere, and the Campaign committee plans to send delegates



Dark Skies campaigners in the garden of William Herschel's house in Bath. *Left to right: Nigel Pollard, Reg Wilson, Bob Mizon, Michael Tabb. Photo courtesy Mike Tabb.*

to the International Light Pollution Symposium in Stuttgart, Germany, in September 2003.

**Bob Mizon, Coordinator**

### Campaign for dark skies: III

## Local successes from Aberdeen to Bath



Aberdeenshire Council convenor Raymond Bisset (left) receives the Good Lighting Award from Stuart Hawkins of CfDS, sheltered from the rain by Dr Alistair Flett of local science centre Satrosphere. *Photo: Aberdeen Herald & Post*

CfDS Good Lighting awards continue to highlight the Dark Skies message in local media across the country. Stuart Hawkins writes from Aberdeen: 'I first approached Aberdeenshire Council in 1996 regarding their policies on external lighting, following the publication of *Inverurie – The Challenge*, a public consultation document, in September of that year. The Council, responsible for a large part of NE Scotland, is aware of the problems of light pollution and does take steps to minimise its effects.'

Aberdeenshire Council were invited by CfDS to accept a Good Lighting Award, in particular naming the installation in Blackhall Road, a major road in Inverurie. Three local newspapers carried reports of the presentation, quoting Stuart Hawkins as saying 'We have found you should be able to light one city free for every two that are lit if we saved all the waste light. Lights should shine down – good-quality lighting shines downwards, rather than skywards.'

Meanwhile from Somerset, Mike Tabb sends a prominent report and photo from the Bath Chronicle headed 'Seeing stars again – thanks to lights'. Bath & NE Somerset Council and Bath University received a CfDS Good Lighting Award for new sports lighting installed at the University. Mike said 'I am delighted the new lights have been installed. The university was in the past famous for the glow in the sky at night when the sports facilities were being used. I protested when I heard more lighting was to be

installed – I didn't want it to be made worse. With the co-operation of the Council the University were persuaded not only to put in good new lighting but to change all the others.

'It is important to the Campaign for Dark Skies but we don't just do it for amateur astronomers. Every child does a certain amount of astronomy at school and there are very few who could be taken out at night to see the stars. What we are trying to do is bring back the stars.'

*Photos and information supplied by Stuart Hawkins and Mike Tabb.*



Council and University working together for darker skies in Bath. *Left to right: Greg Leslie, director of Christie Lighting, Mike Tabb, Les Kew from Bath & NE Somerset Council, and Patrick Finch, Director of Property Services at Bath University. Photo: Bath Chronicle*