

CfDS: Protect the Night

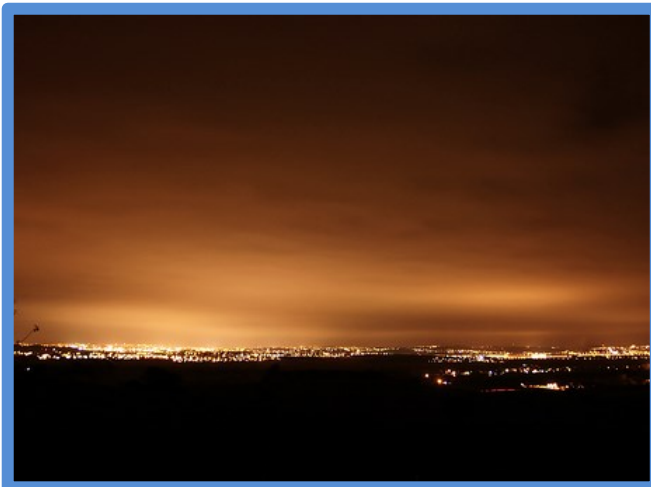
Most UK councils are adopting environmental and economic lights-out policies

The CfDS does not call for the switching off of any necessary light, but if part-night switch-offs prove to be beneficial, the CfDS will support them.

The right light in the right place at the right time is what the CfDS would like to see. Both switch-offs and *better lighting* policies, using modern technology giving better light control and correct quantities of light, will lead to money and energy savings. The impact on the surrounding countryside will be minimised.

Since its inception in 1989, the CfDS has been arguing against other negative effects of inefficient lighting: disruption of wildlife habitats, intrusion into premises (involving health issues), and lights left on when not needed, for example in empty car parks, and light directed into the night sky to veil the stars.

In cases where all-night lighting is genuinely needed, for example in busy city centres, then the best, carefully controlled lighting technologies should be used.



A distant city seen from the countryside

Which councils are switching off streetlights in the small hours of the morning?

In November 2014 a Labour Party survey concluded that lights were being switched off or dimmed in three-quarters of England's council areas. Another survey showed more than half of Great Britain's 468 local authorities are switching off or dimming streetlights, mostly from midnight till about 5 a.m.

As these figures are constantly increasing, we do not list them, but an Internet search will reveal which ones are on the list.

Between 2002 and 2005, Calgary City Council replaced all 37,500 of their streetlights, saving them \$1.7 million per year. The cost of the scheme was recovered through savings in just 6 years.



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Costs, crime and switch-offs

The ever increasing cost of electricity has caused councils to reconsider keeping inefficient streetlights on all night, and many are now turning off streetlights overnight all over the UK. Large amounts of money have been saved, and councils' CO2 footprints have been reduced.

Large scale switch-offs have often been met with dire predictions of crime waves, but there is no statistical evidence to indicate that overall crime has increased. In most areas where switch-offs have been introduced, crime has fallen. A study in 2015 by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and University College London, in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, reported on their analysis of 14 years of data from 62 councils in England and Wales. The study found no evidence of a link between reduced street lighting, crime and night-time vehicle collisions. Streetlights are installed to help people see what they are doing in the darkness. Unfortunately that includes criminals. In fact most break-ins occur in broad daylight.

Install efficient street-lighting Efficient lighting should always be installed to minimise energy use, prevent light pollution and nuisance to neighbours. Wildlife will also benefit from a natural night. Efficient lighting shines light only downwards towards the street, and *not* into people's homes, or into the sky. Modern full cut-off, energy efficient streetlights are the solution. LEDs are becoming commonplace due to their lower energy usage and longevity. However it is essential that blue-rich lighting is avoided due to the growing evidence of adverse effects on animals and humans. Over-bright blue-rich LEDs will create more skyglow by reflection than lights that they replace. For more information on this subject, see our [Good Lighting page](#).

Use dimmable streetlights New technology allows streetlights to be remotely controlled by dimming or switching off. Bright lights are unnecessary throughout the night when there are fewer people or vehicles. If necessary, lights can be brightened. Dimming is typically not noticed by the public. In York city centre, only 5% of respondents to a survey noticed that some lights had been dimmed. No crime was reported around dimmed lights.

If adopted, both these methods would lead to a dramatic decrease in both the cost of street-lighting, and the amount of light pollution produced.

Remotely controlled lighting is the way of the future, and the time will come when city lights will be controlled from a central base, and lights will respond to local circumstances (traffic and pedestrian volumes, incidents, adverse weather...). This is already happening in many places throughout the world, and lighting companies are moving gradually towards remote control.

The use of efficient lighting would also help restore the night-time to the dark, natural environment that nature intended, and the glory of the Milky Way would be revealed to a generation that has never seen it before.

