

# THE CAMPAIGN FOR DARK SKIES: PROGRESS IN THE UK OVER 18 YEARS

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Campaign for Dark Skies: United Kingdom

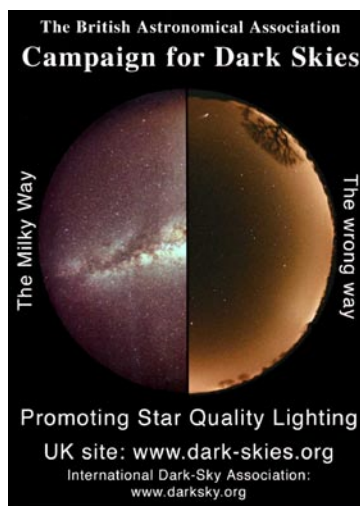
The Campaign for Dark Skies was formed in 1989 by concerned amateur astronomers aware that there was a gradual degradation of their night sky by the insidious encroachment of light pollution. The first meeting of those concerned amateur astronomers was held at the Head Office of the British Astronomical Association at Burlington House, Piccadilly in London. Most of those astronomers were members of the BAA; the BAA continues to offer valuable support to the Campaign to this day.

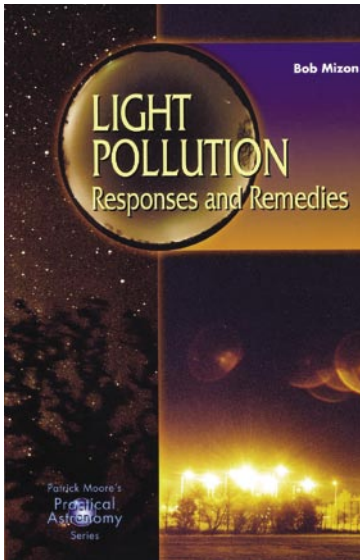
Over the intervening years the Campaign has matured, moving from a fringe issue to mainstream. Light Pollution is a topic that receives regular newspaper column inches in addition to television and radio broadcast interest. The term 'light pollution' was almost unheard of at the formation of the Campaign, it is now a common term which probably most of the population of the UK understands. This paper highlights some of the successes of the Campaign in recent years and details some of the challenges and opportunities that remain.

At the beginning of the Campaign it was agreed to form a small committee to steer the Campaign direction and aims. Aware that there was much to do, the committee agreed to the formation of a network of Local Officers whose task it would be to champion the reduction of light pollution in their local area.

Those present at the time of the formation of the Campaign knew little of the technical aspects of lighting and needed to acquire a technical base from which to discuss lighting with those in the lighting industry. The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) was contacted and was of great support to the Campaign. A number of lighting companies in the UK were also of great help and provided the Campaign access to knowledge, technical details and importantly, knowledge of the lighting industry – vital if the Campaign was to influence lighting practise.

It was clear from the beginning that the Campaign needed to influence policy makers and major organisations who were significant users of lighting. One of the early successes was the joint work undertaken with the Institution of Lighting Engineers (ILE) to produce *Guidance Notes on the Reduction of Light Pollution*. This has since been updated.





The Campaign also lobbied the Highways Agency, a Governmental Department responsible for, amongst other aspects of the road network, the road lighting on major 'A' road routes and motorways. The Highways Agency produced its own policy guidance to install full cut-off lighting across the road network. The Campaign still ensures it maintains healthy links with this agency. This was one of the few Government departments which took seriously the need to remedy the problem of light pollution. A familiar mantra from Government of the day was 'Education not Legislation'; however, by the year 2007 the Campaign recognised that there have been a number of legal precedents, and now an Act of Parliament strengthening action against the worst excesses of light pollution.

During the 1990's, the Campaign lobbied supermarket companies, working with them to install better quality lighting in their car parks. A large number of the supermarkets were being built on the edge of towns where skies were relatively dark. Many have since agreed to utilise 'down lighters' in their car parks.

During the Campaign's early years there was a clear need to publicise the issue of the loss of the night sky and highlight remedies. The Campaign worked alongside the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) in the production of a leaflet, *Starry starry night*. This was a very successful pamphlet highlighting the issues of light pollution and simple remedies. This is due for reprint, although this time will be wholly financed the Campaign for Dark Skies.

Further work has been undertaken with the CPRE in their *Night Blight* campaign. This public campaign highlighted the loss of dark sky areas over a 7 year period from 1993 to 2000, graphically showing the increase in light pollution across the UK with Isophot data from the NOAA satellite.

In addition to the above, the Campaign for Dark Skies has produced its own publicity material with Information Sheets and posters graphically demonstrating the effects of light pollution on the night sky. Bob Mizon, the Campaign for Dark Skies national coordinator, authored in 2001, the book, *Light Pollution, Responses and Remedies*.

The Campaign was slowly gaining recognition and winning the logic of the argument against the wasteful practice of light pollution, however, it was clear that 'education' alone was not effective. The Campaign was supportive of individuals across the UK who sought legal redress when persuasion and reasoned argument alone failed. Following a number of legal cases, the Campaign sought a legislative solution and made contact with the Science and Technology Committee of the House of Commons and eventually in 2005 the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act was passed. This made light pollution (or trespass) a statutory nuisance akin to noise and could be remedied in Law. Unfortunately there are some exclusions and the Campaign is working to have those

brought under the umbrella of this Legislation.

At this point there still remain many short and long term goals for the Campaign, they can be summarised as:

#### Short Term

- 1) Overturning the transport-based exclusions to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, as they have no logical basis;
- 2) Phasing out 500W domestic exterior lamps, a major source of light nuisance and local skyglow;
- 3) Publicising Dr Christopher Baddiley's light-pollution modelling work widely among lighting professionals;
- 4) Convincing the Highways Agency to use best light control;
- 5) Wide distribution of the new *Starry Starry Night* leaflet (including *via* website);
- 6) Constantly improving liaison with other dark-sky campaigners, and supporting IDA Europe's approaches to the EU.

#### Longer Term

- 1) Having the night sky officially recognised as a part of our environment worthy of protection, declared a *Site Of Special Scientific Interest and an Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty*;
- 2) ...leading to the *protection of the night sky* in law, as has happened in the Czech Republic (Law for the Protection of the Atmosphere);
- 3) Ensuring that *domestic exterior lighting* conforms to sensible standards in its direction and power;
- 4) Ensuring that *public lighting schemes* (car parks walkways, industrial estates etc.) have correct directionality and output specified at the planning stage.
- 5) Ensuring that all *road lighting* (including that in side streets) conforms to environmentally friendly standards.
- 6) Ensuring that, in the *public consciousness*, light is perceived not just as a beneficial agent, but also one capable of causing as much nuisance as noise.



NOAA Isophot data.

In conclusion, the Campaign was formed primarily to meet the needs of concerned astronomers. What transpired was that this concern was felt in the wider community and the Campaign was drawn to help many non-astronomers. In the UK, as with elsewhere, the lighting industry embraced the light pollution challenge and developed technical solutions, the benefits of which we see today. The legislative context has also developed in our favour, albeit with some shortcomings.

Campaign's such as the Campaign for Dark Skies needs to work with others, a significant issue highlighted as never before is the awareness of the environmental impact of the emission of greenhouse gasses in energy production. The issue of wasteful lighting practices plays easily into this agenda and is one which the Campaign will have to exploit for the benefit of darker skies and to reduce man's negative environmental impact on this planet.

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