

# Obtrusive Lighting Position Statement

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Over the last century large parts of Britain have rapidly lost access to naturally dark skies. Light in the wrong place, or obtrusive lighting, is one of the major unaddressed sources of pollution in this country and it affects people, wildlife and our landscapes. In 2009 the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution published its report on Artificial Light in the Environment<sup>1</sup> and recommended that **those responsible for the management of existing National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the equivalent National Scenic Areas in Scotland seek to eliminate unnecessary outdoor light and to better design and manage that which cannot be eliminated.**

1.2 In the Forest of Bowland AONB our relative isolation means that there are areas of land still largely unaffected by light pollution, however where lighting is obtrusive (eg on isolated dwellings or within some developments) this can seriously affect the quality of the landscape which was designated partly because of its tranquility and its value to heritage and biodiversity. In the words of the Royal Commission: *'we believe that access to the natural beauty of the night sky is every bit as important as the preservation of other aspects of natural beauty which society routinely seeks to protect for the enjoyment of its citizens and for posterity.'*

## 2. Purpose of this Position Statement

2.1 This paper has been produced in order to clearly set out the position of the AONB Partnership with regards to obtrusive lighting in the Forest of Bowland. It aims to provide guidance to assist the six local planning departments which operate in the area, and which have a duty to further the purposes of the AONB. It is hoped that this guidance will assist in the determination of planning applications for any development which may include exterior lighting.

2.2 This Position Statement should be read in conjunction with the AONB's Guidance on Lighting for residents and businesses and with the examples of Good Practice we have compiled. These additional documents aim to encourage and support a gradual removal of existing obtrusive lighting as this cannot be tackled via the planning process.

2.3 This document, plus the Guidance and Good Practice, complements the AONB's work on Dark Sky tourism by providing encouragement and support to partners wanting to lend their support to the initiative.

## 3. Obtrusive Lighting and Dark Skies

3.1 Most people expect to see some lighting at night as it helps to guide your way and to provide a sense of security. However, light in the wrong place (where it is not intended or wanted), or at the wrong time, is a form of pollution as it spoils the environment. Artificial light creating an impact on health and wellbeing, can be classed as a statutory nuisance<sup>2</sup>.

3.2 The RCEP report mentioned above, identified that obtrusive lighting can affect the migration and feeding behaviour of some birds and the feeding habits of insects and their predators. It can also have an impact on human health and wellbeing through causing sleep disturbance and stress. Importantly, obtrusive lighting can reduce the intensity of dark skies: reducing the opportunity to view constellations, the Milky Way and astronomical events.

3.3 Light pollution can take on various forms and can originate from different sources:

Form	Source	Effect
Glare	Spotlights, security lamps or headlamps often incorrectly sited or not shielded	Excessive contrast between light and dark in the field of vision
Trespass	Poorly directed exterior lights	Intrusive light affecting neighbouring properties
Scenic intrusion	Clutter or profligacy of lights in a natural environment	Over illumination and distraction, a reduction in the scenic quality and loss of dark skies
Sky glow	Street, traffic and building lights, creating a combination of reflection and refraction of light in the atmosphere	Causes a lack of contrast between a dark and light sky many miles from the source

<sup>1</sup> *Artificial Light in the Environment*, The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, 2005

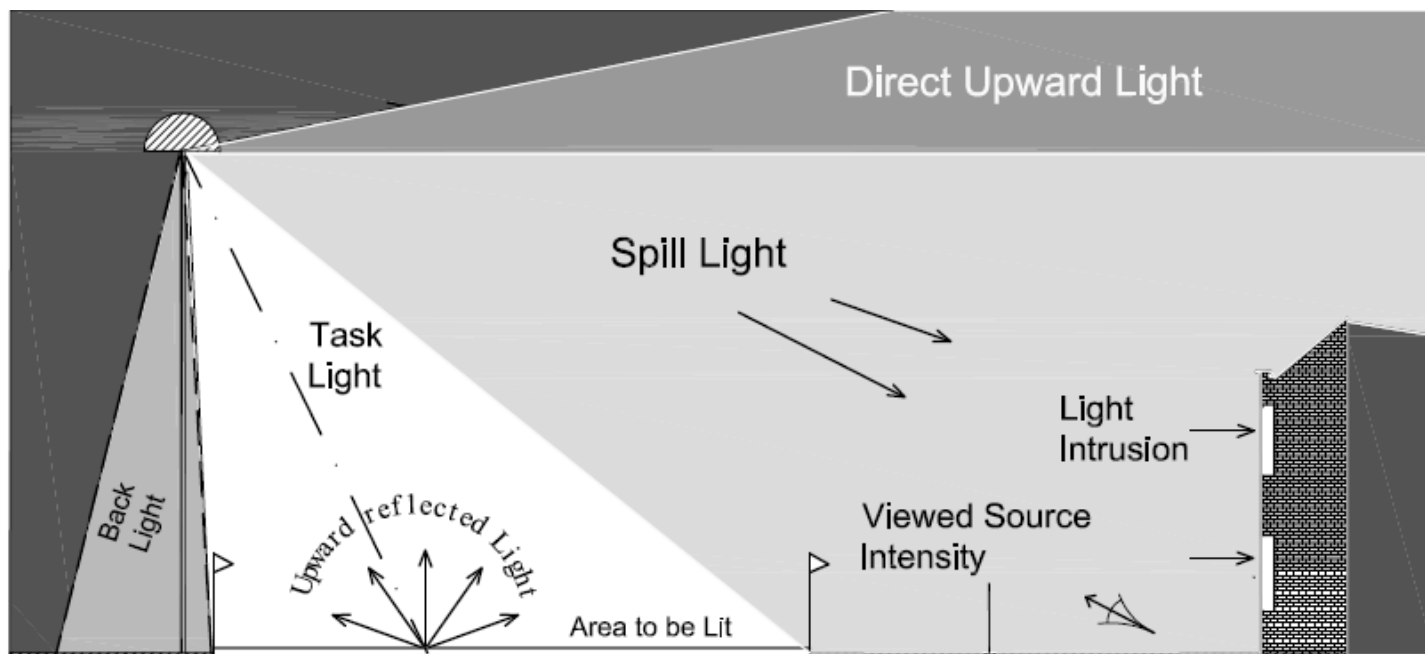


Fig 1: Types of obtrusive light (from ILP Guidance Notes)

## 4. Reasons for Control

4.1 Guidance produced by the Institution of Lighting Professionals<sup>3</sup> identifies five Environmental Zones for local authorities to specify exterior lighting controls in their Development Plans. In this Guidance, zone E1: National Parks and AONBs are categorised as having 'natural surroundings' which should be kept 'intrinsically dark'.

4.2 A reduction in obtrusive external lighting will improve the night time scenic quality of the AONB by maintaining this intrinsic darkness. It will also lessen the impact on wildlife such as birds, invertebrates and plants which can be affected by artificial lighting when it masks seasonal and diurnal patterns. Controlling obtrusive lighting at night will also bring benefits to residents through a reduction in glare and trespass.

4.3 Any reduction of light pollution will also help to maintain and improve the area's dark skies which are becoming a tourism asset: this contributes to the local economy via increased visitor spend in accommodation and eateries, and the increased use of local services.

4.4 Reducing excessive exterior lighting will cut energy costs and saves carbon. In some areas total 'switch offs' of public street lighting, especially on highways and motorways has met with public approval and no increase in crime or accidents. In Lancashire there is no appetite for switching off, however dimming will soon be introduced from dusk til dawn on old street lighting stock whilst low cost LED lamps are introduced to around half of the street lights in the county over the next 3 years (2015-18).

## 5. Position Statement

5.1 It is considered that exterior lighting proposed as part of any new development, within or affecting the boundaries of the AONB, should be **the minimum required and only appropriate to its purpose, so as to protect the area's natural surroundings and intrinsic darkness.**

5.2 Proposals for exterior lights should follow the AONB Guidance and Good Practice and should be able to demonstrate **that there is not a significantly adverse effect, individually or cumulatively, on: the character of the area; the visibility of the night sky; biodiversity (including bats and light sensitive species); and residents, pedestrians or drivers.**

<sup>3</sup> Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light GN01: 2011, Institution of Lighting Professionals