

### NNAS dark skies 2019 - 2020

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all 2020 events organised to promote dark skies, and the 2020 Dark Sky Festival organised by NCP (Norfolk Coast Partnership) have been cancelled. A number of events occurred in the autumn of 2019, and a full report on the 2019 Dark Sky Festival main event is given below.

During the autumn of 2019 NNAS events promoting dark skies were held at Kelling Heath holiday park and at Wiveton Downs. The Kelling Heath event was integrated with the 2019 Dark Sky festival. Colin Hards gave an illustrated talk to a holiday audience in the lecture area at Kelling on dark skies topics. Unfortunately the sky outside was overcast, so our planned night sky laser tour and telescope viewing session on the Kelling DSDS (Dark Sky Discovery Site) organised by other NNAS members couldn't take place.

In 2017 we applied for DSDS for Wiveton Downs and Kelling Heath Holiday Park, and these were granted. Later, during a star party at Kelling a worrying change had taken place, with the building of new washing / toilet blocks with aggressive external lighting. NNAS made contact with a number of interested parties, in particular Keith Venables (BAA), Duncan Wise of Northumberland National Park, and both astronomy organisers of the two equinox star parties at Kelling. Keith Venables made a detailed light survey of Kelling, and a top level meeting with Blue Sky Leisure management (owners of Kelling Heath Holiday Park) was organised. To their credit, the Kelling representatives were very keen to improve their lighting and reduce light pollution, and subsequent modification work on the light fittings made a considerable difference. A second light survey confirmed this.

### Dark Skies Festival 2019 – introduction event

The Festival was launch by Kate Dougan of NCP (Norfolk Coast Partnership) followed by a talk on the night sky by John Craythorne of King's Lynn AS. Some telescope viewing was possible on the terrace afterwards.

### Keynote event at Oddfellows Hall in Sheringham

Kate Dougan opened the meeting to an invited audience of local government officials and local holiday business owners. Norfolk Police also sent along two representatives demonstrating a willingness for these issues to get a wider understanding in law enforcement.

Bob Mizon (BAA Commission for Dark Skies) was the first invited speaker. Bob stated that 90% of people had not seen the unpolluted night sky. 60% of world wildlife species are nocturnal to avoid predators. The solution was the right amount of light, where it's needed, when it's needed. Dark Skies matter, and the French government have the right idea with new laws about light pollution.

The second speakers was David Hook of CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England). He stated that light pollution suburbanises the countryside and threatens rural character and tranquillity. He stated that compared to 'urban', 'rural' meant a lack of light, and that CPRE protects rural tranquillity. In their survey, he reported that 96% of rural parish councils prefer unlit streets. Surveys had shown that crime rates go down when lights are switched off. He showed image slides of full cut off luminaires, and examples where shielded LED lights have to be used correctly. These have the advantage that they can be dimmed down to 10% brightness, or switched off. Advanced intelligent luminaires types can dim when there are no human present, and are not fooled by wildlife. Highway England were doing a

good job by replacing old sodium lights on main roads. So David Hook concluded that in the main, public lighting was getting better and less polluting, while business and private lighting unfortunately isn't. For instance churches and their spires should not be lit continuously, but only occasionally. Recycling centres are not lit at night. CPRE would like to have all external lighting under planning control, as is the case in France. In fact in many cases owners do not need any lighting at all.

The final speaker was Chris O'Connell of Norfolk County Council. He stated that all light pollution came from man made lights. Of relevance was section 29 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and ILP guidance notes for the reduction of offensive light. He noted that the ILP (Institution of Lighting Professionals) represented lighting companies. He explained that they were developing cameras to detect passing traffic and so when not required luminaires will dim down.

A lively debate followed with the audience asking and giving feedback on many issues.

A final event at Kelling ended the festival, as reported above.

#### Future NNAS dark Skies involvement

NNAS is a member of the North Coast Partnership AONB Dark Skies Working Group, and has attended a number of meetings to discuss policy and possible action to limit and reduce the light pollution in this region. We hope this dialogue will continue in the future.

But due to other commitments, I have had to relinquish my role in overseeing Dark Skies issue on behalf of NNAS, so this position on the NNAS committee is now vacant. If any member is interested in taking on this role, please contact the Society General Secretary, or contact me to discuss what the role entails.