



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

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Consultation on proposals contained in the planning white paper Planning for Sustainable Development

1. The Royal Astronomical Society (RAS) is the UK's leading professional body for astronomy & astrophysics, geophysics, solar and solar-terrestrial physics, and planetary sciences. As such it represents UK astronomers, both professional and amateur. It has a contribution to make to the present consultation as a body concerned with the deleterious effects of the lack of clarity and effectiveness of present planning policy in respect of light pollution.
2. Light pollution hampers the education of young scientists by restricting the practice of astronomy in the UK (for example when astronomy is taught as a component of science courses in UK universities). It has some deleterious effects on professional research activity carried out in the UK, even if most research activity is carried on at telescopes overseas or in space. Light pollution also hampers the enjoyment of the night sky by everyone, reducing the uplift in scientific awareness and confidence in the people of the UK that comes with this.
3. One of the Society's fellows, Mr Martin Morgan-Taylor, has prepared a statement of the environmental effect of the present lighting infrastructure on astronomy and more broadly. He plans to submit the statement in parallel to the present response to the consultation. He describes the piecemeal way in which planning decisions on lighting schemes are taken, and the way in which, given that light pollution spills widely across local boundaries, the present system of planning is not effectively coordinated when the potential environmental effects of a scheme will be felt at some distance from the place of its implementation. He comments on the ways that the detailed proposals in *Planning for Sustainable Development* will affect future planning of light infrastructure schemes. The RAS broadly endorses Mr Morgan-Taylor's analysis of the issues.
4. The RAS thus welcomes the proposals to issue national policy statements on infrastructural development, in the expectation that a clear national policy statement on lighting issues will help to control light pollution and deliver a more sustainable and more effective national lighting infrastructure.

Prof Michael Rowan-Robinson
President, RAS

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