

Connemara Dark Skies



Submission to the Draft Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028.

The Connemara Dark Skies Group (CDS) welcomes Galway County Council's inclusion of policy objectives on light pollution and dark skies in the Draft County Development Plan (sections 7.9.3, 8.10.4). Such policies can help the recovery of the tourism sector by driving dark sky or "astro" tourism (including more off-season tourism), benefit local people and wildlife and aid the county in achieving its climate and biodiversity targets. CDS offer our expertise to help deliver the policy objectives.

The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), which is referenced in section 8.10.4 of the plan, provide guidance and evidence on best practice in public policy on lighting from an energy, ecology, human health and safety point of view [1]. CDS draw upon these principles in making the following recommendations:

- That LP1 of 7.9.3 be amended to:
"To require that all developments shall ensure lighting schemes are designed so that light spillage is minimised to ensure light pollution in the surrounding environment including residential amenity, wildlife and near public roads is limited. Lighting schemes should consider dimming or switching off lighting during the night where appropriate. Such lighting schemes shall be submitted and agreed with the Planning Authority."
Rationale: Dimming and switching off lighting is appropriate in places that see reduced activity after hours and will help to reduce light pollution and energy waste.
- That LP2 of 7.9.3 be amended to:
"To require the use of low energy LED (or equivalent) lighting in support of Climate Action. Lighting should be limited to warmer correlated colour temperatures (CCT) of 3000 Kelvin or below to be of an environmentally sensitive manner."
Rationale: While cooler coloured LEDs are often slightly more energy efficient than warmer colours, this must be weighed against other factors. Cooler LEDs have been shown to have negative impacts on wildlife, increase glare and compromise human vision and worsen sky glow and light pollution. Evidence for this is referenced at [2].
- That LP3 of 7.9.3 be amended to:
"To encourage the maintenance of dark skies in rural areas, to actively reduce existing sources of light pollution from public infrastructure in strategic dark sky areas by upgrading to dark sky friendly lighting and to limit light pollution in urban and rural areas."
Rationale: To realise policy objective DS1 of 8.10.4, designated dark sky areas will need nearby public lighting to be of a dark sky friendly manner. For example, CDS are working to get an IDA recognised accreditation in Connemara which requires measurements and evidence of low levels of light pollution.
- Chapter 15 on 'Development Management Standards' should include standards on lighting reflective of the policy objectives on light pollution in 7.9.3.

- Appendix 5 - The guideline for the single rural house should be amended to include recommendations on outdoor lighting in line with dark sky friendly principles as detailed at [3]

CDS look forward to further engaging with the council on lighting and dark skies to ensure the benefit of communities throughout the county.

Signed:

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[1] <https://www.darksky.org/our-work/lighting/public-policy/>

[2] <https://www.darksky.org/our-work/lighting/lighting-for-citizens/led-guide/>

[3] <https://www.darksky.org/our-work/lighting/lighting-for-citizens/lighting-basics/>