

The Sawston Dark Sky Charter

The Dark Sky Charter is at heart deliberately quite simple and short. It is a call for everyone to have access to the night sky.

Lighting in the hours of darkness should be sensitive while also ensuring safety. It should also reduce the needless and negative environmental impact that it currently causes. The basic idea is for a reduction in the amount of spurious artificial light generated during the hours of darkness, light that obscures and washes out the number of stars that we can see above us.

There are four basic principles that can be followed by all, no matter who and where they are. And they can be easily incorporated instantly without any major investment or effort.

These four principles are:

- Lights should be no brighter than necessary, dimmed and turned off when not required
- Angle lights to the areas needing illuminated, avoiding unwanted spread
- Any external light should be for a specific purpose
- Warmer coloured lights should be used where possible

The benefits of adopting the Dark Sky Charter and following those four principles are many. Of course the obvious one is the democratic access to the night sky. But it goes far beyond that, it also has a benefit in the fight against climate change, helps physical and mental wellbeing, and saves money. Four benefits flow out of the four principles:

- Reducing the amount of lighting at night reduces energy usages, cutting not only emissions but costs
- Reducing the amount of lighting at night minimises the impact on insects and nocturnal animals allowing them the chance to flourish
- Reducing the amount of lighting at night resets our natural cycle of day and night, improving health and wellbeing
- Reducing the amount of lighting at night has the proven academically researched benefit of conversely reducing crime

There are many ways for the public, local councils, businesses, organisations, government, in the end everyone, to help. A few simple suggestions to end this charter:

- Homeowners can ensure their floodlights are angled down, and on a short timer if they need to be on one at all. That sensor lights aren't wide-ranging, and passers-by on pavements don't set them off. When not in rooms the lights are off.
- Businesses can turn off lights around premises, as many of these burn all night long. Internal lights are turned off when no one is in them.
- Councils can ensure their properties don't needlessly burn lights, and encourage their constituents, and other local councils, to do the same
- Property developers can take a sensitive approach to how lighting is added to a new or existing site

If we all encouraged each other to take even small steps along this path, all of our lives would be enriched for the better.