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| NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE | COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| DATE OF MEETING | 22 February 2018 |
| TITLE | Sustainability Balance Dark Sky Status |
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| CABINET MEMBER | CIlr Dafydd Meurig |
| PURPOSE | Informing Members |

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 During the 1980s the quiet nature or tranquillity of specific areas began to be recognised; this included acknowledging the importance of dark-skies.
- 1.2 In 1988, the **International Dark-Sky Association - IDA** was founded in Tucson, Arizona, USA. It is a non-profit organisation whose principal aim is to "preserve and protect the night time environment and our heritage of dark skies through quality outdoor lighting."
- 1.3 The IDA is also responsible for designating areas throughout the world as Dark-Sky Reserves. The organisation is responsible for other designations that acknowledge and protect Dark-Skies in smaller surface areas.

2. DARK-SKY RESERVES

- 2.1 The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) has a specific procedure for the Dark-Sky Reserve designation - which includes inspecting, criteria and action plans. It also requires that for areas to be eligible for Reserve status they must be fairly large. A core part of applying for the designation is the preparation and adoption of the Lightscape Management Plan. Details about the IDA can be and the designation procedure can be seen on the website - www.darksky.org.
- 2.2 The IDA has stated that the mission of the Dark-Sky Reserve is to:
- Acknowledge the effort to maintain and protect dark skies
 - Promote ecotourism
 - Promote the protection of night-time habitats and public enjoyment
 - Encourage workers to protect dark-skies
 - Provide international recognition
 - Encourage other areas to act for the benefit of dark-skies
- 2.3 By now, there are a number of Dark-Sky Reserves throughout the world - including in the USA, New Zealand, Germany, France, England, Ireland and Wales.

3. BRECON BEACONS DARK-SKY RESERVE

- 3.1 The Dark-Sky status came to the public's attention in Wales following the designation of the Brecon Beacons National Park as a Dark-Sky Reserve by the IDA in 2013. This was the first area in Wales to receive this status and much publicity was generated as a result. The Park

held a number of events, such as night-time tours, star-gazing etc. to coincide with the designation, and an Observatory was created.

4. SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK

4.1 Following the attention given to the Brecon Beacons, a number of other areas in Britain researched the possibilities of applying for Dark-Sky Reserve status, including Snowdonia National Park.

4.2 After conducting Dark-Sky inspections, taking action on some lighting measures, and adopting the Light Management Plan, Snowdonia National Park Authority also managed to gain the status in 2015. A considerable amount of staff time was required for the project and consultants had to be commissioned to undertake some of the work. A copy of the National Park's application to the IDA can be seen by following the link: http://www.darksky.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Snowdonia_IDSRS_application.pdf .

4.3 Having succeeded with the application, the National Park prepared a Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to light, and progress must be reported on annually in terms of managing and restricting lights.

4.4 In terms of the benefits from the designation, initial findings note that it:

- adds value to local businesses
- attracts some visitors with a specific interest in the night sky
- helps attract visitors outside the main season

5. CLWYDIAN HILLS AND DEE VALLEY AONB

5.1 At the beginning of February 2018, the Clwydian Hills and Dee Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee voted to apply for a Dark-Sky Reserve Designation. This followed a two year period of research and consultation with local businesses and people. According to a BBC report, making the application and creating a Lighting Management Plan will cost around £20,000 and Welsh Government will pay half of this.

6. LLŶN PENINSULA AND BARDSEY

6.1 In 1997, the Countryside Council for Wales commissioned a report of Wales that looked at activity that disrupted the tranquillity of areas. The study also gave consideration to the dark night sky. In the Study, the far end of the Llŷn Peninsula and the Clynnog area were areas that had very little "sky-glow". A further assessment was carried out in 2009 and a substantial part of Llŷn again scored high in terms of tranquillity and dark sky (absence of lights).

6.2 In 2014, Wil Parry of Menter y Felin Uchaf investigated the possibility of applying for Dark-Sky Reserve Status for the Llŷn Peninsula. He collaborated with the Wales Dark-Sky Education Service and was given support by the AONB Service. However, the IDA determined that the surface area of Llŷn was not large enough to be able to apply for Reserve status. It was noted that there were possibilities in terms of a Dark-Sky Park or Dark-Sky Communities status for individual villages and towns. However, no further action was taken on the matter.

6.3 Bardsey Island Trust has been working for some time on an application for a Dark-Sky Sanctuary status. The background work has now been completed (including changing the lights to low impact ones). The Trust aims to submit the application to the IDA in 2018.

7. DARK-SKY DESIGNATION FOR LLŶN

7.1 Welsh Government has recently taken an interest in ensuring Dark-Sky status for the rest of Wales' Designated Landscapes (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and the five AONB). Consequently, a grant has been offered toward conducting a survey that would form the basis for applying for Dark-Sky status of some sort; it would also be useful for reviewing the Management Plan.

7.2 The AONB Service has accepted the grant offer and the survey will be conducted by the Wales Dark-Sky Education Service in 2018.

7.3 There is also an intention to resume discussions with the IDA about a Dark-Sky status that could be appropriate for an area such as Llŷn, that is insufficiently large to be given Reserve status.