

## Wye Valley National Landscape and Fownhope Dark Skies

Did you know that the Wye Valley AONB has been renamed the Wye Valley National Landscape to reflect the importance of our rural environment and elevate its status towards that of a National Park? Fownhope is entirely surrounded by The Wye Valley National Landscape and as such, we have a responsibility to manage our parish in a way that contributes to the natural beauty of the local landscape.

The Parish Council's Environment Working Group has made Dark Skies a key focus of their programme for 2024, and will be holding a series of fun events aimed at promoting dark skies this year - including a guided star gazing evening, a dawn chorus walk, and a youngsters adventure dusk walk. Dates and details will be announced soon.

The first activity of the year will be measuring light pollution using 'dark sky metres'. Dark Skies Herefordshire have offered training and support for villagers to work with them, and would be hoping to have us take a reading in early April - we would need a clear night four days before or after the new moon for the best readings, and as the new moon is on the 8th April our survey window would be between 3rd and 13th April. We would also need some basic training, and this would take place towards the end of March. If you would be interested to join a small team of volunteers to take the dark sky readings please contact Helen: [clerk@fownhopeparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@fownhopeparishcouncil.gov.uk)

In the meantime, there are a few simple things that individual households can do to help maintain our dark skies:

- **Only use outside lighting where and when you really need to.**

Using external lights to move around your garden and in and out of the house safely makes sense, but leaving them on all night does not. Make sure to turn them off or use a sensor to help limit your use. This will not only help reduce light pollution but also lower your energy consumption. And if you already have motion sensor activated lights, check the settings to ensure that they are not activated by rain, cats or hedgehogs and only stay on for as long as needed.

- **Think about the impact of external lighting on wildlife and other people**

Decorative garden lighting might help set the scene for a summer BBQ, but it's not necessarily attractive to your neighbours or helpful to wildlife. Lights shining into trees disturb roosting birds and spoil the night skies for anyone interested in star gazing. Fownhope is listed in the Visit Herefordshire Stargazers Guide as a favoured location, so please help keep our Dark Skies dark by only using decorative garden lighting when you are using your garden.

- **Use only the brightest light you need.**

There is a huge range of choices when it comes to lighting, but you don't need "daylight bright" light at night. Choose "warmer" lights - these reduce the amount of blue-violet light being emitted, which is considered more harmful to invertebrates and reduces the amount of light reflected upwards adding to skyglow.

- **Shield your lights**

Directing your lights to light up only the places you need can make a huge difference. Adding shields to existing lights can help stop casting light into unwanted places such as trees, hedges and up into the night sky. And keep in mind that interior lighting escapes to the outside world if curtains and blinds aren't shut. So again, use low intensity, warm white lights if you have large windows or glass doors and try to shut your curtains when the lights are on.

Fownhope Parish Council work alongside the Wye Valley National Landscape Association on a number of projects aimed at protecting and enhancing our National Landscape. Details and further information can be found on the village website or at [www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk](http://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk)

Thanks

Fownhope PC Environment Working Group