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Professor Sir John Lawton
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The Royal Commission on
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February 2010

Thank you for your letter of 27 November regarding the short report produced by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on Artificial Light in the Environment. My apologies for the delay in responding.

I welcome your report as light pollution is not an area on which the Assembly Government has developed a formal position. However, the Welsh Assembly has powers in relation to light as a statutory nuisance as set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, and is doing much to tackle light nuisance. In terms of energy efficiency, local authorities in Wales have already received guidance and support from the Carbon Trust’s Local Authority Carbon Management scheme on energy demand reduction strategies. This provides advice on carbon emission reductions for buildings, vehicle fleets, street lighting and landfill sights. Most local authorities in Wales will be included in the new Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme which starts on 1 April this year. It is a new scheme for the UK which will drive energy efficiency through behaviour and infrastructure change. Many local authorities are already developing strategies to move towards more energy efficient lighting and are trialling periods where street lighting is turned off at night. The Welsh Assembly Government has a role in scrutinising development plans and we try to ensure that national policies are carried through to the local level by the local planning authorities.

We also recognise that light pollution can be both a natural environment and a climate change issue and are taking steps to tackle it by promoting energy efficiency. I am developing a Climate Change Strategy for Wales which will show not just how the Welsh Assembly Government, but all sectors in Wales will contribute to reducing emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

The Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for street lighting on trunk roads which need to meet certain standards. We are also currently following guidance documents that allow us to utilise alternative innovative approaches to reducing energy consumption and subsequently carbon emissions through the use of dimming devices that reduce the illumination between midnight and 5am. The dimming level has to be assessed for each road section and the lighting levels adjusted to the most acceptable lower level.

Wedi’i argraffu ar bapur wedi’i ailgyrchu (100%)
commensurate with the level of traffic at this time of night. Furthermore, we now use better lamp design as well as white light filaments to minimise night time light pollution in rural areas. In the future, and as technology develops we are also confident that the use of LEDs lamps can be made as an alternative to traditional lighting filaments that will significantly reduce both maintenance and running costs.

I noted that one of your recommendations is that Government departments responsible for light guidance keep the legislation under review. We do of course keep all legislation under review and take into consideration and act on any new evidence that comes to light.

Yours,

Jane Davidson AM

Y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynaliadwyedd a Thai

Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing