

## **Shining a light on the truth about the importance of Dark Skies!!**

At the October meeting of the Denbigh and District Probus Club, members were delighted to welcome Gwenno Jones, Designated Landscapes Dark Skies Officer who is working on the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places Dark Sky Project which is a collaborative project between all eight Designated Landscapes of Wales.

The project aim is to work with communities and businesses to improve their lighting in order to reduce light pollution, for biodiversity and human health.

Gwenno explained how light pollution has increased by 400% in the last 25 years and is still increasing by about 10% every year. This has a huge impact on biodiversity as more than 60% of our biodiversity relies on dark skies and also a billion pounds a year is wasted in energy costs because of misdirected lights, upward spill of lights and inappropriate lighting.

Artificial lights confuse animals and a variety of species, for example, there is an impact on the life cycle of moths and because of this, there has been a massive decline in the moth population. Light pollution disrupts 65% of our night time pollinators. Bees are meant to sleep at night and recover but lighting disturbance means they do not rest as much and produce much less honey. 150 insects per night are killed by a single street light. Many migrating birds coming in are re-directed by lights and fly into buildings and an untimely death.

Only 2% of the UK population experiences truly dark skies and can see more than 12 stars in the sky. Light can interfere with our melatonin levels and too much light before bedtime and during sleep time can cause migraines and interfere with sleep patterns. Too much blue lighting before sleep, particularly from screens and other devices can have a huge impact.

It was pleasing to hear that 92% of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley currently meets the International Dark Sky Association standards and the project is working towards becoming a designated dark sky area through the IDA.

There are currently 4 dark skies sites in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley – Llangwyfan Carpark, Nannerch, Moel Arthur Carpark, Moel Famau Bwlch Pen Barras carpark and Horseshoe Falls, Llangollen.

Project officers ensure that much work is done with schools to raise the awareness of the future generations who can make a huge difference, via a comprehensive education programme. Additionally, an all-Wales Dark Skies week is run annually in February half term with multiple interactive events and activities.

Much work is also being undertaken in communities and with businesses, supported by Welsh Government, to improve the lighting in terms of lighting types and direction and shielding of lighting fixtures and fittings.

The colour temperature of lights is also key with white light being detrimental to animals and insects and the more yellowy lighting being preferable. To enhance dark skies, bulbs of 2700-3000 Kelvin (k) are preferred in a warm white.

Following the talk, members engaged the speaker in a question-and-answer session where many topics were explored including movement sensors, accident black spots and lighting, AONB supplementary planning guidance, local lighting hotspots polluting the skies etc

Denbigh and District Probus Club welcomes new members to join their group for monthly meetings (held at the Oriel Hotel, St Asaph) where they enjoy lunch, friendship, and a talk from a guest speaker.

The club AGM will be held in November and on Monday December 4<sup>th</sup> the speaker will be Gareth Foulkes from Llandyrnog who will talk about Modern old-fashioned farming.

For further information have a look at the club web site [denbighprobus.com](http://denbighprobus.com) or contact –

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