
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: TOMINTOUL AND GLENLIVET LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP: APPLICATION FOR DARK SKY PARK STATUS

**Prepared by: Luke Vogan, Graduate Planner
David Berry, Planning Manager**

Purpose of Report

To ask the Planning Committee to agree a letter of support for Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership's application for Dark Sky Park status.

Recommendation

That the Planning Committee agree to send a letter of support for Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership's application for Dark Sky Park status.

Background

1. The Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership (TGLP) area is around 265 km² and most of it lies within the Cairngorms National Park. It is surrounded by hills of 700 – 800m which help to protect it from much of the light pollution generated by the larger settlements of Badenoch and Strathspey and Deeside. As a result, the underlying quality of its night skies is excellent. TGLP are in the process of submitting an application to the International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) for Dark Sky Park status to help protect the characteristics of the area and enhance tourism interest.
2. The Dark Sky Places programme run by the IDSA offers five types of designation. TGLP are applying for 'International Dark Sky Park' status, defined as "publicly or privately owned spaces protected for natural conservation that implement good outdoor lighting and provide dark sky programs for visitors". There are a number of places in the UK that have achieved that status:
 - Galloway Forest Park, Scotland;
 - Bodmin Moor Dark Sky Landscape, England;
 - Ellan Valley Estate, Wales; and
 - Northumberland National Park and Kielder Water and Forest Park, England.

3. The TGLP Dark Skies Project aims to preserve the natural darkness of the night skies in the area by promoting environmentally responsible lighting. It aims to:
 - Protect the plants and animals that depend on the natural daily cycle of light;
 - Promote out of season tourism by allowing visitors to experience a sky brimming with stars; and
 - Reduce energy wastage by ensuring that outdoor lighting only illuminates the intended areas and does not overspill into the surrounding countryside or the night sky.
4. Appendix I shows the boundary of the TGLP Dark Skies Project.
5. TGLP have received positive feedback on the project through a recently started a consultation with local community groups and relevant organisations The Moray Council have also expressed overall support the project and are replacing old sodium street lighting with “full cut off” LED street lights, making a major contribution to the project.
6. If the project is successful in obtaining Dark Sky Park status from the IDSA, the designation would mean the area has been officially recognised for its special skyscape and wildness characteristics and measures should be taken to ensure the conservation of these characteristics.
7. To help deliver these objectives, and to support the application to the IDSA, TGLP have commissioned consultants to produce an External Lighting Master Plan (ELMP). The ELMP outlines measures to help reduce light pollution, energy wastage, and the harmful effects of excessive night-time lighting on both wildlife and human health within the Landscape Partnership area. It includes advice to encourage businesses and home owners to reduce the impact of existing external lighting, along with guidance aimed at minimising the impact of any new lighting proposals in the area.
8. TGLP’s intention is that if Dark Sky Park status is achieved, the ELMP’s guidance for new lighting proposals could represent a material consideration when any future planning applications involving external lighting schemes are determined.
9. The ELMP includes the following criteria for consideration in regards to planning applications involving external lighting:
 - Ensure that only areas where light is required are illuminated;
 - Prevent glare affecting adjacent properties;
 - Minimise the escape of surplus light into the countryside and night sky
10. The ELMP can be viewed online at www.darks skies.glenlivet-cairngorms.co.uk/dark-skies/lightscape-plan/.

Request for Letter of Support

11. To help obtain the Dark Sky Park designation TGLP has asked CNPA in its capacity as planning authority to endorse the ELMP as a material planning consideration and to consider issuing a letter of support for their application to the IDSA.

Proposed Response

12. CNPA supports the conservation of dark skies through policies within both the Local Development Plan (policy 5) and the National Park Partnership Plan (policy 1.3). These policies and their associated supporting text outline the requirement for new development to minimise light pollution to surrounding areas. TGLP's Dark Skies Project will make a significant contribution towards the delivery of these policy objectives. It also fits well with CNPA's wider approach to the promotion of sustainable tourism.
13. Although the ELMP has not been prepared by CNPA planning officers and contains a level of technical detail that is not likely to be relevant for all new development proposals, it is considered capable of being a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications.
14. Therefore we propose to write a letter to TGLP confirming CNPA's support in principle for their Dark Sky Park application and noting that we will have regard to the ELMP as a material consideration when determining future planning applications in that area.

Next Steps

15. With the agreement of the planning committee, officers will write a letter of support for the Dark Skies Project, underlining the support from policies in the current LDP and the intention to have regard to the ELMP as material consideration for future development proposals within the designated area.
16. Officers will provide updates to the planning committee as and when further information is available on TGLP's application for Dark Sky Park status.

Luke Vogan & David Berry
February 2018

lukevogan@cairngorms.co.uk
davidberry@cairngorms.co.uk

Appendices

- I. Boundary of TGLP Dark Skies Project