

BATH DARK SKIES COORDINATOR/ADVISER

Many of us have been astonished at the beauty of the stars and Milky Way in a truly dark sky in the depths of the countryside in the UK or abroad. But the increasing spread of poorly designed artificial lighting threatens our ability to experience it. It is not just our enjoyment of the sky at risk. Scientific studies show that human health can be adversely affected by the nature and timing of exposure to artificial light. There are also major adverse impacts on a wide range of wildlife who are adapted to nature's rhythms, not ours.

The good news is that action is beginning to be taken on this issue. Thanks to the efforts of groups such as the Commission for Dark Skies (CfDS), there are increasing numbers of Dark Sky Parks and Reserves being established in the UK and overseas. We can improve things in and near cities, too. Modern LED based lighting technology offers much more scope for providing the right light in the right place at the right time, which can save money as well. Local authorities and other bodies are often willing to help, but may miss important opportunities.

15 months ago, some local astronomy and wildlife groups held a Starlit Skies Conference in Bath to discuss with local interests and residents' groups what practical steps we could take for Bath and the surrounding area. Many good ideas came out of this, including the development and production of a training film for those involved in building design and development to raise awareness of these issues and their solutions. You can see the film, which has been very successful, and lots of other background information, including links to partner organisations, here: <http://starlitskies.org.uk/>

Since then the Bath Starlit Skies Group that emerged from the Conference has continued to grow. But we need help! We are looking for one or two energetic local volunteers who could spend a few hours a week on mainly two activities:

- **Coordinate activities** and initiatives designed to promote awareness of these issues in businesses, schools and the local community. Collaborate with the Campaign to Protect Rural England locally in relation to the surrounding countryside when relevant.
- **Provide advice** to developers, businesses and interested bodies on good lighting practice. Liaise with LA Planning Departments, local councillors, RIBA and local designers in the built environment. (Training would be provided)

The two activities are somewhat different. They might both suit one individual, or you may feel you could do one but not the other. You would be working with members of the Starlit Skies Group and others, who would all provide support and encouragement, and CfDS will also provide literature, advice, sample letters etc.

This is a challenging agenda but we, with our partners, believe that there is a real opportunity here for Bath to help lead the drive for real and lasting change and to be an exemplar for other towns and cities to follow. **If you are interested, and would like to know more, please contact Charles Draper at chairman@williamherschel.org.uk in the first instance.**



THE
WILLIAM
HERSCHEL
SOCIETY

