

Cheshire East Highways

Street Lighting Carbon Reduction Scheme

Frequently Asked Questions

**1 What exactly is being done?**

In selected areas throughout Cheshire East one of the three actions is taking place to street lighting:

- **part night lighting:** lights switched off between the hours of midnight and 5.30am (17,700 lights -47% of total ,rising to around 21,000 once the assessments are complete)
- **dimming:** lights dimmed to approx. 60% of normal strength – which is not noticeable to the naked eye -4,500 lights (12% of total)
- **switched off:** 950 lights (3% of lights) switched off (with plan to remove these lights in future). These lights are on inter-urban routes (e.g. Alderley Edge by-pass) and lights will remain on at junctions or intersections.

Street lights in town centres and high crime areas will be replaced with lower energy consuming units to save costs and will NOT be switched off.

**2 What are the benefits?**

The benefits are threefold:

- **Reduction in the Borough's energy bill.** We currently pay around £1.6M to keep our street lights illuminated through the year, a significant amount of money.
- **Reduction in the Borough's Carbon footprint.** From April 2013 the authority will have to pay the Climate Change Levy, a tax based on the amount of carbon used by the authority. The tax is set notionally at around £12 per tonne. By reducing the amount of street lighting energy used this contributes significantly to lowering our exposure.
- **Reduction in Crime.** In the majority of areas, nationwide, that this type of scheme is in operation before and after crime levels have dropped. The authority will not be switching off lights in areas where there is an acknowledged crime and/ or anti social behaviour problem.

**3 Is this a permanent or trial scheme?**

The project is intended to be a permanent part of the Council's strategy to reduce carbon. Each of the switch off sites will however be reviewed in October 2013 to ensure that the correct solution has been adopted. CEH will also be monitoring the scheme throughout.

**4 Can the council legally turn off the lights?**

Yes. There is no statutory requirement on local authorities in the UK to provide public lighting, however, if lighting is provided the Council has a responsibility to maintain the lighting in a safe way.

**5 Why is it being done?**

We need to reduce our energy bill which is in the region of £1.6m per year. This scheme will reduce it by 40% by 2016 – equating to £640,000 per annum. To put this into context £640,000 represents approximately one fifth of the major roads repair budget for 2012-13.

This scheme will also contribute to Cheshire East's aim to reduce total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 25% over the next four years.

**6 Is there any positive support for this scheme?**

Many other local authorities have been running reduction in street lighting trials – including Buckinghamshire, Somerset, Swansea, Essex, Leicestershire, Devon and parts of Yorkshire

Also:

- a) reduction of the Council's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 25% has been welcomed by environmental groups
- b) the reduction in light pollution will result in clearer night skies and is welcomed by the British Astronomical Society's [Campaign for Dark Skies](#)
- c) reduces threat to nocturnal wildlife – excessive lighting confusing their natural patterns

**7 How has Cheshire East Council decided which lights to switch off?**

Cheshire East Highways has used experience gained in the Borough and from other locations in the UK to determine the best solution for each of the sites selected.

All of the sites, irrespective of the treatment that they are to receive, will be subject to an objective analysis that has helped to inform the solution selected.

In addition, for traffic routes where lights have been switched off we have undertaken a road safety review in advance of the works and have sought, and gained, the approval of both Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire and Rescue.

Before we alter the switching regime in residential areas we will be working with your local Cheshire East Member and your town/ parish council to ensure that we capture all relevant detail about the area. We will be working to a set of criteria that has been developed specifically to address residential areas.

**8 Is my road affected?**

You can find out which roads area affected on the Cheshire East Highways [Service Information Centre](#)

**9 Why weren't residents consulted or advised of this?**

Cheshire East has already undertaken trials of the three solutions in the Wilmslow and Sandbach areas:

- Part Night Lighting: Residents in Wilmslow were consulted before and after the three month trials which took place 2011. In Wilmslow 80% of the local community approved the proposed scheme.
- Street Light Switch Off: The A34 Handforth bypass was used as a trial site for both switch off and for the installation of advanced LED technology lighting. Roundabouts

on the bypass have been relit using LED lamps, these alone save the authority £6000 in energy costs over a 12 month period. The lighting between the roundabouts has been switched off completely. The scheme, introduced in the summer of 2012 has received minimal comment.

- Dimming: The A533 Middlewich Road, adjacent to the Council's Westfields Office has been used to trial and operate our dimmable street lighting units. The lights are dimmed from 10pm every night and are returned to full illumination at around 5:30am. The trial has received minimal feedback.

CEH has written to all Town and Parish Councils affected by this new trial and has also been working with the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs). Moreover all ward Councillors have been consulted and this programme has been reviewed by Cheshire East Council's Scrutiny Committee. Cheshire Police and the Fire and Rescue Service have also been consulted.

**10 Have elderly residents been taken into account?**

Our research shows that impact will be the same for all users. Each residential area will be considered and judged on its individual circumstances.

**11 Where is the information/research to support the claims**

- a) **there will be no increase in crime**
- b) **this will not affect road safety?**

The safety and wellbeing of residents and motorists is important and has always been the biggest consideration of this scheme. We have been working closely with Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to ensure this.

All of the sections where lights have been turned off have been subject to a road safety review, carried out by a qualified Road Safety Engineer. Both Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire and Rescue have been consulted and both have given their support to the project. Further checks will take place over the next 12 months and road safety statistics will be carefully monitored.

Maintenance or enhancement of Cheshire East roads are also being completed where required including:

- Road markings  
ensuring that the centre line remains reflective to improve visibility
- Signing and Bollards  
reviewing the reflectivity of the existing stock and, where necessary replacing/cleaning
- Road Studs  
replacing missing/ poor quality inserts
- Foliage  
cutting back of vegetation to improve visibility to signs etc. A significant amount of work has already been done as a part of our routine activities.

The [CPRE](#) (Campaign to Protect Rural England) argues that street lighting, far from deterring crime, may sometimes cause the very opposite. It cites statistics from [Essex County](#)

[Council](#) that suggest crime falls by as much as 14% when streetlights are dimmed or switched off. [Wokingham Borough Council](#) also found that a reduction in night lighting actually led to a drop in crime.

- In Essex since the pilot scheme began there has been no demonstrable increase in road collisions.
- The Highways Agency has implemented a number of schemes across its motorway and trunk road network. The trials range from switch off to part night lighting.

Many other local authorities have been running reduction in street lighting trials – including Buckinghamshire, Somerset, Swansea, Essex, Leicestershire, Devon and parts of Yorkshire.

All accidents and crime in the affected areas will be closely monitored throughout the trial and regular meetings will be held with the police. A full review will be carried out and a report will be published with the Council's findings. If the level of crime and accidents increase then alternative measures will be considered.

**12 If I disagree with this scheme – who can I complain to and what will be done?**

you can contact your local councillor, visit the Council's [website](#) to find out who your councillor is.

or write to

Street Lighting Carbon Reduction Scheme  
Cheshire East Highways  
Brunswick Wharf Depot  
Brook Street  
Congleton  
Cheshire  
CW12 1RG

Your comments will be recorded and will form a part of the data that will be used to review the project in 12 months time.

**13 Will my council tax be reduced as a result of this street light reduction trial?**

All savings generated from this scheme will be directed to priority services within Cheshire East and therefore a reduction in Council tax will not be made.

**14 How are home insurance and insurance claims affected by this street lighting trial?**

Cheshire East Council does not have a statutory requirement to provide public lighting. The Council does have a duty of care to road users and will continue to light important junctions, roundabouts, subways etc.

Our lighting is not in place to protect private properties and as such this was not taken into consideration as a factor when deciding to proceed with the trial. Therefore, street lighting within the vicinity of your property is not an element that insurance companies will or should take into account when developing home insurance or property policies.