



## Northumberland Dark Sky Park

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#### FAQs:

#### **What is a Dark Sky Park?**

An IDA Dark Sky Park (DSP) is an area of land that is recognised as having an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is protected for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment.

#### **What is the International Dark Sky Association (IDA)?**

The IDA is the recognised authority on light pollution. Founded in 1988, the IDA was the first organisation to call attention to the hazards of light pollution. It promotes one simple idea: light what you need, when you need it. Some light at night is necessary for safety and recreation. The IDA works with manufacturers, planners, policy makers and citizens to provide energy efficient options that direct the light where you want it to go, not uselessly up into the sky.

#### **Why has Northumberland got one?**

Research undertaken by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) in the late 1990s and last ten years has shown that rural Northumberland (around the National Park and Kielder Water & Forest Park) are not only are the most tranquil places in England, but also have the largest area of dark skies in ENGLAND. A “Gold Tier” Dark Sky Park is the highest level that can be attained by an area being designated for its starry skies.

#### **What will that mean for those living in the Dark Sky Park?**

Residents will continue to enjoy the beauty of the night sky knowing there are mechanisms in place to conserve it. Being in a Dark Sky Park does not mean you have to turn lights off. Rather it is about encouraging the use of better quality eco-friendly lighting, which is not only more effective in shining light where it is needed, but also reduces light pollution and carbon emissions and is also better for nocturnal wildlife. Developers in the future will be assisted by planners on the proper installation of outside lighting to ensure that it does not pollute the night sky. Residents will also benefit from the increasing number of stargazing events and activities which will take place in and around the Dark Sky Park.

#### **What will it mean for visitors to the Dark Sky Park?**

Visitors will come to regard Northumberland as the best destination in England to see our dark skies, with a world-class observatory and extensive programme of stargazing events to entice them. They will also know that there are places to stay geared up to provide a warm and unique welcome any time of the year.

#### **What will it mean for wildlife in the Dark Sky Park?**

There are many nocturnal animals living in the Dark Sky Park, including barn owls, noctule and pipistrelle bates, foxes, badgers, hedgehogs, moths and insects. These animals rely on dark nights to forage for food and hunt their prey or avoid being

hunted! Light pollution disturbs the navigational patterns of nocturnal animals contributing to the decline of some of our native species. The reduction of artificial light in and around the Dark Sky Park will improve their environment.

### **What will it mean for businesses in the Dark Sky Park?**

Tourism in Northumberland tends to be very seasonal, mostly active between Easter and the end of October. The best time to observe the night sky is between October and March, meaning there is an ideal opportunity to capitalise on this natural asset. That includes running stargazing events and providing accommodation, equipment and information to help people admire the heavens in comfort. Astro-tourism training seminars are being planned around the county.

### **How big is the Northumberland Dark Sky Park?**

Northumberland Dark Sky Park comprises the whole of Northumberland National Park and 67% of Kielder Water & Forest Park, totalling 572 square miles or 1,483 square kilometres. It will be England's first Dark Sky Park and Europe's largest.

### **What is Northumberland National Park?**

Northumberland National Park was designated in 1956. It incorporates the central section of Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and stretches northwards to the Cheviot Hills and the Scottish Border above Wooler. We seek to conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, as well as promoting opportunities for everyone to enjoy and understand its special qualities.

### **What is Kielder Water and Forest Park?**

Kielder Water & Forest Park is England's best tourism attraction (Visit England 2013) and covers land mostly owned by the Forestry Commission and Northumbrian Water. It is an outdoor activity destination whilst also being England's largest operational Forest and encompassing Kielder Water the largest man-made lake in Northern Europe with a shoreline of 27 miles. It is the most tranquil place in England (CPRE) and is a unique wildlife habitat being home to 50 % of England's endangered red squirrel population.

The visitor experience is managed through Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust which works to improve economic, social and environmental sustainability, provide public recreation and leisure facilities, educate in all aspects of the natural environment and advance the arts.

### **Where is Kielder Observatory?**

Kielder Observatory is located in Kielder Water & Forest Park, approximately 3 miles from Kielder village (signposted). It is England's largest public observatory and has attracted more than 40,000 visitors since it opened.

### **How many people live in the Northumberland Dark Sky Park?**

The total population is approximately 2200 people, giving a population density of only 2 per square kilometre.