

To: Ashford Joint Transportation Board

By: Behdad Haratbar, Head of Programmed Works, Highways, Transportation and Waste, Kent County Council

Date: 10 June 2014

Subject: Safe and Sensible Street Lighting - Update

Classification: Information only

Summary: This report provides an update to Board members on the County Council's implementation of various measures to reduce energy costs, carbon emissions and light pollution associated with its street lights, to deliver savings to support frontline services.

Background:

Kent County Council (KCC) is one of the largest lighting authorities in the UK and has around 120,000 street lights and some 25,000 lit signs and bollards. If we do nothing, the annual cost of illuminating these is £6.4m, a cost that keeps rising. Illuminating these also produces 29,000 tonnes of carbon emissions, more than half of the County Council's total carbon footprint.

In 2011, the County Council resolved to implement a number of measures to reduce energy costs, carbon emissions and light pollution arising from the provision of street lighting. These measures included a trial switch-off of surplus lights for a twelve month period and the conversion around 70,000 lights to part-night lighting. These were the subject of a report to the 12 March 2013 meeting of this Board and Members endorsed the proposals.

Trial Switch-off of Surplus Lights

We liaised closely with Kent Police on crime and accidents, and carried out detailed risk assessments and safety audits of each site. We followed it up by undertaking mitigation works to refresh road markings and install cats eyes where appropriate to enhance safety prior to switching the lights off. The majority of the selected lights were switched off last November. Romney Marsh Road was switched off in March because a formal road closure was needed.

The Trial Switch-off of Surplus Lights is for a period of twelve months. We will review these sites at the end of the trial period to consider whether the lights can be removed permanently. We continue to monitor crime and accidents and will review the lighting if any increase can be reasonably attributed to absence of street lighting.

Part-night Lighting

The introduction of Part-night Lighting was the subject of extensive debate, discussion and consultation. The issue was reported to the spring 2013 cycle of Joint Transportation Boards and Members agreed with the proposals. This was also regularly raised at our meetings with the Kent Association of Local Councils. The County Council followed this up by undertaking a public consultation exercise over much of last summer. The consultation was on the proposed hours of switch-off and exclusion criteria. Of those who responded, 75% agreed that the County Council should proceed with implementation of this policy.

We adopted the process of consultation used by public authorities including Central Government which includes using our website, radio and newspaper adverts, twitter and leaflets distributed to District Councils offices, libraries etc. We also wrote to all Parish and Town Councils in July 2013 enclosing a poster to be placed on their noticeboards.

We wrote to County Members within each District a month before implementation, we followed this by publicising the impending works through radio and newspaper adverts, twitter and leaflets distributed to District Councils offices, libraries etc. At the same time we posted the details of the sites on our website and wrote to the Borough, Town and Parish Councils. Our Community Engagement Officers liaised with their community contacts to inform them of the impending works.

The implementation of Part-night Lighting is based on the principle that all street lights are suitable for conversion unless they meet one or more of the agreed exclusion criteria. Detailed analysis identified approximately 5,800 of the County Council's 10,400 street lights in the Borough (mainly in residential and rural roads) for conversion to part-night operation. Conversion works commenced in February and have been completed, save a very small number of difficult sites which we expect to resolve in the next few weeks.

Given the scale of this work, we accept that the exclusion criteria may not have been correctly applied in a small number of cases. As these have come to our attention, we have reviewed them. The total number that we have reverted to all-night operation is less than 2%. If members of the public or members have concerns about specific sites, they can report these to us by using our website – www.kent.gov.uk/streetlights - or by calling 03000 418181.

Once fully implemented, these measures will reduce energy costs by around £900K and reduce carbon emissions by about 5,000 tonnes.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the progress made in implementing the various measures that form part of the County Council's Safe and Sensible Street Lighting policy to reduce energy costs, carbon emissions and light pollution.

Background documents: Report to 12 March 2013 meeting of the Ashford Joint Transportation Board “A Common Sense Plan for Safe and Sensible Street Lighting”

Appendices

None

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