

Probus street lighting/dimming trial

Publicity for the trial

In August 2012, a leaflet was distributed to all houses within the village of Probus (not to the outlying rural areas of the parish) – approximately 900 houses. The leaflet informed residents of the trial and gave details of the dates, times, lighting regimes. Residents were also told that there would be an online survey available at the end of the trial.

A free magazine, Probus News, is delivered to the whole village in the first few days of each month. In the October edition, I wrote an article about the trial and reminded residents that an online survey would be available from the end of the trial.

There were 8 responses to the online survey. In addition, 5 residents emailed me directly with their feedback.

Survey Monkey Responses

Section 1, dimming after 10 p.m.

Did you notice that street lights were dimmer after 10 p.m. during the trial?

Yes 5 No 3

If no, why was this?

Did not go outside after 10 p.m. on any of these days 0

Did go outside after 10 p.m. but did not notice the dimming 2

If yes, please say what you thought about it

I thought that the reduced level was fine 2

I thought that the reduced level was not sufficient 3

Comments:

"My streetlights were completely turned off and therefore it was pitch black outside and was frightening on this estate which is mainly made up from the elderly community"

"The street light shines right into my bedroom window and as i have to go to bed early as I have M.E I am unable to get my room into darkness."

"75% was much better than 50%. I often have Grandchildren stay and they were very scared, and had to leave a light on, so council saving money but costing me more"

"I thought the reduced light was better than none at all"

Section 2, switch off 00:30 to 05:30

During the 2 weeks when most of the lights were switched off between 00:30 and 05:30, did you notice that the lights were off?

Yes 7 No 1

If no, was this because you did not go out of the house at any time when the lights were off?

Did not go out 0 Other 2

Comments:

"Very scary and comment above applies"

"Having looked at which lights were being dimmed, I realised that my house was surrounded by non-dimmed lights"

"I do not like the dark. The street light is to the left of my front lawn and my bedroom window over looks it so I can see it on."

If you did notice that the lights were switched off, please say what you thought about it

I was happy with the lights being off 3

I did not like the lights being off 4

I am not sure because it did not directly affect me 0

Comments:

"It is nice to wake up in the night or early in the morning and not have artificial light coming through the window. It felt more 'normal'! I would be very happy for this to continue and there are of course the environmental benefits."

"This was our favourite part of the trial and admit we stayed up late a few times especially to experience the darkness! So lovely to be able to see the stars. I see no reason why the streets around Probus need to be lit at all during this time of night - it would be lovely to think we could be a pioneering village, saving energy and stopping light pollution."

"I am a pensioner living on my own so I never felt safe and I am now going to have to purchase security lights to the back and front of my property"

"I did not like the lights being off altogether. They were fine reduced by 50%"

If you did not like the lights being off during these times, please say what you would have preferred.

I would have preferred the lights to have remained on at full power 1

I would have preferred the lights to have remained on at reduced power, e.g. 50% or 75% 3

I would have preferred some lights to have remained on, e.g. one in two, one in three etc. 0

Comments:

"Some light is better than no light so 75%"

"The lights reduced to 50% power would be better than none."

"Being out at night is not nice at the best of times, but if the street lights are off it feels very intimidating. I often walk home from babysitting duties after 00.30, no lighting is not good."

Overall comments

"I am afraid as the lights are still not dim enough I will have to invest in some black out curtains."

"In Falmouth, where we lived until recently, the streetlights were changed to low energy bulbs (or whatever are used in streetlights). This gave a lovely soft white light, rather than the harsh, horrible orange light we usually get from streetlights. I wonder if these could be looked into also?"

"A problem with the light down the alley from Church View Road to Tregony Road is the overgrown trees etc with make it very dark"

"I think it is a good idea, and would welcome the opportunity for the lights around the church/ wagg lane to be dimmed too."

"As I have said I do not like the dark and I live alone. But I do think reduced lighting would be fine in the summer with the lighter evenings. But in the winter months October to March when it is very dark and bad weather the lights should be left on full power."

Comments emailed directly to me

Resident 1: predominantly negative about switching off:

"Hello, I am emailing you to voice my concerns over the switching off of the street lights in Probus at night. Whilst I agree with saving energy and money, I am also concerned about the community. On Thursday 20th Sept at 2.30am, I received a telephone call from my son who works nights, to say he had had an accident at work and could I pick him up from hospital. As I left my home at 12 Carne View Road, it was pitch black, there were no street lights on in this area. If there is an emergency and the emergency services need to be called, I am concerned that they would be delayed in finding the correct property as you are unable to see house numbers etc."

Resident 2: predominantly negative about switching off:

"writing in connection with the trial of street lighting in Probus. After the trial period we feel that it would not be a good move implementing this full time for several reasons.

1- We work shift work and feel that the street lighting gives us a little more security as neighbours are able to note when strangers are around or near a home that they know is unoccupied due to work etc.

2- The criminal fraternity would then have ability to use the provided cover of darkness to go about their work with less chance of being seen. This affects us more on Carne view road as we have little enough lighting as it is, our house is set so far back we need as much lighting as possible."

Resident 3: supportive of the switching off:

"We write to support the switching off the Probus street lights during the times carried out by the trial and would wish that this switch off time is continued permanently. Our house is on Fore Street directly opposite a street light and from our own point of view we would prefer not to have the street light on all night. Switching off would also mean a reduction of cost to CCC which must be beneficial. After all it is only going back to the system in place years ago when the majority of street lights were switched off overnight."

Resident 4: supportive of the switching off:

"Can I say that the lighting trial was marvellous. It was so nice to have darkness, at night!!!! Not one person has said anything negative to me about the trial. I did write to Mr Lantsbury (not sure of the spelling now) but was told he has moved on from his position so, I asked that my positive comments be passed on to the appropriate people. I only hope that now having completed the trial we can quickly adopt a sensible policy of getting the lights off permanently."

Resident 5: supportive of the switching off:

"We have not noticed any problems in the trial period, so if it saves money -keep it going full time."

My own experience of the switch off

I drove into Probus at 2 a.m. on Wednesday 19 September when the lights were switched off to see for myself what it was like without lights on. I visited all roads in the village.

Some lights were still switched on: 2 on Fore Street near the Hawkins Arms, 5 on the lower part of Fore Street, 2 on Tregony Road towards the doctors' surgery. In addition, lights on adopted footpaths between estate roads were still on (at 100% power?). Amelia Close is a private road with a private lamp that remained on. Fairfields Estate had its lights on presumably because they have not yet been adopted. Also, the 6 parish council owned lamps were on (The Square, Wagg Lane, back of the church). There was also one light remaining on in Lewman Road (M250) but this may have been a mistake in the programming. See attached listing of lights remaining on.

My overall impression was that, in those places away from any lights, the roads and pavements were very dark. It would have been impossible for a pedestrian to walk safely without a torch. For car drivers, it probably would not make much difference.

Overall conclusion

The number of responses from residents to the exercise was very small. Only 13 responses from the 900 houses in the village. The reduction in lighting to 75% and/or 50% was commented on by a few who did not like it, but overall, I do not think that the reduction had a seriously negative impact. With the total switch off, 4 of the respondents to the online survey (out of 8 responses) were definitely against this, as were 2 of the 5 emails that I received.

This means that only 6 out of 900 households have expressed a direct dislike of the lights being switched off.

At this stage, I am undecided as to whether or not this means that the Council should proceed with long term switching off. I would be interested to see the feedback from other areas.