

# Wild about Dark Skies Festival

28 October to 10 November 2024

## Guidance 2024



Welcome to the Wild about Dark Skies Festival! This annual event celebrates the High Weald's dark skies, raises awareness about the negative impacts of light pollution – including wildlife, climate change and our own wellbeing – and provides some tips and advice for how we can all do our bit to reduce it.

The festival is supported by Lund Trust and facilitated by the High Weald National Landscape team. If you wish to get involved, please contact **Samantha Nicholas** [s.nicholas@highweald.org](mailto:s.nicholas@highweald.org) 01424 723005.

All information can be found at [www.highweald.org/wildaboutdarksbies](http://www.highweald.org/wildaboutdarksbies).

### What area does the Festival cover?



The festival is focused on the [High Weald National Landscape](https://www.highweald.org) (which covers parts of West Sussex, East Sussex, Kent, and Surrey) and the towns, hamlets and villages on its fringes.

### Who can take part?

Any group or organisation who can manage a Wild about Dark Skies event. This could include community groups, schools, churches, parish councils, charities, arts organisations, businesses, farmers, and landowners.

### How do I get involved?

Your contribution to the festival can be as big or small as you wish – **however, your event MUST have a theme of reducing light pollution to be included.**

You can hold any event! Activities could include:

- Family star party – fun activities for children, games, craft and puzzles
- Dark sky photography exhibition
- Mobile planetarium show
- Stargazing demonstrations with astronomy groups
- Pumpkin and star party with stories of the stars
- Talks from special guest speakers
- Leading a dark skies walk.

## Speakers and activities

We have several contacts for excellent, knowledgeable presenters who can enhance your dark skies event. The ones listed below can be paid for out of a central fund, but you must request them in your sign-up form. All these presentations are flexible and can last between 20 to 50 mins, dependent on your event schedule:

To find out supplier information please contact Samantha Nicholas.

- **Mobile planetariums** are a fantastic way to teach about the wonders of the universe. Step inside and be amazed by the 360 degrees show led by skilled presenters. Great for audiences of all ages.
- **Light pollution workshop** - a simple demonstration of what light pollution; how it impacts wildlife and humans and what you can do to reduce light pollution!
- **Bat conservation talks** – speakers from local conservation groups providing a walk or a presentation to highlight the importance of reducing light pollution to protect our bat population.
- **Astronomical groups** – there are several enthusiastic members of local astronomical societies who can provide talks on the wonders of the stars through Dark Skies walks, astronomical telescope demonstrations and talks.
- **Dark Skies stories:** Find out more about star constellations such as Orion the Hunter and Cassiopeia and the Greek myths surrounding these enigmatic stars.

## You may also borrow items from our Dark Skies Toolbox

The toolbox includes:

- **Dark Skies Puzzle** – giant floor puzzle showing light pollution and how to reduce it to help our wildlife (designed by Peter Smith)
- **Wild about Dark Skies portable banners** – featuring key messages about the impact of light pollution on wildlife and how to reduce it
- **SQM light meters** (5 to borrow) - these light metres assess the darkness of your local skies
- **Bat detectors** (2 to borrow) to use when out on walks or for demonstrations
- **Red light torches** (9 to borrow) - if you want to safely escort groups in the dark, red light torches are the best way as they will not impact humans or wildlife due to the colour of the light
- **'How to reduce light pollution' leaflet** – downloadable from our website or we can provide hard copies (up to 500 available per event)
- **Feedback cards** – helpful in evaluating whether your event has been a success.

These items can be collected from the High Weald team, Woodland Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, Flimwell, TN5 7PR or you may need to collect them from other event locations dependent on their use.

## Funding your event

If you are running an event you can apply for reimbursement of **eligible** costs from the High Weald National Landscape Partnership. Please set out in the sign-up form the costs you are likely to need reimbursed.

Eligible costs include:

- Hiring facilities (for example hall or equipment costs such as PA systems and microphones)
- Hiring specialists outside of the central list – cost to be agreed by National Landscape Team

- Project administration, max of £11.44 per hour (timesheets must be included)
- Cost of items that you will need to purchase to make the event run smoothly, for example volunteer equipment or photocopying
- Any additional PR costs such as printing leaflets or posters.

Event type	Reimbursement available
Dark Skies walks (30-60 attendees)	Up to £300 per walk
Dark Skies small event (100-300 attendees)	Up to £500 per event
Dark Skies large event (300 plus attendees)	Up to £1,000
Other	Dependent on event idea

### Do I need match funding?

There is no requirement for match funding. However, there is a limit to the contribution from the High Weald National Landscape Partnership and you will need to consider whether you have enough volunteer and, in-kind support and possibly cash to run your event(s).

### Other support provided by the High Weald team

We also provide other materials that will help you run an event, downloadable from [www.highweald.org/wildaboutdarkskies/](http://www.highweald.org/wildaboutdarkskies/).

They include:

- PR social media and poster templates
- Event and Dark Skies walk risk assessment guidance and templates.

The team will also highlight your events through the main High Weald PR and social media channels, including listing your event on our Wild About Dark Skies event webpage.

### Signing up and the Festival timeline

- Provisional book activities and resources, in liaison with Sam
- Return the sign-up form by 1 August to confirm your Festival plans. **We cannot commit to any payments or reimbursement of expenses until this sign-up form has been submitted.**
- Await our confirmation that we have committed funds to your event(s). We will get back to you by mid-August.
- Request a BACs form from Sam by 1 September so we can set you up on the ESCC finance system for payment.
- Deliver your event(s) 28 October to 10 November
- Return the reimbursement form once the event has been completed and by 15 December 2024 at the latest.

### Contact details

Samantha Nicholas [s.nicholas@highweald.org](mailto:s.nicholas@highweald.org) 01424 723005

All information can be found at [www.highweald.org/wildaboutdarkskies](http://www.highweald.org/wildaboutdarkskies)

**Good luck!**