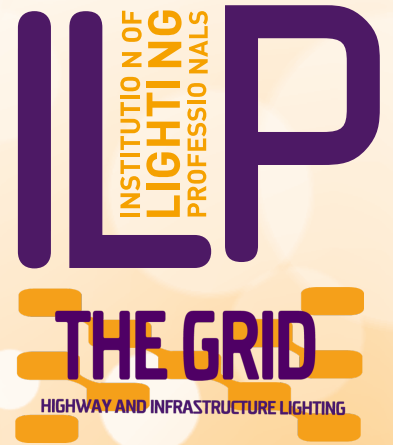


# advice for considering switching off street lights in the public realm

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## Introduction

Many local authorities and organisations with responsibility for street and highway lighting are considering switching off public lights for all or part of the night, in order to save money and energy.

This document provides an auditable risk based approach that the ILP recommends anyone considering switching off public lighting should follow. Failure to follow this guidance may leave an authority's approach open to question.

## Preliminary works

If lights are to be switched off, it is likely that additional safety works will be required including improving the condition of the white lining, signage and road studs. These works must meet the standards required for an unlit road.

When considering switching off lighting, the principles of good lighting design still apply. This is especially important in conflict areas (see ILP Professional Lighting Guide 02) and authorities must also consider the recommended safe length of any unlit section of highway between adjacent lit sections (see National Highways document TD34).

## Risk based appraisal process

The ILP recommends anyone switching off public lighting follows the principles of National Highways document TA 501. In summary, the ten stage process involves:

**Stage 1:** A high level review to determine areas that are most likely to be better candidates for lighting switch off. The aim is to identify sites where this approach will affect safety (including road safety, crime and disorder) the least, be most easily implemented and will provide a reasonable reduction in running costs.

**Stage 2:** Review the site to determine that no obvious site-specific issues will render lighting switch off inappropriate. Essentially it is the application of common sense in the assessment of road layout, conflict areas, CCTV provision, pedestrian use and levels and perception of street crime.

**Stage 3:** Determine the safety benefits derived over the last five years of operation. Where switch off or part-night is being considered then a Personal Injury Accidents (PIA) dataset should be generated for each location and this should include the time and date of accident and severity of accidents. PIAs should be rationalised to exclude incidents where driver gross negligence was a significant or contributory factor.

**Stage 4:** A road safety report to provide a detailed risk assessment of the level of utility of the road at the selected site, addressing such questions as:

What hazards is the road lighting currently eliminating or mitigating?

Could these hazards be managed in other ways?

Are the hazards only relevant at certain times, e.g. during peak traffic flows?

**Stage 5:** A lighting design report to be produced by a competent lighting professional to provide an accurate costing of all aspects of the scheme, so where switch off or part-night lighting is being considered then the increase in PIAs must be taken into account relevant to the period for which the switch off is being proposed. In this instance, due consideration must also be given to the requirements for signage, as existing lit or unlit signs may require changing to 'retro-reflective' material. For all aspects of lighting profiling the costs should be considered from a whole life costing basis including installation, commissioning, running, maintenance and removal.

**Stage 6:** Determine the running costs accrued over the last five years of operation of the existing installation. As with Stage 5 this should be based upon a whole life costing approach and also include past reactive maintenance work.

**Stage 7:** Determine a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR), essentially comparing stages 3 and 6 above.

**Stage 8:** Evaluate that the decision is both robust and reliable based upon the following:

- Is the site appropriate for the switch off approach being considered?
- Does a comparison of costs and effect on safety and crime indicate that the measure is reasonably practicable and acceptable to the stakeholders?
- Can the benefits be realised?
- Is the reputation of the authority being placed at risk?
- Are there any other factors to consider?

The study and decision (even if it is to do nothing) must be recorded for future reference, perhaps against the inventory records.

**Stage 9:** Implement a communications plan. The decision should be communicated to all appropriate stakeholders including Councillors, the emergency services, area forum groups and residents.

**Stage 10:** Implementation with monitoring and resultant action plans which may include the lighting being switched back on again.

## Decisions on public lighting should be made only by qualified, competent lighting professionals.

The Institution of Lighting Professionals unites the skills of engineering, design and technology in order to deliver quality lighting for the built environment and achieve public benefit. The ILP seeks to ensure that its members attain and develop the professional knowledge, education and skills to meet necessary competencies. **THE GRID** is our niche information service provided free of charge for all lighting professionals involved in the delivery of public lighting services for highways and infrastructure via local authorities or contractors. For more advice on all lighting related matters, please contact us.

### Where to download documents mentioned (correct as at time of publication)

**ILP Professional Lighting Guide 02:** <https://www.theilp.org.uk/resources/ilp-technical-reports/plg02-the-application-of-conflict-areas-on-the-highway/>

**National Highways TD34:** <http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmrb/vol8/section3/td3407.pdf>

**National Highways TA 501:** [http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/ha/standards/ians/pdfs/TA\\_501.pdf](http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/ha/standards/ians/pdfs/TA_501.pdf)

