STREET LIGHTING UPGRADE

Frequently Asked Questions

What is this project?

We joined forces with Slough and Reading councils on a joint application to the Department of Transport’s (DfT) Challenge Fund in 2015 to fund a street lighting upgrade scheme.

We were successful and secured £18.9 million to share between us.

The three councils are now working together on this scheme, with Slough and Reading doing similar things in their boroughs. The contractor carrying out the work for all three is Volker Highways.

Each borough will cover 30% of their costs, and the DfT 70%. Town and parish councils involved in the scheme will fund their highway lighting works on a similar basis.

What does it involve?

Replacing some 8,000 aging columns that are approaching the end of their useful lives, as well as more than 13,000 new LED lanterns, across the Wokingham Borough. We will not be replacing columns that are in good condition or lanterns where LED units have already been installed.

These will include those on major roads, in residential areas, in parks and open spaces, property and car park lighting, as well as some owned by town and parish councils.

The new LED lanterns will radiate white light, with a neutral colour temperature, compared to older yellow light lanterns.

We will also be extending the use of our Central Management System (CMS) to control and manage the lighting.

When is this happening?

Works started in April 2016 and are expected to finish March 2018.

Are the lights in my street being changed?

Unless the street lights in your street are already LED then we will be either replacing the existing lanterns with new LED lanterns or converting the existing lantern to LED’s. The ‘Provisional works programme by Street’ lists the streets and locations over the next few months where and when work is due to happen. It shows where both columns and lanterns are being replaced, as well as where lanterns only are being installed on existing columns.

Will all the works in my street be done at the same time?

If all the columns are being replaced or all new LED are being installed on your existing columns, then “Yes”. However, in streets where there is a combination of new columns and installing lantern on the existing columns, then “No”, as the contractor will need to schedule these for different times. This is basically because replacing columns takes longer than lantern only replacements and each type of work needs completely different ‘gangs’, equipment and planning. Also, by replacing lanterns first, before the columns, more energy will be saved earlier in the project.
Where will the new columns be located?

The new columns will usually be located next to the old columns or be placed in the same location. However there may be a few locations where we take the opportunity to move the column a little more so it’s less of an obstruction or improves the spread of light.

Will traffic and access to my property be affected?

With the lantern-only replacements - very little. We will simply need to park next to a column (as is the case with our current maintenance work).

For new columns and lanterns, however, more work is involved. The new column needs to be lifted in, the electricity connection transferred, the old column lifted out and the area reinstated. This process usually spans three days. It’s possible a number of columns will be worked on at any given time. We will try to maintain normal conditions and access to your property, but there may be locations/times when this isn’t possible.

If you need any special access arrangements while we are working in your street - due to a family event or moving house for example - please let us know and we will do our best to work around you.

How are the new lanterns different?

We are using LED (Light Emitting Diode) lanterns. LED’s use considerably less energy (60%) to produce the same amount of light. Even more energy can be saved with dimming and/or part-night lighting. Also, LED lanterns don’t need as much routine maintenance. These two factors will combine to reduce the public annual cost in providing street lighting. The type of lantern being installed will burn brightly until it connects to our central management system (CMS), at which time it will dim to the normal operating level. This is usually done within 48hrs.

Why use white light?

Our eyes are better adapted to seeing in white light, so we have better vision, see colours better and we recognise faces better. It is a more ‘natural’ light.

The new lighting looks a bit patchy – Is this normal?

Yes. The LED lanterns have optics that better focus the light down on to and along the highway. This actually improved the uniformity but areas behind the lanterns will tend to be darker. Also, the intensity of the light from the new LED lanterns is comparable to the old rather defused yellow light but the white light improves how our eyes pick up the contrast in light, so, depending on the spacing of the columns, there could be a general appearance of patchy light levels along the street. This does not mean that the lighting levels are lower but is a consequence of the change from yellow light to white light.

Will the new lighting affect crime levels?

Unlikely. Current national research finds no discernible change in the levels of crime following the introduction of white light, dimming and/or part-night lighting. Moreover, it is generally reported that pedestrians feel more comfortable being out and about at night because they can see better.

Is the white light brighter than the old type of lighting?

The new lanterns will be brighter until they are set-up on our Central Management System, which will typically take a day or two. Once set-up, the light level will be adjusted (dimmed) to the appropriate level for the street – in residential roads this will be typically 50% as the standard lighting, then to 47% from 10pm, then to 35% from midnight, returning to 50% in the morning. A review of ‘part night lighting’ will be
undertaken in 2018, after the project is completed, and will be introduced, as appropriate, once the street has been assessed, consultation has taken place and it is considered suitable. LEDs typically produce less light (measured in lumens) than traditional yellow lighting. However, because our eyes are better adapted to white light, it can seem “brighter”.

**Can something be done if the light shines directly into my bedroom(s)?**

There will always be some light intrusion from the street lighting into adjacent properties, regardless of the type of light. However, it is possible to fit a shield to the front or the rear of the lantern to reduce direct light. If, after the lighting unit has connected to the central management system (CMS) and is dimmed (usually 48hrs after being installed), you are experiencing a high level of light intrusion, then please let us know and we will arrange for a shield to be fitted.

**Why are we doing this now?**

There are a number of reasons. Firstly our lighting column stock is ageing and we have a legal duty to maintain the highway and its ‘furniture’. Secondly to take advantage of new technology that reduces street lighting carbon footprint and improve its management. Thirdly the joint project with Reading and Slough takes advantage of economies of scale in terms of resources and costs.

**How will the change in light affect wildlife?**

We believe it will have less effect than the current lighting. With white light, less light spread (due to better optics), dimming and, where appropriate, part-night lighting, it will provide a less ‘artificial’ environment.

**What do I do if I have a further question?**

Please email your question to streetlightingupgrade@wokingham.gov.uk If you would like someone to ring you back, please indicate this and include your telephone number.