



# Kerry International Dark-Sky Reserve

Kerry Dark-Sky Office, Dungeagan, Ballinskelligs, Co. Kerry

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## Annual Report

### Private retrofitting of lights

The retro-fitting of lights in private dwellings has increased only slightly, but we are not concerned with this, as overall, the outdoor lighting in the Core and Buffer Zone is really good. Only a handful of people leave an outdoor light on all or most of the night. Some are due to oversight while others (*we know*) belong to elderly people living alone who see light as a means to security. We have sent out emails to various companies seeing if they will provide us with motion sensor lights in return for public acknowledgement but so far have not received anything positive.

### Public retrofitting of lights

Every month we contact the lighting engineer of Kerry County Council for an up-date and have received the same story 'we are in negotiations with the ESB' this is the government agency that will actually be erecting the street lights. We are contemplating a petition, collecting signatures of everyone in the Reserve as next year is an election year and we think this might move things alone.

### Business retrofitting of lights

This is where the biggest improvement is. B&B's are especially excellent on retrofitting their outdoor lights, they are now using these lovely dark-sky friendly lights in their advertising. The biggest supermarket in the Reserve (who already turn off their outdoor lights at 9pm in winter and 10pm in summer) have started to retrofit all their outdoor lights this will actually be completed at the month's end.

The biggest Hotel in the region (Derrynane Hotel) closed down and was taken over by the bank early on in the year. Such is the spectacular scenery of the area the Hotel is placed in

that and it was easily resold. The new owners have contacted me (Julie Ormonde). They want to know more about the lighting strictures of a Dark-Sky Reserve. They are committed to changing *all* the outdoor lights around the hotel and parking lot, and even want to put up special curtains/blinds to stop the indoor hotel lights from spilling out into the night. I think you may hear a lot more about this project in the coming year.

### **Outdoor Star Party.**

The Star Party we planned was to be a big event and we had many people and services booked. The Star party was to take place in tandem with the Skellig Star Party on August 14-16<sup>th</sup>. We put in for a council grant in March 2015 and it was approved - hurrah. Time passed, we emailed and phoned and still to date we have not received anything. The planned Star Party had to be downgraded to a pale reflection of what it was supposed to be. We still have not got any answers as to why the funding was approved and then not received. A meeting with the Tourism Minister of Ireland has been arranged where all this kind of red-tape will be discussed.

### **Dark-Sky Reserve Group**

The KerryIDSR Group were a group of voluntary people, but we got feedback and emails saying that the group should become an official limited guarantee company....we think this may be the reason that the funds we were granted have not been released. The new company was set up in August called 'National Dark-Sky Company, Ireland Ltd' trading as 'Kerry International Dark-Sky Reserve'.

The company is still finding its feet and have many meetings with the 'powers that be' over the coming months.

### **Conservation day**

We had planned a Conservation Day for June 13<sup>th</sup> but had to cancel due to bad weather. Overall the Summer proved to be a disaster for any planned events, this was true throughout Ireland and the UK. Conservation Day had to be put off until 2016.

### **Outreach**

Outreach is mainly done through the local schools where light pollution and its effects on animals etc are discussed and shown with videos. Children are especially enthusiastic in learning the facts about light pollution. We bring color-in pictures and provide them with a take-home information pack. We also asked the children to go outside and count the lights

they see when it is dark outside, and have provided them with an information chart to tick off the various questions; type of lights etc that they see. The children then hand back the sheets to the teacher who uses the information to get a class survey going on how better to control the use of un-necessary lights.

The Kerry Dark-Sky Office is also used as an Outreach centre to locals and visitors. The office supplies leaflets about light-pollution and provides examples of good and bad lights in a small dark room set aside from the main office area. Visitors from all over the world have visited the office more especially during the summer months, and sign a visitor book.

### **Kerry Dark-Sky Office**

The office is a single bungalow set upon an acre of land in Ballinskelligs. It has one very large room, a small dark room (see above) a long corridor and a toilet. At the rear of the building the South Kerry Astronomy Group has set up a small Observatory which will see its first light this very month.

Plans for the ground around the Dark-Sky Office are for a Solar Garden and a not-to-scale Solar System Walk. The lights around the outdoor of the Office are all dark-sky compliant, but they are actually rarely used. The Astronomy group will be placing a red out-door light at the rear of the building for set-up use during any star gazing sessions.

The office has no equipment, the computer and printer is on loan. An application for a grant was accepted but – as with the Star party – the money still has not been realised.

During the Summer astronomy classes were held in the Office and it proved to be a huge success so much so that next year there will be an extra class added.

The Dark-Sky office has major potential. It actually belongs to the Ballinskelligs Community and to date they have been very kind in not charging rent or utility bills, this however has ceased and we now have to find a way to get money to pay the bills.

The Office is run on a part-time basis by one person working on a Community Employment Scheme. The office is open 10.30 – 4pm Tue, Thur and Friday. We have been told by the locals that people turn up at the office mon-sun and at all hours. It is disappointing that the Office is not open at least 6 days a week. The workload at the office in terms of phone calls and emails is larger than expected, and a lot of time is taken up with greeting and conversing to the visitors who want to know about the KerryIDSR and Light pollution; a workload for at least two full-time people.

### **KerryIDSR biggest need**

The biggest need in the KerryIDSR is to have a full time manager. The work load is simply too big for volunteer work ...so far this job has been undertaken by Julie Ormonde who finds the

commitment on her time and personal life overwhelming. She receives no expenses whatsoever and has been doing this for almost 4 years now.

Over the past few months she has kept a low profile in the hope that the 'powers that be' see that a paid manager as urgency ...we will await the outcome.

### **Summery**

The KerryIDSR has no money for publicity or to pursue any projects...we have not even got our own time-lapse yet. More organisation is certainly needed, hence the need for a manager to get the work done. Retrofitting of lights is going well and we hope that the Council will begin the public street light retrofitting soon; this was supposed to begin earlier on in the year. Volunteer work can only achieve so much, real work can only be done with paid staff and this is our biggest drawback.

I hope this report is satisfactory to what the IDA requires.

Regards,

Adrian Cronin

Administrator on behalf of Julie Ormonde volunteer manager of the KerryIDSR