

Street Lighting Executive Summary

Overview

From April 2016 through to March 2017, Lincolnshire County Council made changes to street lighting conditions across Lincolnshire, including permanent switch off, LED lighting and 'part-night' lighting (where street lights were turned off overnight).

Over recent months concerns have been raised by Lincolnshire residents about safety issues since these changes and in particular that levels of crimes committed overnight have risen.

In response to these concerns Lincolnshire Police have undertaken research to understand whether there is a link between the switching off of street lighting overnight and the levels of recorded crime. We have done this by comparing crimes that occurred between midnight and 6am for the months after the changes were introduced to the same period in the year before it was introduced. Doing this made it possible to see whether substantial changes in crime levels related to the changes made to overnight street lighting.

We looked at crime types that were the most likely to be affected by the change; burglary, criminal damage, vehicle offences and violence against the person/personal robbery.

This report is an executive summary of findings - the full report is available on the following link XXX (hyperlink to be provided).

Data Limitations

Due to the way in which crimes were reported and recorded, there are caveats that apply to the data used for the analysis. This relates to locations, dates and timeframes:

Locations

- Town centres were subject to a variety of different lighting changes and will have limited 'part-night' lighting in place. Where possible data for town centres was removed from the analysis to reduce the inclusion of offences committed in lit areas.
- Main roads and residential areas deemed unsuitable did not experience 'part-night' lighting. As this report uses areas and not specific streets, the data may include some offences which were in fact committed in a lit street however, it was not possible to determine or filter out these specific crimes.

Dates

- Lincolnshire County Council rolled this out in ten phases over a year and therefore certain areas within the earlier phases have a larger amount of data available than the later phases.

Timeframe

- Data was included where an offence had a recorded start time of between 0000-0600 hours. This therefore excluded data where the offence has reportedly occurred overnight but with a start time prior to 0000 hours.

Findings

Lincolnshire

There was a slight reduction in the number of overnight burglary, vehicle and personal robbery offences across the county. However, the number of criminal damage offences increased although not consistently across all nine areas within the county. North Kesteven was subject to a substantial increase in criminal damages with smaller but still noticeable increases recorded for both Boston and Stamford.

As a result of this spread across nine policing areas, it cannot be concluded that street lighting has impacted on levels of criminal damage recorded for Lincolnshire as a whole.

West area

In the West area of Lincolnshire the changes are different for each type of crime. The number of burglaries and vehicle offences dropped slightly, whereas criminal damages were subject to a clear increase. A sizeable increase in criminal damages recorded for North Kesteven area is a large contributing factor to this overall increase across the five areas that make up the West area.

Due to the changes differing between offence type and across areas (e.g. a large rise in criminal damages for North Kesteven but a very slight increase Lincoln South), there is no evidence to suggest a relationship between crime levels and the use of 'part-night' lighting.

Lincoln and West Lindsey (LWL)

In Lincoln and West Lindsey (LWL) area the changes in recorded crime levels vary depending on the crime type. For example, where a rise in burglaries occurred there would be a reduction in vehicle crime etc. Visible spikes in the number of recorded crimes were noted for some smaller beat code areas within Lincoln South and West Lindsey areas. Further analysis enabled us in some instances to identify a specific reason for the rise such as a series of offences committed by the same offender breaking into several cars on one street in one night.

There are many factors influencing why these crimes may have been committed and it cannot be confidently concluded that they are the direct result of lighting conditions during the night. Furthermore, there is no evidence of a relationship between the number of crimes recorded and the introduction of 'part-night' lighting.

North and South Kesteven (NSK)

Findings for South Kesteven, Grantham and Stamford lead to the same conclusions as with LWL. The changes recorded before and after the use of 'part-night' lighting are different depending on which type of crime and also which areas within NSK are being looked at. As mentioned previously, North Kesteven was subject to an increase in criminal damage offences for 2016/17 compared with the previous year. The increase in this area is largely due to two specific beat codes, however, on review of these there was no clear reasoning for the rises in criminal damage offences recorded.

Although North Kesteven has experienced an increase in criminal damages where no explanation is clear, this is only one area and therefore it cannot be concluded there is a relationship between levels of crime and the implementation of 'part-night' street lighting.

East area

The conclusions made for this area echo those for the West of Lincolnshire. Again, criminal damage offences were subject to an increase whereas the number of burglary and vehicle offences reduced. Across the four areas, Boston was the main reason for the increase in criminal damage offences.

For the East area of Lincolnshire, it cannot be concluded that there is a relationship between crime levels and the introduction of 'part-night' lighting.

Boston and South Holland (BSH)

Boston and South Holland also displayed similar results to NSK and LWL with the changes varying dependent on the type of crime and across the policing beat code areas. For example, in one beat code area burglaries increased yet those in the neighbouring beat code reduced.

This further strengthens the argument that there is no evidence of a relationship between the crime levels and street lighting for these areas.

East Lindsey (EL)

Finally, the Wolds and Coastal areas which make up East Lindsey replicate the findings of all other areas within Lincolnshire. Again, the change in recorded crime levels differs depending on the type of crime and the beat code area.

The findings from this data further suggest there is no correlation between changes to crime and the introduction of 'part-night' lighting across East Lindsey.

Conclusions

Overall, the analysis identified that there are limited connections between the changes in the levels of crime recorded and the introduction of 'part-night' lighting and therefore it cannot be explicitly concluded that there is a relationship between the two.

It is clear that many factors can impact on the number of offences committed in a certain area, such as a cluster of offences by a lone offender; however, it is not possible to directly state that an increase or decrease in the number of crimes recorded is the direct result of the changes in street lighting overnight.