

Sark Tourism
The Visitor Centre
SARK, Channel Islands
GY9 OSA
Phone 01481 832345 / Fax 01481 832483
www.sark.info / email office@sark.info

Press release

Sark to become the world's first Dark Skies Island?

Sark's stunningly clear starlit skies have long since been regarded as special by visitors and locals alike, and now it seems that the rest of the world may also recognise this as it could soon be designated the world's very first Dark Sky Island.

Most people living in UK, Europe and the USA never get to see a truly dark sky, with the Milky Way stretching overhead and thousands of stars sparkling against a backdrop of deepest black. The light pollution from towns and cities – wasted light spilling up needlessly into the sky – obscures the view of all but the brightest stars and planets, leaving the night sky a washed-out orange, with only maybe a hundred stars scattered across it.

There are few places remaining in Europe that have not had their sky spoiled by light pollution, and identifying and recognising those areas is crucial if we are to maintain our cultural link with the night sky.

Sark is hoping to follow in the footsteps of Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park in Scotland, which was awarded Dark Sky Park status in 2009, and apply to the International Dark-sky Association (IDA) as park of their Dark Sky Communities scheme.

Thus far, there are only a handful of places in the world which have official Dark Sky recognition from the IDA, and only two Dark Sky Communities exist – the city of Flagstaff in Arizona, and the town of Borego Springs in the mountains of southern California. Through the Dark Sky Communities scheme, Sark hopes to become the world's first Dark Sky Island, and join this elite group of global communities who value and protect their dark skies.

If successful, the award would establish Sark as one of the premier places for people to come and gaze up at the magical night-time sky, without the light pollution or noise which plagues towns and cities on the mainland.

The application to the IDA will follow many months of work on the island – measuring exactly how dark the sky is; imaging the dark sky with all-sky cameras; carrying out a lighting audit of all external lights on the island; and writing and adopting a lighting management plan to limit and control the islands outside lighting.

The project is being led by the Agriculture Committee and the Société Sercquaise, and the dark sky surveys, images and lighting audit has been carried out by Steve Owens, UK Co-ordinator for the International Year of Astronomy, who assisted Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park with their bid last year.

END

Notes to editors

For further information please contact

Jo Birch, Société Sercquaise, 01481 832788 or jo.birch@cwgsy.net
Steve Owens, steve@astronomy2009.co.uk, 07717 720479