

Street lights across Leicester could be dimmed as part of a city council scheme to save energy and money.

The authority wants to dim 2,000 lights across the city, which it claims will save £250,000 and 300 tonnes of carbon over a seven-year period. = **£17.85 per year**

Details of plans to switch off up to half of a council's 13,344 street lamps are due to be unveiled.

Torfaen council is holding the first of 20 planned exhibitions highlighting areas where the lamps could be turned out.

The county's bill for street lights is expected to rise to £600,000 this financial year and would be significantly more again in 2009-10.

Carmarthenshire is set to become the latest council in Wales to switch off street lights to save money.

A review is under way into the 18,337 lights in the county that cost about £560,000 a year to run. = **£30.53 per year**

A man is paying £295 for the street lights in his village to be put back on for a few months. So how much does a street light cost to operate?

While many towns are twinkling happily in the glow of Christmas lights, one village in mid-Wales is simply grateful to have its street lights back on.

Powys council has accepted an offer from a resident of Llangynog to pay £295 for the lights in his village to be lit until the end of March. They were turned off in September as part of a county-wide drive to save money.

Mike Atherton paid just under £300 for 16 street lights - **about £18.44 per light for December, January, February and March.** That works out at about **£4.61 per month or 15p a night. = £54.75 per year**

A spokesman for Powys Council says the charges, which were for the energy alone and not the maintenance, operate on a sliding scale and as the nights get shorter after Christmas, the charges fall.

"The lights come on automatically when the light intensity drops and switch off when the morning light reaches a certain point. The cost allows for the shorter nights," he says.

THE ANSWER

The energy cost in winter is about 15 pence a night

If you include maintenance and replacement costs, it is about 27 pence a night

But costs vary according to the type of street light and the kind of deal struck with suppliers

So if Mr Atherton was paying for only February and March, he would pay only £4.21 per month, or 14 pence a night, and in the summer even less.

The 15p a night figure is correct for Powys Council and 12 other authorities in South Wales, which buy their electricity as a consortium. The cost per street lamp will vary for other councils. But Powys' energy costs have risen 36% in the last year and are set **to increase a further 40% in the coming year.**

A spokeswoman for Surrey County Council says it pays on average about 15 pence a night, although that figure excludes the maintenance costs such as replacing the bulbs. So what if these are taken into account too?

Conwy County Borough Council in North Wales puts the running costs into its sums and in 2007 it paid £1.15 per week (16p a night) per street light.

But Peter Adderley, one of its street lighting engineers, says the 2008 figure, which has yet to be calculated, is likely to be much higher, given that energy costs have risen by 60% in the last year.

Maintenance, which includes replacing lamps, has risen by about 3%, so it would be reasonable to estimate the real cost of operating a street light for one night is currently about 27p a night.

The lamps used in streetlights vary in both size and consumption, but are typically between 35 and 400 watts, says Mr Adderley.

Many of the street lights in Conwy are in residential areas and use energy-efficient, low-pressure sodium bulbs, which are between 35 and 55 watts, he says.

Traffic routes have lamps with 150-watt bulbs and town centres have the strongest bulbs of between 250 and 400 watts.

Nearly 3,000 people have contacted Powys council over a controversial scheme to switch off thousands of street lights.

The local authority said it received 2,848 inquiries between 1 September and 31 December, but it is uncertain whether they were all complaints.

Some lights have now been turned back on at certain times following a review.

Elsewhere, Torfaen council and Ceredigion council are planning on switching off some of their lamps.

Rocketing energy costs forced officials in Powys to turn off more than half of the council's 14,000 lights to save £225,000 last year, but this did not stop communities across the county criticising the move. = **£32.14 per year**



Some streets cost more to light than others

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A council spokesman said: "The council received 2,848 calls regarding street lights between September 1 and December 31, 2008.

'Inundated'

"We can't say whether they are all complaints or not, we have taken a number of calls asking for information about the process, review etc."

Politicians have been inundated with complaints.

In north Powys, a spokesman for Montgomeryshire MP Lembit Opik and AM Mick Bates said they had received 100 complaints so far from disgruntled residents.

In the south of the county, a spokeswoman for Brecon and Radnorshire AM Kirsty Williams said she had received about 40 letters of complaint, some phone calls and a few people had even approached her in the street.

Ms Williams said: "I have been inundated with complaints about the street lighting and am trying to work with council to find solutions to turning as many necessary lights back on as possible."

Last month, 60-year-old care worker Mike Atherton, from Llangynog, near Llanfyllin, paid nearly £300 out of his own pocket to switch 16 lights back on.

Meanwhile, the council's chief executive Mark Kerr asked his staff to turn off office Christmas tree lights during the festive period to avoid upsetting the public.

In an e-mail, Mr Kerr said staff should not "needlessly exacerbate already strong feelings", and said tree lights were only to be powered by batteries.

In Torfaen, a council spokesman said a public consultation period over its plans to turn off up to half of its 13,344 street lights would end on 31 January.

He said results for and against the proposal were currently being collated.

Ceredigion council is also planning to switch off its street lights between midnight and 0500 GMT.



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