



DARKER SKY

Interreg
North Sea



Co-funded by
the European Union

GOOD PRACTICE
STORY 1
SUMMARY



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LAUWERSOOG

THE NETHERLANDS



SETTING

- **Timeframe:** as of June 2024
- Seaside harbour village in the Netherlands, located between the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage site and the Lauwersmeer Dark Sky Park
- **Community-led development** of a “Masterplan Darkness” to reduce light pollution while maintaining safety and harbour operations.

MAIN STAKEHOLDERS

- Harbour Coalition, port management, harbour community and local residents
- Local businesses and ship operators
- Environmental and nature protection organisations
- Municipalities and provinces
- Visitors and neighbouring coastal towns/ports
- DARKER SKY Project team

KEY APPROACH

- **Co-creating the “Masterplan Darkness” with community input**
- Replacing outdated lighting with dark-sky-friendly, shielded, warmer-colour fixtures
- Targeted changes in the harbour area first, then the village
- Aim to reduce light emissions by 50% by 2026
- Public engagement encouraging voluntary light reduction and awareness

KEY TOPICS

- Light pollution and its ecological and human health impacts
- Harbour safety and economic needs
- **Community engagement and participatory planning**
- Sustainable lighting solutions and infrastructure adaptation

IMPACT

- **Extension to whole municipality planned**
- Strong positive local reception and early voluntary adoption of lighting changes
- **Strengthened community identity and environmental stewardship**
- Raised regional interest: neighbouring ports are observing and considering similar action
- **Establishing Lauwersoog as a demonstrator and role model for balancing economy, safety and nature protection**

“GIVING DARKNESS, NOT TAKING LIGHT.”



Giving Darkness, Not Taking Light: Engaging Everyone for a Darker Sky



© Theo Jurriens

Lauwersoog, a seaside village nestled on the edge of the Wadden Sea, has always been a place where land and water intertwine. But recently, it faced a dilemma: How could it keep its dynamic harbour economy running safely while preserving the tranquillity of the night sky?

In this active harbour community, light is essential. It guides ships safely into the harbour, illuminates neighbourhood streets and ensures the safety of residents, visitors and harbour workers. But there's a catch.

Lauwersoog's lies very close between to the highly protected Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage site and the Lauwersmeer Dark Sky Park. That means that every artificial beam of light has consequences. It spills into the natural darkness, disrupting predator-prey dynamics, confusing the navigation of local and migratory species and unsettling their reproductive patterns, ultimately impacting entire ecosystems.

Beyond its toll on wildlife, light pollution also disturbs our circadian rhythms and

well-being. This issue takes on added urgency as the Netherlands ranks as Europe's third most light-polluted country.

Despite many other successful initiatives protecting local nature, the challenge of addressing light pollution remained yet unaddressed in Lauwersoog.

Enter the "Masterplan Darkness". It's not a cloak-and-dagger operation or imposed new decree; rather, it's a community-driven strategy to strike a delicate balance. **The motto? "Giving darkness, not taking light." The goal? To protect nature without casting the village into total darkness.**

Inducement stemmed from other successful sustainability initiatives in the region and was motivated by the allure of the Dark Sky Park. As part of the DARKER SKY Project, a dedicated harbour project team was ready to act. A first inventory revealing excessive light pollution in Lauwersoog's harbour initially stunned the community. But it quickly spurred them into action.



So, the Masterplan didn't emerge from a secret council chamber. Instead, it unfolded amidst the community. Residents, business owners and environmentalists came together in meetings, discussing concerns and sharing perspectives to develop a plan for change.

They discussed light levels, safety concerns and the delicate dance between safety, progress and preservation. **The result? A blueprint masterplan that harmonized human health and safety, economic vitality and environmental stewardship.**

This initial planning focuses on renewing the lighting in Lauwersoog, with the harbour area taking centre stage. Yet, the vision extends beyond the harbour, it includes the village also. Over the next year, dark-sky-friendly lighting will replace outdated fixtures at areas like harbour piers, docks, building exteriors and village streets. Height, colour, shielding and brightness - all carefully considered features - will contribute to this transformative change towards a 50% light emission reduction by 2026.

But the Masterplan Darkness isn't just about wattage, lux and lumens. It is about hearts and minds. The community needed to see darkness as a gift, not a loss. The project team is currently launching educational campaigns, motivating everyone to dim lights of their ships, turn off late-night advertisements or interior lighting and embrace energy-efficient alternatives. By showing the positive outcomes, like better health and biodiversity, the community became more supportive and excited about the plan.

How's the progress so far? The responses have been overwhelmingly positive. **Early adopters - businesses and residents alike - have enthusiastically embraced the change.**

They've shown full commitment by already reducing their light emissions either by changing or switching off their business or private lighting. This initiative has leveraged the community's existing environmental awareness, strengthened bonds and is propelling them toward new sustainable goals.



© Homme Joustra



And neighbouring ports? They perked up, curious about this village that dared to redefine progress and expressed interest in joining dark sky protection efforts.

Lauwersoog dreams big. **As a community driven demonstrator site of the DARKER SKY project, it envisions itself as a model, a place where industry, recreation and nature coexist harmoniously.**

By celebrating darkness, not fearing it and embracing the balance between people, economy and nature, this harbour hopes to inspire others across the whole North Sea region.

Perhaps one day, as towns across the region look up to their own star-filled skies, they found inspiration in Lauwersoog's commitment to giving darkness, not taking light.

ABOUT

Interview took place in **June 2024** with Klaas Laansma (Harbour Coalition Lauwersoog)

Main project partners

- Nynke Visser & Reynier Peletier, University of Groningen
- Piet Zijlstra, PolyCiviel
- Klaas Laansma, Harbour Coalition Lauwersoog

LEARN MORE

about Lauwersoog and current progress

- ▶ [Introducing Our Pilot Sites: Lauwersoog](#)
- ▶ [Night of the Nights Event in Lauwersoog 2025](#)
- 🌐 [DARKER SKY News](#)
- 🌐 [DARKER Pilot Site Lauwersoog](#)

MORE GOOD PRACTICE FROM THE LAUWERSOOG AREA

The transformation of lighting at the Lauwersmeer military base



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GOOD PRACTICE STORY COLLECTION

This story is part of the Good Practice Story Collection of the Interreg North Sea DARKER SKY Project. The stories are gathered by our project partners and connected stakeholders, based on their work and experiences in different regions. They were collected during the first two years of the project (2024–2025). **Some reflect earlier stages and in many places further progress has been made since then.** For updates, please visit the project website and LinkedIn.

The collection aims to inspire and share practical insights into how different places reduce light pollution. **The stories come from diverse settings but are connected by a common approach:** bringing people together, balancing safety, everyday use and nature and learning through practice.

Enjoy reading! We hope the stories offer ideas and perspectives you can take with you.

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-  [Light Pollution Knowledge Hub](#)

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