

Festive Lighting in the Highway

Festive and Christmas lighting adds greatly to the appearance of towns and villages during Christmas and special events, and it is encouraged as it can play an important role in community life. If you are intending to use or connect decorations to street lighting columns, or place decorations across the road, you will need to get permission.

What you need to consider

When installing and using any lights connected to street lighting it is important to ensure the safety of the public, contractors and volunteers. It is also necessary to ensure those promoting and erecting festive decorations do not leave themselves open to prosecution or legal claims because of their actions, which may have been carried out with the best of intentions.

There have been incidents in Wiltshire including a fire caused by faulting wiring of Christmas decorations and overhead decorations being pulled down by a high vehicle. Street lighting columns are not always as strong as they appear, and over two hundred lighting columns in the county had to be replaced last year because of concerns about their structural strength.

What you need to do

In order to ensure the safety of the festive lighting there are a few safety and legal procedures you will need to follow if you are considering installing such lighting;

- Get permission of the owners of any street lighting columns (usually Wiltshire Council) to use or connect to them.
- Get specific permission for any decorations or banners spanning the road
- Have adequate public liability insurance.
- Use suitable contractors.
- Pay the local electricity company for the electricity.

Usually there will be no problem in Wiltshire Council giving the necessary permissions, but you should apply as early as possible.

Permission to use or connect to Lighting Columns

The first stage is to seek the permission of the owners of the street lighting columns to attach decorations. This is usually Wiltshire Council but in some cases, it could be the local town or parish council or another organisation. It is particularly important if you intend to use a column to supply electricity to the attachments to get permission.

A simple form to apply for permission is attached at **Appendix 2**.

There are some obvious restrictions:

- Decorations with electrical equipment must not be erected in close proximity to Petrol Filling Stations and no decorations in proximity to overhead Low Voltage electricity cables.
- No decorations which contain flashing red, yellow or green lamps will be allowed within 10 metres of a set of traffic lights or pelican crossing.
- Street lighting columns are not generally designed to be strong enough to support additional attachments. Even relatively light additions such as a small sign can lead to considerable extra load being imposed on a column in strong wind. Suitable structural testing may be required to approve the attachment and costs of this may be charged to the promoter.
- Catenary arrangements spanning the road with lights strung between lighting columns are not allowed because of the potential loading on the columns. If you want to string lights across the road you will have to make arrangements with adjoining building owners to put fixings to their property, and obtain any other necessary permission.

In order to connect to the street lighting electricity, supply some modifications to the column may be required to provide a connection point. Any costs associated with amendment to column base and installation of IP67 socket shall be borne by the promoter. We would be happy to arrange the changes if suitable, but you will need to allow time for work to be done so submit any proposals as soon as possible.

Permission for any decorations or banners spanning the road

The Highways Act (section 178) requires you to have a licence to place banners and similar decorations over the road. An application form is attached at **Appendix 3**.

Height Clearance above Footways and Verges

All attachments must be at least 2.5m above footways to the underside of any attachment, such as a decoration or sign protruding from the column.

A greater clearance is better to avoid the risk of damage or vandalism.

Height Clearance above Carriageways

Decorations or lights can be suspended between buildings, but there must be a minimum clearance of 5.8 metres above the road (7.5 metres on abnormal load routes). The clearance must allow for any cable sag. You will need to satisfy yourselves as to the strength and suitability of the anchorages and the wall to which they are fixed, and obtain any necessary permissions.

Stringing decorations between lighting columns is not allowed because of the potential loading on the columns.

Have Public Liability Insurance

You will need to provide evidence of your public liability insurance. You should also discuss your proposals with the insurance company to ensure your cover is adequate for the works you are undertaking.

You will have to agree to indemnify the Council against any claims, costs and proceedings, howsoever arising, as a result of the erection, retention, maintenance and removal of the festive lighting. You will need to provide evidence of Public Liability Insurance cover of up to £5 million for any one incident.

Copies of the insurance must be submitted with the application.

Use Suitable Contractors

If the decorations are to be connected to electrical equipment owned by Wiltshire Council, your contractor will generally need to be a member of the Highway Electrical Association (HEA) and the people employed on the work will have to prove their suitability to undertake it, usually by being registered with National Highway Sector Scheme 8 (NHSS8) - The Overseeing and / or Installation and / or Maintenance of Highway Electrical equipment and supporting works.

No ladders are to be placed in contact with or leant against the lighting columns as part of the installation process. Suitable contractors will be aware of the issues of working at heights.

Electrical connections made by removing the column access door are not acceptable in any circumstance, and any requirement for drilling holes in the column shall only be carried out by the Term Maintenance contractor where column is suitable.

The festive lighting must be separately fused with RCD (Residual Current Device) or RCBO (Residual Current Circuit Breaker) for safety and to ensure that if there is an overload the normal operation of street lighting is unaffected. Arrangements will be made to convert standard isolators to one suitable for festive lighting (with RCD and timer), but it is important to apply for the change to be made as early as possible.

The programming of timers by the promoter is allowed providing the contractor / operative accessing the base has suitable certification to do so. e.g. G39 certification. Please note that provision of certifications will be required as part of the approval process. Otherwise the promoter shall utilise the Council's Term Maintenance Contractor for the programming at their own cost.

The installer may have to make arrangements with Wiltshire Council as highway authority and the police if traffic management is required during installation.

Installation and connections involving the Council's street lights must not be started until approval for the installation has been given by Wiltshire Council.

The promoter will be responsible for the safety of any decorations, catenary wires or other arrangements, including the anchorage points and their maintenance and testing.

Wiltshire Council may arrange for its contractors to make safety checks of decorations, but responsibility for the safety of the festive lighting remains with those installing and operating it.

You will need to provide a manned telephone number to provide a 24 hour 7 day a week response with a two hour response time to any dangerous on site situation involving the festive lighting or associated decorations.

Wiltshire Council will disconnect and remove any equipment which in their opinion is unsafe or dangerous to the general public. This work will be recharged to the operator.

Removal of decorations shall occur within one week of the agreed date and all festive socket and isolator covers and columns doors shall be closed, locked in position and timers shall be programmed to permanent off. Any failure to do so, or identifiable damage, will be subject to rectification work by the term maintenance contractor and recharged to the operator.

Pay for the electricity

You will have to pay for the electricity. This will require an unmetered load certificate to be agreed with the local electricity company, which in Wiltshire is Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks. You will then need to register this certificate with your chosen energy supplier and pay them for the electricity used.

Wiltshire Council does not pay for the extra electricity used by festive lighting. If you make an unauthorised connection your organisation will be liable to prosecution for the theft of electricity from the supply company.

A suitable form is enclosed as **Appendix 4**.

What next?

If you do want to install festive lighting:

- Complete the Festive Lighting Application Form (**Appendix 2**) and the Section 178 application (**Appendix 3**) if decorations are above the highway.
- Sign the forms and return them to the address below (or scan and email) together with a copy of the insurance and other supporting information such as location plans, electrical accreditation and certification.
- Send the Unmetered Connection Agreement (**Appendix 4**) to Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks.

Wiltshire Council will endeavour to grant the necessary approvals as soon as possible, but we may get back to you if there are any queries.

Please email the signed application form and return, together with a copy of the insurance certificate to:

northernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk

southernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk

centralhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk

streetlightinginWiltshire@atkinsglobal.com

Need any help?

Wiltshire Council's street lighting is managed by Atkins.

If you have any questions email streetlightinginwiltshire@atkinsglobal.com

Or contact Stuart Brown or Paul Metcalfe on 01225 730360

Atkins
3rd Floor
County Gate
County Way,
Trowbridge
BA14 7FJ

Contact for Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks:

Unmetered Supply Operator
Paul Angus, 0345 0700301

Further Reading:

Institution of Lighting Professionals: PLG06 – Guidance on Installation and Maintenance of Seasonal Decorations and Lighting Column Attachments.

The Institute of Lighting Engineers; GP02 Lasers, Festival and Entertainment Lighting Code (1995)