



ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY GCE

CRITICAL THINKING

Unit 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking

F501/RB

RESOURCE BOOKLET

To be opened on the day of the examination

Monday 11 January 2010
Afternoon

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Read the background information and Documents 1 and 2.
- Use Documents 1 and 2 to answer the questions.
- Do not hand in this Booklet at the end of the examination. It is not required by the examiner.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- This document consists of 4 pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Background information:

In an attempt to save money and energy, a number of UK local authorities are either switching off street lights in suburban areas between midnight and 5am, or planning to do so. This is referred to as a 'blackout'. There are disagreements as to whether or not turning off street lights makes these areas less safe at night.

Document 1**Blackouts are a disturbing safety issue.****Now you see it****Now you don't**

Councils in England and Wales argue that a reduction in street lighting is necessary. If street lights are switched off in suburban areas at certain times, a council's carbon footprint can be reduced and its climate-change targets can be met. With sodium street lamps costing between £20 and £40 a year to run and many councils having at least 100,000 lights, councils also claim the blackout could almost halve street lighting bills. One city which has discussed turning street lights out is Fairbanks, in the US state of Alaska. Because of its long dark winter, about 60% of the city's electricity bill comes from street lights.

1

The most surprising claim made by councils is that the blackouts don't appear to make the streets less safe. Essex County Council insisted that vandalism and petty crime had not increased since it started its blackout trials. Their spokesperson said, "There is an argument that cutting street lights reduces some types of crime because groups of people no longer like hanging around street corners if it is dark."

2

Common sense, however, dictates that the government-backed blackouts would inevitably lead to increased crime and fear of crime. Equally disturbing is the warning from motoring organisations that changes in street lighting could increase the number of road accidents. Consequently, as a response to saving money, energy and the planet, the blackout needs to be rethought.

3

Reactions

Derek Barnett, of The Police Superintendents' Association said, "Good street lighting reduces crime, it makes the public feel safe and reduces the risk of road traffic accidents. I would need to feel confident that the environmental savings were being balanced against the impact on local crime." 4

Those who live in the blackout zones established so far have given the experiment the thumbs down. A Hampshire resident affected by the blackout said, "It's now pitch black after midnight. The big concern is that it will encourage vandalism and burglary. This is a very middle-class residential area. For those people who live on their own, it is very intimidating. It is a criminal's haven." 5

In relation to the potential savings, a Buckingham County Councillor said that the three year switch off trial had won widespread support. "We have more of the public on our side than against. We started the ball rolling and now everyone is getting on the bandwagon because of the astronomical energy costs." 6

Document 2

Councils should not switch off street lights

14th October 2008

According to the Home Office report, 'Research on Street Lighting and Crime', improved street lighting can reduce crime by 30%. Yet more local authorities have been secretly switching off their lights. This will lead to more car crashes and increased crime.

It seems odd that while many councils are switching off their street lights, the Transport Minister has told us, "Experience shows that better street lighting helps improve road safety, as well as reducing crime and fear of crime. It also helps create happier and healthier local communities by promoting social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of transport by encouraging people to cycle and walk."

An AA study shows that driving outside of daylight hours is more dangerous. Only a quarter of all travel by car drivers is between the hours of 7pm and 8am, yet this period accounts for 40% of fatal and serious injuries.

AA Insurance has expressed reservations about the switching off of street lights. When the clocks go back, the number of car insurance claims increases by 13%.

Likewise, the AA President commented, "In the dark, drivers' reactions tend to be slower and stopping distances longer. Street lighting can reduce the risk of crashes and their severity. Local authorities should consider more environmentally friendly lighting rather than putting us all in the dark."

Extract from TheAA.com which gives the following information about itself:

'Looking after the interests of its members as motorists has been at the heart of the AA since it was founded in 1905. With such a long pedigree in motoring affairs, it's no surprise that the AA is looked to by government, decision makers and politicians to help guide policy.'

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