

# Brown Tourist Signs Policy



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# **Policy on the Application Procedure and Financial Arrangements for the Provision of Brown Tourist Signs**

## **The Assessment Fee**

The applicant must enclose a cheque for £200.00 including VAT (for larger attractions and/or complex signing schemes a larger initial fee may be required). It should be payable to Durham County Council, and will cover the cost of assessment of the application against the policy and site inspection/meeting as deemed appropriate. The fee is non-refundable in the event of the application being refused. Where applications are refused an explanation will be given as to the reasons for refusal.

## **Information required from the Applicant**

- Evidence of Tourist Board / Visit Britain membership and/or confirmation that the site is a recognised tourism facility, from a local authority tourism department (or affiliated tourism body), trade association or other seen as representing standards in this area.
- Compliance with all prevailing tourist board standards such as the national Visitors' Charter, Visit Britain or other recognised national accommodation scheme - with grading award documentation being made available.
- Confirmation in writing from a body recognised as a representative of standards applicable in the relevant sector of tourist-related facilities.
- Evidence of the promotion of the attraction to tourists, for example, in brochures, guides and official tourism publications.
- Proof that the facility or attraction does actually attract tourists in meaningful numbers in respect of its size and on which a clear traffic management case could be made. Proof could take the form of a visitors book or visitor survey data.
- Proof that the attraction or facility meets with all current health, safety and welfare standards pertaining to the operation of the facility or attraction. Whilst we do not judge the worth of the attraction or facility (see above), we do have a duty of care to the visitor in signing such destinations in terms of health, safety and welfare.
- Applications will only be considered where the applicant can prove that they meet the required planning conditions to run that facility or attraction.

## **Assessment and Sign Erection**

The application will be assessed against this policy and in consultation with other bodies as appropriate.

A response will generally be provided within 4 weeks of making the application. If successful the County Council will undertake detailed design of the tourist sign(s) in accordance with the appropriate standards. The sign designs and detailed costing for their provision and erection will be forwarded to the applicant for final agreement.

On receipt of the agreed payment orders will be placed with the sign manufacturer and the signs will be erected. Applicants should note that up to six weeks should be allowed for the sign to be manufactured.

Only a contractor employed by Durham County Council will be permitted to erect the signs on the highway.

## The Basic Principles

In setting up the criteria for assessing applications for the brown and white tourist signing the following basic principles were used :-

- a. **The formulating of this policy has been in accordance with the Highways Agency TA94/04 – Traffic Signs to Tourist Attractions and Facilities in England – Guidance for Tourist Signing (Local Roads).**
- b. **The primary purposes of highway signing is for traffic management and safety purposes and where there is a conflict these considerations must take precedence over tourist signing.**
- c. **All applications will be viewed from the perspective of the Visitor and not the owner/operator of the attraction.**

### 1. Definitions of Visitor Attractions and Visitor Facilities.

- a. A **Visitor Attraction** is a permanent place to which people make excursions for sightseeing, for entertainment or for historical or cultural visits. It must be open to people making casual visits within normal opening hours and not just to those who have made prior bookings. There must be evidence of promotion to tourists and of the attraction serving tourists. Temporary attractions should be dealt with through the temporary signing procedure.
- b. A **Visitor Facility** is a permanent place which provides accommodation and/or food for visitors to the area who are making excursions for sightseeing, for entertainment or for historical or cultural visits. It must be open to people making casual visits within normal opening hours and not just to those who have made prior bookings. There must be evidence of promotion to tourists and of serving tourists. Facilities will be restricted to accommodation and catering only.
- c. **'Visitors'** includes people travelling from home. However, to qualify for tourist signing to the attraction or facility there must be evidence of promotion and use by people staying away from home i.e. 'tourists'.

### 2. Signing should be in support of the attraction/facility's own advertising and promotion and not in lieu of it.

It is inevitable that businesses will relate their economic well-being to the County Council's willingness or otherwise to provide direction signs. The principle has therefore been established that the management of the attraction facility and not the County Council is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the business.

3. **The extent of the signing should reflect the importance of the attraction/facility both in visitor numbers and parking facilities.**
4. **The level of signing should take into account environmental and conservation conditions.**

### **Traffic Management Considerations**

- **Limited Number of Destinations.** The amount of signage that can be allowed at any junction is limited by the capacity of the driver to comprehend and assimilate the information whilst on the move. The driver is required to respond quickly to the information and if appropriate check the rear view mirror, indicate and then manoeuvre. The size, typeface and colour of the sign together with the distance of the sign from the junction combine to give a good visibility and thinking time for the driver to enable the required manoeuvre to be carried out safely. Because of the importance of driver comprehension the design rules for direction signs limit the total number of destinations and/or symbols on the direction signs on any sign assembly to six. Only one symbol is allowed per destination in line with national guidance.
- **Parking Facilities.** Individually signed tourist attractions and facilities are expected to have adequate car (and perhaps coach) parking and the level of signing should reflect this. Where an attraction or facility is in a built up area and relies on public off-street parking it may be better to sign all visitors to the car parks and provide a tourist information board within the car park or nearby.

### **Financial Implications**

The cost of assessing the applications, the provision and maintenance of the signs are all required to be at nil cost to the traffic authority and it is therefore necessary to levy charges for these services. The assessment of the application, the liaison with neighbouring traffic authorities, the parish councils, and tourism body, together with the preliminary sign designs is covered by a standard charge of £200.00 including VAT (for larger attractions and/or complex signing schemes a larger initial fee may be required). This cost to be paid in advance and non-recoverable should the application be denied. The cost of the provision and erection of the signs will be charged at cost.

The costs of replacing stolen or damaged signs, and work on signs will be charged as and when the situation arises.

The applicant is required to undertake to pay for the removal of the signs should the signed destination fail at a future date to meet the required criteria. We reserve the right the right to remove the signs should wider signing issues dictate.



## Quality Criteria

### Visitor Attractions

Attractions	Quality Criteria
Visitor Attractions Quality assured by Visit Britain	These should normally meet the definition of an attraction as set out in the Visit Britain's Visitors' Charter. By signing, the Charter attractions are committed to observing minimum quality standards and also following a procedure for investigation by regional tourist boards in the event of complaints made about the establishment.
Craft Centres/Craft Workshops	To qualify it should be possible to observe craftsmen at work during the majority of the working day and, where there are multiple units, at least half should feature demonstrations throughout opening hours from April to October.
Garden Centres	To be eligible for signs, they would need to demonstrate specific provisions for tourists including promotion to the tourist market to be considered for signing. Absence of such provisions means that it can only be considered as a purely retail establishment and would not be eligible for brown signs.
Churches and other Buildings of Historic and Architectural Interest	The interest created must be such that it is able to attract visitors from outside of the local area and there must be an adequate level of access and an appropriate level of interpretation. Any other use of the building should not prevail over the use of the building as an attraction - apart from the case of churches and cathedrals.
Natural Attractions	There should be suitable provision for public access and an appropriate level of tourist facilities for approved attractions such as beaches, viewpoints and rivers. They should be recognisably more than merely local in importance

## Facilities (accommodation)

Facilities (Accommodation)	Quality Criteria
Hotels and other serviced accommodation Quality assured by Visit Britain,	Establishments wishing to be signed should be members of quality assurance schemes which provide independent inspections of all member premises. The three largest schemes are those run by Visit Britain and the AA. If an establishment is no longer a member of any scheme then Durham County Council would have grounds for removing the signing.
Self-catering accommodation Quality assured by Visit Britain	Most customers for this sector tend to book their accommodation in advance and can receive directions through the post, therefore many establishments may not require white-on-brown signs. However, there may be traffic management reasons for the provision of signs. If the sites are large enough to offer facilities to day visitors they may be considered for signing (see below for caravan sites and log cabins etc).
Camping and Caravan Sites Quality assured by Visit Britain	<p>Only those sites with at least 20 pitches for casual overnight use by touring caravans are eligible for signing. Each site must also be licensed under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and/or the Public Health Act 1936.</p> <p>Static caravans, log cabins and the like whose sole purpose is for short term hire (week-ends, 1 week or two weeks etc) may be eligible if there are 10 units or more.</p>
Youth Hostels Quality assured by YHA	Hostels managed by the YHA can be granted tourism signs, and those managed by a national park authority or similar body and open to the public without prior booking can be signed but not with the youth hostel symbol.
Public Houses Quality assured by Visit Britain, Brewers Association or Tied Pub Owners.	Signing of a public house is to be considered only where there is clear evidence that it is serving a tourist market as opposed to meeting a predominantly local market, and it is in a relatively remote or difficult to find location. Individual pubs would not normally need signing in recognised tourist resorts or town centre areas. Establishments most likely to serve the tourist market will include pubs serving meals, pubs with children certificates, and/or inns offering overnight accommodation that complies with the quality assurance schemes. Evidence of promotion to the tourist market would also be relevant.



## Facilities (other)

Facilities (other)	Quality Criteria
Restaurants and Cafes	There would be need to be clear evidence that an establishment is serving (and promoted to) a tourist market, and is in a relatively remote or difficult to find location. Individual establishments would not normally need signing in recognised tourist resorts or town centre areas. Customers should be able to obtain a meal without pre-booking (although this does not preclude establishments that are frequently fully booked).
Retail Facilities	Shops would need to have facilities which are aimed (and promoted) directly at tourists if they are to be signed. Individual establishments would not normally need signing in recognised town centres or shopping areas, but shops in more remote rural areas targeting or frequented by tourists may be considered only if they do not have permanent standard highway signs.
Recreational Facilities and Sports Venues	Visitors should be able to be admitted without prior booking during normal working hours.
Picnic Sites	Only places conducive to eating in the open air and set aside for that purpose with some seating and tables available may be considered for tourist signing.
Tourist Information Centres (TICs) and Tourist Information Points (TIPs) Quality assured by Visit Britain	Only TICs recognised and networked by the tourist boards may be signed with the international 'i' symbol - the word centre being added where the sign size and traffic safety conditions permit. It may also be appropriate to use the 'i' symbol for TIPs provided that they meet the relevant standards.

## The Difference in Approach between Urban & Rural Areas

<b>Visitor Attraction (as previously defined)</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Urban Areas (as previously defined)	In urban areas priority will be given to signing to car parks and tourist information facilities rather than individual attractions. For larger visitor attractions signing may be permitted where it is justified for traffic management/road safety purposes. This should be completed in association with local tourism operators and bodies, Chamber of Commerce and other interested organisations. It is anticipated that these schemes will primarily consist of pedestrian signing to and from car parks and tourist information facilities should they exist.
Rural Areas	Provided "Quality" criteria are satisfied signing may be provided in accordance with criteria given in Appendix E - Implementation.

<b>Visitor Facilities (as previously defined)</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Urban Areas (as previously defined)	In urban areas signs to facilities will not usually be provided. As for Visitor Attractions an exception to this rule will be pedestrian signs provided as part of an overall strategy. It remains unlikely however that signs to individual facilities will be provided. Signs approved as part of this process will generally be generic signs to groups of similar establishments, e.g. "Hotels", "B & B", "Amusements", "Shops", etc. Where traffic management and road safety benefits justify it, highway signing may be utilised for this purpose.
Rural Areas	Provided "quality" criteria are satisfied, signs may be provided. It should be noted however, in village situations signs to facilities will not normally be provided. Composite signs at entry points to villages will be permitted to indicate facilities available. In environmentally sensitive areas, limitations on the type or location of signs may apply as set out in Appendix E - Implementation.

## Urban Areas for the Purposes of this Policy

### North Durham

- Chester-le-Street
- Lumley
- Bournmoor
- Pelton
- Ouston
- Sacriston
- Consett
- Stanley
- Shotley Bridge
- Ebchester
- Leadgate
- Castleside
- Delves Lane / Blackhills
- Annfield Plain
- Dipton
- Burnopfield
- Lanchester
- Langley Park

### West Durham

- Bishop Auckland Crook
- Tow Law
- West Auckland
- St Helen Auckland
- Tindale Crescent
- Willington
- Wolsingham
- Stanhope
- Frosterley
- Barnard Castle
- Staindrop
- Middleton-in-Teesdale
- Gainford
- Evenwood
- Butterknowle

### East Durham

- Seaham
- Easington Village
- Easington Colliery
- Peterlee
- Horden
- Murton
- South Hetton
- Wheatley Hill
- Thornley
- Shotton Colliery
- Wingate

### South Durham & Durham City

- Spennymoor
- Ferryhill
- Sedgefield
- Newton Aycliffe
- Shildon
- Chilton
- Coxhoe
- Cornforth
- Trimdon
- Durham City
- Framwellgate Moor
- Pity Me
- Newton Hall
- Brandon Sherburn
- Ushaw Moor
- Bearpark
- Esh Winning

## Implementation

Durham County Council is the highway authority for all roads in County Durham and will assess applications that within our network. For motorways and trunk roads, the Highways Agency is the highway authority and will assess applications against their criteria. Agreement from both parties will be required for continuation signing on both networks.

### County Roads

**It is stressed that applications for tourist signs will be considered individually - eligibility under the criteria does not confer automatic entitlement to signs.**

- a. Maximum number of tourist destinations at an individual signing location is six. Where more than six applications are received priority will be given to the attraction or facility with greater visitor numbers. The maximum number of destinations to be signed may be reduced from six when the signs accommodate additional information or where the number of non-tourist signs is reaching a point where additional signs need to be minimised for environmental or safety reasons. Regardless of the number of signs, advice contained in the relevant Department of Transport Local Transport Notes is to be adhered to at all times.
- b. Signing will normally only be allowed from the nearest main road or settlement whichever is the shortest distance. Exemptions may be made to this rule for large visitor attractions where this is justified on traffic management or road safety grounds. Generally a maximum distance of 5 miles will be imposed although longer distances may be appropriate for some larger attractions. It should not be assumed that signing will be provided for all directions of access.
- c. Signing will only be agreed where the highway authority is satisfied that the road network to or from the destination is capable of safely accommodating the level of traffic and type of vehicle that the provision of signing may generate.
- d. Where a facility qualifies for tourism signs, any existing signs to that facility of a different type will be removed.
- e. Signs will be the minimum number and size in accordance with road safety and traffic management needs.
- f. Tourist signing will not normally be provided to facilities that are located on major routes, main streets or significant settlements. However traffic management and road safety is the primary concern as determined by the highway authority. Composite signs may be used at the main entry points however in association with village name signs in order to indicate services available. These signs will use generic terms (e.g. "Hotels", "Restaurants", "Tourist Shopping") or more preferably symbols. For these type of signs the off-street parking requirement will not apply.

## Environmentally Sensitive Areas

### (e.g. Conservation Areas or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

In environmentally sensitive areas priority will be given to composite signs. Where similar facilities are available, priority will be given to signs incorporating generic rather than individual terms. In schemes requiring signs at more than two junctions, use may be made of symbols utilising where possible existing signing legends rather than providing additional continuity signing. An example of this could be the beach symbol (bucket and spade) rather than the continued use of the beach name.

## Bypassed Communities

Bypassed communities may use white on brown tourist signs to welcome visitors and indicate the availability of services and features of particular interest to tourists rather than the availability of services for traffic in general. The signs may include an appropriate short descriptive phrase to highlight features likely to be of interest to tourists, such as “Anglo-Saxon Walled Town” Words and/or symbols may be used to indicate facilities or attractions available.

## Pedestrian Signing

Pedestrian signing schemes should include signing to or from car parks within a tourist signing scheme. Visitor information at the car park in the form of a map marking the key visitor facilities and attractions is recommended.

## Trunk Roads and Motorways

Traffic signs to tourist attractions and facilities in England : criteria for signs on Trunk Roads and Motorways are complementary but separate to this policy.

[Criteria for all-purpose single carriageways and dual carriageways with speed limits of less than 50 mph.](#)

- a tourist attraction should only be signed from a trunk road if it is also signed on the adjacent local road network, under the criteria adopted by the local traffic authority
- the route onto which traffic is being directed must be the most suitable link between the attraction and the trunk road
- adequate parking should be provided at the attraction or in the vicinity thereof
- signing may be refused because of siting difficulties or where the number of destinations signed at a single junction would be excessive. In general six tourist destinations should be regarded as the maximum that drivers can absorb at a single junction. There should be less than six where long names are involved, or additional information including symbols is provided on the sign, or the number of non-tourist destinations signed is approaching overload.
- tourist attractions with direct access to an all-purpose trunk road may not need signing if the entrance is visible and identifiable from a distance that allows vehicles to approach it safely. In other cases, (especially on the high speed roads referred to in (ii) below), advance direction signs or flag signs may be needed to guide traffic safely to the attraction. Applications for signs should be considered on their merits, and the attractions signed should at least meet the criteria for signing adopted by the local highway authority.

Criteria for all-purpose dual carriageways with a speed limit of 50 mph or above :

- as above, but additionally
- the attraction should normally be within 20 miles of the junction from which it is to be signed
- taking account of the higher speeds of traffic on such dual carriageway roads, the number of tourist attractions signed should not exceed four, so that signs will be legible and of a manageable size.

Criteria for motorways and fully grade-separated all purpose dual carriageways :

- as in (ii) but additionally
- the attraction should have at least 150,000 visitors a year



## **Other Urban Areas**

In large urban areas, consideration needs to be given to the most appropriate type of signage taking into account the likely form of transport the majority of visitors take in arriving. In many cases pedestrian signing from public transport facilities will be more appropriate than vehicle signing, particularly where car or coach access to the attraction is discouraged for environmental reasons.

Where decisions have to be taken about which attraction to sign, the basis for those decisions should be guided by the needs of traffic management. In general, attractions with higher visitor numbers will have a higher claim to be signed than those with fewer visitors. Proximity to the trunk road may also be used as a selection criterion where visitor numbers alone do not establish a clear ranking.

## **Alternative directions of access**

There should be no expectation of signing specifically from every possible direction of access. Although where possible and appropriate in traffic management terms, alternative routes may be signed.