

National Roads Authority



Policy on the Provision of Tourist & Leisure Signage on National Roads

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Appendix A National Primary and National Secondary Roads Network.

Policy on the Provision of Tourist & Leisure Signage on National Roads

Part 1 Background.

- 1.1 Official strategy for the use of tourist signage is governed by the document PD 12/14, 1988, “Criteria for the Provision of Tourist Attraction and Accommodation Signs”, published by the Department of the Environment. Whilst the provisions of the document remain for the most part valid today, certain practices have evolved over time that do not comply with the provisions of the document, resulting in a proliferation and misuse of tourist signs. This, in turn, has led to diminished benefit to both road users and those tourist attractions and facilities qualifying for signage. In addition, white-on-brown signage has been incorrectly used for many non-tourist destinations.
- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to outline the National Roads Authority’s policy on the provision of tourist and leisure destination signs on national primary and national secondary roads in Ireland. The document has been compiled in tandem with the development of a programme of updating and improving directional signage throughout the national road network which began in 2006 and is scheduled for completion by 2010. It is anticipated that the upgrading of directional signage, together with the rationalisation of the white-on-brown signage used for tourist attractions and facilities, will result in a significant improvement to the quality of national road signage in Ireland, benefiting both local and tourist alike. The policy was developed following extensive public consultation and following reviews with Fáilte Ireland.
- 1.3 The tourism industry is recognized as a very important element of the Irish economy. Ireland has a wide range of unique tourism assets of varying types throughout the country, providing many attractions to both the visiting tourist and the local population. Due to the wide geographic spread of these many attractions the predominant mode of transport is road. The Authority recognises the necessity to facilitate ready access to the many tourist destinations around the country. In this

regard the provision of clear tourist signage is an essential element in assisting the motoring tourist to locate these many attractions in a safe and efficient manner.

- 1.4** The primary purpose of tourist signage is to guide visitors to their intended tourist destinations along the most appropriate route at the latter stages of their journey, particularly where destinations may be difficult to find. As with all other directional signs, tourist signs are an aid to safe and efficient navigation intended to complement, but not replace, pre-planning of the journey and the use of verbal instructions, maps and road atlases.
- 1.5** White-on-brown signs for tourist destinations should supplement rather than duplicate information already provided on other direction signs erected for the guidance of all road users. Whilst recognising that additional benefit may accrue to the operator of a tourist attraction or facility through increased patronage, white-on-brown signs should only be used where there are clear benefits to the road user, e.g. for safety reasons, where locations may be hard to find or to encourage visitors to use particular routes.
- 1.6** The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has commenced a resigning programme for regional roads which will incorporate local road numbers on directional signage. The inclusion of local road numbers provides an improved means of locating individual tourist attractions and facilities off national roads and eliminates the perceived need for much of the current signage proliferation relating to tourist attractions and facilities at such locations.

Part 2 Classification of Tourist Destinations.

- 2.1** A tourist destination is normally defined as a permanently established destination that attracts or is used by visitors. Tourist destinations may be subdivided into two broad categories: tourist attractions and tourist facilities.

2.1.1 Tourist Attractions.

For the purposes of this document, tourist attractions are deemed to include:

- visitor and interpretative centers,
- historic buildings,
- museums,
- zoos,
- parks and gardens,
- natural attractions such as nature reserves,
- beaches and viewpoints,

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- areas of heritage or scientific interest,
 - scenic routes,
 - national parks,
 - forest parks,
 - walking routes,
 - outdoor pursuits centres,
 - golf courses (open to non-members),
 - theatres and music venues,
 - racecourses,
 - equestrian centers,
 - visitor farms,
 - principal GAA, soccer and rugby grounds,
 - island and river ferries,
 - marinas / public slipways and boating facilities, and
 - areas providing fishing.

2.1.2 Tourist Facilities.

Tourist facilities are deemed to include:

- hotels,
- leisure centres,
- conference centres,
- guesthouses,
- bed and breakfast establishments,
- holiday parks,
- caravan and camping parks,
- youth hostels,
- picnic sites,
- motorway / dual carriageway rest and service areas, and
- tourist information centres.

The above lists are not exhaustive but give a broad indication of the attractions and facilities coming within the tourist destination categories.

Part 3 Tourist & Leisure Signage Policy.

3.1 Policy Objectives.

The primary objectives of the Authority's Tourist Signage Policy are to (a) provide a basis for a more coherent system of tourist signage and (b) avoid the unsightly proliferation of white-on-brown tourist signage, particularly for tourist accommodation, on the national road network. These objectives will be pursued throughout the country in tandem with the Authority's overall network re-signing programme. The tourism signage programme will be implemented in consultation with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, Fáilte Ireland and other tourism interests in order to ensure the provision of appropriate signage for the principal tourist destinations.

3.2 Categorisation of National Roads.

There is a limit to the amount of information that should be contained on any road sign in order for the driver to be able to assimilate it in the short space of time available. In general, the higher the prevailing speed on the particular road the bigger the text and the more limited the information on the sign need to be if the information is to be assimilated by road users. It is necessary, therefore, to recognise that the nature and extent of signage must vary in accordance with the category of road on which it is located. The Authority has adopted the following hierarchy of national roads for the purposes of the tourism signage policy:

- A. Motorways and high quality dual carriageways (including routes M/N 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 18, 25 and 50).
- B. Other national primary roads.
- C. National secondary roads.

In the case of categories B. and C. specific criteria will be adopted for the provision of tourism signage within urban, built-up areas (see paragraph 3.4.4).

3.3 Tourist Attractions.

Signage for tourist attractions will, in the first instance, be provided in accordance with the following criteria:

Road Type	Minimum Number of Visitors per Annum	Maximum Distance of Attraction from National Road
Motorway / High Quality Dual Carriageway	75,000	30 km
Other National Primary Roads	20,000	20 km
National Secondary Roads	10,000	20 km

Some flexibility will be exercised in respect of the visitor number thresholds if there are good traffic management or safety reasons, and depending upon the availability of space to accommodate signage. Special consideration will be given to historical or cultural attractions of national importance.

3.3.1 Motorways and High Quality Dual Carriageways.

3.3.1.1 Junction Numbering.

The Authority has developed a new junction numbering system for each of the Major Inter-Urban Routes, M1, M4/N6, N7, N8 and N9, together with certain other dual carriageway routes, including the N2, N3, N11 and N18. The junction numbering system will provide an effective means for route planning on motorways and dual carriageways. Experience in Dublin, with the greater prominence given to junction numbers on the new M50 South Eastern Motorway gantry signage shows that, increasingly, individuals and businesses are making use of the junction numbers in referencing locations adjacent to the M50. It is, therefore, anticipated that, on motorway and dual carriageway sections throughout the network, the junction numbers will be used as primary features in route planning, to the benefit of both tourist and non-tourist destinations.

3.3.1.2 Signage on the Mainline.

White-on-brown signs on the mainline of motorways and high quality dual carriageways will be restricted to the following tourist attractions:

- ◆ Major tourist attractions (with annual visitor numbers in excess of 75,000 per annum).
- ◆ Tourist facilities panels for adjacent bypassed towns.
- ◆ Championship golf courses.
- ◆ Areas / regions of major tourist interest.
- ◆ County boundary signs.
- ◆ Principal rivers.
- ◆ Scenic routes.
- ◆ Nearby historical / heritage towns.

On the approaches to each motorway or high quality dual carriageway junction, white-on-brown tourist signs will be provided, separate but complementary to the main directional signage at the junction. White-on-brown panels may be provided on directional signs for major tourist attractions subject to the availability of space.

3.3.1.3 Signage at Junction Off-Slips.

On exiting the mainline, supplementary tourist signage may be provided at each junction, additional to the standard directional signage. The extent of tourist signage at motorway / high quality dual carriageway junctions will be dictated by the availability of space to accommodate the signage and considerations of road safety. The tourist signage erected must not compromise the visibility and clarity of directional signage. As with all signage, the driver must be able to read and understand signs at normal approach speeds, and not be presented with an excess of information, otherwise the signage could present a safety hazard. Typically, a maximum of four tourist attractions or facilities may be included on the signage. Eligibility will not confer an automatic right to the provision of the sign. The decision as to which tourist destinations are to be signed from a given location will lie with the National Roads Authority and the relevant local authority taking account of (a) the number of visitors involved, (b) the traffic management considerations and (c) the views of Fáilte Ireland. The criteria and thresholds governing the signage of tourist attractions and facilities from the off-slips of grade separated junctions are as listed for “Other National Primary Roads” at paragraph 3.3.

3.3.1.4 Service and Rest Areas.

In September, 2006, the Authority identified locations on the motorway and dual carriageway sections of the national road network where on line service and rest areas are to be provided. Detailed tourist information for the surrounding localities will be displayed on tourist information boards in both service and rest areas. In the case of manned service areas, the Authority will consider the provision of an automated electronic facility providing a wider range of information on the locality and for destinations further along and beyond the route in question.

3.3.2 Other National Primary Roads.

Tourist attractions with visitor numbers complying with the criteria specified at paragraph 3.3 will be eligible for white-on-brown signage from national primary roads. Tourist attractions which do not have recorded numbers of visitors may be considered for tourist signage, subject to (a) the availability of signage space, (b) agreement between the Authority and local authority and (c) the views of Fáilte Ireland.

3.3.3 National Secondary Roads.

Tourist attractions with visitor numbers complying with the criteria specified at paragraph 3.3 will be eligible for white-on-brown signage from national secondary roads. National secondary roads typically have a greater number of tourist attractions in their vicinity than other national routes and, in many cases, these may not have recorded visitor numbers. Such attractions may include beaches and other natural features, marinas and other boating facilities. These attractions may be considered for tourist signage, subject to (a) agreement between the Authority and local authority and (b) the views of Fáilte Ireland.

3.3.4 Confirmatory Signage for Tourist Attractions.

It is important that there be continuity of signage from the first sign through to the destination. The Authority will liaise with local authorities to ensure that, where tourist attraction signage is provided on a national road directing road users onto regional or local roads, continuity of white-on-brown signage will be provided between the exit from the national road and the tourist destination concerned.

Having found the tourist destination, visitors should be able to find their way back to the national road. In conjunction with local authorities, appropriate signage will also be provided to ensure that the return route to the national road is clearly signposted from the tourist attraction.

3.4 Tourist Accommodation Signage.

3.4.1 Motorways and High Quality Dual Carriageways.

Signage of individual tourist accommodation facilities will not be provided from the mainline of motorways and high quality dual carriageways. Signage for Fáilte Ireland approved tourist accommodation may be provided at motorway and high quality dual carriageway off-slips. However, the total number of tourist destinations that may be signposted at such locations is limited overall to four (attractions and facilities) in order to avoid a surfeit of signage, leading to information overload and possible driver confusion.

3.4.2 Other National Primary Roads.

Signage for more extensive Fáilte Ireland approved accommodation facilities, including hotels, conference centres, leisure centres and holiday parks, will be permitted at national primary road junctions. Advance signage on the national primary road will not be permitted.

3.4.3 National Secondary Roads.

Signage for all types of accommodation, approved by Fáilte Ireland or other recognised body, will be permitted on national secondary routes. Up to a maximum of four accommodation facilities may be signposted at a junction. Only one sign may be provided for each facility; no advance signage prior to the junction will be permitted.

3.4.4 Urban and Built-Up Areas.

Many towns formerly on national primary routes have been bypassed in recent years. Consequently, signage requirements for accommodation facilities within urban areas now relate principally to national secondary routes. The proliferation of finger post signs attached to road directional signage posts is both unsightly and ineffective, and has significant implications for road safety. The Authority will, in conjunction with local authorities, develop signage strategies for national roads in individual urban areas, giving greatest priority to locations on national routes in tourist areas. The Authority will promote the use of a standard signboard structure to accommodate tourist related signage in towns and villages on national roads as part of a strategy to eliminate multiple finger-post signing.

3.5 Local Facilities in Bypassed Towns and Villages.

In general, the Authority will provide white-on-brown tourist signage panels for bypassed towns and villages on the national road network. These will be of a standard form with the name of the town or village and may contain a short descriptive phrase to highlight features likely to be of interest to tourists. Up to four symbols indicating the principal facilities and services available in the town or village may be included. Services which one would normally expect to find in any typical town or village, such as ATM facilities and churches will not be included in the symbols provided. Signage bearing the name of individual premises or businesses will not be permitted.

3.6 Retail Facilities

It is recognised that many tourist establishments such as craft workshops, etc. combine a retail outlet with a tourist attraction. Such establishments will be eligible for white-on-brown tourist signs provided it is demonstrated by the applicant, to the satisfaction of the Authority and local authority, that the tourist interest predominates.

3.7 Excess Signing Demand.

For safety consideration reasons, it is important that individual signs are not overloaded with information. Only a limited quantity of information can be read by the driver taking account of the speed of vehicle and height of text.

As outlined above, the maximum number of tourist destinations that will be permitted on an individual sign is four. If there are more than four eligible tourist destinations, priority for tourist signage will be given to those destinations with the greatest traffic management or road safety needs. The Authority will make the decision as to which destinations should be signed, in conjunction with the local authority and following consultation with Fáilte Ireland.

3.8 Tourist Attraction Symbols.

In order to avoid sign clutter and to provide easily identifiable routes for the motorist, symbols should be used wherever possible. As a general rule, an appropriate symbol should be associated with the particular attraction being signed and this symbol should be followed from its first introduction through to the end destination. Once introduced and associated with the particular tourist attraction, the symbol by itself may be used on follow-on signage to identify the route through to the attraction. This is particularly useful and appropriate in providing guidance through off-route junctions where available signage space is limited. An expanded list of symbols, from that provided in the Department of the Environment document PD 12/14, for various attractions and facilities will be included in the revised Traffic Signs Manual, to be published in 2007.

3.9 Use of Irish & English.

Text on tourist signage should be in both Irish and English in accordance with the provisions of the Official Languages Act, 2003 and the Traffic Signs Manual.

Part 4 Implementation of Signage Upgrade Programme.

4.1 Principal Bodies Involved in Implementation Programme.

Implementation of the tourist signage upgrade programme will be undertaken by the National Roads Authority in collaboration with each local authority. Support will be sought from Fáilte Ireland in the provision of current registers of approved tourist accommodation. The inputs of the various organisations involved are as summarised below.

4.1.1 Local Authorities.

- Preparation of a comprehensive plan for tourist signage in their respective counties, in consultation with Fáilte Ireland and the National Roads Authority.
- In conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, operate an up-to-date register of tourist attractions and facilities in each county for the purpose of the management and maintenance of tourist signage.
- Operate a consent licensing system for tourist signposts.

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- Obtain approval for the erection of tourist signs on national roads from the Authority.
 - Conduct an annual review to ensure that only currently approved tourist signs are erected on national roads.
 - Install tourist signage and maintain such signage on an annual basis.
 - Remove unapproved, out of date or damaged tourist signs.

4.1.2 National Roads Authority.

- Liaise with, and as appropriate, provide approvals to local authorities for tourist signage proposals relating to national roads.
- Maintain a national register of tourist attractions and accommodation facilities signposted from national roads.
- Liaise with Fáilte Ireland, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and other tourist industry stakeholders to ensure that the administration of the tourist and leisure signage policy is maintained up to date and responsive to the requirements of the industry.
- Make provision in the Authority's annual maintenance allocations to local authorities for the administration of the tourist signing policy on national roads.

4.1.3 Fáilte Ireland.

- Compile and maintain a register of tourist accommodation facilities in each local authority area, and make these registers available to local authorities and the National Roads Authority.
- Participate in periodic meetings with the National Roads Authority and representatives of local authorities to deal with tourist signage related issues.
- Where requested, provide support to local authorities and the National Roads Authority in determining whether individual tourist attractions and facilities qualify for signage.

4.2 Costs.

The cost of providing white-on-brown tourist signage and the maintenance thereof has traditionally been borne by the operator of the tourist attraction or facility. This principle will generally continue to apply as part of the Authority's re-signing programme. However, where approved tourist signage requires replacement under the re-signing programme and the signage concerned was erected within the preceding three years, the cost of replacement will be borne by the National Roads Authority as part of the overall network re-signing programme. The cost involved in local authorities removing unapproved or out of date signage existing on publication of the Authority's Tourist and Leisure Signage Policy will be borne as part of the NRA's annual road maintenance allocation to the local authority. Where continuity

signage is deemed appropriate between the national road and tourist destination, the cost will be borne partly by the operator and partly by the Authority.

4.3 Timescale.

The programme to upgrade tourist and leisure signage on national roads will be implemented in the timescale 2007 – 2010, in line with the programme set out for the upgrading of directional signage on national roads.

Appendix A

