



Monaghan County Council
Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin

Policy for Signage on National Roads

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Policy for Signage on National Roads

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1. BACKGROUND

This Policy Document was prepared following concerns expressed by the Elected Members of Monaghan County Council on the lack of clarity regarding signage on our national roads. Whereas some of the signage is approved by the Council under Planning or Roads legislation, there is a problem with the increasing amount of signage that is being erected without licence by businesses, event organisers, community groups etc. along the National Road network.

The aim of this document is to set out clearly the policy of Monaghan County Council in relation to signage on our national primary and secondary roads. It is an attempt to facilitate the erection of signage where it is deemed appropriate and to put in place a mechanism to respond to unauthorised signage effectively.



This document takes on board PD12/14, 1988 "Criteria for the provision of Tourist Attraction and Accommodation Signs" published by the Department of the Environment, the policy of the National Roads Authority entitled "Policy on the Provision of Tourist & Leisure Signage on National Roads" (See Appendix A) and that of Monaghan County Council as set out in the Monaghan County Development Plan 2007 – 2013.

Fig 1 : An example showing the proliferation of road signs in County Monaghan

2. SIGNAGE COVERED BY THIS DOCUMENT

2.1 LOCATION OF SIGNAGE

Location of signage can be categorized under two headings:

- Off road signage which occurs on private property i.e. located behind the hedge, wall, street boundary etc
- Roadside signage which occurs on any part of the public road, street including grass verges, footpaths, hard shoulders etc.

This policy proposes to deal only with roadside signage. Off-road signage will be dealt with separately.



Fig 2 : Examples of large unauthorised advertising signs

2.2 CATEGORIES OF SIGNAGE

Permanent signs can be defined as signage intended to be in place for a period in excess of a year and would normally be erected on a steel pole or other such structure.

Examples of such signage include those indicating :

- Tourist attractions
- Tourist accommodation
- Business
- Sports facilities
- Public Buildings
- Directional signs

Temporary signs are those used to advertise an event and include the following:

- Premises for sale or to let (Real Estate signs)
- Shows, Concerts, Circuses
- Recreational or sporting fixtures
- Event promotion

On the road network the Council as the Road Authority is required to provide signage such as:

- **Warning** – signs which warn of hazards/danger on the road ahead or advise persons of the precautions to be taken against such danger, or both.
- **Regulatory** – signs which give instructions or apply prohibitions or restrictions which road users must obey; and
- **Information** – signs which give directions and distances to destinations on the road ahead or on intersecting roads, or which provide other information;

3. DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY



The County Council recognises that there has been a proliferation of signs along the national roads. Many of these signs are both unsightly and often hazardous to road users. In addition, many of these signs detract from directional signage, obscure warning signs and clutter up both roads and footpaths, hindering the reasonable use of the public road.

Fig . 3 An example of the excessive use of signage likely to lead to confusion / distraction

It is also recognised that many businesses in the county use the signs as a means of advertising. While the County Council does not want to portray an anti-business message, it does recognise that it has obligations as both the Roads Authority and the Planning Authority for the county. The Council believes that it is possible to achieve a balance between the needs of the general public who use the public roads and the businesses that require signage to direct users to their premises.



The Policy must also be seen as equitable and transparent to ensure that businesses compete on an equal footing and are not disadvantaged by the use of illegal signage by their competitors. Therefore, the use of signage as a form of advertising on our National Road network should be restricted.

Fig.4 An example of an unauthorised advertising sign

The Department of Transport has commenced a re-signing 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.

Monaghan County Council will undertake to erect signage for all roads and/or villages/townlands leading off the National Primary and National Secondary roads in support of this policy.

The provision of signage for whatever purpose should be to complement the pre-planning of a journey. Therefore, any person travelling to a particular destination should avail of the normal assistance used to determine one's destination.

3.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The erection of signage along roads is governed by a range of legislative measures including:

3.1.1 ROADS ACT 1993(SECTION 71)

Any person who, without lawful authority or the consent of a road authority—

- (i) erects, places or retains a sign on a public road, or
- (ii) erects, places or retains on a public road any caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing (whether on wheels or not) used for the purposes of advertising, the sale of goods, the provision of services or other similar purpose,

shall be guilty of an offence.

3.1.2 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (SECTION 254)

Subject to *subsection (2)*, a person shall not erect, construct, place or maintain—

- (a) a vending machine,
 - (b) a town or landscape map for indicating directions or places,
 - (c) a hoarding, fence or scaffold,
 - (d) an advertisement structure,
 - (e) a cable, wire or pipeline,
 - (f) a telephone kiosk or pedestal, or
 - (g) any other appliance, apparatus or structure, which may be prescribed as requiring a licence under this section,
- on, under, over or along a public road save in accordance with a licence granted by a planning authority under this section.

(2) This section shall not apply to the following—

- (a) an appliance, apparatus or structure which is authorised in accordance with a planning permission granted under *Part III*;
- (b) a temporary hoarding, fence or scaffold erected in accordance with a condition of planning permission granted under *Part III*;
- (c) the erection, construction, placing or maintenance under a public road of a cable, wire or pipeline by a statutory undertaker

3.1.3 LITTER POLLUTION ACT, 1997 (SECTION 19)

Prohibition of articles and advertisements on and defacement of certain structures, etc.

19. – (1) Where any structure or other land, door, gate, window, tree, pole or post is in or is visible from a public place, a person who is not the owner, occupier or person in charge thereof shall not –

- (a) exhibit or cause to be exhibited thereon any article or advertisement, or
- (b) carry out or cause to be carried out any defacement thereof by writing or other marks, in either case,

unless the person is authorised in advance to do so in writing by such owner, occupier or person in charge or by or under any enactment and in addition, in the case of paragraph (a), the article or advertisement –

- (i) if it relates to a meeting or an event, carries the name and address of the person who is promoting or arranging the meeting or event, and
- (ii) in any other case, carries the name and address of the person on whose behalf it is exhibited.

(2) A person shall not place advertising material on a mechanically propelled vehicle in a public place otherwise than by securing the material by some mechanical means to the body of the vehicle.

(2) (A) for the purposes of subsection (2)-

“body” in relation to a mechanically propelled vehicle, does not include –

- (a) any windscreen wiper, wiperblade, mirror or aerial, or
- (b) any other part of the vehicle concerned that is not specifically designed or adapted for the purpose of securing to it the material concerned;

“mechanical means” does not include any means relying on or involving any pressure (of whatever amount or in whatever direction) exerted by –

- (a) any windscreen wiper or wiperblade, or
- (b) any other part of the vehicle that is not specifically designed or adapted for the purpose of employing pressure in order to secure the material concerned to the body of the vehicle;

“place advertising material on a mechanically propelled vehicle” does not include paint, emboss, inscribe or apply any dry method of transfer letters, figures or images on or to the body of the vehicle or place in the interior of the vehicle any such material.

Section 19 (7) (as amended) states that where an advertisement:

- (a) advertises a public meeting, other than an auction, or

“relates to a presidential election... a general election... a bye-election... a local election... a referendum... an election of representatives to the European Parliament... or an election of members of Udaras na Gaeltachta”

a prosecution shall not be brought

unless the advertisement has been in position for 7 days or longer after the day specified in the advertisement for the meeting or the latest day upon which the poll was taken for the election, bye-election or referendum concerned.

Sec 20. – (1) Where any structure or other land, door, gate, window, tree, pole or post situated in the functional area of any local authority is in or is visible from a public place and it appears to the local authority that it is in the interests of amenity or of the environment of an area that any article or advertisement exhibited thereon should be removed or any defacement thereof by writing or other marks should be removed or otherwise remedied or that other specified steps should be taken in relation to the article, advertisement or defacement, as the case may be, the local authority may serve a notice on the occupier requiring the occupier–

- (a) to remove the article or advertisement, or remove or otherwise remedy the defacement, or to take other specified steps in relation to the article, advertisement or defacement, as the case may be, and
- (b) to take other specified steps to prevent a recurrence of the exhibition or defacement, as the case may be.

3.1.4 MONAGHAN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2007 - 2013

The following policies are set out in the current Development Plan:

Policies for Advertisements (extract):

A1. Advertising signs will not be permitted in areas where they are likely to cause

a visual distraction to motorists, obscure or compete with road signs, interfere with sight lines or detract attention at a junction.

A2. The erection of advertising signs and free standing hoardings along National Routes will not be permitted.

Finger Post Signs:

A12. The Council consider that fingerpost signs may be acceptable as an alternative to advertising signs where such signs may detract from amenity or create a traffic hazard.

A13. The use of finger posting will be restricted to giving advance notice of tourist attractions, accommodation and other suitable businesses.

A14. Finger post signs shall not be used for product advertising.

A15. Signs will only be permitted where premises are located away from the main traffic routes in rural areas.

A16. Signs should, if possible, be located at the nearest junction.

A17. Finger-posting will not be permitted where they give rise to confusion for road users or if they endanger traffic safety.

A18. Signs will not be permitted where they detract from areas of amenity or interfere with views and prospects.

The Council can and will enforce these provisions, as appropriate, in cases where signs are erected illegally.

4. MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL NATIONAL ROAD SIGNAGE POLICY

The following sets out the Policy of the Council in relation to signage on National Primary and Secondary roads. The policy addresses signage under a number of headings, viz.

- 4.1 Tourist Signage i.e. Tourist attractions, services and facilities
- 4.2 Commercial signage
- 4.3 Temporary signage.

4.1 Tourist Signage

Tourist signs shall be white on brown signs, and where practicable should make use of symbols rather than text to convey their message.

4.1.1 Signage to tourist attractions

As mentioned earlier, a “*Policy on the provision of Tourist and Leisure signage on National Roads*” was prepared by the National Roads Authority in March 2007 – copy attached at Appendix A.

The objectives set out in the 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.

The NRA defines Tourist Attractions and Tourist Facilities. It recognises the necessity to facilitate ready access to the many tourist attractions 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. 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.

Signage for tourist attractions will, in the first instance, be provided in accordance with the following criteria, with some flexibility in relation to visitors numbers :

Road Type	Minimum Number of Visitors per Annum	Maximum Distance of Attraction from National Road
National Primary Roads	20,000	20 km
National Secondary Roads	10,000	20 km

It is important that where signage is permitted on national roads it continues from the national road to the tourist destination concerned.

The Council will permit the erection of signage for Tourist Attractions in accordance with the above criteria and subject to flexibility in relation to visitor numbers particularly where such numbers are not available.

4.1.2 Signage to tourist services and other facilities

In addition to providing signage to tourist attractions, the Council will consider the provision of signage for local services and facilities where it does not detract from the tourism attraction signage, lead to a surfeit of signage or result in information overload. On national routes which have been bypassed, tourist signs will be provided primarily to advise motorists of attractions, but also of services and facilities which are now located off the mainline. The design of tourism signage will be in line with National Roads Authority policy.

4.1.3 Tourist Accommodation

Where tourist accommodation signage is to be provided, it shall comprise of white lettering on a brown background with a white border. Fingerpost type signs shall be 1,000mm in length, with an option for a double height sign in exceptional circumstances. The provision of the larger sign will be curtailed to locations where a warrant can be demonstrated, locations where mounting space is available or locations where the larger sign will not detract from the existing/future signage. Font shall consist of "Transport Heavy". Individual logos, fonts or symbols shall not be permitted.

4.1.3a Hotels and Holiday Parks

Larger accommodation facilities are expected to make use of methods other than advertising on the national roads to promote their business. These facilities should ensure that maps and directions are readily available on their websites or in published marketing literature. It is not the responsibility of the Council to direct visitors to these facilities.

Where new road realignments or bypasses may affect the passing trade of more extensive Failte Ireland approved accommodation facilities, including hotels, conference centres, leisure centres and holiday parks, the Council will permit signage at suitable locations on the National Road network. Where possible signs will be designed to be grouped together to reduce the potential proliferation of signage which may be generated by this. It is not intended that these signs should act as advertising or directional signage, rather the signs will be provided to inform the public of the availability of specific accommodation and facilities in the area.

4.1.3b Bed and Breakfasts and Guesthouses

In line with PD 12/14 published by the Department of the Environment, generally only one fingerpost sign should be allowed for each premises and this should be located at the junction nearest the premises. As the Council undertakes to provide directional signage to all regional and local roads and/or villages/townlands off the national route, it is anticipated that the need for individual signs to bed and breakfasts or guesthouses off national roads will no longer be required. Advance signage will not be permitted. Where signs, which do not comply with this policy, are already in place, these signs may be removed at the end of the licencing period, as allowed for in Monaghan County Council's Facility Information Signs guidelines.



Fig.5 examples of the use of multiple signs for the same facility

4.2 Commercial Signage

To differentiate between tourism signage and commercial signage, commercial signage shall comprise of white lettering on a blue background with a white border. Fingerpost type signs shall be 1,000mm in length, with an option for a double height sign in exceptional circumstances. The provision of the larger two sign will be curtailed to locations where a warrant can be demonstrated, locations where mounting space is available or locations where the larger sign

will not detract from the existing/future signage. Font shall consist of “Transport Heavy”. Individual logos, fonts or symbols shall not be permitted.



Based on PD 12/14 published by the Department of the Environment, generally only one fingerpost sign should be allowed for each commercial premises and this should be located at the junction nearest the premises.

Fig .6 Example of appropriate use of approved signage

As the Council undertake to provide directional signage to all regional and local roads and/or villages/townlands off the national route, it is anticipated that the need for individual signs to commercial premises off national roads will no longer be required. Advance signage will not be permitted. Where signs, which do not comply with this policy, are already in place, these signs may be removed at the end of the licencing period, as allowed for in Monaghan County Council’s Facility Information Signs guidelines.

4.3 Property for Sale / to let

It is recognised that in rural areas it is difficult to direct the public to properties, which may be for sale or to let. To facilitate advertising of properties, estate agent and auctioneer signage will continue to be required. However to prevent signage clutter, detraction from other signage or the obscuring of sightlines at junctions, the permitted signs will be limited to a maximum size of 300mm in height and 500mm width at junctions off national roads in the county. Signage shall be in a form similar to directional signage. Signage will be required to be removed once the property is sold. Approval for such signage will be required from the Council and a deposit required to ensure its removal.



Fig 7. Multiple estate agent signs likely to cause a distraction

4.4 Temporary Signage

Temporary signs have become commonplace on roads within the county. Temporary signs include advertisements, notices for events, community festivals etc. As temporary signage is erected on an ad-hoc basis and is unregulated, it poses a very real hazard to road users. Signage at junctions is mounted at incorrect heights and setbacks, obscuring sightlines from the

junction. In some cases temporary signs obscure directional signage and warning signage. Mobile Signs placed at the road edge, in the hard shoulder or in the grass verge pose a collision hazard. Signage on footpaths obstructs pedestrian activity and acts as a mobility impairment to people with a disability. It has been observed that in some cases inappropriate signage is being used to advertise business, i.e. Variable Message Signs.

Temporary signs also detract from existing licenced signage and results in the erection of additional signs by competitors. In many cases, temporary signage remains in place for sustained periods of time and may not be removed at the appropriate time.

It is acknowledged that **Communities** erect signage to promote events and also to highlight issues. In supporting these it is proposed that signage will be permitted for such events. It may be erected three weeks in advance of the event and shall be removed within 7 days of the conclusion of the event. With regard to signage highlighting issues the Council will consider such applications on their merit.

Advertising consisting of placing placards, posters or bills relating to the visit of any travelling circus, funfair, carnival, show, musicians, players or other travelling entertainment.

In supporting these it is proposed that signage will be permitted for such events. It may be erected 3 weeks in advance of the event and shall be removed within 7 days of the conclusion of the event.

Temporary signage, other than the above, will not be permitted on the National Roads.

All signs erected on national roads require the approval of the Council and where temporary signage is approved a deposit will be required to ensure that the sign is removed within the prescribed period.

Compliance with the Planning Acts is required in all instances.

5. MONITORING SIGNAGE ON NATIONAL ROADS

5.1 Register of signage on national roads.

The Council will maintain a register of all signage approved on the national roads. It will conduct an annual review of signage with a view to taking enforcement action against those who contravene this policy.

5.2 Unauthorised signage

The Council will prepare a separate policy document to address unauthorised signage within the county.

Note: the photographs shown in this document are for illustrative purposes only and do not imply a direct criticism of any individual or business

Appendix A

Policy on the provision of Tourist and Leisure signage on National Road

National Roads Authority

March 2007