



We're just off the Motorway

advice on traffic signs for
tourist businesses

The right direction

You may own the best tourist attraction in the region, or run a wonderful hotel, but how do your customers find their way to you?

The tourist industry has long recognised the need for adequate and distinctive signs for visitors and tourists. This leaflet explains the rules and regulations for directional signs to tourist businesses in England. It does not deal with Scotland and Wales where the regulations are different.

If considering traffic signs for your business you need to bear three points in mind:

- ◆ There is a national system which determines whether you are eligible for tourist signs.
- ◆ The system is implemented locally and is subject to local interpretation.
- ◆ There are different rules for signposting within Greater London (that is, within the M25/A282).

What is the difference between traffic signs and outdoor advertising signs?

Tourist traffic signs should not be confused with outdoor advertisements which are covered by different rules and regulations and are dealt with by another leaflet in this series, Signs for Tourist Businesses. All outdoor advertisements and signs, other than traffic signs, are controlled by the local planning authorities, not the highway authority. Many advertising signs require express consent (similar to planning permission). Traffic signs, including tourism signs, must be approved by the traffic authority.

Types of traffic signs

Direction signs

These are the standard traffic road signs which direct motorists to towns and villages throughout the country. Traffic signs can only be justified by highway safety or traffic management considerations, and rules govern their design and location. Commercial factors are not considered, so tourist businesses are generally not eligible for this type of traffic sign. On occasions a highway authority may erect a direction sign to a tourist attraction or facility if they consider there are traffic management reasons for doing so, eg if the establishment is difficult to find or generates a large amount of traffic.

White on brown tourist signs

White on brown signs for tourist facilities were first introduced in the mid-80s and limited, in the main, to visitor attractions. The criteria for such signs have since been extended to cover a much wider range of tourist facilities. There are no longer any national fixed criteria for white on brown tourist signs and local highway authorities now have a degree of flexibility in deciding policy for their area. Local policy will seek to avoid a confusing proliferation of signs and try to balance road safety, environmental and traffic management needs with the interests of the tourist industry.

Standard symbols are used on the signs to illustrate different types of facility. The symbols are prescribed by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1994 (it is planned to issue revised Regulations, which will prescribe new symbols). Symbols not in the Regulations must be specially authorised by DETR. Where more than one sign is used on a particular route, the first may show the name and the appropriate symbol and subsequent signs just the symbol.

Temporary signs

These convey information to traffic regarding deviations, alternative routes, routes to sporting events and exhibitions, road works, temporary hazards and accidents. They include the distinctive black on yellow (AA) and white on blue (RAC) signs provided for a fee by the motoring organisations who take care of the design and obtain the necessary permission from the authorities. The Cycle Touring Club provides a similar service. Temporary signs may be other colours, which are prescribed by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions.



Who controls the rules and regulations?

The government department responsible for the regulations and for monitoring their implementation is the **Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)**.

Who decides whether I can have signs?

The **Highways Agency** controls signs on motorways and trunk roads, using a network of local agents.

Your **local traffic authority** (often referred to as the **local highway authority**) decides the local rules and controls signs on all other roads, although it often deals with signs on trunk roads and motorways too.

The local traffic authority may be the county council, metropolitan district council, unitary authority, or, in the case of London, the London borough for your area. Some county councils subcontract their responsibility. If in doubt, first contact your county authority, who will advise you on whom to approach.

It is important to apply to the authority responsible for the road where you want your signs to start, closest to your property. If you also want signs on roads which come under a neighbouring authority, liaison should be organised by the authority to which you apply. You should only have to deal with one authority.

If you want to get or improve the tourist signs to your hotel or attraction, we suggest you follow three steps:

FIRST

Find out if you are eligible.

THEN

Decide if your case will fit the local rules.

FINALLY

Make an application.

Am I eligible?

A tourist business or facility is eligible for signs if it can be described as:

‘A permanently established destination or facility that attracts or is used by visitors to an area and which is open to the public without prior booking during its normal opening hours.’

This covers a wide range of tourist attractions and other facilities, such as those listed below.

Tourist attractions

These are places of interest, open to the public, offering recreation, education or historic interest. They include:

- ◆ Visitor centres
- ◆ Theme parks
- ◆ Leisure complexes
- ◆ Historic buildings
- ◆ Museums
- ◆ Parks and gardens
- ◆ Natural attractions – beaches, picnic sites and viewpoints
- ◆ Areas of special interest

Other tourist facilities might include:

- ◆ Hotels, guesthouses and other serviced accommodation
- ◆ Public houses
- ◆ Restaurants
- ◆ Shops
- ◆ Sports venues
- ◆ Theatres
- ◆ Cinemas
- ◆ Concert halls
- ◆ Tourist Information Centres
- ◆ Holiday, touring and camping parks
- ◆ Leisure drives and cycle routes

You are not automatically entitled to tourist traffic signs just because you fall into one of the categories listed. Your local traffic authority is responsible for deciding whether your establishment is entitled to signs.

Does my case fit local rules?

Traffic authorities have local guidelines for tourist signs, which tend to limit the number of signs allowed, both in the interest of **the environment** – a lot of road signs could harm the countryside or street scene, and of **road safety** – too many signs can be confusing and could cause accidents, particularly if traffic is fast moving.

To find out more about the rules in your area:

- ◆ Obtain a copy of the local guidelines from your local traffic authority.
- ◆ Ask the local traffic authority for its opinion.
- ◆ Seek advice from the development department of your Regional Tourist Board on whether similar facilities have signs in your area.

You may find, for example, that local regulations require that:

- ◆ You are open for a minimum period during the year.
- ◆ You are publicised in the tourist guides and at Tourist Information Centres.
- ◆ Your hotel or guest accommodation is accredited by the National Quality Standards run by the English Tourism Council, AA or RAC.
- ◆ Your holiday, touring and camping park has a reasonable number of pitches available for casual and overnight use and is accredited by the British Graded Holiday Park Standard.
- ◆ You have adequate car parking on site or close by.
- ◆ Your craft centre provides regular craft demonstrations for visitors rather than being predominantly a shop.

In some towns and cities signs may not be allowed for individual facilities. Generic signs which direct visitors to 'sea front hotels' or 'historic centre' may be used. Alternatively, pedestrian signs from public transport facilities or car parks may be preferred. Visitors may also be signed to the Tourist Information Centre or other point from which they can get further directions.

Local rules usually impose design standards such as:

- ◆ Signs to no more than six destinations are allowed at any one location.
- ◆ Several destinations should be combined on a single sign.
- ◆ Signing should normally commence from the nearest major access road (A or B road).

Caravan Park



Picnic Site



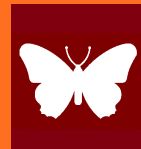
Windmill



Beach



Butterfly Farm



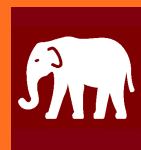
Shire Centre



Historic House



Zoo



Craft Centre



Vineyard



Garden



How do I make an application?

First of all, contact the local traffic authority which covers your premises. Ask for the highways, engineers or surveyors department. They will tell you if you need to involve anyone else, eg the Highways Agency if a sign is needed on a trunk road or motorway. Normally your 'home' traffic authority will undertake any necessary consultation. If in doubt you can ask your Regional Tourist Board for advice.

In general terms, a positive decision will probably be made if the signs can be demonstrated to be helpful to traffic management. The traffic authority is more likely to grant permission for an isolated but popular tourist business than for one in a prominent rural position or congested urban location. The decision on signposting is entirely at the discretion of the traffic authority. There is no right of appeal.

How many signs should I have?

Although you will probably have your own ideas, let the traffic authority handling your application advise you on the number of signs you can have and where they should be. You may need advance signs before the road junction which leads to your premises, or there may be several routes which should be signed. Whichever is the case, the decision will be based on the need for signs to direct motorists safely from the first sign to the premises – and it may be fewer signs than you think. Remember that the final decision lies with the traffic authority.

Important note

There has to be continuity of signs from the first sign to the premises. So, for example, if the Highways Agency consents to signs on a trunk road, but the local highway authority refuses signs on other local roads, you will not be permitted to put up any signs.

How much will signs cost?

All costs must be paid by the applicant. The total amount will depend upon the number of signs needed and their size (larger signs are needed where traffic speeds are higher). Charges cover not only the cost of design and production of the signs, but an amount to cover administration, maintenance and, possibly, replacement, repair of damage, or removal. The cost per sign might range from £100 for a small sign on a rural lane to £6,000 or more for a sign on a motorway. In addition, applications normally must be submitted with a non-returnable fee, usually between £50 to £100.

Motorways and trunk roads

Additional rules for tourist signs on motorways and trunk roads are set out in Signs for Tourist Attractions and Facilities in England: Criteria for Signs on Trunk Roads and Motorways, available from the Highways Agency. Examples of the rules include:

- ◆ Facilities signing on a motorway is limited to motorway service areas.
- ◆ Other attractions should have at least 150,000 visitors a year to qualify for motorway signs.
- ◆ The attraction should normally be within 20 miles of a motorway junction.
- ◆ The number of tourist attractions signed should not exceed four.

Different rules in London

For reasons of volume, different rules apply inside the M25/A282 London orbital route. These rules also apply to signs leading from the M25 to attractions outside London. Most accommodation is still ineligible for signs. The guidelines and criteria are set out in a publication called Tourist Traffic Signs Inside the M25, available from the Highways Agency. This booklet also contains advice on application procedures and sign design. For example:

Attractions that may be signed from or inside the M25 should be those of more than local significance, with adequate parking provision and open to the public without prior booking. They are restricted to: excursion, historic or cultural attractions; sports venues or leisure centres; camping or caravan facilities; nationally recognised Tourist Information Centres.

There are also minimum annual visitor numbers specified before you can qualify for signing from the following roads in London:

From the M25/A282	250,000 visitors
From other motorways	150,000 visitors
From primary routes outside the Inner Ring Road	100,000 visitors

A fuller range of destinations may be signed for pedestrians or bicycles. Within Inner London, pedestrian signing from public transport and suitable car parks is preferred.

Alternative action

- ◆ Have a location map available which you can fax to customers and/or leave with the local Tourist Information Centre.
- ◆ Make sure that details of how to reach your establishment by road, rail, bus and taxi are included in all of your promotional material.
- ◆ If there is a well-known destination nearby which has signs, you can issue directions to follow their signs in your promotional literature and advertising.
- ◆ Work together with other local businesses or through your Regional Tourist Board to obtain generic signs such as 'sea front hotels' to your area or district.

Where to go from here ... further help

There are several publications which set out the rules and regulations on tourist traffic signs. The most useful is: Department of Transport, Circular Roads 3/95: Traffic Signs to Tourist Attractions and Facilities in England. This is available from the DETR Free Literature Unit on 0870 122 6236, fax: 0870 122 6237, or by post from PO Box 236, Wetherby LS23 7NB.

An article called Tourism Signing in England, giving an overview of tourist signing, appeared in Insights September 1996. Contact the Insights office at the English Tourism Council on 020 8563 3362.

Other publications which give the background to the regulatory framework include:

The Design and Use of Directional Informatory Signs, Department of Transport, Local Transport Note 1/94. ISBN: 0115516107. £3.50. Available from The Stationery Office on 0870 600 5522, fax: 020 7873 8247, marked Customer Services.

Traffic signs to Tourist Attractions and Facilities in England: Criteria for Signs on Trunk Roads and Motorways, Highways Agency 1995. Available from DETR Free Literature Unit, details above.

Tourist Traffic Signs Inside the M25, Government Offices and the Highways Agency, 1996. Available from DETR Free Literature Unit, details opposite.

The development department of your Regional Tourist Board may also produce an advisory leaflet giving local information and contacts.

Cumbria Tourist Board	015394 44444
East of England Tourist Board	01473 822922
Heart of England Tourist Board	01905 761100
London Tourist Board	020 7932 2000
Northumbria Tourist Board	0191 375 3000
North West Tourist Board	01942 821222
South East England Tourist Board	01892 540766
Southern Tourist Board	01703 620006
South West Tourism	0870 442 0830
Yorkshire Tourist Board	01904 707961

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