

## **APPENDIX A: APPLYING FOR BROWN & WHITE HIGHWAY SIGNS**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The objective of brown & white signs is to meet the local and strategic needs of visitors and road users in general. Their implementation will be consistent with safe and efficient traffic management and with minimal impact on both the built and rural environment.

The main purpose of brown & white signs is to guide visitors to a tourist destination along the most appropriate route during the latter stages of their journey, particularly where the destination maybe isolated or difficult to find.

Brown & white signs are not an advertising tool and should not be perceived as such. They should not be used as a means for avoiding planning control of advertisements nor as a substitute for good promotional material. Like all other highway directional signs, brown & white signs will only be permitted if they will benefit road users as an aid for navigation and for safety or traffic management reasons.

Policies for UK highways schemes are provided by Central Government via the Department of Transport (DoT) with the Northumberland County Council Highways Department, acting as the delegated authority for policy actions and judgements across the vast majority of the the county. The exceptions are the trunk routes of the A1, A69 and A19 and their associated junctions and intersections which come under the delegated responsibility of Highways England.

The policy actions and criteria detailed below, reflect DoT legislation and replaces any previous approach applied by former district and borough councils within Northumberland. It is understood and accepted that brown & white signs will exist across the county which do not adhere to DoT legislation. These will be subject to individual review in due course.

### **2. DEFINITION OF A TOURIST DESTINATION**

A tourist destination eligible for brown & white signs, refers to a permanently established attraction or facility which:

- Attracts or is used by visitors to the area
- Open to the public without prior booking during normal opening hours

Further eligibility details are provided in Section 4 of this document.

### **3. LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Eligibility does not confer automatic entitlement to brown & white signs. Decisions on signing individual establishments will depend on local circumstances including the number of similar establishments in the area.

New brown & white signs in conjunction with other traffic signs, can have a cumulative detrimental impact on the environment. This is particularly the case in conservation and rural areas but impacts can also extend into settlements where impacts on the visual townscapes and large quantities of “signs clutter” can result.

With possible landscape and environmental impacts in mind, the effects of any potential new signs should be carefully considered by the applicant as this will be a key consideration for the authority in contemplating any applications.

#### **3.1 Rural Environments**

In rural and environmentally sensitive areas, the impact of new signs requires special consideration and more stringent policies and standards maybe applied in order to protect views, features and to ensure that traffic is moved along appropriate routes where impact is minimised.

Northumberland has a number of including protected landscapes Northumberland National Park, Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Should the applicant destination fall within or close to the boundary of these areas or other identifiable sensitive or archeological locations, NCC Highways may seek specific opinion and permission to proceed from the relevant bodies. In some cases this may require specific impact investigations, the cost of which will have to be met by the applicant.

#### **3.2 Towns & Villages**

In the case of towns and villages, it is likely that multiple offerings of some destinations such as cafes, pubs and serviced accommodation will exist within a small area, so to avoid a situation where all such outlets are potentially signed, creating visual clutter and likely confusion thus undermining the safe traffic management justification for signing, permissions will not be considered for signs for such facilities which exist within settlements. This applies to signing such facilities from outside of the town or village as it will not be possible to create a coherent and consistent signage regime along the full route in the absence of any signs within the built up area.

The above also considers the perception that visitors will hold an expectation of some services being readily available within signed settlements, therefore any specific signing to facilities such as cafes, pubs and accommodation will be presenting itself as advertising rather than a traffic management medium.

The existence of facilities are frequently and adequately represented by “Services” signs located on the margins of settlements which represent the existence of facilities via symbols. Where these do not exist, expressions of interest are invited from town and parish councils.

#### **4. DESTINATIONS POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE FOR BROWN & WHITE SIGNS**

##### **4.1 Visitor Attractions**

Including: visitor centres, historic buildings, museums, galleries, theme parks, zoos, parks & gardens, natural and landscape attractions such as nature reserves, beaches and viewpoints, areas of special interest, tourist routes, sports centres, theatres and cinemas.

Eligibility: **YES**

Subject to evidence being provided which demonstrates:

- Evidence that the destination is open for business for a minimum of 6 consecutive months between March and October each year including a minimum of 24 weekend days within that period.
- Adequate on-site parking must be available including provisions for disabled badge holders. If on site parking is not possible, suitable “park and ride” provisions should be made but the parking location should form the end destination for the proposed signage scheme.
- Registration and/or listing with Northumberland Tourism.
- A recognised form of quality accreditation
- Facilities must be adequately advertised, including location, opening times, facilities, etc.
- Front of house staff having been adequately trained in Customer Service.

##### **4.2 Hotels, Guesthouses, Bed & Breakfasts**

Eligibility: **ONLY IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES**

Signing will only be considered for establishments which are located away from settlements and main routes. For the avoidance of any doubt, that means that any establishment

located within a settlement (town, village or hamlet) and/or directly located on an A, B or C class highway, will not be eligible for signing. Should the establishment be proven as remote and isolated destination, further evidence would be required from the applicant which illustrates:

- That the premise is open for business for a minimum of 10 consecutive month each year.
- That adequate on-site or nearby parking being available including provisions for disabled badge holders.
- Registration and/or listing with Northumberland Tourism.
- A recognised form of quality accreditation
- That the destination is adequately advertised, including location, opening times, facilities, etc.
- Front of house staff having been adequately trained in Customer Service.

### **4.3 Self Catering Accommodation**

Eligibility: **NO**

The nature of self catering accommodation is that it is pre-booked and not perceived as being available the public without prior booking during normal opening hours. Self catering business is usually booked in advance and it is an obligation of the organisation concerned to ensure that their customers are supplied with adequate advance directions without the need of specific signing.

### **4.4 Public Houses**

Eligibility: **ONLY IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES**

Signing will only be considered for establishments which are located away from settlements and main routes. For the avoidance of any doubt, that means that any establishment located within a settlement (town, village or hamlet) and/or directly located on an A, B or C class highway, will not be eligible for signing. Should the establishment be proven as remote and isolated destination, further evidence would be required from the applicant which illustrates:

- That the premise is open for business for a minimum of 10 consecutive month each year.
- That adequate on-site or nearby parking being available including provisions for disabled badge holders.
- Registration and/or listing with Northumberland Tourism.
- A recognised form of quality accreditation

- That facilities are adequately advertised, including location, opening times, facilities, etc.
- That front of house staff having been adequately trained in Customer Service.

#### **4.5 Restaurants and Cafes (including ice cream parlours)**

Eligibility: **ONLY IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES**

Signing will only be considered for establishments which are located away from settlements and main routes. For the avoidance of any doubt, that means that any establishment located within a settlement (town, village or hamlet) and/or directly located on an A, B or C class highway, will not be eligible for signing. Should the establishment be proven as remote and isolated destination, further evidence would be required from the applicant which illustrates:

- That the premise is open for business for a minimum of 6 consecutive months between March and October each year including a minimum of 24 weekend days within that period.
- That adequate on-site or nearby parking being available including provisions for disabled badge holders.
- Registration and/or listing with Northumberland Tourism.
- A recognised form of quality accreditation
- That facilities are adequately advertised, including location, opening times, facilities, etc.
- That front of house staff having been adequately trained in Customer Service.

#### **4.6 Retail**

Eligibility: **ONLY IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES**

Retail parks, shopping centres, garden centres, supermarkets, individual shops, etc. are not usually eligible for brown & white signing. The case for signing other retail establishments will be based on the following eligibility criteria.

An exception potentially applies if evidence can be provided that illustrate that the destination holds facilities which are special interest to tourists and that publicity is aimed at visitors from outside of the local area. In such cases, as well as satisfying the criteria outlined in section 4.1, the establishment should offer at least one of the following:

- Tours of facilities or demonstrations
- Interpretative displays for tourists

#### 4.7 Cinemas & Theatres

Eligibility: **YES**

Subject to evidence being provided which demonstrates:

- Adequate on-site parking must be available including provisions for disabled badge holders. If on site parking is not possible, suitable “park and ride” provisions should be made but the parking location should form the end destination for the proposed signage scheme.
- Registration and/or listing with Northumberland Tourism.
- Facilities must be adequately advertised, including location, opening times, facilities, etc.
- Front of house staff having been adequately trained in Customer Service.

#### 4.8 Touring Camping & Caravan Sites

Eligibility: **YES**

Subject to evidence being provided which demonstrates:

- The establishment has a minimum of 20 pitches for casual overnight use by touring caravans and tents.
- That the premise is open for business for a minimum of 6 consecutive months between March and October each year
- Adequate on-site parking must be available including provisions for disabled badge holders. If on site parking is not possible, suitable “park and ride” provisions should be made but the parking location should form the end destination for the proposed signage scheme.
- Registration and/or listing with Northumberland Tourism.
- Facilities must be adequately advertised, including location, opening times, facilities, etc.
- Front of house staff having been adequately trained in Customer Service.

#### 4.9 Static Caravan Sites

Eligibility: **NO**

Static caravan sites are a form of self catering. The nature of self catering accommodation is that it is pre-booked and not perceived as being available the public without prior booking during normal opening hours. Self catering business is usually booked in advance and it is an

obligation of the organisation concerned to ensure that their customers are supplied with adequate advance directions without the need of specific signing.

#### **4.10 Owner Occupied Holiday Parks & Caravan Sites**

Eligibility: **NO**

Such destinations are not open or available to available the public. Facilities within the destination such as amusements and swimming pools maybe eligible for signs if the eligibility terms of sections 4.1 and 4.12 can be satisfied. In such cases, it is unlikely that the name of the holiday park will be included within the sign detail, with symbols and/or generic descriptions being applied.

#### **4.11 Youth Hostels**

Eligibility: **YES**

Subject to evidence being provided which demonstrates:

- That the premise is open for business for a minimum of 10 consecutive month each year.
- Adequate on-site parking must being available including provisions for disabled badge holders. If on site parking is not possible, suitable “park and ride” provisions should be made but the parking location should form the end destination for the proposed signage scheme.
- Registration and/or listing with Northumberland Tourism.
- Facilities must be adequately advertised, including location, opening times, facilities, etc.
- Front of house staff having been adequately trained in Customer Service.

#### **4.12 Recreational Facilities**

Including parks, gardens, country parks and beaches. Facilities such as leisure centres, and swimming pools are included as long as visitors are able to gain entry and use of facilities without pre-booking.

Eligibility: **YES**

Subject to evidence being provided which demonstrates:

- Adequate on-site parking must being available including provisions for disabled badge holders. If on site parking is not possible, suitable “park and ride” provisions

should be made but the parking location should form the end destination for the proposed signage scheme.

- Registration and/or listing with Northumberland Tourism.
- Facilities must be adequately advertised, including location, opening times, facilities, etc.
- Front of house staff having been adequately trained in Customer Service.

## **5. SIGNING CONTINUITY & EXTENT**

There must be continuity of signing from the first sign to the destination. Upon receipt of an application, NCC will make the final assessments on the locations of signs and their distance from a tourist destination based on appropriateness to the location and traffic management needs. Applicants will have the opportunity to make suggestions within the application form.

For most attractions and all facilities, it is likely that signing would only be appropriate within 2 or 3 miles (i.e. the distance travelled by the road user from the first sign to the destination). The last signs (i.e. those closest to the destination) are considered as the most important from a traffic management point of view therefore, for destinations located on main routes, only nearby signing is likely to be approved. In exceptional cases such as a major attraction in a remote area, signing maybe justified from further away.

## **6. APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **6.1 Application Form Completion**

Having given specific consideration to the eligibility criteria (as per section 4 of this document), download an application form and complete as fully as possible, providing evidence of adherence to eligibility criteria such as opening hours, parking facilities, registrations, accreditations and training. Feel free to include photographs and diagrams.

### **6.1 Assessment Fee**

The base cost of assessing and processing a brown & white signs application is £350 + Vat. For larger and potentially more complex schemes, a higher initial fee maybe required. The fee covers:

- The cost of assessment against the relevant DoT policies
- The cost of site survey works
- Processing into a final plan



Print the completed application form and post, along with the required supplementary evidence to:

Richard McKenzie, Senior Programme Officer (Highways Improvements), County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland. NE61 2EF

*Email: richard.mckenzie@northumberland.gov.uk*

*Tel: 01670 624099*

Enclose a cheque made payable to "Northumberland County Council" for £420.00 (£350 + vat at 20%).

It would also be possible to hand the application into County Hall reception (address above).

Before submitting any brown & white sign enquiry or application, the potential applicant is strongly urged to consider the full content of this document and in particular the eligibility criteria as outlined in section 4 and the environmental impact considerations described in section 2 as, should an application be received which is rejected prior to a detailed assessment commencing, i.e. on the basis of it not satisfying the fundamental eligibility criteria or environment impact considerations, £50 of the application fee will be retained to meet administrative costs.

## **7. IMPLEMENTATION OF SIGNS**

In the case of successful applications:

- The applicant will be notified of acceptance by NCC Highways.
- Highways will assess the application in the field, against visual impact, road safety and traffic management aspects.
- Highways will produce a plan of works and provide the applicant with a full cost of the scheme.

Upon receiving the plan of works and costed scheme, the applicant should respond within 4 weeks by making full advance payment of the quoted cost. NCC Highways will then progress the scheme to conclusion. This will normally take a minimum of 12 weeks.

If the applicant chooses not to progress for whatever reason, the application fee will be retained in full by NCC to cover the incurred site survey costs and plans of works.

If anticipated signing requirements are likely to include the trunk routes of the A1, A69 or A19 including their intersections, it is strongly recommended that contact with Highways England in the first instance with perceived requirements.

Please note that due to a number of factors, it is not possible to provide an accurate cost estimate without conducting the specific assessment works. This is due to a number of factors including:

- The quantity of signs required to provide a coherent regime
- The size of signs in relation to content and/or the average speed of passing traffic
- Whether new fixing poles would be required
- Whether traffic management measures would be necessary while installation work took place
- Whether specialist permissions and surveys would be required (e.g. archeological investigations)

Whilst it is difficult to provide any initial menu of costs, applicants are advised to make allowance for an average of £700 per sign.

## **8. AFTERCARE, CONTROL & REMOVAL**

As the delegated authority for highways and the highway margins, signs will exist within the control and inferred ownership of NCC.

NCC Highways shall be entitled to remove, reposition or alter the design of signs if it considered necessary, in the interests of road safety and traffic management, or for the purpose of accommodating other traffic signs.

### **8.1 Inspections**

NCC Highways will perform occasional ad-hoc audits of signs along with regular highway duties. These actions will highlight signs which have been acquired and placed without adherence to the NCC process and destinations which no longer satisfy eligibility criteria for whatever reason.

### **8.2 Damaged Signs**

In the event of damage to signs, where costs cannot be obtained from a third party the Council will, as soon as practicable, arrange for the appropriate work of repair or replacement of the signs in consultation with the destination. In the event of such works of

repair or replacement being carried out, the destination will be required to reimburse the actual costs of the works.

If a need for signs replacement arises as a result of normal wear and tear, NCC will inform the destination of the need for repair or replacement and will agree a subsequent action. In the event of such works of repair or replacement being carried out, the destination will be required to reimburse the actual costs of the works.

### **8.3 Non-Approved Signs**

Signs which have been erected by businesses, either for advertising or directional purposes, which have not received the appropriate statutory planning and/or highways approvals, shall be removed by the County Council providing that the council give 28 days notice of the intention to remove the sign to the applicant. Any incurred removal costs will be recovered from the business/attraction in question.

### **8.4 Business Closures & Change of Service**

It is inevitable that some signed facilities will subsequently close, change functions and potentially lose eligibility status through not maintaining accreditations and/or tourism body registration or changing service which takes them outside of eligibility. In such cases, the signs will be removed by NCC with the cost of removal recovered from the business where possible, especially if the business has made a deliberate decision to allow accreditations and registrations to elapse and where the business has changed operation to take it outside of brown & white signing eligibility.

## **9. ALTERNATIVE SIGNING ACTIONS**

It is recognised that destinations, which may fall outside of the eligibility for brown & white signs, may perceive a business necessity to create directional signing through other means. In such cases, destinations are advised to consider the following guidance and to consult with parish and town councils before submitting any planning application for advertising consent.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/outdoor-advertisements-and-signs-a-guide-for-advertisers>