

South Dublin County Council
POLICY ON WAY-FINDING SIGNS ON
PUBLIC ROADS

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Effective Date: 1st January 2018

1. Introduction / Purpose and Context

South Dublin County Council (“SDCC”) is a relatively densely populated county within the GDA and as such, the demands of industry and the general public for way-finding are pronounced. That said, advances in technology have reduced dependence on road signage with a variety of electronic devices taking citizens to their specified destination.

The requirement for a single policy document that sets out the procedure into which signage application are made, assessed and decided upon is timely.

It is intended that this document will bring clarity to the process in the form of a procedure that will be legible, concise and appropriate for the needs of the County.

This policy relates only to way-finding signs on public roads, as defined by Section 254(d) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

Way-finding signs may be required for:

- tourist accommodation (white lettering on brown background) *
- tourist attractions (white lettering on brown background) *
- cultural, sporting (white lettering on brown background) *
- commercial and industrial premises. (distinctive colouring) *

* PD 12/14 1988 (*Official Strategy for the use of tourist signage*).

2. Scope

This policy does not relate to:

- Signage on private land.
Such signage requires approval under the Planning and Development Acts, 2000 – 2006.
- Temporary signs on either private or public land.
Such signage requires approval from the Council under the Litter Pollution Acts, 1997 – 2003.

3. Legal Framework

Under Section 71 of the Roads Act, 1993 (as amended) any person who without lawful authority or the consent of a Roads Authority erects, places or retains on a public road any structure or thing used for the purpose of advertising, the sale of goods, the provision of

services or other similar purpose shall be guilty of an offence. Also under Section 254(9) of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended), it is an offence to erect, construct, place or maintain an appliance, apparatus or structure on, under, over or along any public road without having a licence to do so.

If any way-finding structure has not been authorised by the Local Authority, it is an unauthorised structure.

A Local Authority has power to remove an unauthorised structure from the public road under Section 71 of the Roads Act, 1993. There are penalties for the removal of such signage.

Way-finding signs of a temporary nature, e.g. signs advertising a particular event, require the approval of the Council's Environment Department under the Litter Pollution Acts, 1997-2003.

4. Policy Objectives

It is the policy of South Dublin County Council:

- That way-finding signs be designed and located in accordance with best practice for use by all road users, including persons with physical disabilities and vision impairments
- To have regard to Transport Infrastructure Ireland's (TII's) Policy Provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads
- To adopt consistent technical standards, which allow easier recognition and understanding by the road user
- To comply with the Official Languages Act, 2003, as appropriate
- To encourage the rationalisation of way-finding signs and to utilise existing structures, where appropriate
- To remove unauthorised way-finding signs
- To process applications in accordance with the criteria set out in this policy
- To prioritise approvals in favour of those that are directing larger volumes of traffic to specified location(s)
- To avoid clutter and support legibility at all signage locations
- To create an environment that treats signage as a temporary solution to way-finding through the encouragement towards electronic, Eircode and geographical directional supports.

5. Assessment Criteria

All applications for way-finding signs will be assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

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1. Signs will only be considered where a directional “need” can be demonstrated. In this context the term “need” relates to the requirements of the travelling public and not the desire of the applicant to advertise as widely as possible. Each such need will be assessed on its merits. In relation to public institutions, SDCC will determine the necessity for directional signs.
 2. Fingerpost signage is the preferred type of way-finding structure. Other types will not be considered unless a “need” can be demonstrated.
 3. Applications for way-finding signs will be refused where they give rise to a potential traffic hazard. In general, way-finding signs will not be permitted at traffic signals, at locations where they obstruct sight lines or compete with other traffic signs, give rise to confusion for road users or endanger traffic safety.
 4. Applications for way-finding signs along national routes and along approach roads to towns and villages will generally not be permitted, except for tourist attractions of national or regional importance. Reference should be made to Transport Infrastructure Ireland’s (TII’s) Policy on the Provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads.
 5. The number of way-finding signs for any one premises shall be kept to a minimum and will generally be restricted to a maximum of two in the local area. In exceptional cases this maximum may be exceeded at the discretion of SDCC.
 6. The number of way-finding signs that will be permitted on any one pole will be strictly limited by SDCC. In the event of multiple applications for way-finding signs at any particular location, priority will be given to approved applicants on a first come first served basis and will be for a maximum period of 12 months where demand exceeds available space.
 7. Applications for way-finding signs shall comply with the requirements of the Traffic Signs Manual published by Department of the Environment. All lettering, logos and symbols are subject to the approval of SDCC. In general, the use of the standard brown background and white lettering will be preferred.
 8. There will be a maximum of 3 no. signs per pole.
 9. Where there is a demand for additional signage, licences will only be granted for 12 months on a rotational basis.

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10. As part of the licensing process, applicants will be required to demonstrate that they are making other efforts to raise awareness of their location such as a Website, Eircode, National Grid Coordinates etc.
 11. Signage is seen as a transient. Accordingly, it is expected that the maximum period an applicant would apply for would be 3 years. In locations of high demand, natural beauty, high traffic and pedestrian volumes, we would anticipate granting signage licence for only 1 year with a view to further assessment after this period.
 12. In all locations, SDCC reserve the right to temporarily or permanently suspend a licence.

6. Unauthorised Way-finding Signs

Unauthorised way-finding signs can give rise to a potential traffic hazard and can hinder the reasonable use of the public road. In addition, such signs can intrude upon the character and visual amenity of an area and can create a nuisance.

All way-finding signs on the public road must be authorised by South Dublin County Council by way of a licence. If a way-finding structure has not been authorised by the Council, it is an unauthorised structure.

Under section 254(9) of Planning and Development Act, 2000 any person who erects an advertisement structure on the public road without having a licence, otherwise than in accordance with a licence or in contravention of any condition of a licence shall be guilty of an offence.

Under Section 71 of the Roads Act, 1993 it is also an offence to erect a sign or other structure on a public road without the consent of SDCC. The Council has the power to remove, store and dispose of an unauthorised structure from the public road. Owners of such signs are liable for any costs incurred.

Extract from the relevant legislation are contained in Appendix 1.

7. Regulation of existing signage

Since SDCC came into existence and prior to the development of electronic way-finding systems, citizens were far more reliant on signage than they are today. Signage was erected in many instances by businesses often without any correspondence with the County Council.

From the date of the adoption of this policy, the procedure for dealing with existing signs will be as follows:

6. (a) Signage that was erected under licence but not subject to annual renewal

- (i) SDCC will establish if the business or premises still exists.
- (ii) If it still exists, the venue will be required to apply for an annual/multi-annual way-finding signage licence. The application will be subject to a revised technical inspection in line with this policy.
- (iii) If the venue does not exist, does not apply for a licence or has their application for a licence refused, the sign will be removed and stored in accordance with the provisions of S71 of the Roads Act, 1993 for collection and/or later disposal.

6. (b) Signage that was erected prior to licensing requirement or not formalised through licence

- (i) SDCC will establish if the business or premises still exists
- (ii) If it still exists, the venue will be required to regularise their signage through the official application process. The associated costs will be based on a site survey.
- (iii) If the venue does not exist, does not apply to regularise their signage or has their application refused, the sign will be removed and stored in accordance with the provisions of S71 of the Roads Act, 1993 for collection and/or later disposal.

8. Costs per sign location

It is a condition of any licence granted by SDCC that we design and install all elements of the sign. The costs associated with this are as follows:

Design and Installation Costs:	
Fingerpost sign, not exceeding 1 metre in length	€600 per sign
Any other sign, advertisement sign or device (pole mounted or free standing) over 1 metre in length	Priced individually per sign

In addition, the annual licence costs per location are set out in the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011. (Statutory Instrument 454 of 2011)

Annual Licence Fees:	
1 year licence for standard fingerpost sign	€50 per sign
1 year licence for larger signs	€630 per sign

Appendix 1

Section 71 of the Roads Act, 1993

Unauthorised signs, caravans, vehicles, etc. on public roads.

71.—(1) (a) 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.

(b) A consent under *paragraph (a)* may be given by the road authority subject to such conditions, restrictions or requirements as it thinks fit and any person who fails to comply with such conditions, restrictions or requirements shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) Without prejudice to the liability of any person under *subsection (1)*, where there is a contravention of that subsection in the case of any sign or advertisement, the person on whose behalf the sign or advertisement is exhibited shall be deemed also to have contravened that subsection.

(3) Notwithstanding any other enactment, an authorised person may remove a sign, caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing to which *subsection (1)* applies.

(4) An authorised person may store, or procure the storage of, a sign, caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing removed by him under *subsection (3)*.

(5) Where the name and address of the owner of a sign, caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing removed and stored under this section can be ascertained by reasonable inquiry, the road authority or the Commissioner shall serve a notice upon the owner informing him of its removal and storage and of the address of the place where it may be claimed and recovered, requiring him to claim and recover it within one month of the date of the service of the notice and informing him of the statutory consequences of his failure to do so.

(6) A sign, caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing removed and stored under this section shall be given to a person claiming it if, but only if, he makes a declaration in writing that he is the owner of the sign, caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing or is authorised by its owner to claim it and, at the discretion of the road authority concerned or the Commissioner, pays the amount of the expenditure reasonably incurred in removing and storing it.

(7) The road authority concerned or the Commissioner may dispose, or procure the disposal, of a sign, caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing removed and stored under this section if—

(a) the owner of the sign, caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing fails to claim it and remove it from the place where it is stored within one month of the date on which a notice under *subsection (5)* was served on him, or

(b) the name and address of the owner of the sign, caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing cannot be ascertained by reasonable inquiry.

(8) A sign, caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing shall not be disposed of under this section within six weeks of the date of its removal under this section.

(9) In this section—

“authorised person” means—

(a) a person authorised in writing by a road authority for the purposes of this section,

(b) a member of the Garda Síochána;

“sign” includes any sign, hoarding or other structure used for the purposes of advertising.

(10) This section shall not apply to a sign which relates to a presidential election within the meaning of the Presidential Elections Act, 1937, a general election or a bye-election, within the meaning, in each case, of the Electoral Act, 1923, a local election, a referendum, within the meaning of the Referendum Act, 1942, or an election of members of the European Parliament, unless the sign has been in position for seven days or longer after the latest day upon which the poll was taken for the election, bye-election or referendum concerned.

Appendix 2

Section 254 of Planning and Development Act, 2000

Licensing of
appliances and
cables, etc., on
public roads.

254.—(1)
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) A person applying for a licence under this section shall furnish to the planning authority such plans and other information concerning the position, design and capacity of the appliance, apparatus or structure as the authority may require.

(4) A licence may be granted under this section by the planning authority for such period and upon such conditions as the authority may specify, including conditions in relation to location and design, and where in the opinion of the planning authority by reason of the increase or alteration of traffic on the road or of the widening of the road or of any improvement of or relating to the road, the appliance, apparatus or structure causes an obstruction or becomes dangerous, the authority may by notice in writing withdraw the licence and require the licensee to remove the appliance, apparatus or structure at his or her own expense.

(5) In considering an application for a licence under this section a planning authority, or the Board on appeal, shall have regard to—

- (a) the proper planning and sustainable development of the area,
- (b) any relevant provisions of the development plan, or a local area plan,
- (c) the number and location of existing appliances, apparatuses or structures on, under, over or along the public road, and

(d) the convenience and safety of road users including pedestrians.

(6) (a) Any person may, in relation to the granting, refusing, withdrawing or continuing of a licence under this section or to the conditions specified by the planning authority for such a licence, appeal to the Board.

(b) Where an appeal under this section is allowed, the Board shall give such directions with respect to the withdrawing, granting or altering of a licence under this section as may be appropriate, and the planning authority shall comply therewith.

(7) Development carried out in accordance with a licence under this section shall be exempted development for the purposes of this Act.

(8) A person shall not be entitled solely by reason of a licence under this section to erect, construct, place or maintain on, under, over or along a public road any appliance, apparatus or structure.

(9) Subject to *subsection (10)*, any person who—

(a) erects, constructs, places or maintains an appliance, apparatus or structure referred to in *subsection (1)* on, under, over or along any public road without having a licence under this section to do so,

(b) erects, constructs, places or maintains such an appliance, apparatus or structure on, under, over or along any public road otherwise than in accordance with a licence under this section, or

(c) contravenes any condition subject to which a licence has been granted to him or her under this section,

shall be guilty of an offence.

(10) (a) A planning authority may, by virtue of this subsection, itself erect, construct, place or maintain, on, under, over or along a public road any appliance, apparatus or structure referred to in *subsection (1)*, and it shall not be necessary for the planning authority to have a licence under this section.

(b) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as empowering a planning authority to hinder the reasonable use of a public road by the public or any person entitled to use it or as empowering a planning authority to create a nuisance to the owner or occupier of premises adjacent to the public road.

(11) Where a planning authority is not the road authority for the purposes of national or regional roads in its area, it shall not grant a licence under this section in respect of any appliance, apparatus or structure on, under, over or along a national or regional road or erect, construct or place any appliance, apparatus or structure on, under, over or along a national or regional road except after consultation with the authority which is the road authority for those purposes.

Appendix 3

Policy Statement on Traffic Hazards:

For the purposes of clarity, traffic hazards are defined as any objects placed on the road, footpath or private property that can be seen from the road and cause a visibility impairment or distraction to road users.

1. No advertisement, sign or other notification of any form may be erected on public or private property without obtaining written support from the Traffic Section of SDCC.
2. Any object that is granted a licence by SDCC will be required to satisfy SDCC Transport Department that it does not cause a visibility impairment, or a distraction to any road user.
3. All statutory and non-statutory road signage, planting, public lighting columns etc. locations will be assessed from a traffic hazard point of view.
4. All non-statutory road signage applications must maximise the use of colour and symbols with the specified signage dimensions to minimise the required cognitive recognition mechanism.
5. A proliferation of signage at a given location will not be permitted by the traffic section and sign rotation of other similar periodic display policies will be adopted by SDCC in the interest of spreading the limited available advertising space for the benefit of all users.
6. As part of the licensing process, applicants will be required to demonstrate that they are making other efforts to raise awareness of their location such as a Website, Eircode, National Grid Coordinates etc.
7. Signage is seen as a transient. Accordingly, it is expected that the maximum period an applicant would apply for would be 3 years, annually renewable. In locations of high demand, natural beauty, high traffic and pedestrian volumes we would anticipate granting signage licence for only 1 year with a view to further assessment after this period.

Made Under the Official Seal

of

South Dublin County Council

Dated this day of 2018

Present when the official seal of South Dublin County Council was
affixed hereto:

Laura Leonard, A/Director of Services
Land Use, Planning and Transportation

This policy is effective from 1st January, 2018