

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 28 JUNE 2007

SIGNAGE IN THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

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Summary

This paper introduces three key documents and the process through which they have been produced:

- a draft overarching Signage Strategy for the National Park
- proposals for boundary markers
- initial proposals to rationalise existing signs.

Approval by the Authority will enable the installation of boundary markers and the process of rationalising National Park signs to start.

Recommendations

- 1 To note and comment on the draft Signage Strategy as work in progress, especially the underlying principles in section 5**
- 2 To approve proposals for boundary markers and priority locations for installation, subject to individual site assessments with the Highway Authority and Highways Agency**
- 3 To note progress on the Sign Rationalisation Action Plan, and approve in principle the removal of signs where agreement has been reached amongst stakeholders. (Section 2 of the Action Plan)**

Resources and Corporate Plan

Included in 2007 – 2008 budget:

- £30,000 for boundary markers
- £5,000 for sign rationalisation

Corporate Plan U3: Improve everyone's understanding and awareness of the National Park

Papers

NFNPA 189/07	Cover paper
NFNPA 189/07 Annex 1	Draft Signage Strategy for the National Park
NFNPA 189/07 Annex 2	Boundary Markers proposals
NFNPA 189/07 Annex 3	Signage Rationalisation Action Plan
NFNPA 111/06	Boundary Markers and related signage issues

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1 Background

- 1.1 Many highway signs in the National Park appear to be poorly designed, located or maintained.
- 1.2 A desire to reduce the frequency of animal accidents, recent pressure to follow national awareness campaigns and attempts to reduce car-related crime have resulted in signage which does not respect the special qualities of the National Park landscape.
- 1.3 The Authority's Corporate Plan 2007-2008 (U3) includes the following action:
 - Reduce the impact of signs through developing and implementing a plan for removal, rationalisation and replacement, incorporating common design elements, wherever possible, working in partnership with the highway authorities;
 - Complete design, construction and installation of boundary markers at all priority sites. Boundary marker installation may extend into 2008-2009, depending upon available resources.

2 Boundary Markers and Signage Advisory Group

- 2.1 The Authority set up a Boundary Markers and Signage Advisory Group (the Group) with representation from Authority members and officers, the Verderers, Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission. The Group has met three times to look at underlying principles for signage, proposals for rationalisation of signs and proposals for boundary markers. Key results of this work are contained in **Annexes 1, 2 and 3**.

3 Draft Signage Strategy

- 3.1 The draft Strategy (**Annex 1**) aims to establish a framework which will guide proposals and action to reduce signage clutter, encourage better presentation of necessary existing signs, and improve the design of any new signs within the National Park. It concentrates on the countryside outside settlements, and primarily on highway signs. It is being developed on the basis of guidance from the Group and input

from other key stakeholders where relevant. It is presented now as 'work in progress' but to enable members to see the context in which specific work e.g. on boundary markers, is taking place and to enable action on agreed areas to be initiated in advance of completion of more controversial aspects of the Strategy.

- 3.2 The Strategy is intended for adoption by the key organisations with responsibilities for signage in the National Park (Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire County Council, New Forest District Council, Salisbury District Council and Test Valley Borough Council and Forestry Commission) as well as the Authority.
- 3.3 The Authority has a strategic role in ensuring that signage within the National Park reflects national park purposes by:
 - guiding and influencing signage to ensure that the special qualities of the National Park are conserved and enhanced – particularly as regards visual impact;
 - guiding, influencing and in some cases delivering signage which enables people to enjoy and understand the National Park (for example installing boundary markers).
- 3.4 Two aspects of signage have still to be progressed before a final Signage Strategy can be drafted.
 - i) Agreement has yet to be reached on replacement signage for the large shield-shaped signs warning drivers about the risk of animal accidents installed just inside the main entrance points to the Open Forest. A range of messages is currently conveyed through these signs. The Group agrees that from a landscape point of view, less obtrusive signs would be preferred. Some stakeholders are concerned that provision is made to convey a range of messages that they consider important. This has an impact on the design and size of replacement signs, with potential landscape implications.
 - ii) Hampshire County Council has commissioned an audit of signs on the B3054 between Lyndhurst and Dibden Purlieu. This will enable a proper assessment to be made of the opportunities to rationalise numerous signs on this typical stretch of New Forest road and the costs of implementation. In turn this will make possible realistic plans for other roads to be drawn up.
- 3.5 The underlying principles in section 5.1 of the draft Strategy have been drawn up by the Boundary Markers and Signage Advisory Group and should guide any programmes of work involving signage, including discussions about animal accident warning signs and plans following

on from the B3054 audit. Members' comments were sought on the first draft in the summer of 2006.

Recommendation 1

To note and comment on the draft Signage Strategy, especially the underlying principles in section 5.

4 Boundary Markers Proposals

- 4.1 The agreed underlying principles for signage have greatly influenced the work on boundary markers.
- 4.2 Following initial research into options for marking the boundary of the National Park, Imagemakers Design and Consulting were appointed to recommend designs and assist the Advisory Group in identifying any opportunities for a common design element among signs that might increase the sense of place.
- 4.3 Numerous potential locations for boundary markers were considered, together with alternative ways in which awareness of the National Park might be increased. A list of priority locations was agreed.
- 4.4 A range of options for boundary markers was considered and those showing most promise were worked up and costed although some elements of the specification e.g. local materials, local manufacturer and materials reflecting the local environment have inevitably constrained the design. A prototype was produced and taken to boundary locations to see what it might look like in situ and further prototypes have been brought to this Authority meeting.
- 4.5 **Annex 2** summarises the recommendations of the Advisory Group for boundary markers. Approval by the Authority will enable work on production and installation to start. Specific issues for the Authority to endorse are:
 - the design concept (Young Oak/Ancient Oak)
 - use of Oak and Douglas Fir
 - use of colour logo and text (compared with a white reversed-out logo)
 - use of the 3D 'special locations' sign where appropriate.
- 4.6 Because it is very difficult to be sure how visible markers will be, especially to traffic passing at speed, it is recommended that several markers are installed in the first instance, and that the Advisory Group reviews their size, design and impact before the remainder are produced.

Recommendation 2

To approve proposals for boundary markers and priority locations for installation.

5 Signage Rationalisation Action Plan

5.1 There are significant opportunities to rationalise signs in the New Forest, both statutory and non-statutory, though some of the actions may take many years to complete. **Annex 3** details the following:

- recommendations for signs for which removal already has widespread agreement amongst stakeholders including the Group (Section 2 of the Action Plan);
- options being considered for signs for which further work is needed before agreement can be reached.

Recommendation 3

To note progress on the Sign Rationalisation Action Plan, and approve in principle the removal of signs where agreement has been reached amongst stakeholders (Section 2 of the Action Plan).