

How to apply for tourism signs

Kent County Council Highways and Transportation (KCC Highways) control signs on local roads (excluding Medway) and sets out local policy on brown signs for tourist destinations.

The Highways Agency controls signs on motorway and trunk roads. Its policy on brown signs is set out in a national standard (TD 52/04) contained in the 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges'. Applications for signing on the Highway Agency's network therefore need to be made via their contact centre and separately to that for Kent County Council's road network.

Tourism brown signs are designed to help direct visitors to a tourist destination along the latter stages of their journey. They are not for advertising or promotional purposes and will only be approved if a traffic management need can be proved.

If you are considering applying for brown signs, we suggest you follow these three steps:

- 1 First:** Find out whether your business qualifies as a tourist destination.
- 2 Second:** Find out whether your business is eligible for signing: Does it meet the requirements?
- 3 Third:** Make an application.

1 First Step: Does your business qualify as a tourist destination?

A **tourist destination** is defined as:

“A permanently established *attraction* or *facility* which 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 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:

- Pleasure / Theme Parks
- Historic buildings
- Museums / Galleries
- Zoos / Wildlife Parks
- Parks / Gardens / Vineyards
- Areas of special interest
- Natural attractions – nature reserves, beaches and viewpoints
- Pottery / Craft centres

Tourist facilities: these are places where visitors can rest, take refreshment and/or obtain information. They include:

- Hotels, guesthouses and other serviced accommodation
- Some self-catering accommodation
- Youth Hostels
- Holiday, touring and camping parks
- Some sports and leisure facilities
- Public Houses
- Restaurants, coffee shops and tea rooms
- Picnic sites, country parks, woodland recreation areas.
- National Parks / Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Country tours and routes
- Fisheries
- Tourist Information Centres

Facilities not eligible: these include unmanned tourist information boards and some sports and leisure facilities. Certain retail establishments, exhibition centres and colleges / universities will only be considered for conventional black and white directional signing provided the facility does not front onto a main road where private signage is visible or for an evidenced road safety reason.

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Second Step: Is your business eligible for tourism signing?

Please note: consideration for white on black directional signing may be given to tourist destinations that do not meet the signing criteria provided they do not front onto a main road where private signage is visible, or if they can demonstrate requirements for traffic or safety reasons.

Example criteria for **local road signing:**

- Must fully comply with statutory regulations.

- Must be publicised in tourist guides, at Tourist Information Centres and on tourism websites.
- Must be open to the general public during advertised hours (with no membership or pre-booking required) and for a minimum period during the year – for attractions this is 150 days a year and 4 hours a day, and for catering establishments 6 months of the year, 6 days a week and 6 hours a day.
- Must have adequate toilet and car parking facilities (including provision for visitors with disabilities), either close by or on site.

Example criteria for motorway / trunk road signing:

- Attractions should have at least 250,000 visitors a year to be eligible for signs on motorways adjacent to large conurbations; 200,000 for other motorways; 150,000 for dual carriageways with a 50mph or more speed limit (or 100,000 for other dual carriageways); or 40,000 for single carriageway roads.
- Attractions which do not meet annual visitor number requirements may still be considered for tourist signing if the number of visitors in the peak month exceeds 20% of the annual requirements.
- With the exception of TICs, brown signs to tourist facilities are not permitted on motorways.

Depending on the type of business, other additional criteria may also apply, for example:

Accommodation facilities:

- Hotels, guest houses and B&Bs must be members of a National Quality Assurance Scheme from Visit Britain or AA.
- Self-catering accommodation must exhibit evidence that accommodation is available for casual visitors.
- Caravan and camping sites must be licensed under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and / or Public Health Act 1936, and should offer a minimum number of 20 pitches for casual overnight visitors.

Catering establishments:

- Restaurants should be able to provide a meal without pre-booking.
- Ideally, the establishment should have a minimum of 20 covers.

- Public houses should provide hot and cold food both at lunchtime and in the evenings, as well as providing for children indoors.
- Individual catering establishments within an urban / resort area can not be signed as visitors will expect catering establishments to be there. In rural areas, premises located on main roads clearly visible by passing motorists will not be considered eligible as it can be assumed they already attract passing trade.

Please note: the above examples do not represent the complete list of criteria upon which applications are judged. For the full list of guidelines and information on tourist signing, please see www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk.

It is not a given that eligibility for tourism signing will guarantee that a tourism sign will be provided. Entitlement will take into account various other criteria including local circumstances and similar establishments in the area.

3 Third Step: Make an application

If applying for local road signage:

- Please print and complete the application form (found at www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk), along with a cheque for **£179.00** made payable to **Kent County Council**. This is a **non refundable** assessment fee only.
- Send to: **Sam Dennis**
Visit Kent
28 – 30 St. Peter’s Street
Canterbury
Kent
CT1 2BQ
- Visit Kent will then make an assessment as to whether or not you meet the required tourism criteria. You will be notified of the outcome by letter.
- If you do meet the criteria, the application form will then be forwarded on to KCC Highways who will assess the application and identify the signing requirements, considering location, size, number of existing signs and environmental sensitivity.
- The decision on signing is at the discretion of the relevant authorities. There is no statutory right of appeal.

- Even though the tourism criteria may be met there is no guarantee the permission for signage will be granted as the other criteria within the directive may not be met.
- If your application is successful, KCC H&T will contact you and discuss your application. To progress the design of the sign/s, KCC require advance payment of £100 per sign (payable to KCC). The sign designs will include a quotation for the purchase and installation of the sign/s and post/s. As guidance, a minimum cost for purchase and installation of a small sign and post is in the region of £300.00. The cost depends upon location, size of the sign, number of posts and temporary traffic management requirements to allow safe installation. Signs on high speed roads will cost considerably more (several thousand pounds potentially) due to sign size, passively safe post requirements and temporary traffic management costs. KCC aims to provide you with a sign design and installation quotation within 6 weeks of receiving the advance payment for sign design.
- If the applicant wishes to proceed following receiving the design and quotation, KCC will require advance payment for the installation.

If applying for signage on motorway or trunk roads:

- A separate application to the Highways Agency will need to be made via their contact centre. There is no guarantee that if signing is provided on the local roads the Highway Agency will provide signing on the motorway and trunk network.

Costs

- Tourism signing is not funded by the County Council. **All costs are recovered from the tourism business applying.**
- An application fee of £179.00 is charged for assessing each request. This covers the cost of the application process for KCC Highways to go out and look at the location and positioning of the signing. Only one attraction or facility per application.
- KCC require advance payment of £100.00 to design each sign and provide a quotation for the installation of the sign and post/s. If the applicant wishes to accept the quotation for the purchase and installation of the sign/s and post/s, KCC will require advance payment. Once payment is received, KCC will purchase and install the signs. This can take several months as the work will be added to a programme of works in the area.

- The actual costs of signage vary considerably according to number, location, size and material.
- Tourism signs remain in the ownership of the local Highway Authority or the Highways Agency.
- If an attraction or facility that has existing tourism signage requests additional signage, another application must be made and submitted with the application fee. Design and installation costs as above also required.
- Any replacement for damaged or stolen signs will be at the tourist businesses own risk. Repair / replacement requests need to be logged at www.kent.gov.uk and will incur additional costs, including the assessment fee and associated signage expenses.

Please note that the information contained in this document is just a guideline – it is not exhaustive and is subject to change.

For further information, or for an application form, please contact:

Visit Kent

Tel: 01227 812912

Email: sam.dennis@visitkent.co.uk

Website: www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk

KCC Highways and Transportation

Tel: 08458 247 800

Email: traffic.schemes@kent.gov.uk

Website: www.kent.gov.uk/highways

Highway Agency

Tel: 0300 123 5000

Email: ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.highways.gov.uk

