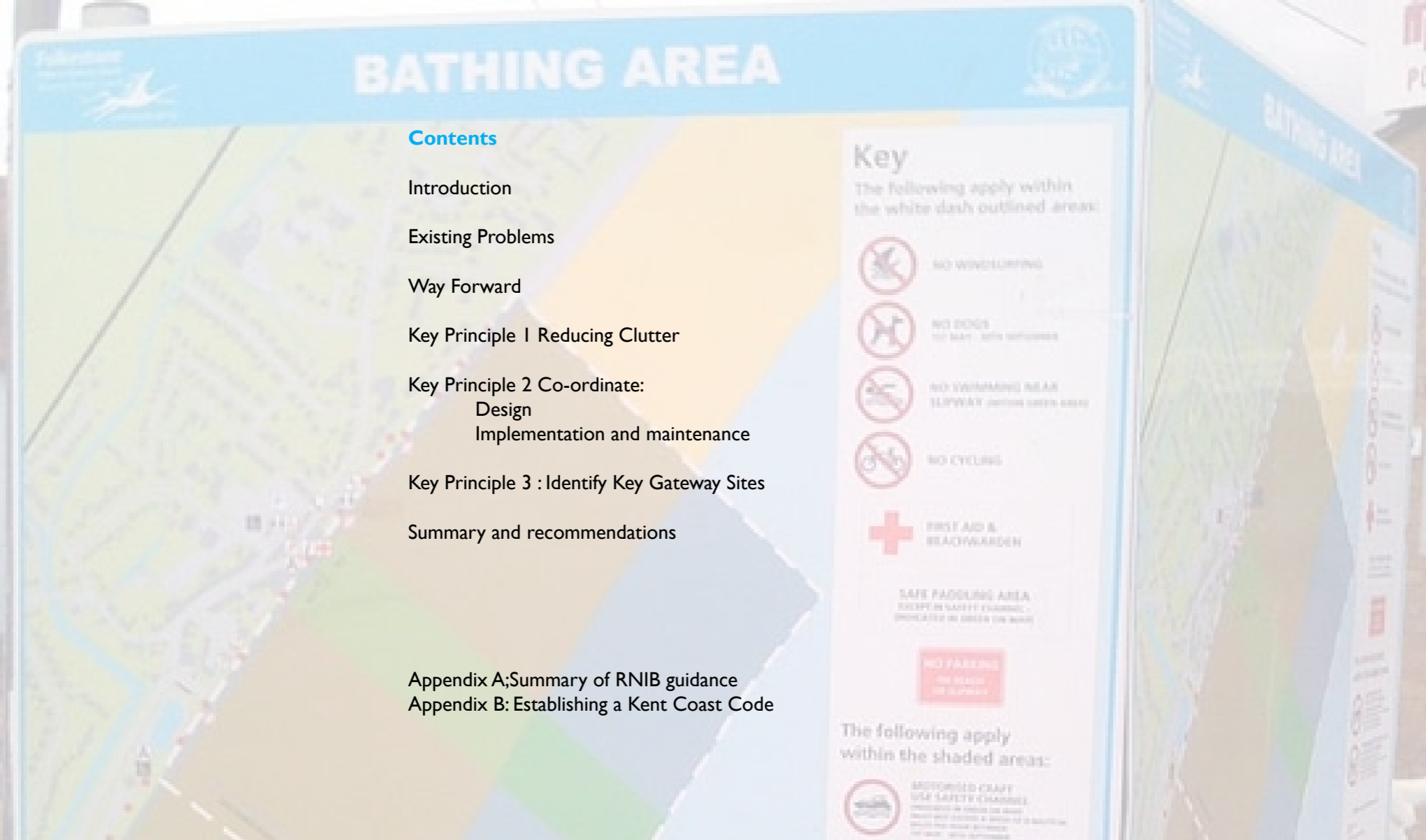


# KENT COASTAL ANALYSIS

## GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR SIGNAGE

April 2012





## 1.0 Introduction

### The study

This guidance has been developed as part of a suite of short signage studies within the Kent Coastal Analysis project commissioned in 2012 by Kent County Council in partnership with Visit Kent and Thanet, Dover and Shepway District Councils. The other signage studies include a Signage Audit and GIS mapping of existing signs and a report highlighting 'Superfluous Signs in Shepway'. This guidance reflects other guidance (such as Government's: 'Paving the Way' and 'Designing Streets for People') and the Disability Discrimination Act (with particular reference to the RNIB's Redbook) but principally it is intended to be a succinct user-friendly document to provide practical and easy to access information for those who are taking forward the vision for improving Kent's coastal strip.

### Why use signs and waymarks?

The other studies have found that there is scope for reducing information and warning signs as an over abundance adds to visual clutter and leads to information overload which reduces effective communication. The only reasons to have signage on the coastal strip are:

- To guide people to attractions
- To reassure people they are on the right route
- To confirm where people are welcome
- To advise where access may be inappropriate
- To clarify where people might not be sure what you want them to do to avoid a situation
- To alert people to hazards or changes

### Different categories of sign:

The Signage Audit used the following categories to distinguish between types of signs and these same terms are used in this guide:

- Direction Signs: orientation to find places and facilities
- Information Signs: information and interpretation
- Directive Signs: advisory, warning, prohibitory



Existing examples of the three different categories of sign.



## 2.0 Existing problems

The Signage Audit and the study of Superfluous Signs in Shepway found that there are some good, well thought out signs on the Kent coast but that there was still a high proportion of poor and unsatisfactory signs. These ones leave a gulf between the expectations that Kent coast marketing initiatives are trying to convey, and the actual image that visitors then take away with them.

Some of the headline outcomes of the audit are:

73% of signs are 'Directive' (ie warning people what they should and shouldn't do)

62% of signs are 'Negative' (ie coming across as authoritative and mean-spirited)

38% of signs are considered worn, vandalised or redundant.

Generally, signs are considered unsatisfactory due to:

- Tone: negative messages mainly about what visitors are prohibited from or warned against.
- Age: signs look dated and worn and because of this sense of neglect are more likely to be graffitied and damaged.
- Number: too many signs in one place that detract from the setting.

The reasons that there are so many unsatisfactory signs are more complex but the main causes appear to be down to:

### Ownership

Whilst the audit shows that most coastal signage belongs to the District Councils there are a significant number of other owners, mainly of directive/warning signs and most notably, but not exclusively:

- Town Councils – often duplicative directive signage regarding behaviour
- Environment Agency – a plethora of directive signage regarding 'dangers' on flood walls, barriers and outlets
- Dover Harbour Board – a plethora of directive signage regarding 'danger' and 'prohibited' activity on barriers, steps and all along the pier.

Liaison with these and other owners of signage will be key to developing a best practice approach to providing coordinated and consistent signage.

### Departmental responsibilities

Within the County, District and Town Councils there appear to be a number of departments or sections which infringe on the Foreshore Management areas mainly:

- Environmental Services – signs regarding rubbish and dog's mess
- County and Local Highways – road signs, parking signs and brown and white tourism signs
- Other departments – various signs often put up in liaison with third parties and/or in response to particular funding streams such as the Sustrans signs, heritage interpretation trails and the like.



Proliferation and several departmental responsibilities



Excessive Directive signs, negative toning and several 'owners'.

Better links between these departments and a process, possibly focused through the Foreshore Manager, for installing and removing signs will avoid duplicative, unnecessary and inappropriate signage.

### Funding

Capital funding generally comes from existing budgets but reacting to budget cuts has affected revenue funded initiatives and there has been a period of under-investment.

Commercial advertising is one way for the Councils to raise revenue to provide facilities such as self-cleaning public toilets. This type of signage is likely to be for national and international products and services, and therefore the design and siting of these signs must be carefully controlled.

The potential for Section 106 money (from development within the area) and grant funding to finance high quality signage and key visitor site improvements should also be investigated.

A concerted attempt to track the life cycle of signage and to coordinate all the different funding streams to deliver wholesale improvement and replacement of signs will assist with the visitor marketing initiatives.

### Lack of Guidance

Signage is often and inevitably conceived in a piecemeal approach as there is no overall strategy or guidance. This leads to an uncoordinated range of materials and products which are then more difficult to maintain.

This document provides the ground rules for this guidance but these must be further developed and improved at every stage.



Worn, vandalised and redundant.

### 3.0 Way Forward

A coordinated approach to signage is required, with consideration of the need and the overall design style, tone, materials and management considered carefully prior to installation. If a clear need is established the emphasis should be on high quality design and materials with a positive use of language.

Specialist requirements for mobility and sensory impaired people also need to be included but if applied indiscriminately can detract from the visual quality of the setting and therefore needs very careful consideration. The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) publishes a Sign Design Guide - a guide to inclusive signage, which is referred to widely for DDA and building regulation compliance. A summary of the RNIB's key points is included at Appendix A.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI Lifeboats) also publish a guide on beach safety signage, which although not definitive, does comply with the RNIB's guidance and sets a consistent standard for the design and content of beach safety signs, flags and symbols and providing beach operators with sufficient information to enable them to set up effective and consistent sign and flag systems on their beaches.

Shepway District Council have designed a consistent format based on these RNLI guidelines (which many other beaches use) and intend to follow this through with future signs. Therefore, it would seem sensible to use this for 'standard' beach information signage throughout the Kent Coast.

The key will be establishing an appropriate design approach for each category of sign to simplify future decisions but also to identifying any key areas (ie historic areas and marketed visitor sites) where more bespoke gateway signage might be justified.

There are three proposed 'Key Design Principles' which are the subject of the following sections:

1. Reduce clutter by removing unnecessary signs
2. Co-ordinate the approach to the design, implementation and maintenance for 'standard' category signs based on the RNLI's guidance, and;
3. Identify bespoke key gateway signs that support visitor marketing initiatives.



Top: RNIB Sign Design Guide

Bottom: RNLI Guide

### 4.0 KEY PRINCIPLE 1:

#### Reducing Clutter

Before designing or installing any ADDITIONAL signage the responsible officer should ask:

#### Are there existing signs that can be removed?

Signage that is not essential to the function of a place should be avoided and/or removed. The installation of new signage should be avoided unless it is essential.

The study on Superfluous Signs in Shepway established a list of priorities for the removal of signs:

#### 1. Unequivocally superfluous signs:

Signs that are unequivocally superfluous due to being abandoned or redundant. These should be removed at the earliest opportunity.

#### 2. Serviceable signs:

Other signs that may be serviceable but are considered superfluous due to the fact that they do not enhance the overall image, reputation or appearance of the coastal strip. Usually these will have duplicate messages, be unattractive, generally unused and/or create clutter. These can be removed with the first category or kept until improved alternatives have been agreed.

#### 3. 'Still required' signs:

Remaining signs that are still required but that detract or diminish from the image and appearance of the coast. The tourism environment would benefit from these being replaced with more positively toned and/or attractive signs when funds allow.

#### Are new signs necessary?

Only use signs where and when needed. Too many signs dilute the message, confuse people and spoil the attraction of the coast.

Warning Signs are not required for every risk. Use them sparingly at non-obvious dangers so that the public are not put at risk. (Beachy Head does not have cliff warning signs every 20m).

If periodic warning or information is considered important, the blackboard sign about Weever Fish noted in Shepway is an excellent and user-friendly way of communicating with the public, it is also cheap and effective and conveys the fact that there is someone 'present and in-charge' of the beach.

#### Are there other ways of communicating with your visitors?

Signage is only one way of communicating with users. There may be more creative and effective approaches, eg. through art, leaflets, websites and local user group networks.

#### Summary Principles:

- Remove under-used, abandoned and redundant signage
- Rationalise duplicate or over-signed areas
- Liaise with other relevant agencies and seek their agreement and co-operation in removal.
- The District Council's to take the lead with originating agencies to be responsible for removal.



An excellent and cheap example of user-friendly communication through signage.

## 6.0. KEY PRINCIPLE 2:

### Co-ordinate approach to design, implementation and maintenance

#### 6.1 Co-ordinating approach to design

The design of coastal strip signage should coordinate within an identifiable area, and help to reinforce local identity. The use of bespoke designs for key visitor destinations, possibly developed in association with local artists, will help to develop a strong sense of local identity and ownership from local businesses and residents. Whilst the aesthetic elements of signage are outside the scope of this report the following best practice will guide the final artwork and content of any type of sign:

#### Hierarchy

The design parameters of signage within the coastal strip in each category are identified in guide sheets below. Broadly the aim of the project is to increase visitors to the coast so the hierarchy of importance in considering signs is:

#### Direction Signs:

- Key Visitor Sites
- Attractions and Facilities

#### Information Signs:

- Activities and events
- Interpretation

#### Directive Signs:

- Beach Management
- Miscellaneous warnings

In some instances these categories may benefit from being combined to reduce clutter (ie the current Beach Management signs contain directive information as well as signing directions to nearest toilets) but in all cases a simple, efficient but attractive design will be appropriate and unnecessary signage avoided except for key visitor sites where iconic and bespoke signage should be considered.

The basic RNLI guidance is ideal for combined Beach Management signs, and is already being followed by Shepway District Council, making it the clear choice for standardised beach signs.

#### Content

Simple, clear graphics should be used that reflect DDA requirements (see below) but not so slavishly that they reduce quality.

A list of destinations and information to be included on the signs should be drawn up.

Established icons should be used to reinforce words where appropriate. This also increases understanding for non-British visitors.

A minimum number of different types should be used.

#### Tone

People want to feel welcome on the coast and respond best to positive, helpful information so signage should help people to make informed decisions. The proposed Kent Coast Code stresses that people should be responsible for their actions, to respect the interests of others and to care for the environment. Signs should contain information that helps the public to follow these principles, rather than telling them what to do.

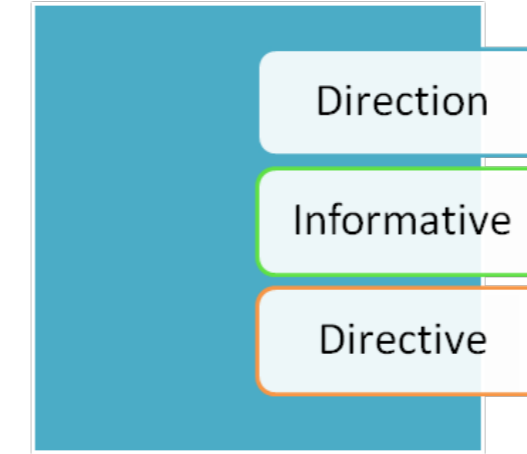
Keep messages short and free of jargon

Use language which is straightforward and easy to understand

#### DDA

Ensure that signs reflect the principles of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995. Good practice in the design and lay-out of signs ensure that messages will be short and easy to understand, and be helpful to a wide range of abilities.

Refer to Appendix A for further details on RNIB recommendations on contrasts, font sizes, heights and positioning.



The hierarchy



Example of coordinated hierarchy signage including all categories



Bexhill-on-Sea has recently installed a coordinated 'wayfinding' set of signs including simple place name marker posts and 'monolith signs with directions and facilities information.

### 6.1.1 Direction Signs

People want to be able to find where they are going and to be shown where facilities are with the minimum of fuss. Knowing they have arrived is also important and 'place name' signs are therefore included in this category and can be key to good welcome and in establishing the perceived value of a place however, bespoke gateway site signage is considered separately in the last key principle.

#### Place name signage

These should reflect the desired image of the area, be consistent and clear, welcoming and display the Code of Conduct if adopted (refer Appendix B). For less distinctive visitor sites and those areas less easily defined (ie by virtue of size, shape or lack of clear single entry point) the place name is best located on the general directive beach management sign and another stand alone sign is not always necessary.

#### Directions to attractions and facilities

Simple and consistent finger posts are recommended for direction signs to attractions and facilities such as piers, toilets, local shops and first aid stations as they are easily orientated to local site conditions and out of reach of day-to-day vandalism. Whilst pillar signs can be more attractively designed (see example from Bexhill) they are more restricted and vulnerable in these respects.

Signs should be located on finger posts rather than on walls, guardrails or other elements of street furniture for consistency. However, if only a single finger is required, appropriate location on a nearby wall should be considered to avoid additional clutter.

Waymarking routes for pedestrians should be identified along the most logical and direct routes. Signs should be located at nodes and decision points and planned so that the number of signs required is minimised.



Thanet's place name signage combines a Code (see Appendix B) and beach management information and is recommended as a basis for good practice with the RNLI guidance along the Kent Coast.



Finger post signage is very variable along the coast and one consistent good quality system is recommended. This is Woodhouse's 'Geo' range.

### 6.1.2 Informative Signs:

Providing some insight into the special nature of a place helps people to appreciate its significance and values and may respond more protectively towards it as a result. Informative signs can also be useful 'markers' on heritage and nature trails that are established through third party funding streams and 'interpretation' is often a requirement of the funding that aims to raise public awareness of the natural or built values. Due to this third party involvement there is little consistency in the interpretation signage seen on the coast. This is not a significant issue as it shows the distinctiveness of each trail or point of interest but there is clearly some financial sense in the District Council's coordinating the information that is available to visitors.

Where necessary, signing of longer distance paths and trails should be integrated into the landscape and urban context design and a Kent Coast symbol included on the signposts.

In some locations, key arrival points, car park exits etc., it may be appropriate to introduce maps to give clearer information. These should always be orientated to relate to the position of the viewer and use simple, clear graphics.



Examples of existing informative signage - events and trails. Perfectly serviceable but often uncoordinated.



Examples of alternative and contemporary informative signage. Woodhouse range and bespoke used on Bexhill seafront.

### 6.1.3 Directive Signs:

#### Wording and design of Directive signs

'Prompts' are useful aids to help the public to behave responsibly. Rather than negative toning, 'reminder' signs with messages like 'Please be a responsible dog owner' and 'Please take your litter home' have long been commonly used and help to reinforce a welcoming tone. They should be used selectively where they are still helpful as prompts for the public to behave responsibly, but mindful of the danger of proliferating signage and diluting the message.

#### Signs advising of a hazard

People are responsible for their own actions and for those of their children and pets. Warning signs should only be used where a hazard raises significant risks which are not obvious to the public. If the cliff drop-off is visually obvious there is no need to have a sign saying 'Beware of Cliff'.

Where hazard warnings are considered essential they should be positively phrased and the reasons for any restriction clearly articulated ie:

**'Keep Safe –the rocks are slippery'**  
(Kent Coast Code No3:Take responsibility for your own actions)

**not:**

**Danger! Keep Off the Rocks!**

These new 'positive' messages should be devised for all required Directive signage that can supersede the current negative tone signs when due for replacement.



Shepway's beach management signage combines all Directive messages in one place with some Directions.



A simple cheap Directive sign but with positive toning that instils a sense of personal responsibility and avoids saying 'don't leave litter, don't burn tyres, don't be annoying' etc

### 6.2 Coordinating Implementation and Maintenance

It is recommended that the foreshore managers take final responsibility for coastal strip signage and are in possession of this report and the RNLI guidance for beach management signs. In addition to their own requirements their scope should extend to assisting and approving other departments, agencies and businesses in the removal, replacement and provision of additional signage. The 'acid-test' checklist they should apply is:

#### Checklist

Are there signs that can be removed?

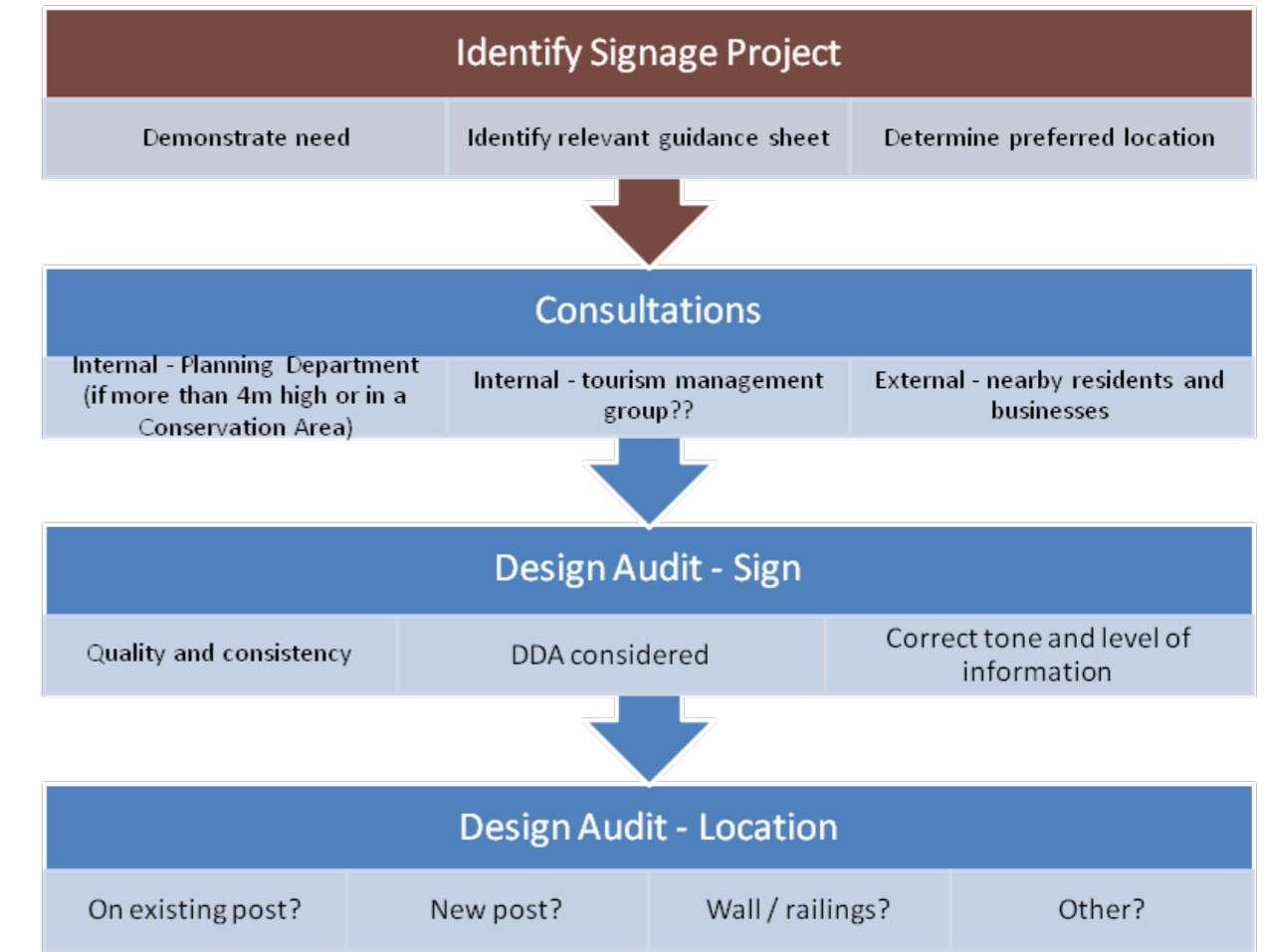
Is the proposed new sign really necessary?

Does the proposed sign catch the attention and deliver the intended information?

Does the quality of the sign give it credibility?

Are the messages in line with the Code?

- Use this guidance to determine what type of sign it is and the broad parameters that apply.
- Consult with the relevant internal and external consultees as appropriate.
- Coordinate meetings and liaison with other owners



Process for Foreshore Managers to coordinate and assess need for signage

### 7.0. KEY PRINCIPLE 3:

#### Identify Key Gateway Sites that co-ordinate with Visitor Marketing Initiatives

##### Key Visitor Sites

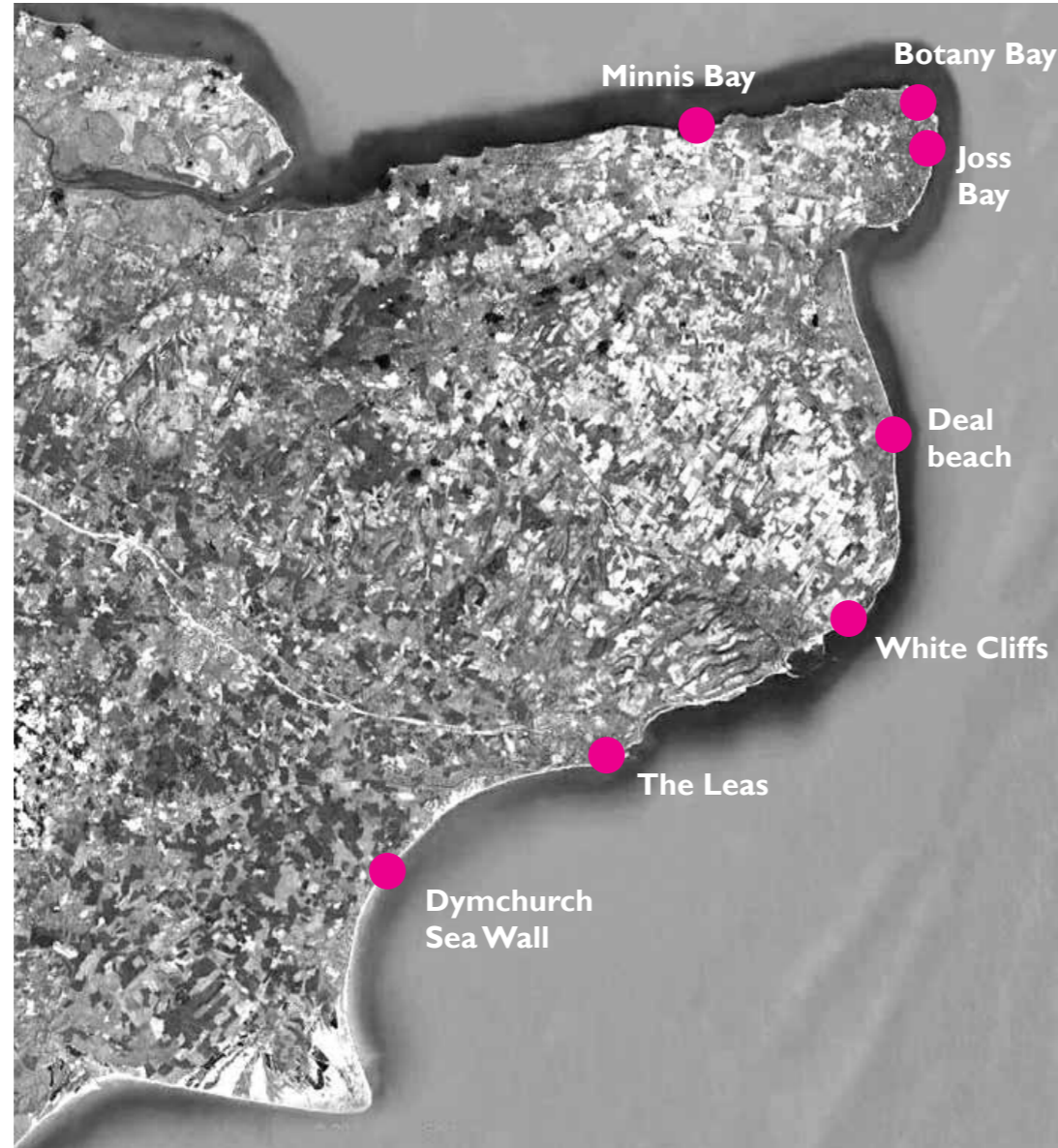
Key visitor sites are the main attractors to the Kent coast and important economic drivers for local businesses. The prominence of these in visitor marketing initiatives should be reflected in their design as high quality public art pieces to set the scene for visitors to the coast.

Key visitor sites might include Botany Bay, Joss Bay Dymchurch sea wall, or on The Leas, Folkestone at the top of the Lower Leas Coastal Park (subject to permission from Radnor Estates).

These should be treated in such a way as to enhance their value as attractors by removing all unnecessary signs and having one simple bold treatment as part of an overall package of environmental and economic improvements at these sites.

Key factors to be addressed include:

- The existing character of the site (ie young and vibrant, historic and heritage) to create a locally distinctive design.
- Ensure that relevant planning and landscape officers are involved at an early stage.
- Involve local businesses and residents if present.
- Long term management and maintenance.



Possible locations of key gateway sites that promote specific and distinct places



Examples of Key Gateway Sculpture Signage - final choice must depend on local context, circumstances and wider consultation.



## 8.0 Summary and Recommendations

There are three 'Key Design Principles':

- Reduce clutter by removing unnecessary signs
- Co-ordinate approach to design, implementation and maintenance for 'standard' category signs and;
- Identify key gateway signs that support visitor marketing initiatives.

Liaison between all the owners of signage will be key to providing coordinated and consistent signage.

Agreement between owners and internal departments on the process, focused through the Foreshore Manager, for installing and removing signs will avoid duplicative, unnecessary and inappropriate signage.

A concerted attempt to track the life cycle of signage and to coordinate all the different funding streams to deliver wholesale improvement and replacement of signs will assist with the visitor marketing initiatives.

Signage is only one way of communicating with users. There may be more creative and effective approaches, eg. through art, leaflets, websites and local user group networks.

Recommended priorities to support the Kent Coast initiatives are:

Removal of superfluous signage in accordance with the three categories.

Prepare a list of destinations, including select Key Gateway Sites, for new place name signs and prepare a design approach including information to be included on each of the signs.

Utilising the GIS database of existing signs:

- Replace Information boards at the main beaches where these are not superseded by the proposed place name signs above. These should give location, details of activities allowed or restrictions, water quality and facilities, beach awards, nearest services, and points of contact.
- Provide Information signs at any other places where some zoning or restriction is in operation.
- Provide Information signs at the main slipways and launch sites giving details of any restrictions and alternatives.
- Provide Information signs in key car parks giving location and sparing information about nearest beach and services.

## 8.1 Guidance on standard Direction Signs

Principles:

- Place names
- Orientation to find places and facilities

Types and locations:

- Combined Direction signs - at main arrival points combine with map, facilities information and directives as used by Thanet and sizing as per RNLI guidance.
- Finger posts - in other locations where some wayfinding is required and desirable.

Colour and materials:

Whilst RNLI guidance focuses on the 'warning' colours of red and yellow, the blue version as used by Thanet is preferred using the warning colours only for the directive elements (as Viking Bay example opposite).

Generally aluminium tray signs with a stove enamel finish with vinyl graphics mounted on powder-coated aluminium posts will provide most durability with a reasonable cost outlay.

Sizing:

The use of separate 780mm wide post mounted tray signs for each element provides greatest flexibility in the event of damage or changing information needs.

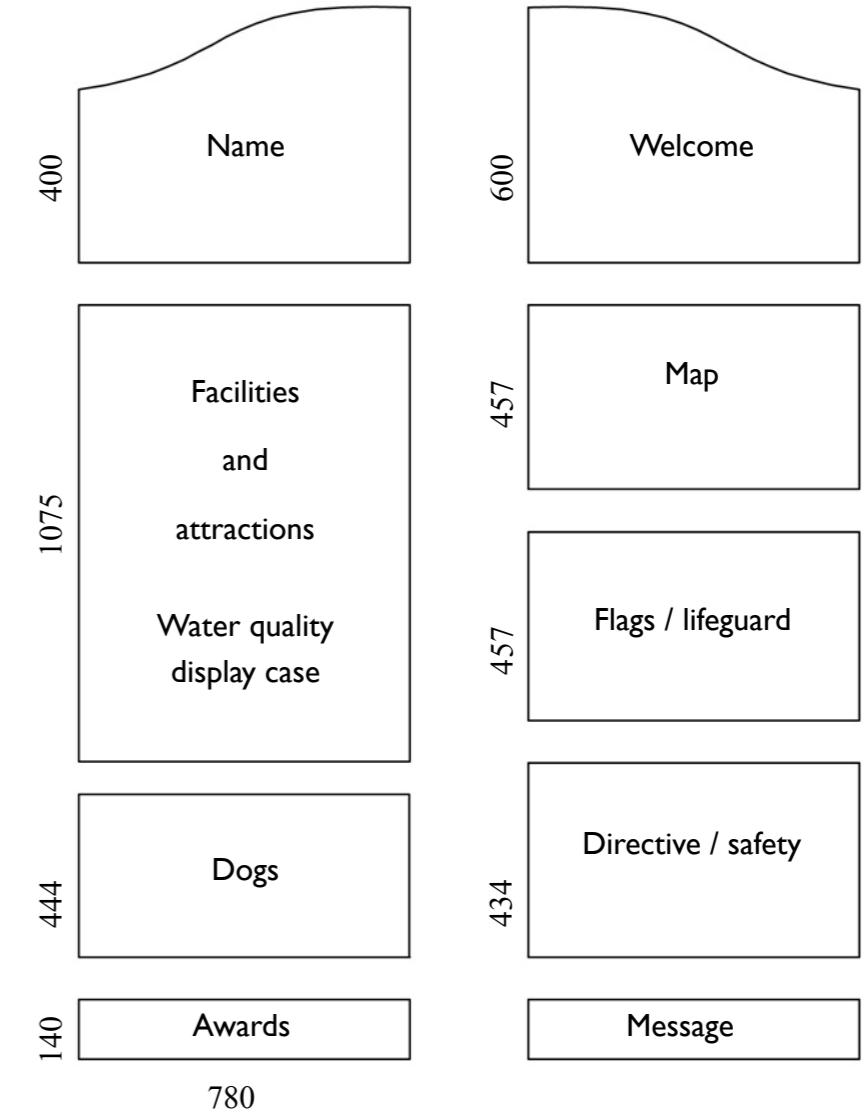
Costs:

£2550 based on double panel sign, £1990 based on finger post with five fingers. £195 per additional average-sized panel or finger (exc delivery and installation).

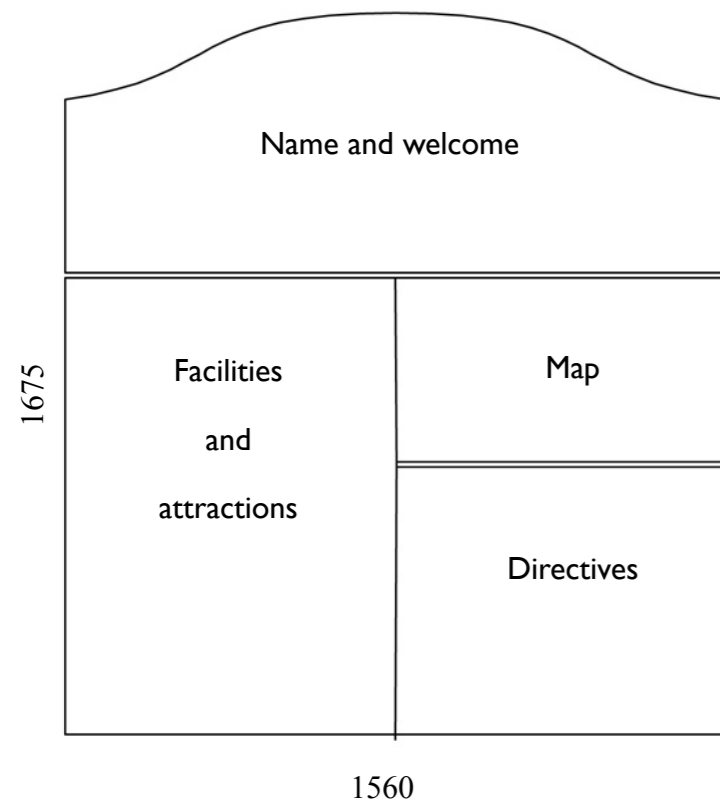


Above:  
Thanet's Viking Bay sign. Generally good format, follows RNLI guidance, but too much writing and additional signs added around it (circled) detract from its appearance. The other signs should be incorporated into 'reminder' directive signs (see later pages).

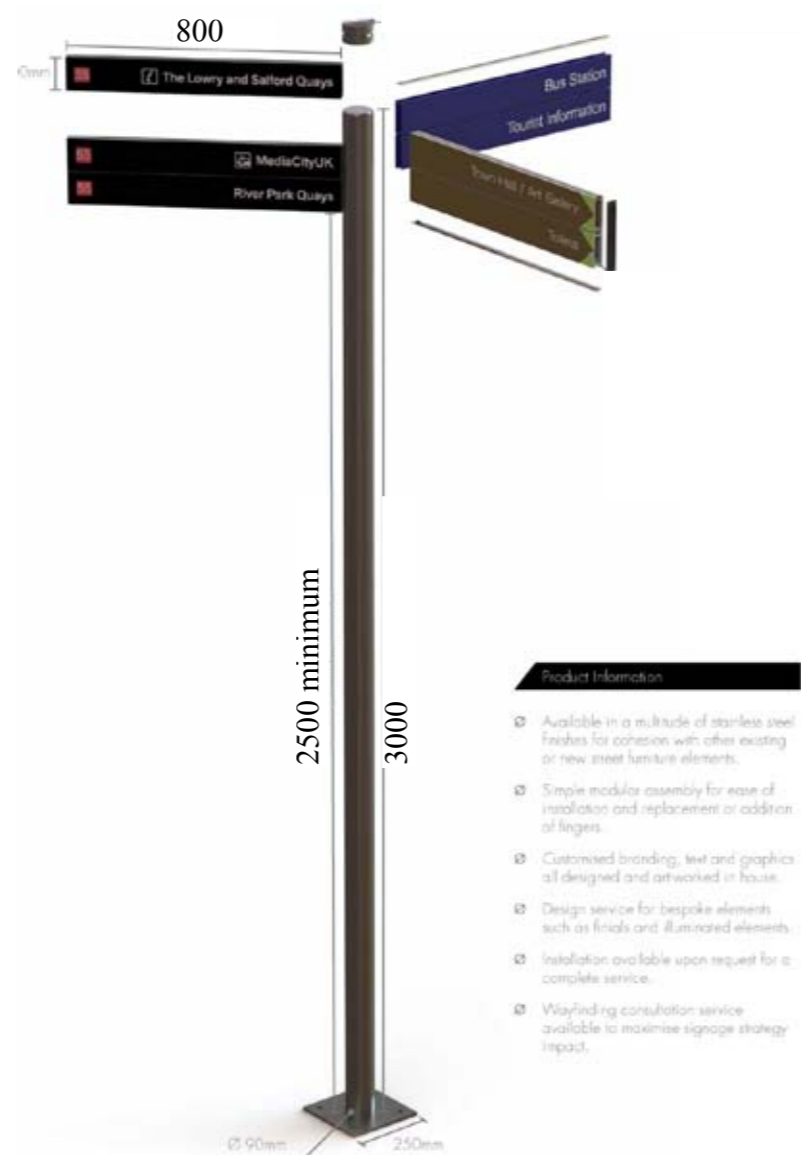
Left:  
Monolith signs can be attractive and contemporary but are expensive and less flexible.



Sizing and content of combined Direction signage - see following page for combined version



Combined version for larger sites and major arrival points, e.g.: Minnis Bay, where bespoke key gateway signage is not to be provided.



Extract from Woodhouse Geo range specification finger posts. Can contain up to eight fingers. Stainless steel post with aluminium fingers, powder coated with vinyl lettering suitable for coastal environments.

## 8.2 Guidance on standard Information Signs

### Principles:

- Activities and events
- Interpretation

### Types and locations:

- Temporary notices about topical issues or upcoming events - at strategic arrival points and hubs.
- Historical and environmental education and interpretation - on heritage or wildlife sites and along defined themed trails, such as the Viking Trail.

### Colour and materials:

For topical issues the easiest, most effective and attractive is the well laid out 'blackboard' (ie Weever Fish season). Generally, display cases are not preferred, as they are hard to maintain and look empty and forlorn when there is nothing to put in them. Therefore advertising of beach related events should utilise existing cases or pillars or be temporarily attached to blackboards. These can be tied to existing railings or freestanding double-sided 'A' type boards.

Interpretation panels should primarily be robust and the information clear. An aluminium construction cased board and post would be suitable for most environments but the use of timber may be more appropriate in some more rural locations.

### Sizing:

The standard lectern type interpretation board is best set approximately 800mm high with the graphic board 890mm x 645mm. Whilst certain interpretation projects may justify a bespoke size, maintenance and replacement costs can be minimised by adhering to this standard wherever possible.

### Costs:

£700 each. Allow an additional £250 per individual printed graphic (exc delivery and installation).

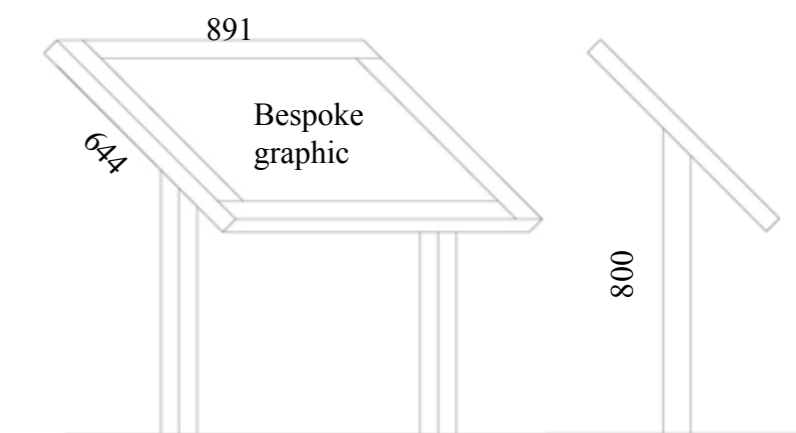


### Top right:

Extract from Fitzpatrick Woolmer range of interpretation boards. Available in a range of materials. Aluminium recommended although timber appropriate in some circumstances.

### Opposite:

Sizing and content of interpretation board.



### 8.3 Guidance on standard Directive Signs

Principles:

- Advisory, warning and prohibitory

Types and locations:

- Combined Direction signs - refer to 8.1. Directives as used by Thanet and sizing as per RNLI guidance.
- Beach management signs - these are 'secondary entrance' or 'reminder' signs where the single Combined Direction sign is not considered enough due to the size of the site.

Colour and materials:

Shepway's beach management signage (refer 6.1.3) combines all Directive messages in one place with some Directions and is perfectly effective. Where these are in place they should remain, but it is recommended that any new or replacement beach management directives are produced in accordance with RNLI guidance but kept to an absolute minimum.

These will generally have a white, yellow or red background and be constructed from aluminium with vinyl graphics mounted on powder-coated aluminium posts.

Sizing:

Shepway signs are approx 1100mm x 1350mm high. RNLI reminder signs are 500 x 595mm high for vertical signs and 980 x 340mm for horizontal signs.

Costs:

Allow £750 for larger, simple plate signs and £450 for smaller versions (exc delivery and installation).



Shepway example of beach management sign. These are good, clear signs which should remain in place.



Extracts from the RNLI guidance showing secondary and reminder directive signs.

Directive signs other than directly relating to the beach should aim to achieve the 'positive' toning wherever possible.



## Placing signs

When deciding which signs you need for your beach and where to place them it is important to consider the beach size and the risk assessment. You may not need to use all of the sign types shown in this guide.

For ease of understanding, this guide groups beaches into two categories – rural and resort. It is appreciated that your beach may have features of both groups, but these examples should help you decide where to place signs on your beach. The illustrations on the opposite page show a rural beach and a resort beach; the red markers on the illustrations represent typical sign fixing positions and are defined below.

- P** Primary entrance sign
- S** Secondary entrance sign
- R** Reminder sign
- M** Mobile sign
- D** Directional sign (for example, directing to the lifeguard facility)
- SO** Symbol-only sign (for example, warning of a particular hazard or location of public rescue equipment)

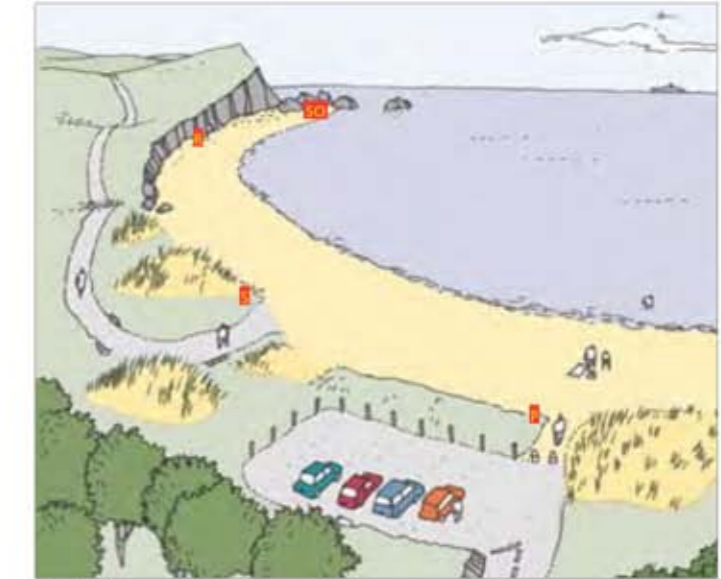
**Advice about placing signs**  
When deciding on a fixing location for your signs it is important to consider the following advice:  
**Primary and Secondary entrance signs**  
Ground-mounted signs (for example, primary entrance signs) must be fixed adjacent to the footway rather than directly on the footway. If the signs are fixed on the footway they will create an obstruction. Care should be taken to ensure that the visibility of the reverse of these signs is maximised.

**Reminder signs**  
It is important that these signs are placed at regular intervals along the beach in between entrance points. The distance between signs will depend on how busy the beach gets and the results of the risk assessment. These signs should face the beach rather than the access points, or be fitted alongside facilities such as toilets or cafes.

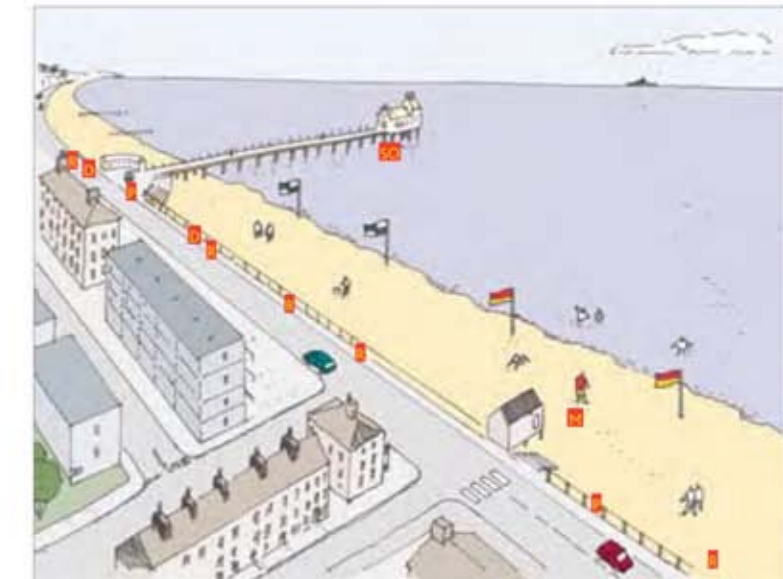
**Mobile signs**  
Mobile signs should be located near the lifeguard service units to allow the lifeguard to keep the information up to date. Lifeguards may also use these signs as a teaching aid. The signs should be stored in the lifeguard unit outside lifeguard service hours.

**Directional signs**  
Directional signs should be used to direct to key facilities such as the lifeguard service unit. Directional signs should be placed at regular intervals along the beach and at any points where the beach user has to change direction.

**Symbol signs**  
Symbol signs are likely to be placed in isolation alongside a particular hazard or danger: for example, 'no diving' from the pier shown on the resort beach illustration on the opposite page might be fixed along the railings of the pier.



Rural beach



Resort beach

Extract from RNLI guidance on placing signs. Whilst the main emphasis from this study is to reduce clutter this provides some sensible principles for location which will assist Foreshore Managers in the decision making process.

## Appendix A

### SIGNAGE - SUMMARY GUIDANCE ON DDA GOOD PRACTICE

#### PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO THE KENT COAST

Disability Discrimination Act  
Guidance for Signage

Current equality legislation requires that information is readily available to elderly, blind and partially sighted people independently. The primary source is the RNIB SDS Sign Design Guide ISBN 185878 412 3 which is frequently referred to in the Building Regulations and other Government Guidelines.

#### Practical Considerations

- Signs should have text with characters at an appropriate size for which the sign will be viewed. It should have letters that contrast in colour and luminance with the background and the whole sign should contrast with the surroundings.
- Signs should be placed in a location where they are well lit but preferably unaffected by reflections from the sun. Use of matt surface finishes helps.
- Avoid the use of abbreviations in signs, as people may not understand them
- Avoid too many words per line, as they are difficult to read quickly. Suggested maximum is two or three.

- The typeface should not be complex or fussy. Some suggest using only 'sans serif' such as: Calibri, Helvetic, Arial, Futura or Avant Garde.
- It is best to use a capitalised first letter rather than all caps or lower case. The lower case height should be 75% of the caps height. The use of lower case letters is generally the easiest to read as even with blurred vision the letters take on word shapes and are more memorable.

#### Position of signs

Directional signs should indicate the route to a destination, paying particular attention to potential points of uncertainty.

Directional signs should be placed only on fixed parts of a structure such as walls, posts and hard surfaces.

Signs containing detailed information or safety signs may be displayed at both a low or high level ie 1400mm - 1700mm (max height) top to bottom for a visually impaired person standing and 1000mm to 1100mm for close viewing by a wheelchair user.

#### Size of characters

The size of the character depends on the distance the sign will be read. The lettering height is most important: It is measured by the 'x' height of the character set which is the height of a lower case x. The x height is dependent on the sight distance and is determined in millimetres by multiplying the sight distance in metres by 57 but the x height should not be less than 20 mm. Upward adjustments are necessary where the viewing angle is at an angle (Table 1 opposite).

#### Colour and contrast

Visual acuity is given by:

- The difference in luminance (value) between letters and background and between board background and the general background.
- The difference in colour.

Some contrast with the surroundings is also necessary. Contrasting borders can be used if the main colours are similar to the background (Table 2 opposite).

Optimum contrast and visual acuity is given by:

- White on black
- Yellow and black
- Yellow and blue
- White and blue
- Red and white

• Dark grey and white Orange, reds and greens can fade in direct sunlight and the sign may therefore need to be replaced more frequently.

#### Tactile Signs and Braille

Tactile signs indicating direction or event / function identification should have embossed letters with a sans serif font at a depth of 1.25mm +/- 0.25mm. The stroke should be 1.75mm +/- 0.25 with the edges slightly rounded but not hemispherical in section. The letter height should be 15mm and 50mm.

Grade 1 Braille should be used for single words. Grade 2 Braille should be used to reduce the length of multi-word signs. The sequence of use of Braille and tactile symbols should be for each line of information the normal lettering and symbols at the top, followed by a line of tactile lettering; followed by the line of Braille letters.

#### Directional Signage

There is a protocol for using arrows on directional signs which is largely common sense. ie arrows directing right on the right hand side of the sign. Generally most directional signs along the coast will be 'finger-post' style.

Viewing Distance	Type of Sign	'x' height mm
Long Distance	Facility sign (ie Toilet)	200
	Location sign	90-120
	Direction sign	90
Medium Range	Location and direction	60
Close range	Interpretation	15-30

Table 1

Background	Signboard	Text
Red brick or dark background	White	Black/blue/green
Stone	Black or dark blue	White/yellow
White	Black / dark	White/yellow
Foliage	White	Black/blue/green

Table 2

## Appendix B

### Establishing a Kent Coast Code for communication and signage.

To reduce the numbers of warning signs, one approach is to ‘re-train’ or ‘re-position’ visitor awareness by rolling out a Code of Conduct. A code would put the onus on visitors to take responsibility for themselves, to respect the places they visit and to assist in enforcing the code by requesting others to do the same.

There are many examples of such Codes, including the Thanet Coast, Countryside and the Scottish Outdoor Access Codes and these could be adapted to apply to the Kent Coast, equally to the public, managers and tourism businesses.

A standardised ‘Kent Coast Code’ has been discussed for inclusion in this report although Shepway District Council currently feel this will be difficult to achieve on their signs as they are currently pursuing their own standardisation using RNLI guidance. However, if each District is willing to support this initiative for future signs, such a Code could be displayed on all methods of communicating with visitors – not just on signs.

For example such a code might state:

#### **Respect the interests of other people.**

Act with courtesy and consideration to others. Respect the privacy, safety and livelihoods of those living or working on the coast and the needs of other people enjoying the beach.

#### **Care for the environment.**

Look after the places you visit and enjoy. Leave the beach and facilities as you find them. If you are a manager or local business, help maintain the natural and cultural features which makes the Kent coast an attractive destination to visit and enjoy.

#### **Take responsibility for your own actions and those of your family.**

If you are exercising your access rights, remember that the coastal strip cannot be made risk-free and act with care at all times for your own safety and that of others. You are responsible for keeping your children and pets away from cliffs, drops, flood defences and outfalls.

#### **Advise others of the Kent Coast Code.**

We are all responsible for each other. If you think others may not be aware of this Code politely bring it to their attention.



The Thanet Coastal Code has all the right messages

**allen scott** LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

**acorn**

real places  
consultancy

