

KENT COASTAL ANALYSIS

SHEPWAY - ASSESSMENT OF SUPERFLUOUS SIGNS

December 2011





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Aims of the report

The Shepway Coastal Recreation Strategy, (Nov 2010) identified scenarios for increasing tourism activity along the coast. As part of the work an audit was undertaken of recreational infrastructure and facilities including tourism related signage. The overall audit was used to inform and underpin the analysis and recommended actions.

This report is part of several within the Kent Coastal Analysis project and aims to advance one of the priority actions of the Shepway Coastal Recreation Strategy, para 8.3:

'Removing redundant signage:

There is scope for reducing information and warning signs. An over abundance of signage adds to visual clutter and leads to information overload which reduces effective communication. In this instance less is definitely more. We recommend that a concerted effort is made to remove abandoned, out of date and duplicate signs and there may also be scope for some rationalisation. Someone needs to take the initiative on this but we have assumed that the owners of the signs will be responsible for bearing the costs of removal.'

The following pages identify different types of current signage and make clear and actionable proposals in order to implement this improvement.



Current signage

The November 2010 audit identified 130 signs in the coastal strip much of which has clearly accumulated over time and belongs to several organisations including Shepway District Council, parish and town councils, the Environment Agency (EA), MOD, countryside agencies and private owners. These include warning and safety signs, information signs, direction signing (maps and finger posts) and interpretation boards.

As part of the current Kent Coastal Analysis project the 130 signs have been analysed further in the Shepway Signage Audit Summary Report (Dec 2011). This shows the geographic spread, type and tone of each sign in order to set a baseline for developing a more comprehensive signage strategy. Some of the headline outcomes of this summary report relevant to the identification of superfluous signs in Shepway are:

73% of signs are 'Directive' (ie warning people what they should or shouldn't do). Of these nearly half are concerned with safety.

62% of signs are 'Negative' in tone (ie 'Warning: Keep off the Rocks').

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



Analysis

The overall objectives identified in The Shepway Coastal Recreation Strategy (para 7.2.1) are wide ranging and signage can only so far in delivering these. However, signage does have a role and most importantly should not be at odds with these objectives. Accordingly any signs that detract or diminish these objectives by way of appearance or content are considered 'superfluous':

1. *Enhance the overall image, reputation and appeal of Shepway.*
2. *Improve the experience of visiting the coast and help build a successful tourism sector.*
3. *Enhance the natural environment and heritage and safeguard it for future generations.*
4. *Encourage and promote a range of recreation activity and manage it to minimise conflict between users.*
5. *Protect the interests and quality of life of the local community.*
6. *Improve engagement, understanding and support for maintaining the quality of the coastal environment.*
7. *Be effective and deliver value for money.*

As expected there is no general consistency in the signage in terms of application or design, although there are clearly 'families' of signs that will have been put in together under previous but different funding programmes by differing organisations for differing purposes. For example:

- The Sustrans series of 'Whale Tail' markers
- The SDC Beach Information notice boards
- The EA Flood Defence structures warning signs

Whilst most of the signage is still relevant much of it appears tired and outdated. Whilst the effects of the tough coastal environment may shorten the lifespan of signs, the lacklustre appearance of many is at odds with one of the main objectives 'to enhance the overall image, reputation and appearance of Shepway'.

Some are also duplicative, a few derelict and in some places there is a case for de-cluttering. These diminish the appearance and experience of visitors and are at odds with several objectives.



Superfluous [soo-pur-floo-uhs]

Part of Speech: adjective

Definition: extra, unnecessary

Synonyms: abounding, de trop, dispensable, excess, excessive, exorbitant, expendable, extravagant, extreme, gratuitous, in excess, inessential, inordinate, lavish, leftover, needless, nonessential, overflowing, overmuch, pleonastic, profuse, redundant, remaining, residuary, spare, superabundant, supererogatory, superfluent, supernumerary, surplus, unasked, uncalled-for, unneeded, unrequired, unwanted, useless

The most noticeable outcome of the analysis is the extent of 'Directive' warnings and prohibitions nearly all of which are 'negative' in tone. Of these the safety (warning and prohibition) signs are most prolific and many come across as mean-spirited and authoritarian. This again is at odds with the objectives of enhancement, encouragement and promotion.

However, it is recognised that not all of these signs can or should be removed as they have a role to play.

Dog-related (fouling and nuisance) signs are a good case in point. These are 'negative' but are a necessary response by Councils to enable them to enforce by laws and deliver dog-dirt free pavements and beaches.

Anecdotal evidence from Thanet and Dover's Foreshore Managers and from site visits suggest that they work and should be left in place.

Generally however there is much Directive signage that could be communicated with more positive messages or helpful information rather than just negative toning.

For example:

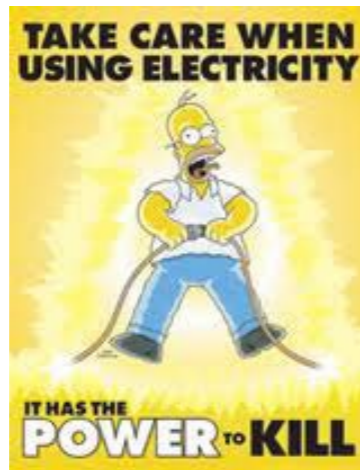
'Danger Warning!: Keep off Rocks!'

could be re-written to explain why:

'Keep Safe.

The rocks are slippery and the tide strong'.

Or with humour:



Proposals

Although this report is concerned primarily with removing superfluous signs, it forms part of a suite of reports developing a wider signage strategy for the Kent Coast.

Categories for removal

Accordingly a set of categories have been established from our audit and analysis which take into account and are consistent with the principles in the earlier Shepway Coastal Recreation Strategy. They help to categorise levels of superfluosness and the principles will also go on to inform the best practice Kent-wide signage proposals:

1. Unequivocally superfluous

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

2. Serviceable

Other signs that may be serviceable but are considered superfluous due to the fact that they detract or diminish from the main objectives. 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

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

Principles carried forward to inform best practice:

- 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.
- SDC to take the lead with originating agencies to be responsible for removal.
- New 'positive' messages to be devised for required Directive signage that can supersede the current negative tone signs when due for replacement.
- New signage to reflect the desired image of the area, to be consistent and clear. To replace dated and unattractive Information and Orientation signage.

Recommended priorities are:

- Information boards at the main beaches. These should give location, details of activities allowed or restrictions, water quality and facilities, beach awards, nearest services, and points of contact.
- Information signs at any other places where some zoning or restriction is in operation.
- Information signs at the main slipways and launch sites giving details of any restrictions and alternatives.
- Information signs in key car parks giving location and limited information about nearest beach and services.

Proposal Category 1:

- The photos show all signs that are considered unequivocally superfluous due to being under-used, abandoned or redundant. These should be removed at the earliest opportunity to improve appearance and to reduce clutter.

All photograph reference numbers are taken from the 2010 audit.

Locations of these signs can be found by clicking on the following links:

For Photo prefixes A-D:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=3&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7b916332aebb77c>

For Photo pre-fixes E-G:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=4&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7e99c9d3830d6b6>

For Photo pre-fixes J-L:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=5&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7ea0fd5c345e15>

For Photo pre-fixes M-Q:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=6&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7ea4fb6b6109257>

L24: Interpretation Board:

Abandoned.

Proposal: Remove or replace



G9: Map Board:

Partially abandoned.

Proposal: Remove or replace



M38 (main picture), E14, C3 and F8 Beach Information Boards:

Under-used, tired, unattractive.

Proposal: Remove and replace with new beach information signs such as F6, F4I and G5 (see below)



F4I Beach Management Sign

Contains a lot of information, some negative but it is coordinated, clear and well placed.

Proposal Category 2:

- These photos show all signs that are serviceable but are considered superfluous due to the fact that they detract or diminish from the main objectives. Usually there will be duplicate messages, be unattractive, generally unused and/or creating clutter. These can be removed with the first category or kept until improved alternatives have been agreed.

All photograph reference numbers are taken from the 2010 audit.

Locations of these signs can be found by clicking on the following links:

For Photo pre-fixes A-D:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=3&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7b916332aebb77c>

For Photo pre-fixes E-G:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=4&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7e99c9d3830d6b6>

For Photo pre-fixes J-L:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=5&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7ea0fdf5c345e15>

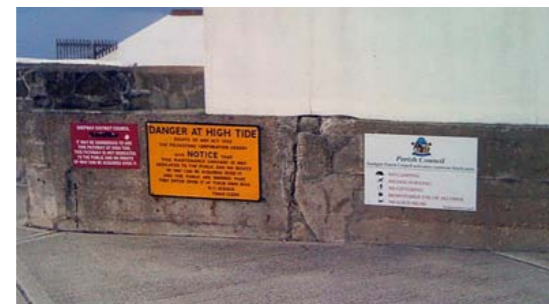
For Photo pre-fixes M-Q:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=6&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7ea4fb6b6109257>



E21 (main picture), E1 and E16: Negative, clutter, some duplication and three organisations.

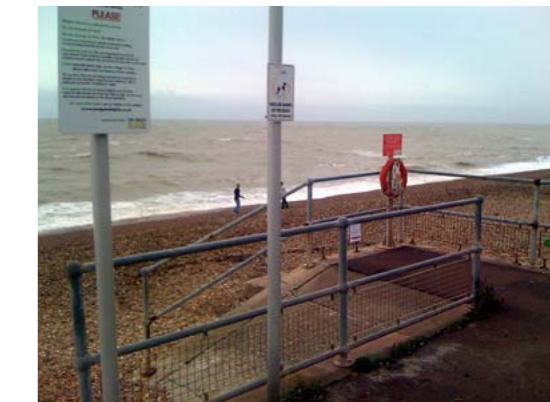
Proposal: Coordinate with all parties into one sign with a more positive spin.



K11 No cycling and dog fouling signs:

Duplication and poor quality.

Proposal: Whilst the principle of utilising a single pole for more than one sign is good this is clearly unsightly and unnecessary. Remove lower two or preferably all of it.



E29 Various signs

Clutter and some duplication.

Proposal: Remove dog sign and pole. Put remaining signs all on remaining pole, preferably the lifebuoy location.

Proposal Category 2: continued.

M38 a-d Various signs in the same location:

Clutter, duplication and poor quality.

Proposal: Whilst the principle of utilising a single pole for more than one sign is good this is clearly unsightly and unnecessary. As a minimum remove 'Tidy Britain Award' signs, dog signs and old byelaw signs. Preferably rationalise and replace all into one coordinated sign system.



Proposal Category 3:

- These photos show the remaining signs that are still required but detract or diminish from the main objectives. The tourism environment would benefit from these being replaced with more positively toned and/or attractive signs when funds allow.

All photograph reference numbers are taken from the 2010 audit.

Locations of all these signs can be found by clicking on the following links:

For Photo pre-fixes A-D:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=3&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7b916332aebb77c>

For Photo pre-fixes E-G:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=4&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7e99c9d3830d6b6>

For Photo pre-fixes J-L:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=5&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7ea0fd5c345e15>

For Photo pre-fixes M-Q:

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&vpsrc=1&ctz=-60&vps=6&jsv=372d&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=216594257990770122253.00048e7ea4fb6b6109257>

L12 (main picture), L8 and L43: Environment Agency warning signs

Negative and over-signed

Proposal: Reduce number by half. Consider more positive tone when due for replacement



B4 Sunny Sands Welcome Sign

More negative than welcoming. Unattractive and vandalised.

Proposal: Replace with new design of welcome sign and re-locate any necessary 'directive' messages elsewhere.



NI Lydd Town Council Notice Board

Unattractive and appears poorly located. Unlikely to be read much in this location?

Proposal: Replace with new design and re-consider location.

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