

SIGNAGE - SUMMARY GUIDANCE ON GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

For further information refer to 'Signs guidance for farmers and other land managers – Using advisory signs to inform the public about your day-to-day land management operations', available from the www.outdooraccess-scotland.com website.

Why use signs and waymarks?

- To guide people along preferred or agreed routes or paths
- To reassure people that they are on the right path
- To confirm where people are welcome and advise them 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 types of sign

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| - Instructional | - informative |
| - advisory | - warning |
| - interpretative | - prohibitory |

Are signs necessary?

- Only use signs where and when needed. Avoid putting up too many signs as this will dilute your message, confuse people and spoil the attraction of the countryside.
- Signage is only one way of communicating with users. There may be more creative and effective approaches, eg. through maps, leaflets, websites and user group networks which, in some cases, may remove the need for signage.
- Signs are not required for every land management operation. Use them to ensure the public are not put at risk and to allow you to work safely and effectively.
- Standard health and safety signage should continue to be used where appropriate.
- Signs should not normally be necessary where access rights do not apply eg. building curtilages and areas of privacy around houses, across lawns or gardens, but waymarking or signage will help direct people to more appropriate paths.
- 'Private – Keep Out' or 'No Entry' should not be used on land or inland water where access rights apply. These commands are too wide ranging and do not comply with the Act and the Code. Specifically, the use of the statutory prohibition signs (red circle with red diagonal slash) is not Act compliant and cannot be used. If your intention is to prohibit motor vehicles, then you should use a more specific wording saying 'No motor vehicles unless authorised' or 'Authorised vehicles only'.
- Reminder signs with messages like 'Please leave gates as you find them' and 'Take your litter home' have long been commonly used and help to support the Code's three key principles. You should therefore continue to use them selectively where they are still helpful as prompts for the public to behave responsibly, but be mindful of the danger of proliferating signage and diluting your message and (see above).

Key principles

- Do the signs catch the attention and deliver the intended information?
- Does the quality of the sign give it credibility?
- Are the messages in line with SOAC/legislation?
- Signs need to be carefully placed so that they are readily accessible, easily read and free of surrounding vegetation

Wording and design of signs

People want to feel welcome in the outdoors and respond best to positive, helpful information.

- Keep messages short and free of jargon
- Use language which is straightforward and easy to understand
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- At all times use the word “**path**” and not “**footpath**”.
- **Help people to make informed decisions** – The Scottish Outdoor Access 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.
- **Use the Code to create signs** - Use the Code to check your wording is correct and that you are not inadvertently deterring people from exercising their access rights by using language or symbols inappropriately. Please check with SNH that any use of the Code logo is correct.
- Ensure that your signs comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 which makes it illegal to discriminate against disabled people on the grounds of their disability. Note also that the Disability Equality Duty (since December 2006) requires all public bodies to ensure that people with disabilities are treated equally. Good practice in the design and lay-out of signs should be followed to ensure that messages will be short and easy to understand, and be helpful to a wide range of abilities.
- In the majority of cases, the use of symbols to prohibit specific modes of access will not be Act compliant as the manager cannot readily determine what will be responsible use.

Signs advising of a hazard or diversion

The Code advises you to consider signage where a hazard raises significant risks which are not obvious to the public, where a hazard lasts longer than time it takes to complete work (e.g. spraying), or where the public might not be sure what you want them to do to avoid a situation.

- Signage should apply only to the minimum area and duration required to safeguard people’s safety.
- Signs can be erected either in advance, to warn people of a risk before they come to it or to promote an alternative route option, or at a site to warn people when they reach the hazard or activity; or used in combination (both in advance and at-site).
- Where people are crossing land rather than using path and tracks, any necessary signs should be located at regular access points.
- Advising users on hazards or obstructions can be done using text signs (either text-only or reinforced by the recognised potential hazard symbol).
- Signs that the public will value best include all of the following:
 - o the activity or hazard that visitors need to be aware of;
 - o the area affected and for how long;
 - o the action you are requesting people to take and the reason for it;
 - o your contact details; and
 - o a simple ‘thank you’.
- Remember to take down signs as soon as the activity is complete or the hazard is no longer present.