

A Future for Fingerposts - Strategy Guidance note



Traditional traffic direction signs – fingerposts - are a cherished feature of the countryside, but many are threatened by vandalism and decay. Fingerposts are not only attractive in their own right, but have become icons important to rural identity, enhancing local character.

Within West Sussex there are two distinct designs, commonly referred to as the West Sussex and East Sussex styles, though other types can be found around the county.



West Sussex style



East Sussex style

The increasingly high cost to maintain these posts within reducing highway maintenance budgets has made it very difficult to continue to fund their upkeep. Repairs have previously been undertaken on an ad hoc basis, as and when resources permitted. Consideration has been given to replacing them with modern tubular steel posts and arms at a fraction of the cost, however this will lose that critical rural identity and visual heritage amenity.

As West Sussex County Council can no longer guarantee resources are available for maintaining fingerposts, where it is desirable to retain them it has proven necessary to adopt an alternative strategy to support their continued existence. Assistance from external local sources is considered paramount to the successful retention of fingerposts, whether this is through Parish Councils, local community or volunteer groups or charitable trusts.

At locations where assistance is not forthcoming, the County Council will need to consider the value of retaining the fingerpost against complete removal, or its replacement with lower maintenance modern tubular steel posts and arms.

This assistance is best coordinated through parish council's, as generally they have a greater understanding of the needs of their local area and community, can be a focal point for volunteers and are better placed to pursue alternative funding sources.

The County Council, through the Area Highways Offices, will continue to be the principle contact in relation to any fingerpost work, and will draw up the licences required to allow the 3rd party to undertake repair work and ongoing future maintenance. In addition, each Area Office may be able to provide assistance to the parish council, possibly through the sourcing of materials, provision of labour / plant to move or erect fingerposts or to provide specifications and local contacts.

The Area Highways Office will also undertake a risk assessment of the fingerpost location to determine what traffic management, if any, may be required to allow work to proceed on site. If it is determined that traffic management is required, this can be arranged and funded by WSCC. Should there be a need to remove the fingerpost from site to allow refurbishment in a safe environment, the Area Highways Office may be able to arrange this.

All work on fingerposts will be in accordance with the County Council's standard detail specification FP1/09 in order to maintain appearance and enduring quality.

Anyone working on the public highway is required to hold public liability insurance. At present the minimum level required by the County Council is £10m. West Sussex County Council is unable to accept liability for 3rd parties working on the public highway.

For more information or to discuss how you may be able to assist with the refurbishment and preservation of fingerposts, contact WSCC on 01243 642105, or write to your local Highways Office at:

- Northern Area Office, Worthing Road, Broadbridge Heath, Horsham, RH12 3LZ.
Highways.northern@westsussex.gov.uk
- Southern Area Office, Clapham Common, Clapham, Worthing, BN13 3UR.
Highways.southern@westsussex.gov.uk
- Western Area Office, Drayton Lane, Drayton, Chichester PO20 2AJ
Highways.western@westsussex.gov.uk

