

Report to	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	12th March 2020
Lead Member/Officer	Councillor Hugh H Evans (Leader)/Emlyn Jones (Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services)
Report author	Mike Jones (Traffic, Parking and Road Safety Manager)
Title	Tourism Signage Strategy for Denbighshire

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. This report is about the development of a Tourism Signage Strategy for Denbighshire. The Tourism Signage Strategy is one of the actions contained within the Denbighshire Tourism Strategy.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To provide information regarding the development of the Tourism Signage Strategy, including a progress update on ongoing tourism signage schemes.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Committee considers the contents of the report, provides observations, and supports the continuation of work to develop the Tourism Signage Strategy.
- 3.2. That if the Committee wishes, a report on the final draft of the Tourism Signage Strategy comes back to the Committee in late 2020/early 2021.

4. Report details

Introduction

- 4.1. We are currently developing a Tourism Signage Strategy for Denbighshire. A strategy is required in order to provide some direction for identifying tourism signage schemes in a consistent way and to also consolidate some significant

existing schemes into one overall strategy. This is an action contained within the Denbighshire Tourism Strategy.

4.2. Although still at a draft stage, it is suggested that the Tourism Signage Strategy should contain the objectives listed overleaf. These objectives have been selected either because they relate to significant schemes already in development (such as the Vale of Clwyd scheme), because they are recommendations from a previous Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting, or because they are required to ensure a consistent approach to tourism signage across the County.

Proposed objectives for the Tourism Signage Strategy

- Ensure the Vale of Clwyd is adequately signed from the A55 trunk road
- Ensure Rhyl and Prestatyn are adequately signed from the A55.
- Ensure there is appropriate signage for major attractions in Ruthin and the Dee Valley from the A494 and A5 trunk roads, including the role of the A483.
- Identify and develop signage for a series of “scenic tourist routes” within Denbighshire to complement the Wales Way
- Provide suitable follow-on signage within town/village centres to tourist destinations

Policy background

4.3. The Welsh Government are the Highway Authority for all trunk roads in Wales, including the A55, A494 and A5 in Denbighshire. This means that tourism signage can only be placed on the trunk road network with prior approval from the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government published a policy for tourism signage on trunk roads in August 2013. A copy is attached in Appendix A. This policy provides strict criteria in terms of the type of tourist destination, minimum visitor numbers and the maximum permitted distance to the destination from the nearest trunk road.

4.4. The Council also has a policy for tourism signage on County (non-trunk) roads which was approved in 2006. A copy is provided in Appendix B. Like the WG policy, it sets criteria to determine whether a tourist destination is eligible for

signage. It is recommended to review this policy now that the Tourism Signage Strategy is being developed.

- 4.5. One of the overriding principles of providing signage is that the amount of signage is kept to a minimum to avoid unnecessary clutter and to ensure that motorists are not overloaded with information as this can cause distraction with potentially dangerous consequences. This is one of the reasons that the existing policies are written in order to avoid an over-proliferation of signage.

Objectives

- 4.6. A scheme has been developed to sign the Vale of Clwyd from the A55, including the “follow-on signage” to the destinations. Plans showing the proposed A55 signage are included in Appendix C. Rhuddlan Castle, Denbigh Castle and St Asaph Cathedral are the attractions included on the signs. We originally proposed to include Ruthin Gaol as well, however, it doesn't meet the WG policy because the A55 is not the closest trunk road to Ruthin (the A494 is) and because Ruthin is more than 10 miles from the A55. A working group formed by Ann Jones AM has identified funding for approximately half of the £150k required. A bid for the remainder has been submitted to the Council's Strategic Investment Group for financial year 2020-21. At the time of writing this report, we do not yet know whether that bid has been successful.
- 4.7. We proposed to develop a scheme to replace the existing Rhyl key tourist sign on the A55 westbound carriageway at Junction 27 as it is in a very poor condition. The scheme would also include a new sign on the eastbound carriageway at Junction 23a where presently there is no brown sign for Rhyl. Please see photographs and location plans in Appendix D. It is also proposed that SC2 would be one of the attractions included on the new signs. A bid for the signage has been submitted to the Council's Strategic Investment Group for financial year 2020-21. At the time of writing this report, we do not yet know whether that bid has been successful.
- 4.8. A new key tourist sign for Prestatyn was placed on the A55 at Junction 31 in 2016. The tourism signage within the town has been renewed within recent

months. As part of the draft Strategy, we are proposing to consider the potential for a brown sign for Prestatyn on the A55 eastbound carriageway at Junction 24 (see Appendix E for further details).

- 4.9. There will be a need to review the condition of the existing tourism signage on the A494 and A5 trunk roads and to consider whether the attractions in Ruthin and the Dee Valley are adequately signed from the trunk road network, subject to the Welsh Government's policy for tourism signage on trunk roads. The role of the A483 is also important and should also be considered.
- 4.10. *Visit Wales* have identified three routes across Wales, as part of the Wales Way project. One of these routes is the "North Wales Way" which broadly follows the A55. However, to complement this main route, a number of circular routes have been developed through the Visit Wales Regional Tourism Engagement Fund by the six North Wales Local Authorities in conjunction with the 10-year Wales Way Project. These routes will appeal to visitors who wish to explore our region further and stay in the area; they will lead visitors to smaller tourist attractions which would not qualify for signage from the trunk road network.
- 4.11. An Officer/Member working group has been set up to continue the development of the Tourism Signage Strategy. The working group includes two members from each of the MAGs. The first meeting of the working group took place on the 24th February 2020.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1. The Tourism Signage Strategy is an action within the Denbighshire Tourism Strategy. It will also contribute towards the Corporate Priority of Connected Communities as quality signage is a component of good infrastructure.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1. In Denbighshire and across the UK, Tourism signage is normally funded by the operator of the tourist attraction or facility. As well as the cost of the sign manufacture and installation, the amount that the operators pay also includes

design costs and an allowance for future minor sign maintenance. In some cases, the Council is the operator of an attraction and contributes accordingly.

- 6.2. There is no existing Council budget for the provision of new tourism signage, nor a budget for the replacement of existing tourism signage. The implementation of signage schemes identified within the Tourism Signage Strategy will therefore depend upon funding from private sector tourism operators where signage is for privately-run attractions, or from Council capital funding in the case of Council-run attractions.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment is proposed to be carried out within the next few months as the Tourism Signage Strategy is developed further.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1. The need for a Tourism Signage Strategy was originally raised by Communities Scrutiny Committee in May 2018.
- 8.2. It is proposed that we engage with Denbighshire Tourism Forum in the summer of 2020 to seek the views of local tourism operators.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 The Council has to prioritise funding commitments in light of the funding available and competing pressures such in Social Care, Schools, Highways for example. However the Capital Plan for 2020/21 does include a total of £150k funding for traffic signage schemes Vale of Clwyd and Rhyl brown tourism signage schemes which were requested by the service. It is welcome that external income is maximised in this area.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1. The main risk is that a failure to secure funding could inhibit the delivery of the Tourism Signage Strategy.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1 Section 7.4.1 of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers with respect of policy development and review.

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