

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 6

meeting date: 16th NOVEMBER 2017
title: BROWN TOURISM SIGNS
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: MARK BEVERIDGE, HEAD OF CULTURAL AND LEISURE SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 Outline the process involved for businesses who wish to get a Brown Sign installed to assist people get to their location.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
- Corporate Priorities - To encourage economic development throughout the borough, with specific focus on tourism
- Other Considerations – To develop, with relevant partners, measures to support the visitor economy

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 There is often much confusion over Brown Signs, with many people thinking they are the responsibility of the local planning authority. This is not the case, any proposal or application to have a Brown Sign has to be submitted to the local highways authority, in the case of the Ribble Valley that would be Lancashire County Council. To place a sign further afield, such as on a motorway would require an application to the Highways Agency.

2.2 These signs are designed to guide visitors to a tourist destination along the most appropriate route, during the latter part of their journey, particularly if the destination is difficult to find.

They are often, though incorrectly perceived by tourist businesses as useful marketing tools, despite this not be the purpose for which they are provided. They are no substitute for a good marketing strategy allied to appropriate promotional material.

2.3 Brown Signs are regulated under the "Traffic Signs Regulations and general Directions 2002", under the auspices of the Department for Transport.

2.4 The nearest Highways Agency roads to the Borough are: M65, M6, M61, M66 and M55. All other roads in the immediate area are the responsibility of LCC.

2.5 The costs for signs from the Highways Agency are significant, £8,000-£40,000, depending upon the road and work involved; the process can take up to 9 months.

2.6 For LCC the initial fee is £125, but the actual cost of the sign, if agreed will depend on a number of factors, so there is no indication of the range of costs thereafter.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Simply applying for signage gives no guarantee of success. Each application is judged according with guidance and a range of eligibility criteria, as well as road safety and traffic management factors. Too many signs can spoil the look and feel of an area, whilst making it confusing and distracting for drivers.

3.2 In addition tourism signs need to supplement, rather than duplicate information which is already provided; such as existing direction signs, brown signs and tourism literature.

3.3 There is normally no form of appeal if an application for a sign is unsuccessful and once a sign is installed it becomes the property of the Highway Authority, however much the applicant has paid for it.

3.4 Cleaning and maintenance is not the responsibility of the applicant that lies with the Highway Authority. As this is generally a low priority, signs can become overgrown or discoloured with algae, making them difficult to read or in some case hidden altogether.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – None in the context of this report
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Borough Council has no role to play in businesses obtaining a Brown Sign
- Reputation – The Council can act as a facilitator to help through the network of businesses it works with to provide them with the information to help them apply for appropriate signage.
- Equality and Diversity - None

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 The Committee ask the Chief Executive to write to the LCC Chief Executive requesting that all Brown Signs in the Borough are cleaned and where necessary the vegetation is cut back to make them visible.

5.2 The Committee ask the Director of Community Services to request LCC to provide a presentation to The Ribble Valley Tourism Association on the process for applying for Brown Signs.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS None

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