

Annex 1:

DRAFT DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR DIRECTIONAL PATH SIGNS IN THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

Introduction

1. This document provides guidance about the signs that people use to get around the path network in the Cairngorms. The guidance is primarily about those signs that help people find out where a path goes and how far it is to the destination. For the sake of clarity, we will call such signs “directional path signs” of which there are two basic types:
 - a) **Fingerposts** which direct the user along a path and contain information about the direction of the path, destination and the distance to that destination; and
 - b) **Intermediate Way-markers** which help to guide people along a path that has fingerposts at either end. Waymarking is used to provide the user with reassurance and inform route choice along a path and within a network of paths. Not all paths with fingerposts will require intermediate waymarking.
2. Directional path signs are very important to help people get the most out of the path network in the Cairngorms. Such signs are especially important for people who are unfamiliar with the area or who are less confident in their ability to navigate safely. As such, they can play a significant role in helping visitors enjoy the National Park and in helping encourage people to become more active.
3. There are of course many other signs in the countryside that path users may encounter. For example, signs that:
 - a) give advice about how users should be behave responsibly
 - b) provide information about route conditions, hazards or which warn of land management operations
 - c) provide interpretation, telling stories about the place
 - d) point to features of interest and local attractions along the route
 - e) provide information about who manages the path and/or financially contributes to the work
 - f) mark the threshold of land ownership units (maybe a big estate) or designated sites (perhaps a National Nature Reserve).
4. This guidance does not cover these types of signs – it is only about the signs that help people find their way.
5. This guidance sits within the context of the national guidance provided by Paths for All Partnership in their publication ‘Access Signage

Guidance'. The guidance is a 'local format' for path signs in the Cairngorms National Park.

6. This guidance will be of particular interest if:
 - a) you are considering installing any directional path signs
 - b) you are considering replacing old and worn directional path signs
 - c) you are preparing a proposal for funding for such signs from the Scotland Rural Development Programme
 - d) you are expecting to receive financial support from any public sector organisation for installation of directional path signs.

Background to a new approach

7. Many paths are already signposted in the National Park. However, the current system of path signage in the Cairngorms National Park is a result of a piecemeal approach. Signs have been installed in parts of the Park over a number of years in a variety of styles, each of which looks quite different. Directional signs across the Park are currently made of varying materials (e.g. wood, plastic and metal), different colours and they provide users with varying information (e.g. distance in miles, kilometres, meters or in estimated time to reach a destination).
8. We believe that the current system, inherited from the past, is unlikely to meet the needs of the future. Following discussion with a number of interested parties the National Park Authority is committed to promoting a new approach. This is particularly important at the present time for the following reasons:
 - a) **Promoting high standards of design in a National Park:** All signs are, to some extent, an intrusion in the landscape. In the National Park we need the highest standards of design to ensure that people can find their way around but with the minimum impact on the landscape.
 - b) **Signs for many different types of user:** In the past some signs have been developed specifically with walkers in mind – for example, where estimated walking times are provided. Scotland's new access legislation encourages use of paths by a variety of users (including cyclists, horse riders and wheelchair users). We need to cater for their needs too. Good design can also help with legibility of the information provided on signs for the widest possible range of users.
 - c) **Signs for a network of paths:** In the past, directional path signs have been installed on land where the land manager was particularly positive about encouraging people. In the future paths will be signposted over a much wider area – especially in, around and between communities and in other places of

interest. The system of paths signs need to reflect the needs of people to move around this network.

- d) ***Agreeing the format for new signs:*** As result of ongoing work we are likely to see more directional path signs installed in the next few years. It makes sense now to agree what those signs should look like and what information they should convey in order to provide the widest possible range of benefits. Providing an effective standard design now can also help keep costs of maintenance to a minimum.
- e) ***The need for a strategic approach:*** Providing an effective system of directional path signs is only one part of what it takes to help people enjoy the Cairngorms. The work on signage needs, for example, to be linked to the provision of visitor information and the maintenance of the paths themselves. The Outdoor Access Strategy for the Cairngorms was approved in March 2007 and provides the strategic context for this work. The agreed policy for the Park on signs and waymarking is reprinted in Annex 1.

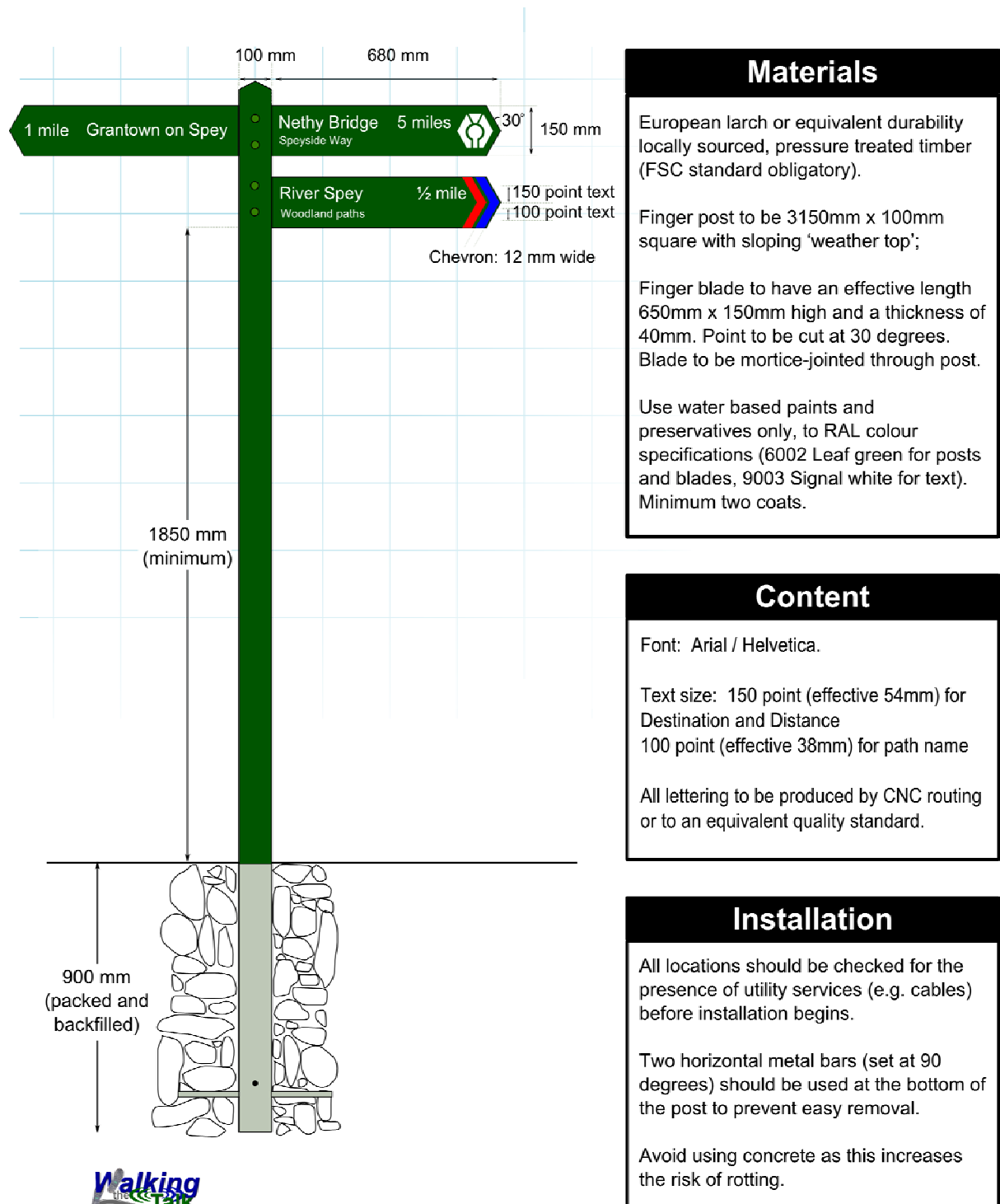
The rationale for directional path signs in the Cairngorms

9. Directional path signs are primarily provided to improve people's experience of a path, or network of paths, and can be used to confirm that users are:
 - a) allowed to be there;
 - b) where they thought they were, and
 - c) going somewhere.
10. Path signs can also be a useful 'tool' for land managers to help encourage people to remain on paths, and to avoid sensitive areas or areas with busy or hazardous land management activity.
11. Following discussion with a range of interested parties this guidance has been developed based on a number of fundamental principles:
 - a) *A user-based approach*: The experience of path users is the single most important factor in deciding what any sign should look like.
 - b) *Simplicity*: The signs should be as simple as possible and should avoid information that is not essential for path users (e.g. marketing brands or logos, names of organisations, etc). This information can be provided on other signs, perhaps located near the trail head. Directional path signs should primarily display:
 - direction of the path (normally through orientation of the finger post)
 - destination of the path
 - distance to the destination
 - c) *Separation of sign types*: Directional path signs should be provided independently of any other signs. Other information that users may need, or which land managers may want to provide, should be provided on other signs or information boards to suit the specific circumstances.
 - d) *Consistency*: A consistent approach across the Park helps build confidence in path users, helps them move around the landscape between different management units and keeps costs to a minimum.
 - e) *Placing signs only where they are needed*: This guidance cannot prescribe where each sign should be placed: a balance is required between providing sufficient information for users without cluttering the landscape with signs. This needs to be considered at a local level, taking into account a number of factors. The policy in the Outdoor Access Strategy already contains a presumption against signposting or waymarking in wild, remote or sensitive areas (See Annex 1).

Content, design and location of Fingerposts

12. Fingerposts direct the user along a path and contain information about the direction of the path, destination and the distance to that destination. The standard design recommended for finger posts is shown in Figure 1.

Fig 1: Standard design specification for Fingerpost in the Cairngorms National Park



13. Key features of the standard design are as follows:
- a) **Materials:** Wood is a sustainable resource and signs can be manufactured locally. Water based paints have low environmental impact.

- b) **Colour:** White letters on green background are high contrast and easy to read. This colour scheme is the most commonly used for path signs across Scotland.
- c) **Fonts:** Use of Arial / Helvetica font gives the most flexibility and is one of the fonts that meet accessibility standards for the visually impaired. Font size follows national guidance.
- d) **Dimensions of posts:** These are in line with national standards. A standard minimum height for a free standing finger post of 1850 mm is recommended. However, there may be situations, particularly on paths that are popular with wheelchair users, where a directional sign could be better located in a different position to improve the effectiveness of the sign. With careful thought, some directional signs can be added to existing furniture without the need for a new post.

14. **Information on signs:**

- a) **Direction:** The fingerpost should point along the route of the path.
- b) **Destination:** Careful consideration needs to be given to the choice of destination so that it is meaningful to users (i.e. a place where people want to visit and which they will recognise once they arrive). Often it will be a settlement or significant feature found on a map. The destination shown on the sign may often be beyond the land management unit on which the sign is located. In some circumstances it may be useful to add an intermediate destination e.g. 'via Bridge of Muick'. Where a path is designed as a recreation loop without destination, it may be appropriate to sign it 'Circular Path'.
- c) **Distance:** This is simply the distance in miles, or crude fractions of miles, to the destination e.g. 1 ½ miles. Note: decimal fractions of miles should not be used.

15. In addition, and only if it is relevant, the following information may also be provided:

- a) **Path name:** Use the strategic route name (e.g. Speyside Way) or the locally agreed path name, if appropriate. Note that font size for the path name is smaller than for the destination as this is of secondary importance to most users. The development of a relevant local name for a path can contribute towards local distinctiveness. Use of Gaelic or Doric path names may also add local distinctiveness.
- b) **Path identity symbol:** Where a path has an agreed symbol, such as the 'thistle' on Long Distance Paths, this can be incorporated into the finger post. Other organisational logos and brands should not be used.

- c) **Coloured chevron:** These can be provided on finger posts but only if the path subsequently uses intermediate waymarking with colours.
16. **Maintenance:** Painted wooden signs will require regular maintenance about every five years, including repainting. Path managers should consider this when planning signs for a path or network of paths.
17. **Special circumstances:** The following three sets of circumstances have been identified where it would be appropriate to depart from the standard design specification for the Cairngorms National Park as described in Figure 1.
- a) **Within settlements with agreed sign design formats:** Some settlements within the National Park have agreed styles of directional signs (e.g. in Aviemore Fig. 2.1) and these should be used for path signs located within the settlement in order to retain a coherent appearance and to reduce the potential for confusion. Towards the edge of the settlement it will be appropriate to change to the standard design specification as shown in Figure 1.
- b) **Within settlements, when adding a sign to existing road sign:** Here metal is the best option for the finger post, such as that shown in Figure 2.2. The content of the sign should, however, follow the standard design specification (Figure 1) in terms of destination and distance.

Figure 2: Examples of existing sign styles

2.1 Aviemore



2.2 Grantown







- c) **Replacement of path signs of historical significance:** In some specific locations, the existing path signs are themselves of historic interest – for example, the cast iron path signs that have been in place in some locations for many years and which were installed by the Scottish Rights of Way Society (now Scotways). In

these specific instances, the retention of the original signs, or installation of replica replacements, is recommended.

Intermediate Waymarking

18. *Intermediate Way-markers* guide people along a path which has fingerposts at either end. Waymarking is used to provide the user with reassurance and inform route choice along a path and within a network of paths.
19. This guidance does not prescribe where intermediate waymarking should be installed, nor specify the form it should take in the National Park. The merits of four broad styles (as outlined in Table 1) are described below and the decision is left to the path manager.
20. A consistent approach to waymarking will be required along the length of a path between fingerposts, which may include crossing land managed by different organisations. Consideration should be given to how users access the paths in question. For example, not all users may have passed the trailhead where the system of way-marking is explained.
21. On many path networks, roundels have been developed that include some text that 'wraps' round the outer edge of the arrow or symbol. It is considered appropriate to use the name of the path, where one exists, which may help to reduce colour confusion. Roundels should *not* be used to convey any 'essential' information (e.g. warning or advisory notices).
22. Path managers may find it useful for maintenance programmes to discretely individually number all path signs and accurately record their location. Individually identifiable markers can also provide exact reference points on promoted paths in such rare circumstances as when someone has a serious accident on the route.

Table 1 Comparison of Commonly used styles of Waymarking

	Coloured Bands	Arrow	Symbol	Symbol and arrow
Example				
Advantages	<p>Simple, cost effective & relatively easy to maintain</p> <p>Can be used in any direction</p> <p>Can be easily integrated with fingerposts through use of coloured chevron</p>	<p>Simple, cost effective & relatively easy to maintain</p> <p>Can be coloured to identify path</p> <p>Provides directional information</p> <p>Can be used in a roundel with path name</p> <p>Easy to add to existing structures</p>	<p>Symbols, esp. when combined with a colour, offer the most distinctive type of waymarking accessible to all.</p> <p>Can be used to develop path identity</p>	<p>Symbols, esp. when combined with a colour, offer the most distinctive type of waymarking accessible to all.</p> <p>Can be used to develop path identity</p>
Disadvantages	<p>No route choice can be shown unless extra 'confirmation' posts are installed after junctions</p> <p>Careful colour contrast is needed to distinguish different paths</p>	<p>Careful colour contrasts needed to distinguish different paths</p> <p>Can appear unprofessional – especially when over-used</p>	<p>Can be complex, expensive to develop & difficult to maintain.</p> <p>No direction information</p>	<p>Can be complex, expensive to develop & difficult to maintain.</p> <p>Not interchangeable with different locations</p>

Other information for path users

23. If the directional path signs are to work effectively, the range of information required to support the needs of the path users, as listed in the first section of this guidance, should be provided elsewhere. It is therefore recommended that this information is provided in a variety of ways including:
 - a) map and information boards at the start of paths,
 - b) separate specific signs,
 - c) leaflets and websites.
24. These media offer the opportunity to inform users about the role of land managers in managing the paths and to present the paths as part of a wider network in the National Park by use of the National Park brand.
25. Some specific requirements are considered below.
26. **Interpretation:** Drawing users' attention to specific points of interest along a route or telling stories of the area or the path is often worthwhile and can add considerably to the users' experience. This can be done using panels and other forms of static interpretation or, more creatively through artistic approaches. It is recommended that site managers wishing to create a distinctive 'sense of place' for their site use creative interpretation and design at key visitor locations without resorting to the need to customise functional path signs. Land managers should also give careful consideration to the impact that such additional infrastructure can have on the landscape and be mindful of the need to regularly maintain and update any information. It should also be noted that such structures are likely to require planning permission.
27. **Land management signs:** It is recommended that path users are informed about temporary land management practices and seasonal conservation issues and by using the 'Signage Guidance and Templates for Land Managers' provided by Scottish Natural Heritage and agreed by the National Access Forum.
28. **Grant aid or commercial sponsorship:** Some paths and path networks receive grant aid or commercial sponsorship and funding bodies legitimately want their support recognised. Instead of adding logos to path directional path signs, which can create a cluttered appearance, it is recommended that path managers inform users in a variety of alternative ways as described above.

Making the change happen

29. While many of the existing path signs do not meet current best practice standards, the wholesale replacement of path signs with the standard design is **not** recommended. Priority should be given to installing directional path signs in the following order:
 - a) Install directional signs on promoted paths that are not currently signed, then
 - b) Replace directional path signs that are illegible/worn/damaged, then
 - c) Replace directional path signs that do not meet best practice.
30. It is anticipated that this work will take a number of years. Creating a consistently signposted, coherent network of promoted paths across the Cairngorms National Park will require the active cooperation of many partners.
31. Replacing existing path signs is unlikely to require planning permission. New signs, depending on location and impact, may require permission. In all situations, path managers are advised to consult the relevant planning authority as a matter of course.
32. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is available for advice on implementation of the guidance and on potential sources of funding for path signs.

Acknowledgements

33. CNPA wishes to thank the following for their help in developing this guidance:
 - Cairngorms National Park Local Outdoor Access Forum
 - Paths for All Partnership
 - Fieldfare Trust
 - Inclusive Cairngorms
 - Scotways
 - Walking the Talk
 - All the participants at the 11th April 2008 Workshop

Annex 1: Outdoor Access Strategy Policy 11- Providing appropriate way-marking

Way-marking has a crucial role to play in encouraging people to take access and in assisting them orientate their way around the National Park. The policy for the Park is based on the following principles:

- There should be a network of way-marked routes around and between every community, including good information to orient people and find the start of such routes;
- Way-marking information must include a direction pointer, destination and approximate distance at the start of the route;
- It should be easy to find the start of promoted paths from the heart of nearby communities;
- Giving approximate times to complete the route at the starting point will help to provide comfort to those who might otherwise lack the necessary confidence to embark on the route;
- There will be a presumption against way-marking in wild, remote or other sensitive areas, especially in mountainous terrain, where people value the sense of wildness and are expected to be self reliant;
- The Park Authority will work with relevant partners to produce and keep under review technical way-marking guidance, in line with national best practice, which will lead to high standards, a consistent approach and the promotion of a feeling of being within a National Park.