



CPRE Sussex Policy Position Statement

CLUTTER

Section 1

The scope of the problem

Clutter on rural roads is becoming a creeping menace which threatens to destroy the beauty of our countryside.

The response of the majority of highway authorities to problems of traffic and speed is to add more signs, signals, barriers and road paint.

Where does all this clutter come from?

- Directional signs
- Advisory and mandatory signs
- Commercial – housing developments, B+B, hotels, Garden Centres, Leisure feature or outlet, Advertising, Built structures, Casual (Local events), and permitted /controlled events.

The volume and speed of traffic on rural roads and through villages is a major threat to character of the countryside. The Highway authorities who have a key role to play in managing traffic need to respect the countryside character to prevent the creeping urbanisation of rural areas. The increasing impact of transport on the countryside can be seen in the profusion of signs, the over zealous use of painted lines on roads, the poor attention to detail of design in new street furniture and traffic calming schemes which create a kaleidoscope of red, white and yellow geometric patterns. The worst offending sites are often those with numerous “add-ons.” There is an increasing problem of large advertising boards which are often on wheeled structures on private land. It has also been noted that there is an increase in the amount of clutter on footpaths and along railways.

Clutter can also be counter-productive – too many road signs can often distract drivers and

can actually be the cause of accidents. It is a particular problem in AONB’s.

Research from Holland has shown that signs and highway clutter appear to act as a barrier to reading contextual clues. Without them, drivers have to rely on normal cognitive skills to read their surroundings for clues, and the resulting lower speeds appear to reduce congestion by allowing road junctions to work more efficiently.

Section 2

Central and Local Planning Policy

The Highway Authority commits to:

Developing a policy in the Local Transport Plan to protect/enhance the countryside character – the policy will seek to decrease the clutter caused by signs, lines and other street furniture and ensure highway management practices are sensitive to the character of the countryside;
Bidding for additional funding in the Local Transport Plan;

Working with landscape professionals, interested groups and wider public to develop a traffic management manual and design guide;

To undertake a clutter audit across the Authority’s area; and

Establish clutter free pilot schemes.

West Sussex County Council is committed to the Clutter campaign but there are problems of direct funding and limited enforcement resources. WSCC have developed a Clutter Action Plan which covers the following:

When carrying out maintenance, look at the whole sign and consider how it can be improved /reduced.

Liaise with local agencies /organisations. eg CPRE

Appoint a “street scene officer.”

Conduct a clutter audit.

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Review construction techniques.

EuroRap is a European Road Assessment programme with members drawn from motoring organisations, national and regional road authorities and experts. It campaigns for the continuity of signage to improve road safety particularly on rural A road routes.

Section 3 CPRE Sussex Policy Statements

We support the national CPRE clutter campaign which has issued a clutter challenge, whereby local highway authorities are exhorted to reduce pointless road signs.

- We want to see the carefully considered use of signage and other measures to create an environment that will influence drivers to be more careful and so reduce accidents but without affecting landscape quality more than absolutely necessary.
- Give priority to the removal of existing sources of clutter.
- Support measure to ensure that all new proposals are better designed to complement their surroundings.
- More specifically CPRE Sussex supports the following:
 - The replacement of yellow fluorescent chevrons with reflectors;
 - The use of more sympathetic signs;
 - The removal of redundant signs/posts;
 - Combining signs on one post. In Hampshire a campaign to remove clutter in the village of Selbourne has led to the reduction of signs: from 96 signs on 43 separate posts to 48 signs on 13 posts. In addition the sizes have been reduced and unsightly grey base plates have been eliminated altogether;
- The placement of very small visual signs on walls rather than on posts.
- CPRE Sussex to liaise with Sussex Parish Councils to assist with village clutter as they have the best understanding of their locality.

Section 4

CPRE Branch contact

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Section 5

What can you do?

- Notify local councils of any clutter issues in your area.
- Contact the CPRE Sussex branch to inform them of any clutter issues in your area.