

Signage Working Party

Minutes

Thursday, 15 May 2014 at 15:00

PRESENT:

Councillor Sutton (in the Chair), Councillor Marsden, Dr John Langley.

Kim Balls (Senior Strategic Planner) and Karline Smith (Senior Member Services Officer).

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2013 were confirmed.

2 GREAT YARMOUTH SIGNAGE

The Senior Strategic Planner reported that following the 30th September 2013 meeting he had carried out an audit of Great Yarmouth Town Centre's existing pedestrian signage to establish its condition and if it was fit for purpose.

Three audits were undertaken on foot in May 2014 using the mapping information provided by the Environmental Services Officer and aligned along pedestrian routes regularly frequented by tourists and shoppers travelling into the Town Centre, seafront and the heritage quarter as follows:

- Audit 1 - Great Yarmouth Train Station - North Quay/Conge - Town Centre/Market
- Audit 2 - Town Centre - South Quay - King Street (Heritage Quarter)
- Audit 3 - Seafront (Marine Parade) - Regent Road - St Georges - Town Centre/Market

The purpose of the walking audit was to gauge the quality and quantity of pedestrian signage in the town centre and understand the ease of pedestrian movement via the signage (legibility).

Quality

A small proportion of the audited pedestrian signage was considered to be in a poor state, requiring some paint repair and work to signage lettering which had become illegible. Otherwise, the majority of the signage appeared to be in a good condition and was overall considered to be in keeping with the style and colour of the existing components of the public realm, particularly those provided through InteGREAT. On this alone, there appears to be some general consistency.

Quantity

There are 39 pedestrian led signage posts within the North Quay, Town Centre, South Quay, Seafront and lower King Street/Nelson Road South area, with a higher

concentration in the Town Centre and King Street area.

In areas such as Hall Plain, South Quay and King Street, signage is over represented, in some places within 20 yards of each other. This has a particularly 'cluttering' effect on the streetscape, especially on thoroughfares where additional road signage is present.

Legibility

As described earlier, the majority of the signage audited was clear in its direction and offered the pedestrian a suitable route through the town to key areas and leisure activities benefitting the town's economy.

However, at times, some of the pedestrian signage was misleading or not overtly clear to the walker. References to ambiguous destinations such as 'stations' were not clarified and were often conflicted in their direction.

It was also noticed that very specific leisure or cultural activities such as 'Potteries' or 'Time and Tide Museum' first appeared on signage a long distance away from their intended destination. This potentially narrows the offer of the walker/tourist to a specific destination rather than offering the opportunity to explore a much more general 'heritage quarter' and then to use specific directional signage to individual leisure and cultural activities such as museums, open space or attractions. It may be appropriate to re-evaluate the current signage 'hierarchy' to reduce clutter and improve overall legibility.

Furthermore, it was considered that some signage destinations, such as the 'seafront' lacked the presence of interpretation signage or public information points to remedy the 'what do we do now we have arrived here?' question. The junction of Regent Road and Marine Parade is a prominent example of this.

This junction provides the pedestrian with a good sense of 'arrival' to the Seafront - drawing the eye to the Cinema, Britannia Pier, the beach, amusement and seafront shopping, however whilst the public realm improvements help to capture the flow of tourists walking from the Town Centre to the Seafront, it is unable to pick out what is exactly on offer, where and how far. Equally, those who have parked along the Seafront and have meandered northwards along Marine Parade to the junction of Regent Road could be unaware of the Town Centre offer which is a relatively short walk away.

Overall the audit identified the potential for some repair and maintenance work on the existing pedestrian signage, particularly where lettering had become illegible. There is also the potential to consolidate signage in particular areas around the town centre to reduce cluttering and improve the streetscape. However, these measures would primarily seek to improve the aesthetics of pedestrian signage and streetscape rather than improving legibility around the town centre as a whole.

Further Consultations

Signage legibility has been an increasingly important principle to simplify movement across cities and town centre and to support economic growth. In places such as Bristol, Glasgow and Leeds, the award winning 'Legible City' concept has helped to create new signage strategies, hierarchy and branding and has been rolled out in many smaller towns such as Cheltenham.

The Urban Design Manager at Cheltenham Borough Council was contacted for a view

in a new 'Wayfinder' scheme for Cheltenham town centre that was loosely based on Legible City. Here, signage was identified as being difficult to read, change and obsolete, therefore new finger-posts were designed and strategically placed at a cost of £2,000 per post. In addition, new 'monolith' signage boards, which included a 'heads up' display map (portraying an aerial view of the current location seen from the users perspective) and walking distances via 5 minute and 10 minute concentric circles, were erected at key meeting points or entrances to leisure, shopping or visitor 'quarters'. The 'monolith' signage boards were priced at £3,500 each. Overall, 16 finger posts and 16 'monolith' boards were implemented at around £150,000.

The Travel SMART Public Realm Officer at Surrey County Council was contacted for a view over a joint 'Wayfinder' scheme that was being currently rolled out at Redhill, Woking and Guildford. Here, a more comprehensive approach to new signage was undertaken by commissioning consultants Atkins to undertake research on pedestrian routes, key landmarks, emerging retail and leisure quarters as well as a design review on a new signage system. The implementation and building on new finger-posts and monoliths were roughly equal to those paid for by Cheltenham Borough Council, however the consultancy work totalled an additional £80,000

In both case studies, new Wayfinder signage was financed through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) and monies received through the government backed Portas Pilot scheme, however these funding pots have since closed to new bids.

Potential Options

Option 1 - Do nothing

Option 2 - Repair existing signage, consolidate/re-balance positioning and de-clutter

Option 3 - As above with additional 'interpretation' style boards in key locations

Option 4 - New signage strategy, hierarchy and full implementation

Dr Langley stated that consideration needed to be given to where any of the signs could be moved to taking into consideration the underground utilities. It was also suggested to look into themed boards such as a Heritage Quarter board which would direct visitors to an area and not to a particular attraction.

The Senior Strategic Planner stated that there was a lack of signs specifically on the junction of Marine Parade and Regent Road and that an interpretation board could be installed in this location.

The Association of Town Centre Managers would let the Senior Strategic Planner know if there were any funding streams that the Council could apply for to pay for the signage.

The group then discussed Apps and the new I love GY app which needed to be publicised.

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendation be presented to the Great Yarmouth Area Committee for consideration:-

* That Option 2 must be carried out as a minimum.

* That increased promotion of the i Love GY app be carried out and advertised at Car Parks, Beach Coach Station, Train Station and Bus Station.

- * Option 4 , approval to go to Cabinet to look for funding streams to pay for this work.
- * Simplification of signage to give clarity to visitors should be implemented.

The meeting ended at: 15:55