



Department  
for Transport

# The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016: Consultation Response

November 2015

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# Foreword

Great Britain is widely acknowledged to have one of the best traffic signing systems in the world. The signs, in use since 1964, have become instantly recognisable and a familiar part of our everyday lives. This has played a key role in creating our good road safety record.

While the signs themselves continue to perform well, it has become clear that the legislation that underpins them, the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions, is out of date and in need of an overhaul. To help work out how it should change, we carried out a complete review of signing policy culminating in 'Signing the Way', published in 2011, which set out recommendations for delivering a modernised Statutory Instrument.

The new version (which will replace the 2002 version as amended) has been completely restructured to provide significant deregulation and a new approach for local authorities in delivering their traffic management and traffic signs. It's worth noting that on the whole the appearance of the signs themselves to road users will not change. This is about creating a flexible legislative framework for the future, rather than new signs. This has been the most comprehensive overhaul of traffic signs in the last 50 years.

We have conducted extensive levels of stakeholder engagement including a full public consultation last year and a series of roadshows across Britain to promote and explain the new policies with workshops to embed the new ways of working. The statutory instrument applies to England, Scotland and Wales and we have worked closely with the devolved administrations in its development.

Primarily, this consultation was about a small number of policies which were not part of the earlier public consultation but which we proposed were included in the new version of the statutory instrument alongside the matters that have already been the subject of public consultation.

Our consultation was launched on 28 August and closed on 6 October. We received 140 responses which included 55 local authorities in Great Britain.

## Question 1 Tackling sign clutter

- 1.1** The over-provision of traffic signs can have a detrimental impact on the environment, and can dilute more important messages, resulting in information overload for drivers.
- 1.2** Some of the most common traffic signs left in place longer than allowed are signs indicating a change in the road layout, for example "NEW ROUNDABOUT AHEAD" shown below:



Permitted variants:

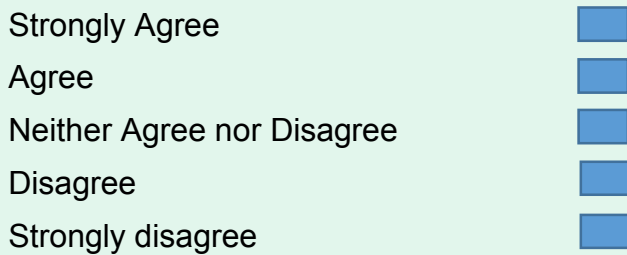
"NEW ROUNDABOUT" may be varied to:

1. "CHANGED PRIORITIES"
2. "GAP CLOSED"
3. "NEW ONE WAY SYSTEM"
4. "NEW ROAD LAYOUT"
5. "NEW TRAFFIC ISLANDS"
6. "NEW TRAFFIC SIGNALS"
7. "NEW ZEBRA CROSSING"
8. "SIGNAL PRIORITIES CHANGED"
9. "SIGNAL TIMINGS CHANGED"

- 1.3** These signs are only allowed to be used for a maximum of 3 months following completion of the works, but are often left in place longer.
- 1.4** We propose that this sign has a 'remove by' date on the back of it, so that the date by which a sign ought to have been removed is clear. This change might, for instance, lead to members of the public letting the local highway authority know if it is not taken down within the time limit.

### Question 1A

1A) Do you agree that a "remove by date" should be placed on the back of "NEW ROUNDABOUT AHEAD" signs and their variants?



**Table 1.1 All responses**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39%	43%	9%	5%	4%

**Table 1.2 Local authority responses**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40%	42%	8%	6%	4%

- 1.5** The consultation responses demonstrated considerable support for the new approach. With 82% of all respondents agreeing that remove by dates should be placed on the back of "NEW ROUNDABOUT AHEAD" signs and their variants.
- 1.6** There were a number supportive comments from organisations and local authorities. One Local Authority said, "This will help to reduce sign clutter as temporary signs are often forgotten and can remain on site for years after scheme completion. One member of the public commented "I'm aware of many such signs that have been in place for years."
- 1.7** However, some respondents felt that it would be better to simply remind practitioners of the requirement to remove temporary signs and the rationale behind it. One Organisation commented "It seems likely that in practice such labels will rarely be affixed."

## Government response

- 1.8** In the revised Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions the "NEW ROUNDABOUT AHEAD" sign and its variants will be required to have a 'remove by' date on the back. We believe that this will assist in ensuring the prompt removal of these signs.

## Question 1B The decluttering taskforce

- 1.9** Reducing sign clutter remains a priority for the Department, and to help move this forward the Secretary of State has appointed Sir Alan Duncan MP to lead a taskforce looking into the issues. To inform this work we would like to hear your ideas for reducing sign clutter.
- 1.10** Overuse of traffic signs blights our landscape, costs local authorities money, and dilutes important road safety messages. Whilst the Department is responsible for the legislation setting out what signs look like and mean, decisions about which traffic signs to place and where is a matter for local authorities.

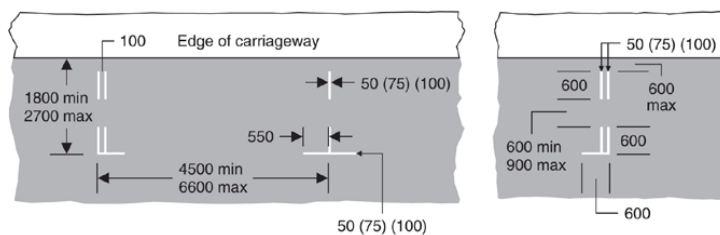
1B) Please tell us about any new ideas or initiatives which would help to reduce traffic sign clutter.

## Government response

- 1.11** We have received 75 responses suggesting ways that we could further reduce traffic signs clutter, all of which have been passed onto Sir Alan Duncan's taskforce. Thank you for your help on this matter.

## Question 2 Traffic Regulation Orders for unrestricted parking bays

- 2.1** We propose to allow parking bays that have no restrictions on their use to be placed without the need for a Traffic Regulation Order.



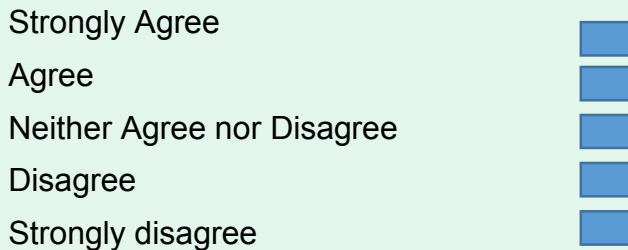
1032  
Parking bay marked with individual parking spaces  
(Longitudinal marking)

- 2.2** Local authorities use Traffic Regulation Orders to apply traffic management controls, to specify parking restrictions and the conditions under which vehicles may be parked. Bays can be placed that have no restrictions or enforcement associated with them, and removing the need to make a Traffic Regulation Order would enable traffic authorities to install them more quickly and cheaply.
- 2.3** In 2002 we removed the need for a Traffic Regulation Order for yellow box markings and bus stop clearways and there is no evidence from the implementation of these to suggest that local authorities would not continue to undertake effective consultation in order to meet the needs and expectations of their local residents.
- 2.4** Members of the public also have the opportunity to challenge the parking policy decisions of councils under the new 'Right to Challenge Parking Policies' introduced at the end of the last Parliament.
- 2.5** It is worth noting that a parking bay with a legend where there is no upright sign (e.g. a loading bay with just a road marking 'LOADING ONLY' that operates 24 hours a day 7 days a week) will still require a Traffic Regulation Order.



## Question 2

Do you agree that we should remove the need for a Traffic Regulation Order for unrestricted parking bays?



**Table 2.1 All responses**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
38%	43%	10%	5%	4%

**Table 2.2 Local authority responses**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40%	42%	8%	6%	4%

- 2.6** 81% of all respondents and 82% of local authority respondents supported the decision to remove the need for a Traffic Regulation Order for unrestricted parking bays.
- 2.7** Many felt that this would be a useful traffic management tool to manage parking where regulations are considered unnecessary. One Local Authority said, "This should assist in the reduction of bureaucracy, which will lead to time and cost savings for the council."
- 2.8** However, some respondents didn't feel that the change would make any real difference. One Local Authority said, "We are not entirely sure what the advantage of this would be as we already put this sort of bay in place without a TRO."

### Government response

- 2.9** The responses to this question have demonstrated strong support for this measure, therefore the new Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions will remove the need for a Traffic Regulation Order for unrestricted parking bays.

## Question 3 Signs in street lit areas

- 3.1** Street lighting plays an important role in road safety, as well as ensuring the personal safety of pedestrians. Decisions on street lighting should be a local decision by elected local councillors, reflecting local circumstances - especially in relation to any concerns about crime
- 3.2** If local authorities have roads with street lighting (at least three lamps not more than 183 metres apart) that are not lit at night, it becomes more important to ensure that signs in these areas that are required to be lit for safety and enforcement purposes are still visible to road users
- 3.3** For example a warning of a height limit ahead not visible could result in a heavy goods vehicle hitting an overhead structure.
- 3.4** The current requirement is that such signs “may” additionally be retroreflective. We now propose to say that such signs “must” also be retroreflective if the street lighting is switched off during part of the hours of darkness.
- 3.5** We understand through talking to industry that nearly all signs visible to moving traffic are now retroreflective. We do not therefore anticipate there being any increased costs associated with providing this type of sign.

### Question 3A

Do you agree that signs on roads with street lighting (at least three lamps not more than 183 metres apart) that is not lit at night must also be made retroreflective?

Yes



No



**Table 3.1 All responses**

Yes	No
94%	6%

**Table 3.2 Local authority answers**

Yes	No
92%	8%

- 3.6 There was extremely strong support for this measure with the vast majority of respondents in agreement that signs should be clearly visible in all conditions. Many said that this change will assist with road safety and other confirmed that most signs are now made using retroreflective materials.
- 3.7 One Local Authority told us, "We already do this as a matter of course." Another highlighted, "This will ensure that they are clearly visible to road users in times of darkness – with or without street lighting."
- 3.8 Of those who answered 'No' to this question, some explained that making signs visible should be determined by local authorities with regards to local risks and concerns and not be a matter for legislation.

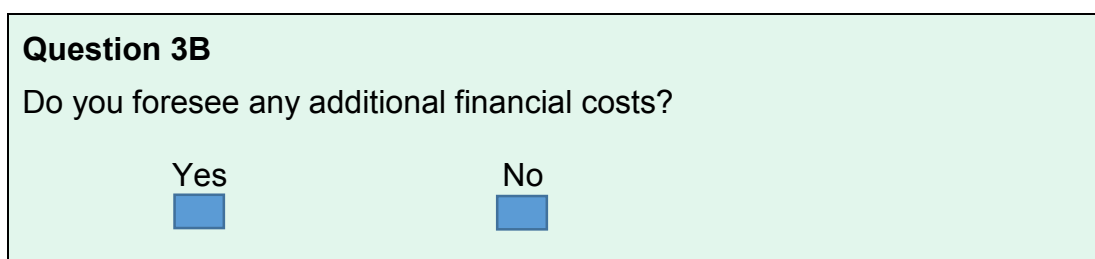


Table 3.3 All responses	
Yes	No
21%	79%

Table 3.4 Local Authority responses	
Yes	No
23%	77%

- 3.9 It was clear from responses that there does not appear to be concern over extra costs with this proposal. Of the 21% who felt there would be some cost implications, the vast majority indicated that this would be minimal.

### Government Response

- 3.10 Evidence suggests that retroreflective signs are already being used in local authority areas and that most signs are now manufactured as such. In addition there was no comprehensive evidence submitted to suggest there would be cost implications.
- 3.11 We will amend legislation to say that such signs “must” also be retroreflective if the street lighting is switched off during part of the hours of darkness.

## Question 4 Temporary variable message signs

- 4.1** It has become common to see the space on the back and supports of portable and temporary variable message signs being used to display information relating to the supplier of the signs or slogans. While some contact information is useful, for example to aid reporting of faulty equipment, these spaces should not be used for advertising. As with permanent signs, supports and backing for variable message signs should be free of distracting information.
- 4.2** We propose to clarify that the directions applying to the mounting and backing of permanent signs also apply to portable and temporary variable message signs. These are that the support components shall each be any single colour or in their natural colour. The back of the sign shall be coloured grey, black or be in a non-reflective metallic finish.
- 4.3** A maintenance identification code and ownership information may be indicated on the support or back of the sign in characters not exceeding 25 millimetres in height. Information about the manufacture of the sign in order to comply with standards may be indicated on the back in characters not exceeding 5 millimetres.

### Question 4

Do you agree that the directions applying to the mounting and backing of permanent signs should also apply to portable and temporary variable message signs?

Yes



No



**Table 4.1 All responses**

Yes	No
90%	10%

**Table 4.2 Local authority responses**

Yes	No
91%	9%

- 4.4 90% of respondents supported this proposal, with 91% of local authority respondents also doing so.
- 4.5 A number commented that the proposal seemed logical and appropriate. One Police force commented, "It would be considered appropriate to keep these signs free from distracting information and not allow any advertising." A Traffic Authority said, "Yes it would seem reasonable to clarify the directions applying to the back of portable and temporary VMS, to avoid unnecessary distraction where the key focus must be on the road ahead."
- 4.6 There was some concern that this could be seen as over regulating and a Traffic Authority told us, "We are not aware of any issues being caused by existing portable/temporary VMS equipment."

### **Government Response**

- 4.7 Given the majority response, the revised Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions will require that the directions applying to the mounting and backing of permanent signs will also apply to portable and temporary variable message signs.

## Question 5 Tunnel restriction code signing

- 5.1** Tunnel restriction codes apply to vehicles carrying dangerous goods through larger road tunnels, and specify what types and quantities of dangerous goods may be taken through tunnels and under what circumstances. The codes are specified in Chapter 1.9 of Part 1 of Annex A to the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) as applicable from 1 January 2015.
- 5.2** The ADR requires signs to be placed indicating these restrictions. Accordingly we are including the tunnel restriction code sign shown below to indicate a prohibition for certain vehicles carrying dangerous goods within regulated tunnels. Each tunnel is categorised A to E, with A being the least restrictive and E being the most i.e. all dangerous goods vehicles. They are based on the three major dangers in tunnels - explosions, release of toxic gas and fires.



### Question 5

Do you have any comment on the inclusion of the tunnel restriction code sign?

Yes



No



**Table 6.1 All responses**

Yes	No
25%	75%

**Table 6.2 Local Authority responses**

Yes	No
25%	75%

- 5.3** The vast majority of those who commented were in support of this proposal on the grounds of improved safety. One member of the public told us, "I

support the inclusion of the restriction code sign as an improvement to safety." One Local Authority told us, "This was felt to be a good idea and would standardise signs across the UK and Europe."

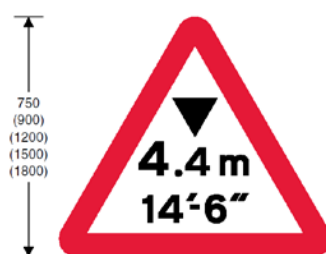
- 5.4** There were some suggestions that the meaning of this sign would need to be clearly communicated to those who will need to recognise it. One Local Authority commented, "Education and understanding of this sign for drivers and wider traveling public is needed."

## Government Response

- 5.5** We are content from the comments received that we should include the tunnel restriction code sign in the new Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions.

## Question 6 Dual unit height, width and length limit signs

- 6.1** Signs that indicate height, width and length limits in both imperial and metric units have been prescribed for some time. We are proposing that in future signs indicating height, width and length limits must show both imperial and metric units of measurement.
- 6.2** Existing signs showing only imperial units will be able to remain in place until they become life-expired, or are replaced during routine maintenance, at which time the dual-unit equivalent must be used.

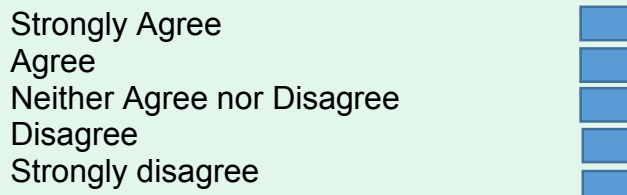


An example of a sign showing dual imperial and metric units

- 6.3** It is felt that there are a number of lorry drivers on our roads who may not be familiar with imperial units of measurement, particularly younger drivers who may not have been taught imperial measurements at school.
- 6.4** This lack of understanding has been implicated in incidents of bridges being struck by over height vehicles. In 2014/15 over 1600 bridge strikes were reported at rail-over-road bridges. This is a safety issue, which also causes delays to both road and rail users, and leads to costly repairs to road and rail infrastructure.
- 6.5** The Department has no plans to change the units of measurement on any other signs. Unlike height, width or length, miles and miles per hour are widely recognised and understood as a measure of distance and speed.

### Question 6

Do you agree that we should only prescribe dual unit (imperial and metric) height, width and length limit signs?



**Table 6.1 All responses**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
51%	37%	3%	2%	7%

**Table 6.2 Local authority responses**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
54%	42%	0%	2%	2%

- 6.6** The majority of responses were extremely positive with 88% of all respondents supporting this proposal and 96% of local authorities also doing so. One Association commented, "We strongly support this and welcome its inclusion in the draft 2016 Regulations."
- 6.7** A Transport Organisation said, "It seems sensible particularly in view of the increasing numbers of younger drivers on the road. Phasing out of imperial only signs once they have reached the end of their serviceable life seems a logical step."
- 6.8** Of those who strongly disagreed, one Association suggested, "prescribing feet and inches only for new signs."

### Government response

- 6.9** We have considered all of the responses and have decided that in the new Regulations, new signs indicating height, width and length limits must show both imperial and metric units of measurement.
- 6.10** Signs indicating height, width and length restrictions in imperial units only that are already in place will not need to be replaced until such time as a new sign is needed.



## Question 7 Road marking route number brackets

**Question 7**  
Are you content for us to prescribe bracketed road number markings?

Yes  No

**Table 7.1 All responses**

Yes	No
95%	5%

**Table 7.2 Local Authority responses**

Yes	No
98%	2%

- 7.1** There was considerable support for prescribing bracketed road number markings with 95% of all respondents and 98% of local authorities agreeing that this should happen. Many local authorities stated that they are already in use. One Local Authority told us, "Yes, should help improve clarity when communicating information to drivers." One Association commented, "The Association is content for DfT to prescribe bracketed road number markings."
- 7.2** However one private company in opposition commented, "It makes the numbers hard to read, and is much clearer without."

### **Government response**

- 7.3** The revised Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions will prescribe bracketed road number markings.

## Question 8 Regulate road studs that only incorporate light emitting diodes

- 8.1** The regulation for illumination of road markings requires studs to incorporate reflectors or retroreflecting material. Advances in technology have led to the development of studs that include only light emitting diodes, hardwired in tunnels and solar powered elsewhere. We propose amending the regulation to accommodate this technology. Traditional studs use reflectors or retroreflecting material which rely on headlight beams for their illumination. Active studs use internal light emitting diodes as their light source giving extended visibility distances and better performance in poor weather conditions over traditional studs.

**Question 8**

8) Are you content for us to regulate for studs that only have light emitting diodes?

Yes  No

**Table 8.1 All responses**

Yes	No
70%	30%

**Table 8.2 Local authority responses**

Yes	No
72%	28%

- 8.2** There was good support for allowing for studs that only have light emitting diodes with 70% of all respondents and 72% of local authorities indicating that they were content. A Local Authority told us, "The use of this technology is on the increase and allowing greater flexibility to allow its use is a benefit to the highway authority." Another Local Authority commented, "This change will increase flexibility in the use of road studs and will give authorities a greater range of options when looking at enhancing the delineation of the road alignment."
- 8.3** Of those who opposed the proposal one Local Authority stated, "Traditional studs are sufficient. It is not clear as to why extending visibility distances is actually necessary." One consultant told us, "As a minimum, every stud

should incorporate a reflector, then at least there's still some functionality when (not if) the LEDs fail."

### **Government response**

- 8.4** We believe there is sufficient support for allowing the use of studs that only have light emitting diodes. There did appear to be some confusion amongst respondents about the question and it is worth noting that in the 30% who did not support this measure, the majority thought we were removing traditional studs altogether in favour of LED only studs.
- 8.5** This is not the case and the decision as to whether or not to use them or traditional studs will be a decision for the traffic authority. We will therefore prescribe studs with light emitting diodes without reflectors in the new Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions.

## Question 9 The draft Regulations and General Directions

- 9.1** Finally we asked for comments on the structure and clarity the Department is proposing to use for the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016.
- 9.2** Our aim has been to produce a draft that is useable whilst at the same time rigorous in ensuring the requirements are properly implemented in law.

### **Government response**

- 9.3** We were grateful to receive a large number of comments which will assist us in making the new Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions user friendly. We are using this information to improve the current draft and are looking at ways to improve navigation around the document.