



THE CHARTERED
INSTITUTION OF HIGHWAYS
& TRANSPORTATION

NORTHERN IRELAND BRANCH

Department for Regional Development
Roads Service, Transportation and
Engineering Policy Unit
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Mr J P Heyburn
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Dear Sirs

Written response by the Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation – Northern Ireland Branch to the Consultation on a Draft Policy and Draft EQIA for Bi-lingual Traffic Signs

CIHT (NI Branch) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation. We apologise for the lateness of this response and hope that the comments will still be of assistance.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) is a learned society concerned specifically with the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of land-based transport systems and infrastructure. It serves the transport profession for the benefit of society and its members.

With over 12,000 members, working across a wide range of disciplines, CIHT aims to promote the exchange of knowledge, improve policy formulation, stimulate debate on transportation issues, recognise individual competence and encourage best practice in the industry.

2.0 DRAFT POLICY ON BI-LINGUAL TRAFFIC SIGNS

Clear distinct traffic signing is a benefit to the travelling public and contributes to road safety. Conversely unclear, indistinct signs will not give appropriate messages to road users and may indeed be a distraction creating unsafe situations. Accordingly ease of assimilating the message on the sign and overall road safety are a concern of the Institution and must be the key criterion when deciding to erect a multi-lingual

sign. It is recognised that similar signing to that proposed in the policy is used elsewhere in the UK and in Ireland and experience there should be factored into the decision process. The concept of having a traffic sign with more than one additional language certainly would be a potentially dangerous arrangement.

The consultation document (policy paragraph 1.5.2) states that Roads Service expects to recover all costs and that the local authority shall be responsible for the reimbursement to Roads Service (policy paragraph 2.1.4). There is no indication in the consultation of the overall likely cost of the policy but at this time of economic stringency we question if it is reasonable to use any public funds (local authority or government) to add additional information to signs.

If the cost of erecting new signs and replacing old signs is to be reimbursed to Roads Service by the local authority. (Policy 2.1.4), we suggest that this should be extended to reimbursing the cost of removing redundant signs (eg tourist signs no longer required when a facility closes).

Consultation paragraph 4.14 highlights current problems with vandalism of certain signs. If bi-lingual signs are vandalised who will pay for their refurbishment/repair. We suggest that this cost might also be covered in an amendment to Policy 2.1.4 to reduce the costs to the roads budget.

If it is concluded that it is appropriate to proceed with implementation of the policy we agree that bi-lingual traffic should be based on existing prescribed signing and be subject to existing design standards.

It is proposed by Roads Service that the policy would only extend to three categories of generic sign type. If the policy is to be implemented we agree with its limitation to the proposed categories noting that the third is certain worded supplementary plates. In the case of this category we suggest that this list, which relates to local community facilities, should not be expanded to cover global signing without a full assessment of costs and impacts based on experience and research on the operation of the policy undertaken over a significant period of time.

I trust you will find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Heyburn', with a horizontal line underneath.

PHILIP HEYBURN
Honorary Secretary
CIHT – Northern Ireland Branch