

Waymarking guidance

Guidance about waymarking on public rights of way

Definition of waymarking

The words 'waymark' and 'waymarking' do not appear in legislation, although section 27 of the Countryside Act 1968 defines references to signposts as including references to other signs and notices serving the same purpose. Such other signs can be taken to include waymarks. Road Traffic Act regulations (which apply to rights of way because they are highways) include signs for giving directions to or along rights of way and a description of Natural England's recommended waymark arrow design. These regulations permit considerable flexibility in type and colour of design.

Introduction

This factsheet looks at the Natural England guidance on waymarking and shows how Ramblers volunteers can undertake waymarking as a path maintenance task.

Further information on the legal background to waymarking can be found in the Ramblers and Open Spaces Publication, 'Rights of way – a guide to law and practice,' by John Riddall and John Trevelyan.

Before starting

Before you start to waymark there are several key considerations to take into account. The first of these is to carry out a survey of the area of the paths to be signed. This survey should comprise not only an overview of the scheme but also the actual location of the signs needed and how they will be viewed. It is essential to ensure that the waymarks guide people on the line of the path, as shown on the definitive map.

Remember that waymarking is a guide to those who do not know the path to help them avoid accidentally committing trespass, but a wrongly placed or confusing waymark may have the opposite effect. Once you are happy with the scheme and the positioning of the waymarks you must obtain permission from the landowner and the local authority, if this has not already been gained.

Placing the waymark

As a rule, you should keep the number of waymarks down to a minimum, whilst still making the route obvious. If the waymark is to identify a junction, then the arrows should be placed at the junction rather than just before it. If possible, the waymark should be positioned on a structure which is vandal-proof and which cannot be moved.

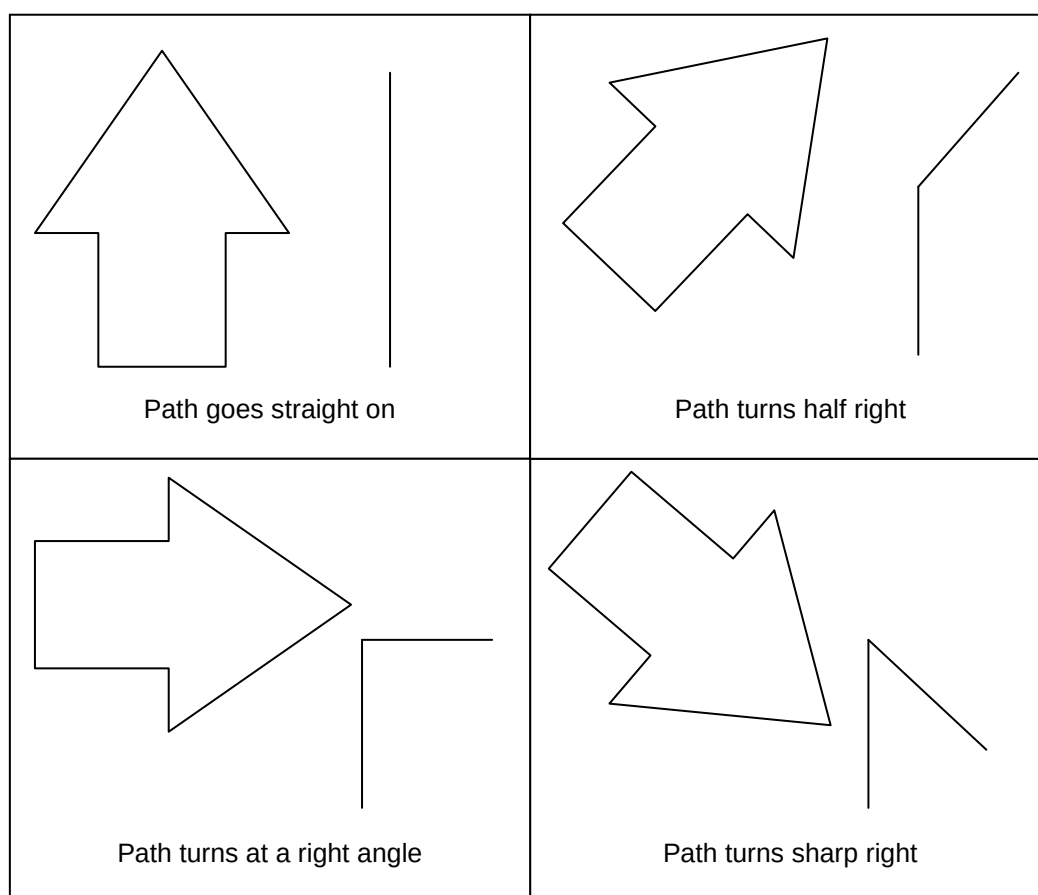
If stones are used, as is commonly so in mountainous areas, ensure that the stones are sufficiently large so that they cannot be easily moved. Waymarks can also be placed on gates and stiles (although not the opening part of a gate). However, in many cases the waymark will need to be fixed to a specially erected post. When attaching the arrow remember that walkers will be approaching the post from both directions and so two waymarks need to be attached, one on each side. It is very rare that one arrow will suffice.

The waymark arrow

The most important part of the waymark is the arrow. It is essential that the arrow is positioned at the correct angle and that it is clear for the path or bridleway user where the line of the path runs. There are three key issues that need to be considered when siting the waymark:

1. The angle of the arrow

The primary purpose of a waymark arrow is to ensure that those using the right of way do not accidentally commit an act of trespass and that they are able to follow the line of the path. The diagram below gives an indication of the angle that a way mark arrow should follow:

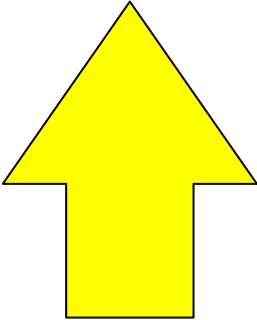
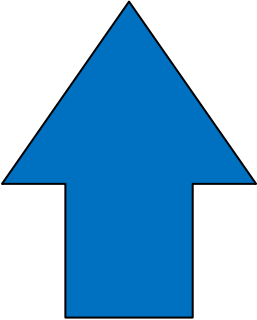
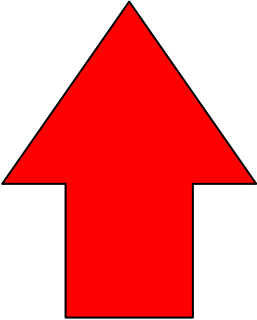
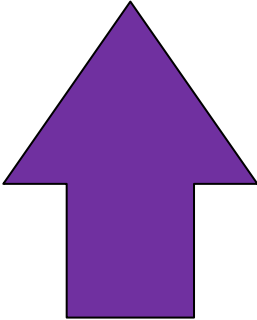


If you're in doubt about the angle of the arrow, then temporarily fix an arrow to the post and walk at it from the angle that a user would walk at it from. This will tell you if an adjustment is needed to the arrow before it is permanently fixed.

2. The colour of the arrow

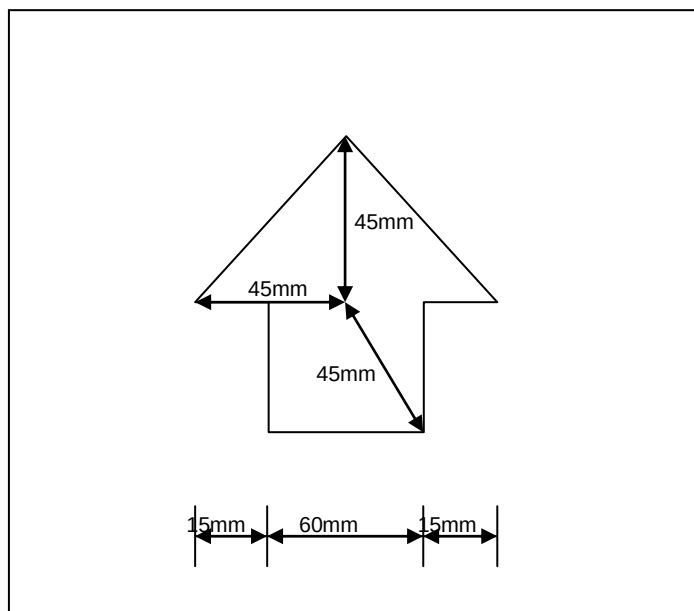
As mentioned, the regulations do permit considerable flexibility in colour and design of waymakers, but there is a considerable amount of guidance on colour schemes. Each colour denotes a particular status. This is especially important at a junction where rights of way with different statuses diverge. However, before starting work ensure that you are using the colours specified by your highway authority, as not all authorities follow the colours outlined in the Natural England guidance.

The diagram below outlines the colours that Natural England recommends.

			
Footpath	Bridleway	Byway open to all traffic	Restricted byway

3. The visibility of the arrow

When placing the arrow it is important that you ensure that it can be seen. This will ensure that users know they are on the line of the path and so give those who do not know where the line of the path goes the confidence to follow it. When planning where to place the arrows ensure that it can be seen from a good distance so that as users approach the path they can see it easily. You need to take into consideration the type of undergrowth that surrounds the waymark and how it is likely to grow in the weeks and months that follow its installation. The arrow should also be clear. The diagram below outlines what the arrow should look like, according to the guidelines published by Natural England:



Materials and equipment

When undertaking waymarking it is essential you ensure you have the correct tools and equipment. The list below outlines the different tools and materials that you may need:

For painted waymarks:

- Non-toxic oilbased undercoat and gloss topcoat and a small container of white spirit.
- Stencil
- Paint brushes, at least one for each colour
- Rag for correcting mistakes and cleaning the brushes with the white spirit

For standard, prepared waymarks:

- Waymark disc with the correct colour arrow on
- Hammer and nails

In general:

- Wire brush and surform (for cleaning the surface before attaching the waymarking arrow)
- Secateurs/clearing tools to cut back overhanging undergrowth which obscures the waymark

After installation of waymarks

Regular maintenance of waymarks is essential. Waymarks can fade, be removed or be obscured as the undergrowth starts to take hold. As part of the work that is undertaken, ensure that waymarks are still intact and clear. When you initially approach the local authority about putting in new waymarks, remember to ask for permission to update to renew and repair the waymarks as necessary.

Further information

You may find the following resources useful when looking for further details about installing waymarks and ensuring that they are properly maintained.

'Rambling for Pleasure, The Secrets of Countryside Access,' Dave Ramm, Chapters 8 and 9 pages 43 to 58, **The East Berkshire Ramblers' Association Group, 2006.**

'Rights of Way, A guide to law and practice,' (2nd Edition), John Riddall and John Traveyan, Chapter 8.5 page 257, **The Ramblers and The Open Spaces Society, 1992.**

'Footpaths, a practical handbook', Elizabeth Agate, Chapter 13 pages 189 to 195, **BTCV Publications, 2011.**

