

Freedom of Information - Response - 27131

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to request the following information regarding out-of-date road signage within the Suffolk County Council area.

Please can I ask the following questions, and can you please break down the data by calendar year if possible:

1. Inventory and Reporting

1.1. How many reports of out-of-date or incorrect road signs has the council received in each of the past five calendar years?

Suffolk County Council (SCC) does not record reports of out-of-date or incorrect signs.

1.2. Please provide a breakdown by category, e.g.

- *temporary roadworks signage left in place after works have ended*
- *outdated speed limit signs*
- *signage for long-completed diversions*

Please refer to the information provided under 4.2.

- *signage referencing services or facilities that no longer exist*

SCC does not record reports of out-of-date or incorrect signs.

2. Assessment and Inspection

2.1. Does the council maintain a register or inventory of road signs? If so, please provide the most recent version (or explain why it cannot be shared).

Suffolk County Council does not maintain a dedicated register or inventory of road signs.

2.2. How often are road signs formally inspected, and what criteria are used to determine whether a sign is out of date or requires replacement?

Road signs are inspected as part of general statutory safety inspections completed at varying frequencies, from monthly to bi-yearly as per SCC's Highways Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP) section 4. The criteria they are assessed against is as per criteria set out in HMOP Appendix 1&2

The HMOP is publicly available at: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/highway-asset-management/highway-maintenance-operational-plan>

3. Removal and Replacement

3.1. How many road signs have been removed or replaced due to being out of date or incorrect in each of the past five calendar years?

3.2. What was the total cost to the council for removing or updating these signs in each of those years?

It is not possible to differentiate and link to any orders

3.3. What is the council's target response time for removing or correcting incorrect signage after it has been reported?

There is no response time for removal or correcting incorrect signage. The replacement of damaged or missing mandatory signs is as per HMOP appendix 1&2

4. Responsibility and Enforcement

4.1. For temporary or roadworks signage, how does the council ensure contractors remove signs promptly once works are completed?

For works carried out by statutory undertakers, there is a requirement for all temporary traffic management and roadworks signage to be removed once works are completed and the site no longer occupies the highway.

This requirement is set out in national legislation and Department for Transport guidance, including the Code of Practice for the Co-ordination of Street and Road Works (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69b93633f6acd3f43e961223/code-practice-coordination-street-road-works.pdf>), specifically Section 10.3 (Section 74 – charges for occupation of the highway where works are unreasonably prolonged), and The Street Works (Charges for Unreasonably Prolonged Occupation of the Highway) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2272/contents/made>).

These provisions are set nationally by the Department for Transport and administered locally by the Highway Authority (Suffolk County Council), placing responsibility on the works promoter to ensure signage is cleared promptly following completion of works.

4.2. How many enforcement actions, warnings, or penalty notices have been issued to contractors or utility companies for failing to remove temporary signage on time in the past five years?

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)

The information that Suffolk County Council can provide is limited to the number of breaches of permit conditions (NCT01a and NCT01b) relating to works continuing beyond the agreed permit end date. These figures include instances where:

- The works promoter has submitted a work stop notice with a date later than the agreed permit end date.
- An inspection has identified that works were ongoing beyond the agreed permit end date, including:
 - Works still in progress
 - Active traffic management remaining in place
 - Signing, lighting, and guarding equipment left on site
 - Spoil or staining left on site
 - Missing road markings
 - Missing street apparatus, surface treatments, or high-friction surfaces

Suffolk County Council is unable to provide a more detailed breakdown of specific occurrences, including whether a breach specifically related to items of signing, lighting, and guarding being left on site. This would entail having to look at each individual permit and would trigger a section 12 exemption, thereby allowing a public authority to refuse a request where it is estimated that complying with it would exceed the appropriate limit (£450 calculated at 18 hours of staff time charged at £25 per hour.)

The table below provides the volume of FPNs issued in the periods requested. These exclude any that were subsequently withdrawn by Suffolk County Council.

Period	Number of FPNs issued
01/01/2021 to 31/12/2021	343
01/01/2022 to 31/12/2022	300
01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023	320
01/01/2024 to 31/12/2024	552
01/01/2025 to 31/12/2025	413
01/01/2026 to 07/04/2026	83

Overrun warnings issued under Section 74 of The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA)

Please see the table below, which sets out the number of overrun warnings issued by Suffolk County Council where items of Signing, Lighting and Guarding (SLG) were observed to remain on site beyond the agreed permit end date.

SLG includes, but is not limited to, all temporary roadwork signage (including diversion signage), as well as associated equipment. Please note that, while an overrun warning may have been issued following the observation of SLG remaining on site, not all such warnings resulted in overrun charges being applied under Section 74 of NRSWA.

Period	Number of overrun warnings issued
01/01/2021 to 31/12/2021	233
01/01/2022 to 31/12/2022	175
01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023	221
01/01/2024 to 31/12/2024	251
01/01/2025 to 31/12/2025	331
01/01/2026 to 07/04/2026	101

5. Complaints and Safety Concerns

5.1. How many public complaints received by the council in the past five years have related to out-of-date or misleading road signs?

5.2. Has the council recorded any road safety incidents or near-miss reports where incorrect or outdated signage was identified as a contributing factor?

Formal Complaints – Reply:

Suffolk County Council (SCC) can confirm that this information is held however, it is being withheld under s.12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA.) s.12 allows a public authority to refuse a request where it is estimated that complying with it would exceed the appropriate limit (£450 calculated at 18 hours of staff time charged at £25 per hour.)

Whilst we do hold the information you have requested it is not held in a reportable format and would require an individual employee to review each of the 1,424 complaints manually to locate and extract the relevant information. A sampling exercise has determined that the average time to review a complaint file is 5 mins as they can vary in size and length and it is a free text option that would be being searched for, therefore, to provide the information requested would take us in excess of 118 hours.

We have tried to identify a way in which this part of your request could be made manageable however, we have been unable to identify a way in which it could be narrowed down and still provide you with meaningful information.

Directorate for Growth, Highways & Infrastructure – Reply:

Only injury collisions are recorded by the Police, and in general, they do not provide sufficient detail in their descriptions to highlight whether or not an incorrect sign or a misleading sign was a contributory factor in a collision. Should the Police believe that the collision was actually caused by the signage, they would issue SCC with a road defect notice for that to be acted upon. We can find no records of any such notices during the last 5 calendar years.