

SIGN SAVINGS – REPLACING OBSOLETE ROAD TRAFFIC SIGNS

Introduction

‘Sign Savings’ is not about keeping signs, it’s about ensuring that the signing system is up-to-date and fit for purpose. When signs are superseded, highway authorities are allowed a period of grace, the ‘savings’ period, in which to remove them.

The UK system of direction signing was introduced in the 1960s, prescribed by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 1964. It provided a clear and consistent method for communicating route information to the road user. Despite being under constant review since the current system’s introduction, it has needed very few changes.



There have been some changes though, and in 1994 a major revision resulted, for many junctions, in the reduction of sign clutter. Tourist destinations could be incorporated as a brown panel on a sign. On advance direction signs at junctions between primary routes and non-primary routes, green and white signs could similarly be combined, improving sight lines and reducing costs. Out too went the blue-bordered local signs, in the biggest simplification of signing in the UK since the inception of the new system.

Further background

Signs removed by new Regulations do not have to be replaced overnight – those no longer prescribed can remain for the ‘Savings’ period as described in regulation 3 of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002. As each new Statutory Instrument has superseded or amended previous ones, various dates have been enshrined in statute to ensure old signing remains lawful for a time, and can be replaced in a managed way, and over a practical timescale. Many obsolete signs had to be replaced before 1 January 2005, and still more types by the beginning of 2010.



The next savings end date, covering tens of thousands of signs many of which are still on the highway today, was the end of 2014. This includes blue-bordered directional signs. TSRGD 1994 provided a saving for a number of blue-bordered signs prescribed by the 1981 TSRGD or the 1982 Amendment Regulations. These were:

Diagrams 728.1, 728.2, 729, 729.1, 729.2, 729.3, 730, 730.1, 732, 732.1, 732.2, 733, 733.1, 734.1, 734.2, 734.3, 734.4, 734.5, 734.6, 734.8, 734.9, 734.10, 736, 736.1, 737.1, 760 and 761.

The time limit on the saving for these superseded designs was 1 January 2015.

The twenty-year period set in 1994 was expected to be sufficient for all obsolete signs to have been removed under planned maintenance. All these signs are now well over twenty years old, and will not be performing to the original standards of retroreflectivity, besides not conforming to the current colour-coding system. However, there is a significant number of the blue-bordered signs that became unlawful on 1 January 2015, yet to be replaced. It should also be noted that large numbers of these signs were manufactured using the old Engineering Grade retroreflective sheeting, which is no longer recommended by BSI as adequate for modern traffic conditions (see the National Annex to BS EN 12899-1).

The 2002 TSRGD revoked further signs, with “savings” dates of 1 January 2010 and 1 January 2015.

These were:

To be removed by 1 January 2010: Diagram 661 in the 1994 TSRGD, and diagrams 618.1, 618.2, 618.3, 618.3A and 620 when varied to include the orange badge symbol shown in diagram 661 in the 1994 Regulations; and

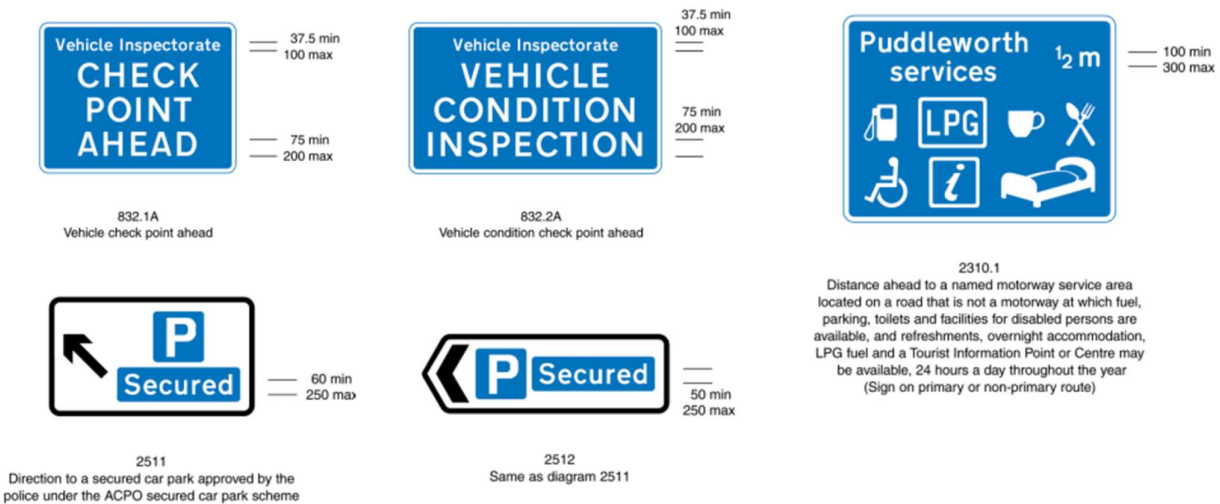
To be removed by 1 January 2015: Diagrams 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2315.1 and 2919 in the 1994 Regulations.

Note also (see below) that some further signs were revoked, subject to a savings period, by the 2011 Amendment (No. 2) Regulations.

Savings

- 35.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), any traffic sign—
- (a) which, immediately before the coming into force of these regulations, was—
 - (i) prescribed by the 2002 regulations; and
 - (ii) placed in compliance with the Traffic Signs General Directions 2002(7); and
 - (b) which ceases to be so prescribed on the coming into force of these regulations, is to be treated as prescribed by the 2002 regulations for so long as it continues to comply with those regulations as in force immediately before the coming into force of these regulations.
- (2) Paragraph (1) ceases to have effect—
- (a) in relation to the signs shown in diagrams 832.1A, 832.2A, 2310.1, 2511 and 2512, on the expiry of the period of **two years** beginning with the date on which these regulations come into force; and
 - (b) in relation to the sign shown in diagram 2919.1, on the expiry of the period of **ten years** beginning with the date on which these regulations come into force.

Extract from the Traffic Signs (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations and General Directions 2011



Savings in the Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2011 – signs for removal by 30 January 2014

Additional signs affected

Savings for the following signs expired on the dates given, so should no longer be in use:

Black-bordered bus lane signs	1 January 2005
Bus lane and other signs with “& coaches” superimposed upon the bus symbol	1 January 2005
Blue background limited waiting plates	1 January 2005
Structural weight limit (626.2) displaying "17T" or "25T"	1 January 2007
Disabled bay signs with the orange symbol	1 January 2010
2919.1 Distance ahead to motorway service area	30 January 2022

The "17T" variant of 622.1A ceased to be lawful on 1 Jan 2007. It was prescribed again by the 2016 TSRGD, but only if expressed as "17t" with a lower case 't', not "17T".

Finally, it may be worth noting that the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 also revoked some additional signs; with the exception of the sign prescribed as diagram 2919.1, no savings period has been applied so these will remain lawful.

ARTSM recommendations

Traffic signs for which the statutory saving has expired are no longer lawful, and might well be an unlawful obstruction of the highway. Nor are they helping to ensure that the UK's traffic signing systems are up to date, lawful and providing proper levels of safety for the road user.

The Association recommends all local authorities which have not already done so to undertake an urgent and thorough review of signs on roads for which they are responsible. Where a sign is still required, it should be replaced with its current equivalent, with the appropriate modern retroreflectivity class in accordance with the recommendations of the National Annex to BS EN 12899-1.

Guidance documents available from www.artsm.org.uk

- Specifying Permanent Traffic Signs
- Specifying External Lighting Units
- CE Marking
- Sign Labelling

For further information, please contact enquiries@artsm.org.uk

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