

2011

Signage Plan for Visitor Attractions in the Burren (revised final draft)



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Summary of Key Recommendations

- There are a number of mistakes and omissions in the tourism signage erected by the NRA on the N67 in 2011 which are identified in this report. These should be corrected as a matter of urgency.
- The report presents a coherent and consistent approach to directional signage for tourist attractions, based on three key principles:-
 1. Outside the Burren only 'The Burren' and the Cliffs of Moher are signed as visitor destinations,
 2. Only visitor sites which can satisfactorily accommodate substantial visitors numbers are signed, and
 3. In the interests of legibility and road safety, a maximum of four visitor attractions only can be signed in any one direction at a road junction.
- The scheme incorporates a Black Head Coast Road scenic drive utilising the R477 and R479 roads
- The recommended scheme should be implemented as soon as practicable.
- The scheme involves identifying the Burren by erecting signboards with the wording 'Burren Village' or 'Burren town' at the main settlements (10 in total) of the Burren. This will involve replacing existing sign-boards by distinctive Burren boards.
- There is serious visual clutter at some road junctions and it is essential that implementation of the proposed scheme is carried out in conjunction with a programme to remove the existing visitor signage.
- There is an opportunity for a 'fresh start' in respect of tourism signage in the Burren, following the implementation of this scheme. However, this will require the planning authority to begin to implement the comprehensive management of Burren signage in accordance with Sections 34 and 254 of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

1. Introduction

This plan is an update of a 2008 signage plan for tourist/visitor attractions signage in the Burren, which has not yet been implemented. The revised plan takes account of important changes that have taken place in the last three years. These are:-

- Implementation by the NRA of a signage scheme for the N67 including visitor signage,
- Substantial implementation of regional road signage schemes by Clare County Council, largely excluding visitor signage,
- Completion of the Ennis Bypass and Western Relief Road (N85) with visitor signage,
- The opening of a new visitor centre at Doolin Cave,
- The roll-out of a visitor information programme by Burren Connect, including information points set up at the Burren Smokehouse in Lisdoonvarna, Michael Cusack Centre in Carran, the Burren Outdoor Information Centre at Turlough and Doolin Cave,
- Changes in the function of some visitor centres:- the Heritage Centre in Corrofin incorporating an information point for the Burren National Park and the Michael Cusack Centre becoming a base for Burren Farm Walks,
- Construction of a car park at Poul nabrone,
- Publication of Traffic Signs Manual (Department of Transport, 2010),
- Adoption of policy on the Provision of Tourist Signage on National Roads (NRA, 2011), and
- Publication of a draft Manual of Irish Tourism Signage in 2011 by Fáilte Ireland

The revised plan is generally in accordance with the set of principles that underlie the 2008 Plan. These include the following:-

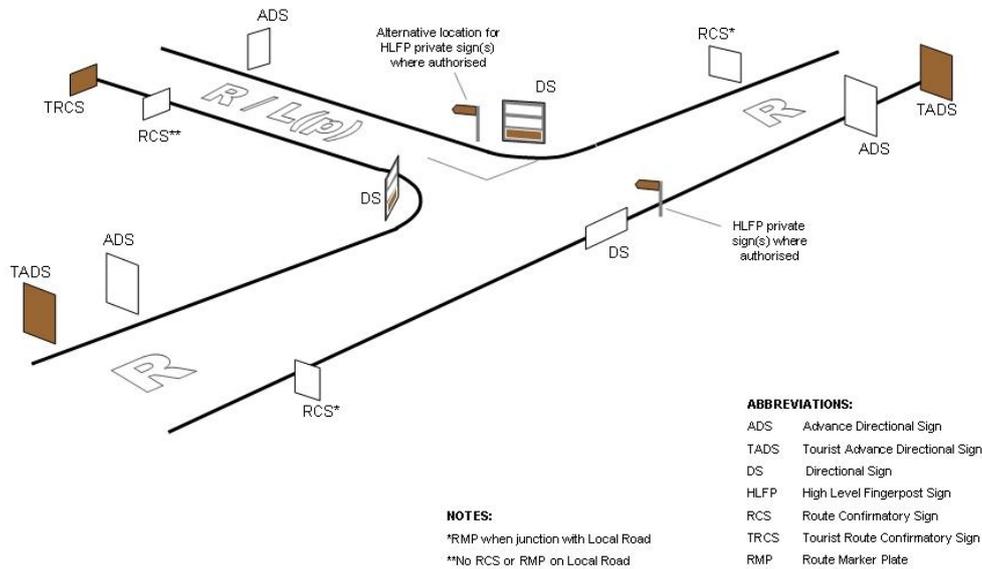
1. The Burren is a destination of international renown that requires an effective and attractive signage plan for visitors,
2. Primary reliance for navigation should be placed on the standard directional signage to towns and villages,
3. The design, location and maintenance of signs should respect the exceptional quality of the Burren landscape,
4. The capacity of the Burren landscape to accommodate signage is variable, being relatively robust in the villages but highly sensitive in the remoter countryside away from main roads,
5. Signs are only one means of conveying information and there is rarely justification for a reliance on signs,
6. Signs have an important role especially directional signage near the end of a journey and to otherwise difficult-to-find places
7. Only places should be signed that can satisfactorily accommodate the number of visitors that they attract,
8. The design and siting of signs must not compromise safety considerations,
9. There should be no advertising signs in the Burren countryside, including directional signage with an advertising message, and
10. There should not be a net increase in the number of signs in the Burren countryside and where new signage replaces existing signage, the redundant signs should be removed.

The Plan has two main sections; Signage to the Burren and Signage within the Burren. There are three main types of sign involved; direction signs (DS), advance direction signs (ADS) and route confirmatory signs (RCS). The schematic diagram indicates the position of the signs; the ADS being positioned in advance of a junction, the DS at the junction and the RCS after the junction.

Regional / Regional or Regional / Local Primary

T-Junction

Separate Tourist ADSs and RCSs, with plate type DSs



(Source: Failte Ireland, Draft Manual of Tourism Signage 2011)

2. Signage to the Burren

The adopted approach for outside the Burren is to sign the geographic entity of the Burren, and not individual visitor attractions. The only exceptions are Coole Park, adjacent to the N18 and the Cliffs of Moher, which is by far the biggest visitor attraction in the area (Refer to Tables 1 and 2). The main access routes to the Burren are the N67 from the north and the north-east and the N85 from the south and the south-east. The N67 provides a secondary access route from the south. It is also important that there is effective signage to the Burren from the Cliffs of Moher visitor centre.

A new signage plan for the N67, including visitor signage, has been implemented this year. This signage has been reviewed both to assess its overall suitability and to ensure integration with the overall Burren Signage Plan.

I consider that the N67 signage does not satisfactorily sign the Burren. 'The Burren' appears as a title on all confirmatory signs between Kilcolgan and Milltown Malbay (Refer to Figures 1 and 4). It appears as though the whole of this section of the N67 is in the Burren, when, in fact, only about half of the route, between Kinvarra and Lisdoonvarna, is through the Burren. It is important that the signage reflects the physical reality of the Burren. While it is neither possible nor necessary to precisely delineate the geographical area of the Burren, there should be a reasonable approximation to it. As things stand, the N67 signage is seriously misleading. For instance, travelling west from Ennistimon, away from the Burren, one is greeted by a confirmatory sign headed 'The Burren' and outside Milltown Malbay there is a Burren sign that is 20 kilometres south of the Burren. These confirmatory signs should be replaced as a matter of urgency.

There are no direction signs to the Burren on the N67, south of Ennistimon. The Burren should be accorded the same emphasis as the Cliffs of Moher in the signage scheme. (Refer to Figure 2).

The Burren is now adequately signed from the M18 and around Ennis via the N85. However, the signage at the junction of the N85 and R476 at Fountain Cross is substandard. Visitor signage at this junction should be upgraded with advance directional signage, directional signage and route confirmatory signage for the Burren (via R476) and the Cliffs of Moher (via N85). In Ennistimon the advance direction sign for the Burren is incorrect, signing 'Burren Centre Kilfenora' rather than 'The Burren and is so far from the junction with the N67 (no 163) as to be misleading.

There should be signage identifying the boundary of the Burren. The 2008 Signage Plan (policy proposal 5) recommends that the Burren is defined by naming villages and towns as Burren Villages and Burren Towns. As the Burren is ringed by a necklace of towns and villages this represents an elegant solution to delimiting the Burren without recourse to obtrusive signage in the countryside. The proposal involves erecting new signs and removing existing signs in seven towns and villages in Clare (Ballyvaghan, Carran, Corrofin, Doolin, Fanore, Kilfenora, Lisdoonvarna and Tubber) and two in Galway (Gort and Kinvarra). A total of 29 new monolith signs are involved (23 in Clare and 6 in Galway).



Figure 2. 5 confirmatory signs that are located outside the Burren should be replaced by signs showing the Burren as a destination, with the distance to the edge of the Burren indicated*. In the case of the sign directly above, between Ennistimon and Lehinch, heading west and away from the Burren, there should be no reference to the Burren on the sign

*Distance to the nearest Burren settlement, i.e. Lisdoonvarna approaching from the south and Kinvara approaching from the north



Junction 171 in Leinch. Add direction sign for 'The Burren'



Junction 170 in Leinch. Add direction sign for 'The Burren'



Junction 163 in Ennistimon. Replace 'Burren Centre Kilfenora' with 'The Burren' as the signed destination

Figure 3. Provide direction for the Burren for motorists approaching from the south on the N67, by adding a Burren direction sign on these posts¹

¹ Junction numbers are as per the NRA Signage Plan for the N67

The recommendations in this section can be summarised as follows:-

1. Remove and replace all confirmatory signs on the N67 between Milltown Malbay and Ennistimon and between Kinvara and Kilcolgan (5 in total). The signs should show The Burren as a destination with a distance²,
2. Also remove and replace the confirmatory sign on the RR478 between Lehinch and the Cliffs of Moher (for the same reason as the above),
3. Provide direction signs for The Burren at junctions in Lehinch and Ennistimon for north bound traffic on the N67 (Figure 3),
4. Provide a full set (ADS, DS and C) on the N85 for The Burren and Cliffs of Moher at the junction of the N85 and R476,
5. Replace and relocate the ADS on the N85 at Ennistimon, substituting 'The Burren' for 'Burren Centre, Kilfenora' and moving the sign closer to the junction, and
6. Remove all existing town and village name boards and erect monolith signs as per the Signage Plan (Refer to Figure 4)

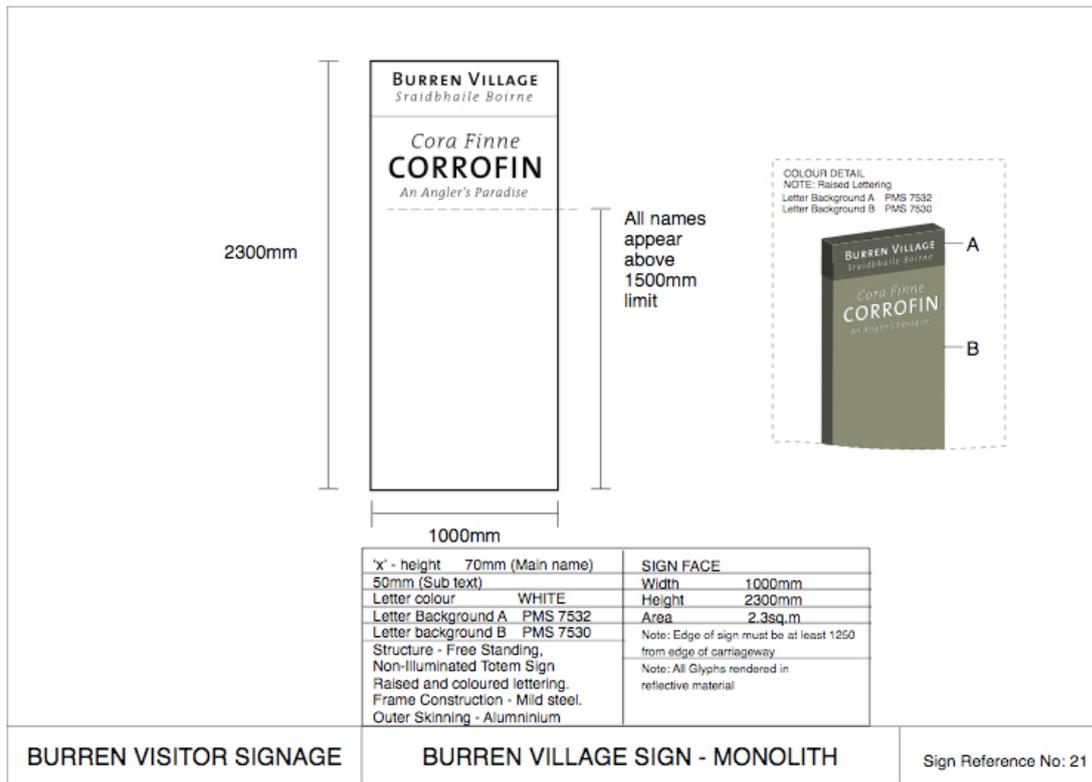


Figure 4. Example of Burren Village Monolith Sign

² The relevant distances are to Kinvarra coming from the north, and to Lisdoonvarna, coming from the south

3. Signage within the Burren

3.1 Overall framework

The plan signs the following 14 sites within and adjacent to the Burren:-

- Aillwee Cave*³,
- Burren Centre Kilfenora*,
- Burren Perfumery*,
- Burren Outdoor Education Centre,
- Burren National Park Information Point,
- Burren Smokehouse*,
- Caherconnell Fort*,
- Cliffs of Moher,
- Coole Park,
- Corrofin Heritage Centre,
- Doolin Cave*
- Dromore Woods
- Dysert O’Dea Castle, and
- Michael Cusack Centre.



Figure 5. The location of visitor attraction sites which are signed in the signage plan

³ * Sites already signed as part of the N67 signage scheme implemented in 2011

These sites are shown on Figure 5. The Plan is primarily for directing motorists via the regional road network to rural sites. The Plan includes a limited number of signs for walkers within settlements. The Plan does not sign sites which do not have significant visitor facilities i.e. Corcomroe Abbey, Cahercommaun, Kilmacduagh and the Burren National Park. Given its national status and the availability of a car park, a limited amount of directional signage is proposed for Poul nabrone, even though there are no facilities there other than the carpark.

The signage scheme is for junctions on the regional road network, including the section of the N67 through the Burren. The scheme does not extend to local roads other than the L1014, Carran Road.

The signage scheme incorporates a distinctive treatment of the R477 and R479. It is proposed to sign these roads from the N67 and R478 as the Black Head Coast Road, the signage to include appropriate tourist attraction signage symbols (as per Table 4.11 of the TSM reproduced in Appendix 3).

The NRA and Failte Ireland have adopted the criteria set out in Table 1 for the signing of attractions from national roads. The draft tourist sign guidelines state that for non-national roads, criteria are to be established by agreement between Failte Ireland and the local authority.

Interest has been expressed in including individual attractions such as trail heads, fishing sites and historical sites in the signage scheme. I believe that such a comprehensive signage plan for the Burren would be both impractical and inappropriate. I suggest that the best way to provide more detailed geographical information is in the form of map-boards in the Burren villages and towns, displaying detailed information about an area within cycling and walking distance of the settlement in question.⁴

Table 1. Minimum criteria for visitor attractions

Road type	Minimum number of visitors per annum	Maximum distance from national road
Motorway	50,000	30km.
Other national primary	15,000	20km.
National secondary	7,000	20km.

Table2. Visitor Attractions in the Burren for which visitor numbers are available
Source: Failte Ireland

Visitor attraction	Visitors in 2009	Distance from N67 national secondary(km.)
Cliffs of Moher	763,758	7
Aillwee Cave	135,000	2
Burren Smokehouse	21,000	0
Doolin Cave	13,500	5

3.2 Visual Clutter

There is serious visual clutter at certain junctions. The amount of signage at some of the most affected junctions has increased in the four years since an audit was carried out in 2007 (Refer to Table 3 and Appendix 1). The value of introducing a coherent signage plan would be significantly impaired should unauthorised signage not be removed. This would cause a continuing

⁴ We erected one such map board in Corofin for the Corofin and District Development Company in 2010

preponderance of commercial signage at a small number of junctions. The operators of tourist attractions that are the subject of this signage plan account for much of the existing clutter. It is paradoxical that the careful design and siting of facilities, which is a characteristic of tourist attraction sites in the Burren, is accompanied by such ill-disciplined signage off site (See Figures 5 and 6). There is no justification for this, given the upgrading of general directional signage that has taken place in the last four years. The signage plan proposed, in itself, will make negligible difference to visual clutter, unless its implementation is accompanied by a programme of signage removal. There is scope for voluntary agreement or enforced removal, if necessary. This is not a large problem. The 2008 report identified 9 heavily signed junctions in sensitive rural locations. If the signage at those junctions was brought under control and the large free standing signs erected by a small number of visitor centre operators were removed, the visual image of the area would significantly improve and provide the opportunity for a 'fresh start' in relation to managing signage in the Burren.

3.3 The design of signs and of sign schemes

As far as is possible the proposed plan is in accordance with the design standards of the Traffic Signs Manual (TSM) and the Draft Manual of Irish Tourism Signage (draft MITS). The Traffic Signs Manual (4.11.8) recommends a reliance on symbols rather than names for signing tourist attractions. However, given the existence of similar attractions (two caves open to the public) and of several attractions for which there is no official distinguishing symbol e.g. ring fort, visitor centre and perfumery, a signage scheme based on symbols is not a realistic option in the Burren. Having to use centre names rather than symbols means that signs are necessarily larger than would otherwise be the case, which means it is not possible to comply with the standard in the draft tourism manual that names should not exceed 1 metre in length.

The TSM recommends a maximum of four locations signed in any one direction and a maximum of seven locations on a sign. For the junction of a regional road with another regional road and for the junction of a regional road with a local primary, the draft MITS recommends a suite of tourist advance direction signs (tads), direction sign and tourist route confirmatory sign (trcs), the tad and trcs to sign the main tourist traffic flows. The tourist advance directions signs are placed 200m in advance of the standard ADS. The signage plan incorporates a full suite of tourist directional signage at main junctions in the regional network in the main directions of the tourist traffic.

Signboards are to be designed in accordance with the guidance in Chapter 2 of the draft TSM. This includes a minimum 'X' height of 100mm with other sign-face dimensions scaled accordingly. The draft TSM shows tourist direction signs placed beneath standard direction signs on the same sign support. As improved signage schemes have only recently been implemented for the Burren roads it is generally not practicable to consider replacing that signage by signs incorporating both town and village destinations and tourism signage on the same structures but that option should be considered in the future.

During consultation attention has been drawn to the issue of temporary signage. The Planning Act provides for the erection of such signage without a license or a planning permit, provided that a sign is not greater than 1.2m² in area and is not left in place more than 7 days after the event that is being advertised.

Table 3. Numbers of commercial signs at selected junctions 2007 and 2011 compared

Junction	Place	Commercial 2007	Tourism signs 2011	% Change
N67 and R480	Newtown	13	16	+ 23
R478 and R 479	Doolin	36	46	+ 28
R476 and R480	Leamaneh	13	17	+ 31

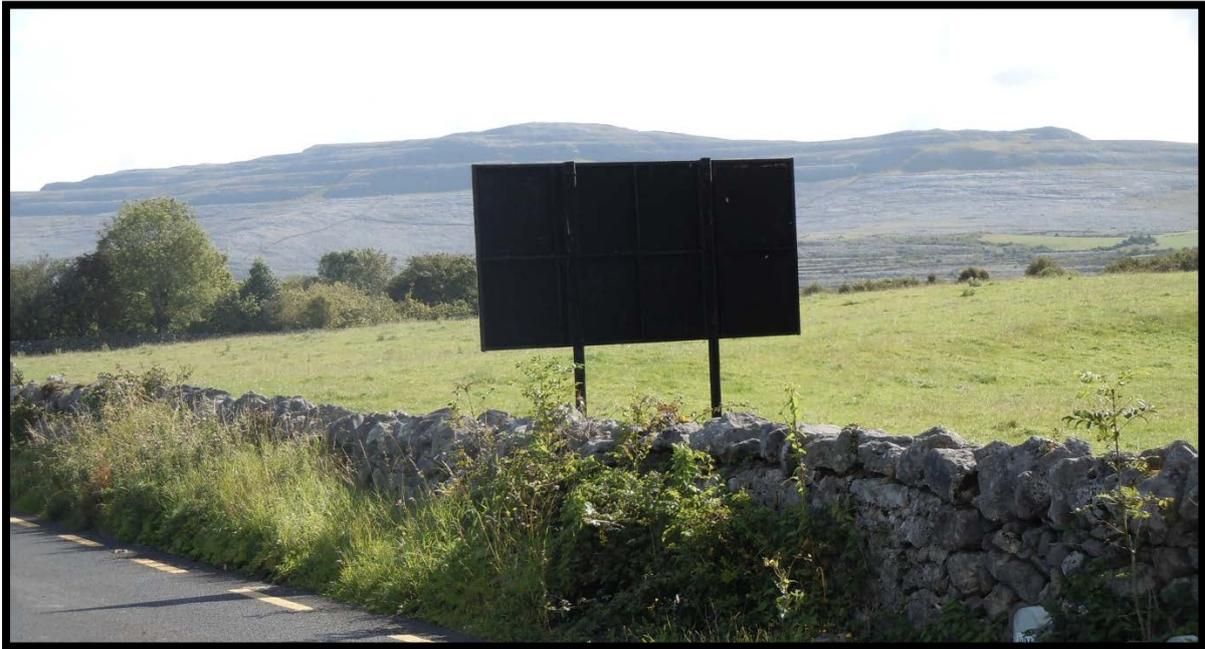


Figure 6. Obtrusive signage. View that includes the rear of a tourist attraction sign at Newtown, Ballyvaghan



Figure 7. Unobtrusive site. Doolin Cave Visitor Centre viewed from main road



Existing



Proposed

Figures 8 and 9. How part of the Leamaneh junction would look if the signage plan was implemented. Most of the visual improvement is accounted for by the removal of existing advertising signage

4. Detailed signage plan for visitor attractions

Maps 1 to 7 set out a detailed signage scheme for visitor (tourist) attraction sites.

The N67 signage is left substantially unchanged except for the changes outlined above, the main one being the replacement of confirmatory signs. 14 visitor attraction sites are signed, using full names rather than symbols. The one exception is the Burren National Park Information Point (because of the length of the name and the degree of familiarity with the *í* symbol as signifier of an information point).

The plan otherwise conforms to accepted conventions e.g. that white on brown signs should supplement other direction signs, not duplicate them and that only a limited number of sites (maximum 4) can be signed in any one direction.

A strategic aim of the signage plan is to separate Cliffs of Moher traffic from other visitor traffic. Given the volume of Cliffs of Moher traffic it is desirable that it should be routed via the national road system as far as possible. In this regard I do not recommend that Cliffs of Moher traffic should be routed via the R477 coast road. The recent erection of a sign in Ballyvaghan directing Cliffs of Moher traffic via the R477 coast road as an alternative to the N67 is regrettable and I recommend that this decision should be revisited and the new signs removed. Within the Burren, signage to the Cliffs of Moher is generally adequate and the only additional sign recommended for the Cliffs is in Lisdoonvarna.

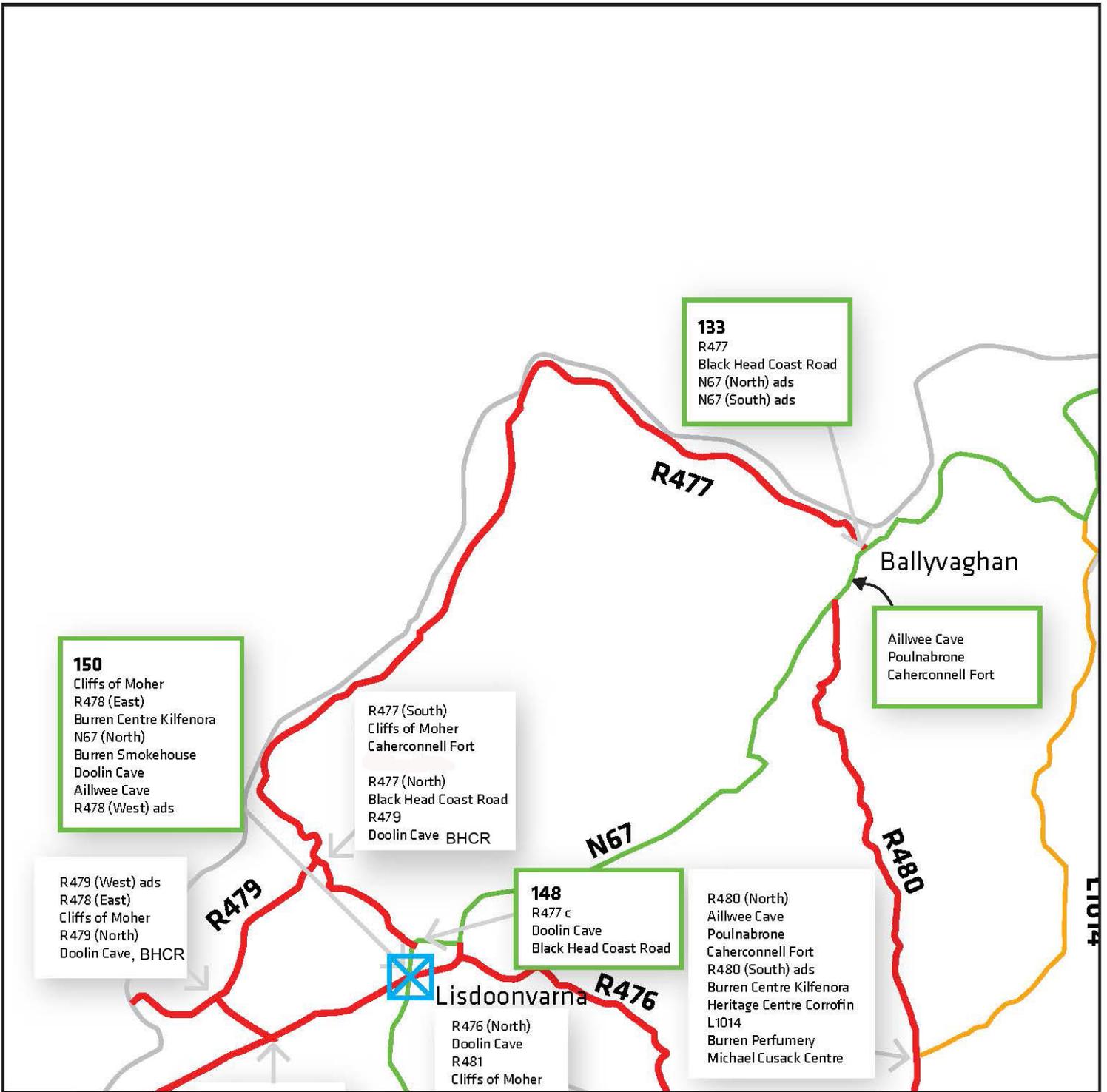


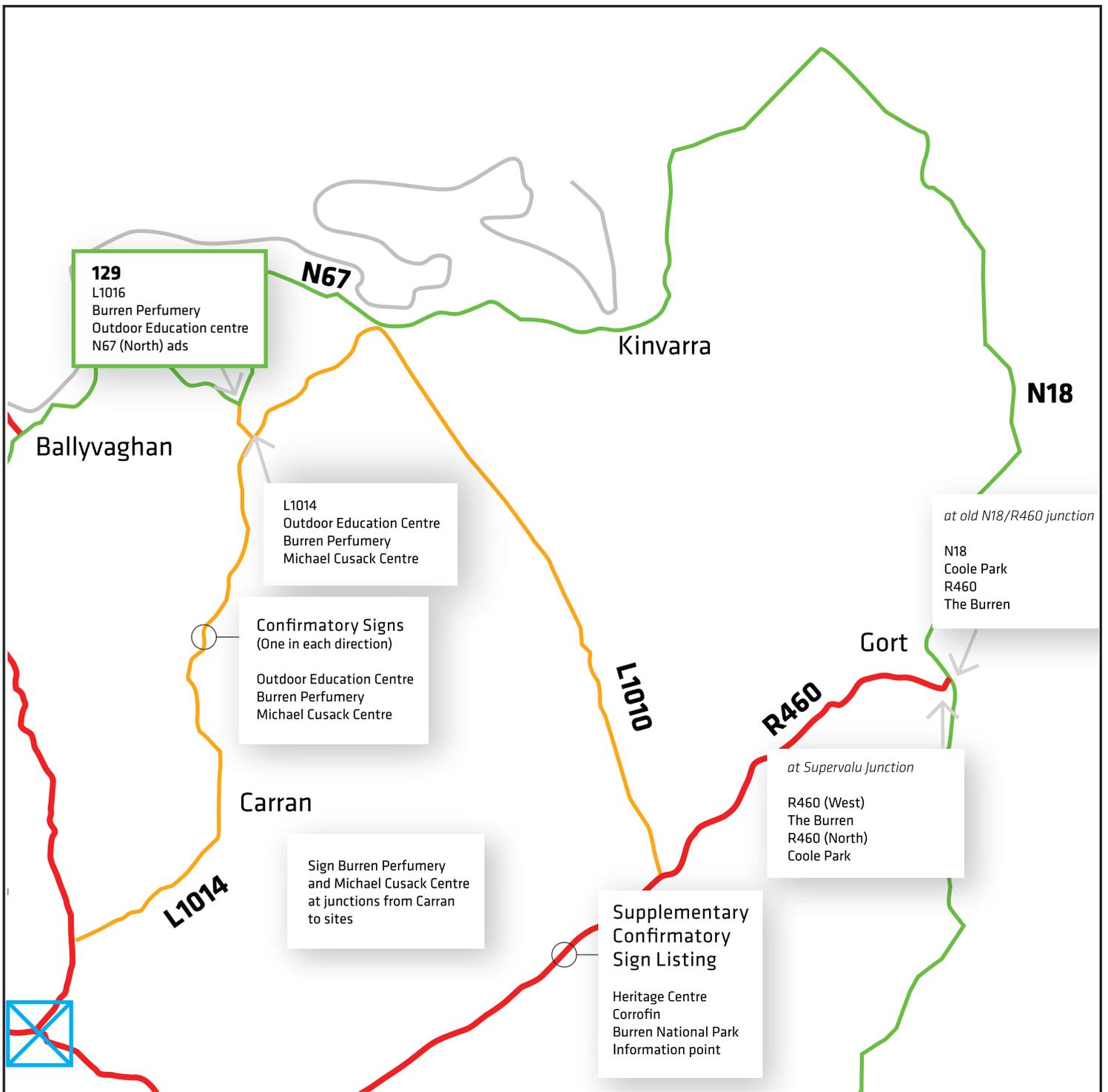
Figure 10. Junction 145 on the N67 in Lisdoonvarna: additional directional signage required

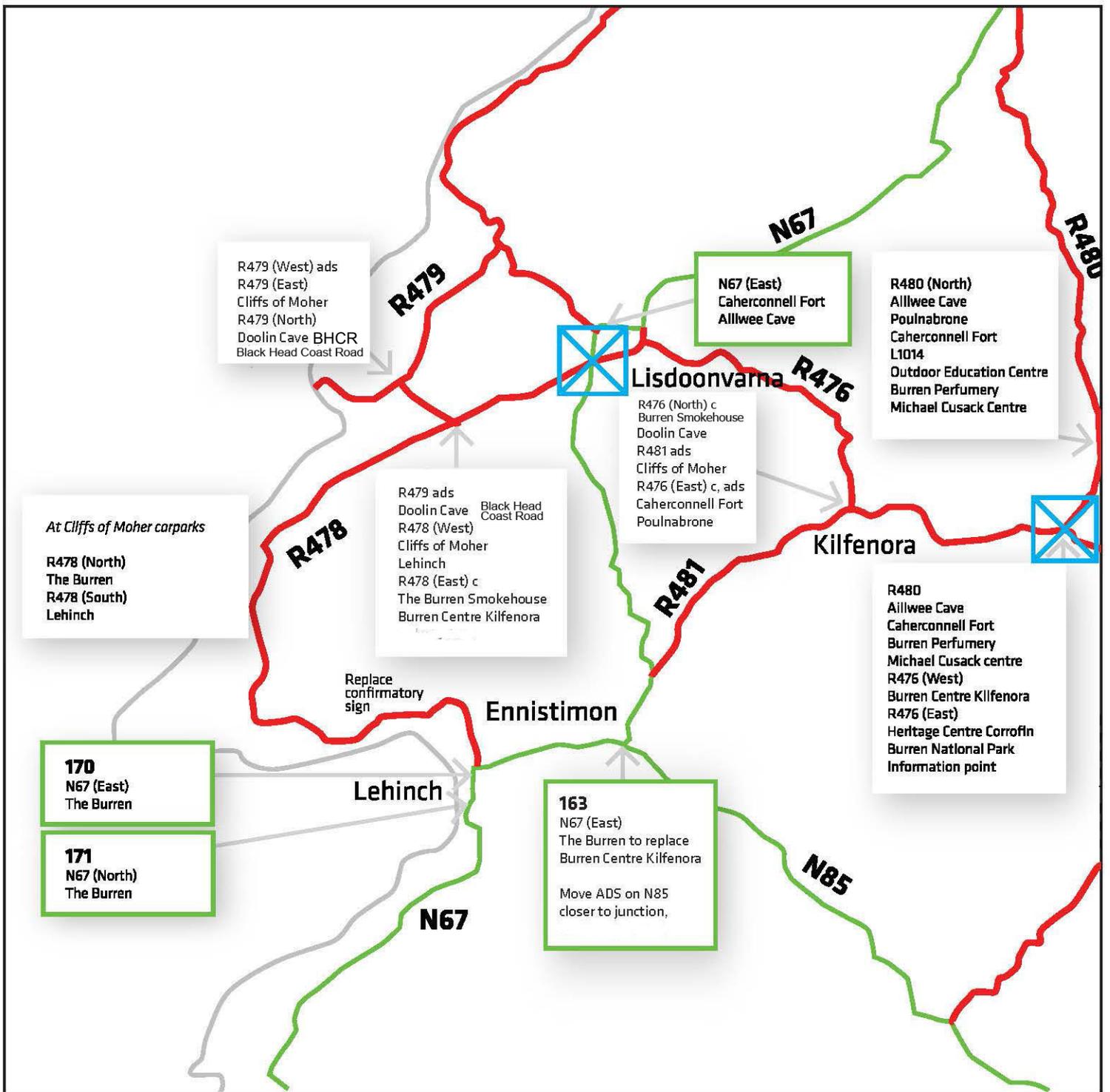
A characteristic of the signage scheme proposed is an emphasis on strategically located confirmatory signs, listing attraction sites with distances. In addition to the confirmatory signs on the N67 (to be replaced), confirmatory signs are proposed at entry points to the Burren at Corrofin, Doolin and Lisdoonvarna.

There are shortcomings in the existing N67 signage in Lisdoonvarna which require correction. There should be clearly visible direction signs for traffic approaching from the north for both the Cliffs of Moher and Doolin Cave at the junction of the N67 and R476 (Junction 145- refer to Figure 10). Doolin Cave should be signed from the junction of the N67 and R477 (Junction 148).

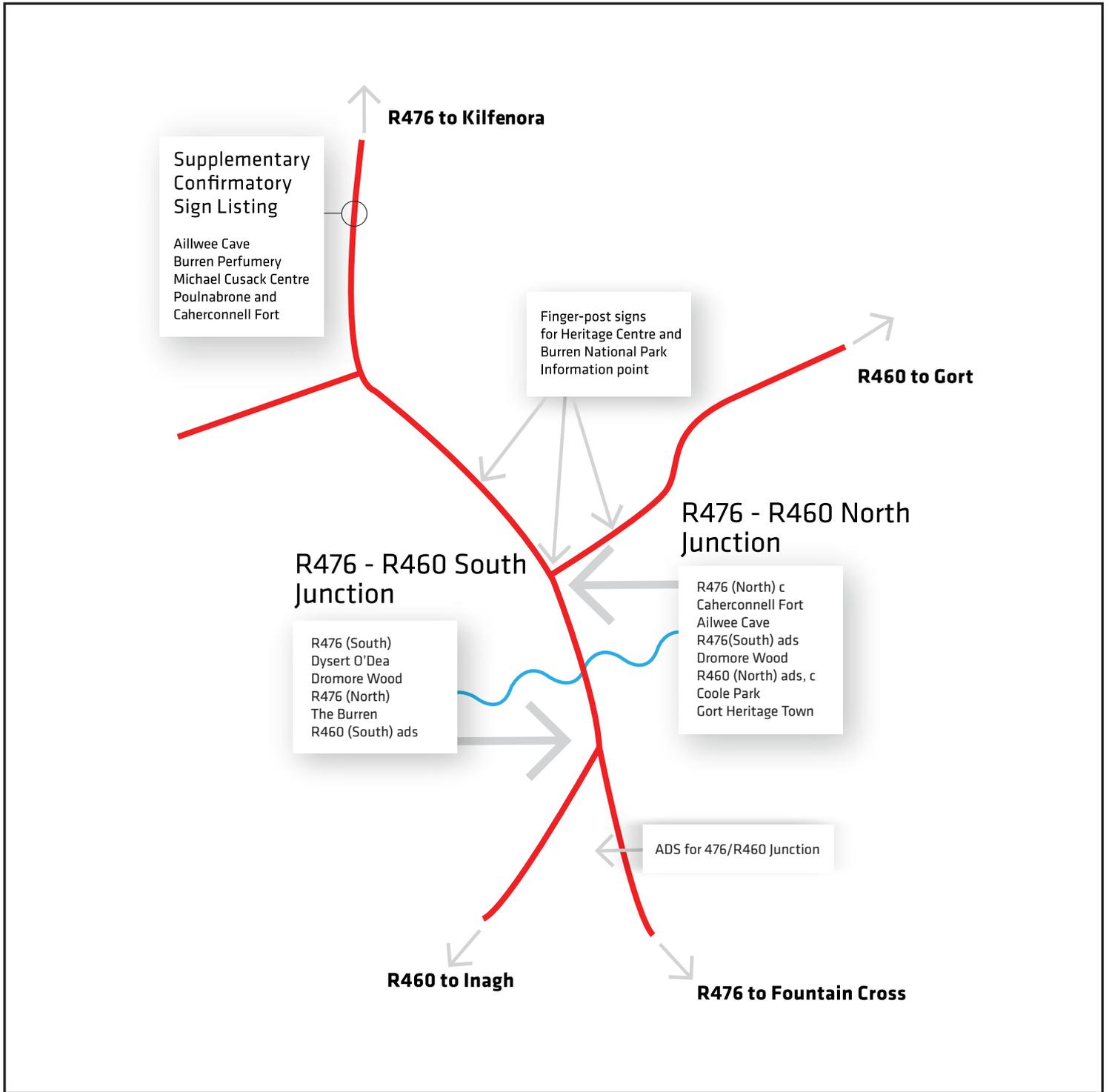
There is no shortage of existing direction signs to the other attraction sites. The main problem is a proliferation of signage and it is essential that implementation of the scheme proposed by this plan is accompanied by a comprehensive scheme of sign removal. There is no need for the official scheme to provide signs at established visitor sites, the pertinent issue at the point of destination being a proliferation of signage, not a lack of signage.

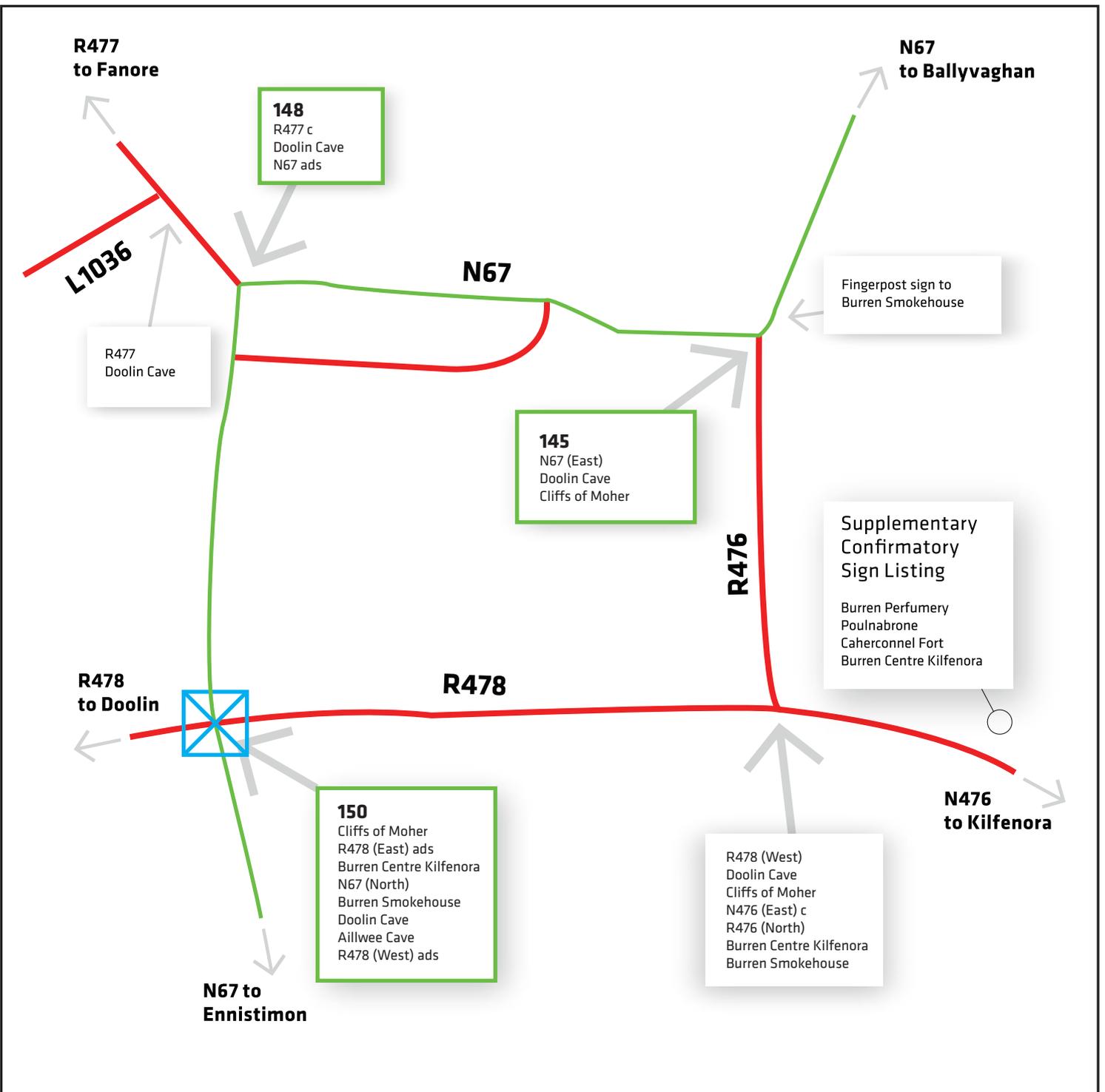


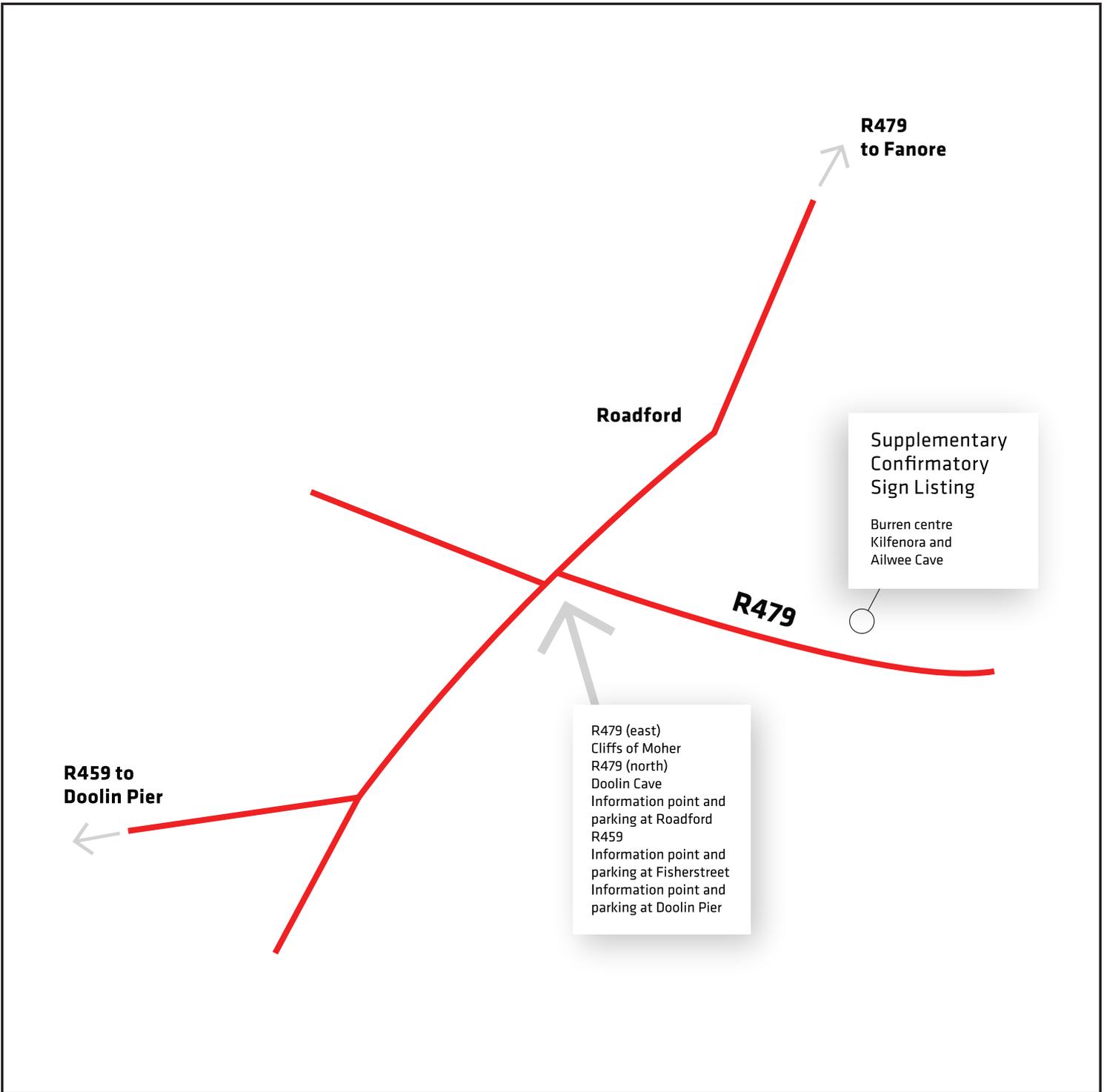




Refer to Map 6 for Lisdoonvarna detail







APPENDIX 1. Examples of heavily signed junctions



2011



2007

Figures 11 and 12 Junction of N67 and R480 at Newtown



2011



2007



Leamaneh detail (2011)

Figures 13,14 and 15.
Junction of R476 and R480 at
Leamaneh

APPENDIX 2

Schedule of Visitor Attractions showing extent of area within which they are signed

The schedule lists the furthest points (generally within the Burren) from which an attraction is signed. Prior to those points attractions are signed as constituent elements of 'The Burren'. An attraction will generally be signed at every junction between the furthest point it is signed and the site of the attraction.

Attraction	North	South	East	West
Aillwee Cave	nr Kinvarra	nr Ennistimon	Corrofin	
Burren Centre Kilfenora		nr Ennistimon	Leamaneh	Coogyulla,Doolin
Burren Perfumery	nr Kinvarra	Corrofin		Lisdoonvarna
Burren Outdoor Education Centre	Belharbour	Leamaneh		
Burren National Park Information Point			Rock Forest	Leamaneh
Burren Smokehouse		nr Lisdoonvarna	Kilfenora	Coogyulla, Doolin
Caherconnell Fort	nr. Kinvarra	Corrofin		Lisdoonvarna
Cliffs of Moher	nr Kilcolgan	nr Spanish Point	Ennis	
Coole Park		Corrofin		
Corofin Heritage Centre				Leamaneh
Doolin Cave		Corkscrew Hill	Kilfenora	Doolin
Dromore Wood			nr Crusheen	Corrofin
Dysert O'Dea Castle	Corrofin	nr Dysert		
Michael Cusack Centre	Belharbour	Corrofin		

APPENDIX 3

APPROVED SYMBOLS (Source: Dept. of Transport, Traffic Signs Manual)



Table 4.11.1: Symbols for Tourist Attractions and Destinations

Facility	Symbol No.	Symbol	Facility	Symbol No.	Symbol
Castle	T 01		Visitor Farm	T 19	
Historic House	T 02		Irish National Stud	T 20	
Prehistoric Monument	T 03		Bird of Prey Centre	T 21	
Newgrange	T 04		Museum or Art Gallery	T 22	
Heritage Site	T 05		Agricultural Museum	T 23	
Battle Site	T 06		Pottery or Craft Centre	T 24	
Round Tower	T 07		Music Centre	T 25	
High Cross	T 08		Woollen Mill	T 26	
Abbey	T 09		Cottage	T 27	
Church of Interest	T 10		Windmill	T 28	
Cathedral	T 11		Cave Open to Public	T 29	
Gardens	T 12		Marina	T 30	
Country Park	T 13		Viewpoint	T 31	
Public Park	T 14		3 rd Level Institute	T 32	
National Park	T 15		Industrial Estate	T 33	
Wildlife Park	T 16		Heavy Industry	T 34	
Nature Reserve	T 17		Office of Public Works	T 35	
Zoo	T 18		An Taisce	T 36	
Gaol	T 37				



Table 4.11.2: Symbols for Leisure Activities

Facility	Symbol No.	Symbol	Facility	Symbol No.	Symbol
Scenic Route	T 40		GAA Ground	T 52	
Walking Trail	T 41		Rugby Ground	T 53	
Pedestrian Route	T 42		Soccer Ground	T 54	
Mountain Trail	T 43		Tennis Courts	T 55	
Cycle Trail	T 44		Golf Course	T 56	
Aquatic Centre	T 45		Greyhound Racetrack	T 57	
Surfing	T 46		Racecourse	T 58	
Water Sports Activities	T 47		Equestrian Centre	T 59	
Leisure or Sports Centre	T 48		Motor Sport	T 60	
Beach	T 49		Pleasure Boating or Boat Hire	T 61	
Aquarium or Seaworld	T 50		Gun Club	T 62	
Fishing	T 51		Rowing Club	T 63	

Table 4.11.3: Symbols for Facilities

Facility	Symbol No.	Symbol	Facility	Symbol No.	Symbol
Fuel	T 70		Accommodation	T 77	
Garage Repairs	T 71		Information Point	T 78	
Telephone	T 72		Tourist Office	T 89	
Public Toilets	T 73		Campsite	T 90	
Refreshments	T 74		Caravan Park	T 91	
Restaurant	T 75		Youth Hostel	T 92	
Picnic Area	T 76		Fáilte Ireland	T 93	

Notes:

1. The images shown in Tables 4.11.1, 4.11.2 and 4.11.3 do not represent the tile size of the logo. For exact dimensions refer to the manufacturing drawings.
2. On Bypassed Towns or Villages signs the information point logo (T 78) shall not be used.
3. The latest list of symbols is available on the Department of Transport's website: www.transport.ie