

Signage for paths up Scafell Pike

Discussion Paper

It is well known that Scafell Pike is a very popular summit due to it being the highest summit in England. This popularity also leads to many incidents and accidents in the area which can lead to fatalities and life changing situations for those involved and also draw heavily on the resources of the local mountain rescue teams and in particular the Wasdale MRT.

In Alpine countries there is usually a very good system of signage detailing the footpaths in the area with indication of where to go as well as distance and estimated time. In the UK we have traditionally shied away from this and make people rely on their own abilities, maps etc and for many this is perfectly acceptable. There are however honeypot mountains around the UK which have drawn many and sundry to ascend because of its size or other aspect. Scafell Pike is definitely one of these with many ascending it on its own or as part of the Three Peaks with Ben Nevis and Snowdon.

There are four main locations to start any ascent - these being Wasdale, Borrowdale, Langdale or Eskdale. Wasdale being the most popular then probably Borrowdale, then Langdale and lastly Eskdale.

The main paths have been improved over the years and there are good paths to the summit. However -

- Around the summit of Scafell Pike and by Broad Crag the ground is extremely rocky, time consuming and can be disorientating.
- Piers Gill, next to the popular Corridor Route is a dramatic slash into the fellside and is only recommended for experienced climbers.
 - The top of Piers Gill is relatively easy and inviting to be descended but gets progressively more difficult and dangerous.
 - There is a footpath down by its north side which looks inviting at first but then becomes somewhat steep and rocky and can create problems for the inexperienced especially in wet or night conditions - i.e. place to avoid as well !
- Scafell - is the companion summit of Scafell Pike however they are divided by Scafell Crag and access between the two is a choice of -
 - Lords Rakes
 - Foxes Tarn
 - Broad Stand

Each of these create their own problem.

There has been much discussion over the years and recently, particularly on social media. The Wasdale MRT are interested in how people view this situation and possible ways to improve it and in the end, hopefully, reduce accidents and fatalities in the area.

There are various levels of what to do - ie nothing through to appropriate signage directing people to and from Scafell Pike solely and even people directing.

Additional signage hopefully would -

- Aid people with their navigation / knowledge of where they are.
- Educate them of distances and time to go
- Warn them of the dangers of Piers Gill area and Broad Stand etc.
- Issue however is would such signage attract more people ?
- There is also the issue with regards following ways off the summit through the boulders - should there be posts to guide along and/or paint boulders !

Could treat Scafell Pike as a special case but then why not Helvellyn, Ben Nevis, Snowdon etc etc

The following are ideas of possible signage and also finger posts - remember there used to be a finger post at Styhead Pass many years ago !

Signage or construction of small wall

1. Above the exit out of Piers Gill NY 213 078
 - Could look to building a small wall to deter people going down into Piers Gill. There was a similar situation with a gully on the side of Green Crag above Buttermere and a small wall was built to deter people going that way.
 - Have a sign - THIS IS NOT A DESCENT ROUTE - or something like that. These could be hidden further down the gill and not visible from the main Corridor Route.
2. Junction of Path going below Piers Gill and Corridor Route - NY 214 079
 - There is a path down the north side of Piers Gill - which can be dangerous in wet conditions
 - Idea of a sign -

NOT RECOMMENDED AS A DESCENT TO WASDALE
BEST TO RETURN OVER LINGMELL COL OR BY STYHEAD PASS
 - Finger post

Finger Posts - with indication of finger point information - focusing people towards Scafell Pike - and away from it !

1. Junction of Scafell Pike Path and path to Hollow Stone - NY 201 072 - important junction
 - Scafell Pike
 - Mickledore - Eskdale
 - Wasdale
2. Lingmell Col NY 210 077 - crucial col and junction
 - Scafell Pike
 - Borrowdale
 - Wasdale
 - Lingmell

3. Scafell Pike NY 214 072
 - Wasdale - Borrowdale
 - Langdale - Borrowdale
 - Eskdale

4. Just below Scafell Pike summit - with junction to Mickledore/Eskdale and way down to Lingmell Col.
 - Wasdale - Borrowdale
 - Eskdale

5. Col Between Scafell Pike and Broad Crag NY 217 074
 - Scafell Pike
 - Borrowdale - Wasdale
 - Langdale