

Changes to The Highway Code: improving safety for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders

Your details

Q1. Your (used for contact details only):
name? Hilary Winter
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Q2. Are you responding:
on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation details

Q3. What is the name of your organisation?
Devon Countryside Access Forum. The Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF) is a local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act). Its statutory remit is to give independent advice "as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area..." It has a statutory function to give advice to the Secretary of State for any Government Department. The DCAF currently has fifteen members, appointed by Devon County Council, who represent the interests of landowners/managers, access users and other relevant areas of expertise such as conservation and tourism.

Hierarchy of road users

Q5. Do you agree with the introduction of new Rule H1?
Yes

Hierarchy of users wording

Q7. Is the proposed wording easy to understand?
No

Disagree with hierarchy of users wording

Q8. Why not?

The Devon Countryside Access Forum supports in principle a hierarchy of road users. However, it advises that certain changes should be made to make this hierarchy clearer.

- 1) The public need to have a clear understanding of the hierarchy and where their use fits into that. A visual depiction would be most helpful.
- 2) Electric bikes and scooters have not been included in the hierarchy and it would be useful to do so.
- 3) The paragraph referring to people with impaired sight does not include people with learning difficulties who may react in a different way to expected.
- 4) Dog walkers have not been specifically mentioned yet are an important category of user that drivers, cyclists and equestrians might encounter. Road users need to be aware of potentially unpredictable behaviour and dogs on extendable leads. Equally, dog walkers need to be aware that dog behaviour and extendable leads could be a particular danger to cyclists.

Most importantly, any revisions to the Highway Code need to be embedded in people's minds. Unless this happens, it will be ineffective. Consideration therefore needs to be given to appropriate stages in education where it could be taught plus additional and regular publicity, for example public service broadcasts or advertisements and use of social media. This happens in Germany where public service broadcasts and a road safety app are essential tools for promoting safe travel.

Rules for cyclists

Q25. Do you agree with the proposed change to rule 63?

Yes

Rule 63 for cyclists wording: shared spaces

Q27. Is the proposed wording easy to understand?

No

Disagrees with Rule 63 for cyclists wording: shared spaces

Q28. Why not?

The Devon Countryside Access Forum advises that simple messages are likely to be more effective, such as 'share with care'.

The paragraph about deaf, blind or partially sighted pedestrians should include people with learning difficulties.

It is not clear what classifies as 'closely or at high speed' as this is a subjective assessment and open to interpretation. Passing very slowly and with extreme care would be a more appropriate message.

There may be situations where the safest option is to get off a cycle, for example at a narrow bridge. This should be included in the wording.

Forum members recognise the importance of letting users know you are there but are not sure whether cycle bells should be made compulsory. A bell could give a cyclist a false sense of security and encourage speed but, at the same time, it is useful to give audible advance warning.

Using the road

Q46. Do you agree that cyclists may pass slower moving traffic on their right or left as detailed in Rule 163?

No

Disagree with using the road: passing on the right or left

Q47. Why not?

On balance, the Devon Countryside Access Forum would prefer the rule about overtaking on the right to be observed. Traffic that is slow moving or stationary may suddenly move at a higher speed.

Using the road

Q48. Do you agree with the proposed speed limits detailed at Rule 163 for overtaking:

	Yes	No	Don't know?
motorcyclists?		X	
cyclists?		X	
horse riders?		X	
horse drawn vehicles?		X	

If no, why not?

The Devon Countryside Access Forum disagrees with the proposed speed limits for overtaking. A simple 'share with care' message should be promoted: sharing with consideration and respect for other people at all times. Again, the low speed message is too vague and reference should be made to care.

The speed and passing distances are urban-centric. In many rural areas there is no road space to permit a 2.0m passing distance and speeds may need to be much lower than those proposed. Drivers need to be aware that they may need to stop and allow a more vulnerable user to pass as well as holding back if it is not possible to overtake.

Dog walkers are not included and additional care may be needed in case dogs are on extendable leads. Nor is reference made to livestock which may be alongside or crossing roads where adjacent land is unfenced.

Q49. Do you agree with the proposed passing distances detailed at Rule 163 for overtaking:

	Yes	No	Don't know?
motorcyclists?		X	
cyclists?		X	
horse riders?		X	
horse drawn vehicles?		X	

If no, why not?

The Devon Countryside Access Forum disagrees with the proposed speed and passing distances. The distinction between 1.5m and 2.0m is minimal and the 2.0m should be a standard. A simple 'share with care' message should be promoted: sharing with consideration and respect for other people at all times.

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Q50. Is the proposed wording easy to understand?

No

Disagrees with Rule 163 for using the road wording: overtaking

Q51. Why not?

A simple 'share with care' message should be promoted: sharing with consideration and respect for other people at all times. Again, the low speed message is too vague and reference should be made to care.

The speed and passing distances are urban-centric. Drivers need to be aware that they may need to stop and allow a more vulnerable user to pass as well as holding back if it is not possible to overtake.

Dog walkers are not included and additional care may be needed in case dogs are on extendable leads. Nor is reference made to livestock which may be alongside or crossing roads where adjacent land is unfenced.

Road users requiring extra care

Q64. Do you have any further comments about other changes proposed in the chapter on road users requiring extra care?

The Devon Countryside Access Forum recommends that dog walkers and livestock should be included as categories of road user that drivers might encounter.