



Who goes first? What's changed in the UK?



Introduction

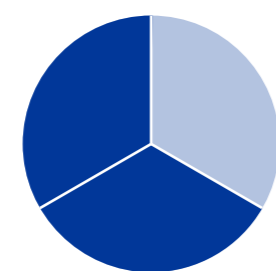
In 2022 the UK followed in the footsteps of other countries and rolled out major changes to the Highway Code; outlining new road rules offering greater priority to active modes.

Previously, a lack of clarity over road rules reduced the priority and protection of people walking or cycling across side-roads, compared to other European nations like Denmark where turning vehicles have a simple and universal duty to give way.

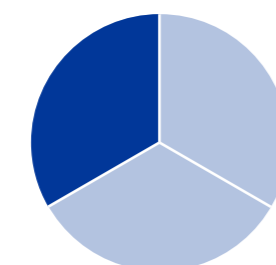
The updates aimed to improve the safety of people walking, cycling and riding horses. The changes appeared to be a huge step towards flipping decades of car dominated legislation and a move towards safer, more active, and sustainable streets in the UK.

Key Numbers

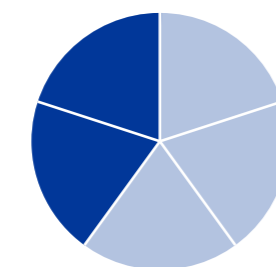
2/3 of UK collisions occur at intersections ¹



1/3 of 2022 pedestrian fatalities occurred at intersections ²



2/5 of 2022 serious injuries occurred at intersections ²

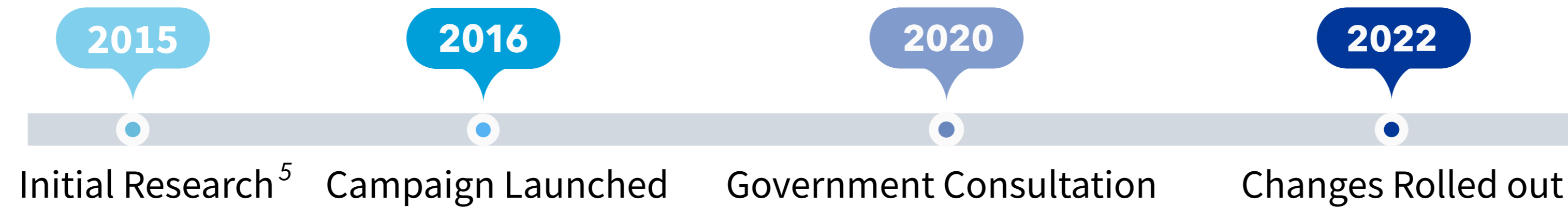


25 annual near misses for regular cyclists where road user turns across cyclist's path ³

27,000 signatures received supporting the changes ¹

8 key changes to the UK's Highway Code ⁴

Delivery Timeline



Key Changes

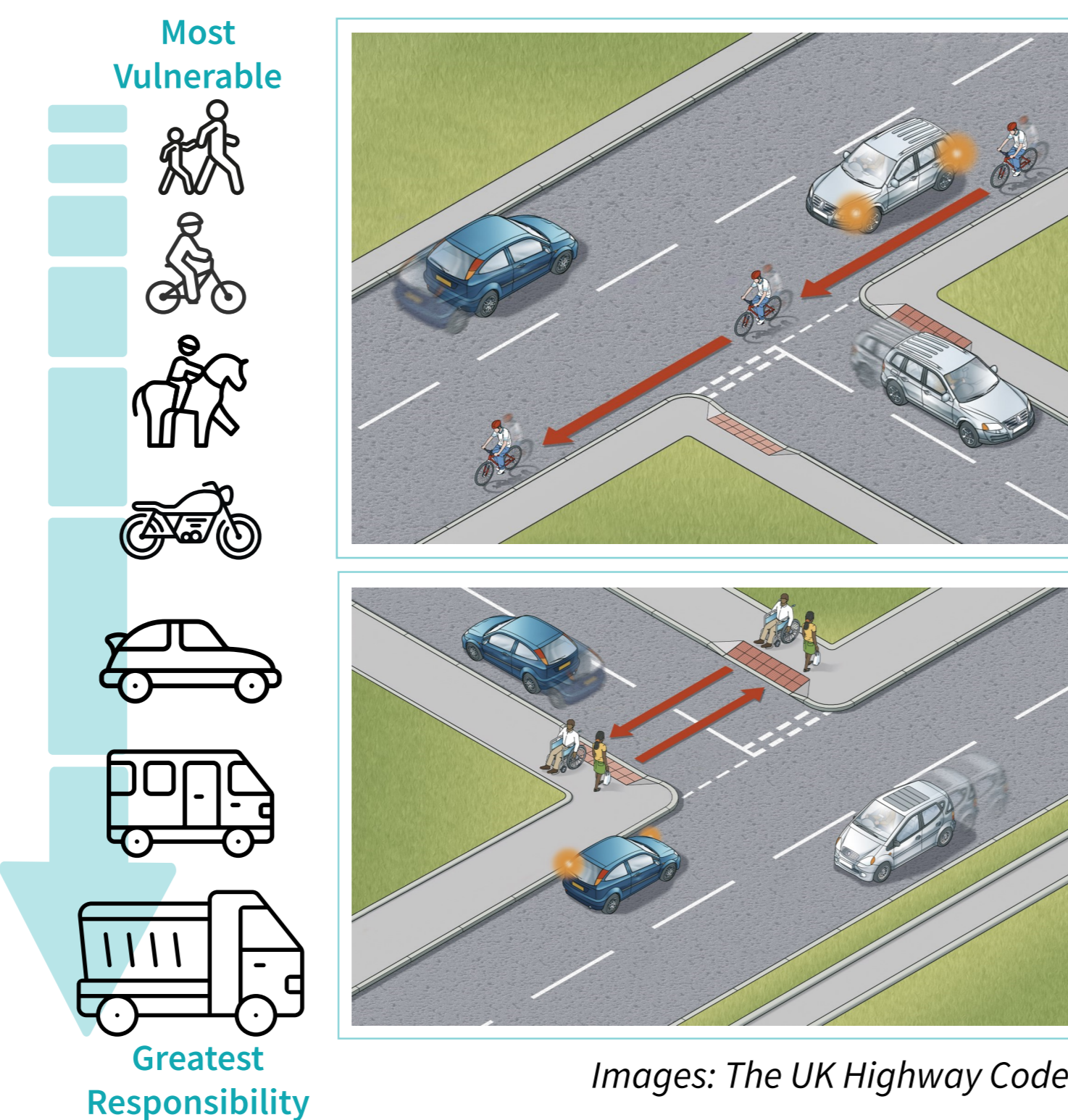
Eight new rule changes were implemented into the Highway Code, including:

1 A formalised road user hierarchy

A new hierarchy of road users was introduced stating: *“those in charge of vehicles that can cause the greatest harm in the event of a collision bear the greatest responsibility to take care and reduce the danger they pose to others”*.⁶

2 Active mode priority at side roads

People crossing, or approaching to cross, unsignalised side roads on foot or by bike, are now prioritised over other vehicles.⁶



Key Points and Considerations



Cost Effective

The changes helped improved active mode priority without nation-wide infrastructure changes.



Understandable

This changes nothing that a courteous driver doesn't already do.



Limited Legal Status

The Highway Code outlines road rules and guidance and can be used in court; however, there have not been wholesale law changes, or the “presumed liability” seen in many European countries.



Limited Research

Comprehensive research is yet to be undertaken and the wider success or impacts are not yet fully understood.



Key Criticisms

At the time, public support for the changes was mixed. Key criticism surrounded poor publicity and promotion, and the potential for increased conflicts.



Public Knowledge

A driver survey suggested 25% were unaware of the changes 18 months on, and below half of drivers surveyed correctly identified pedestrians as having priority.⁷

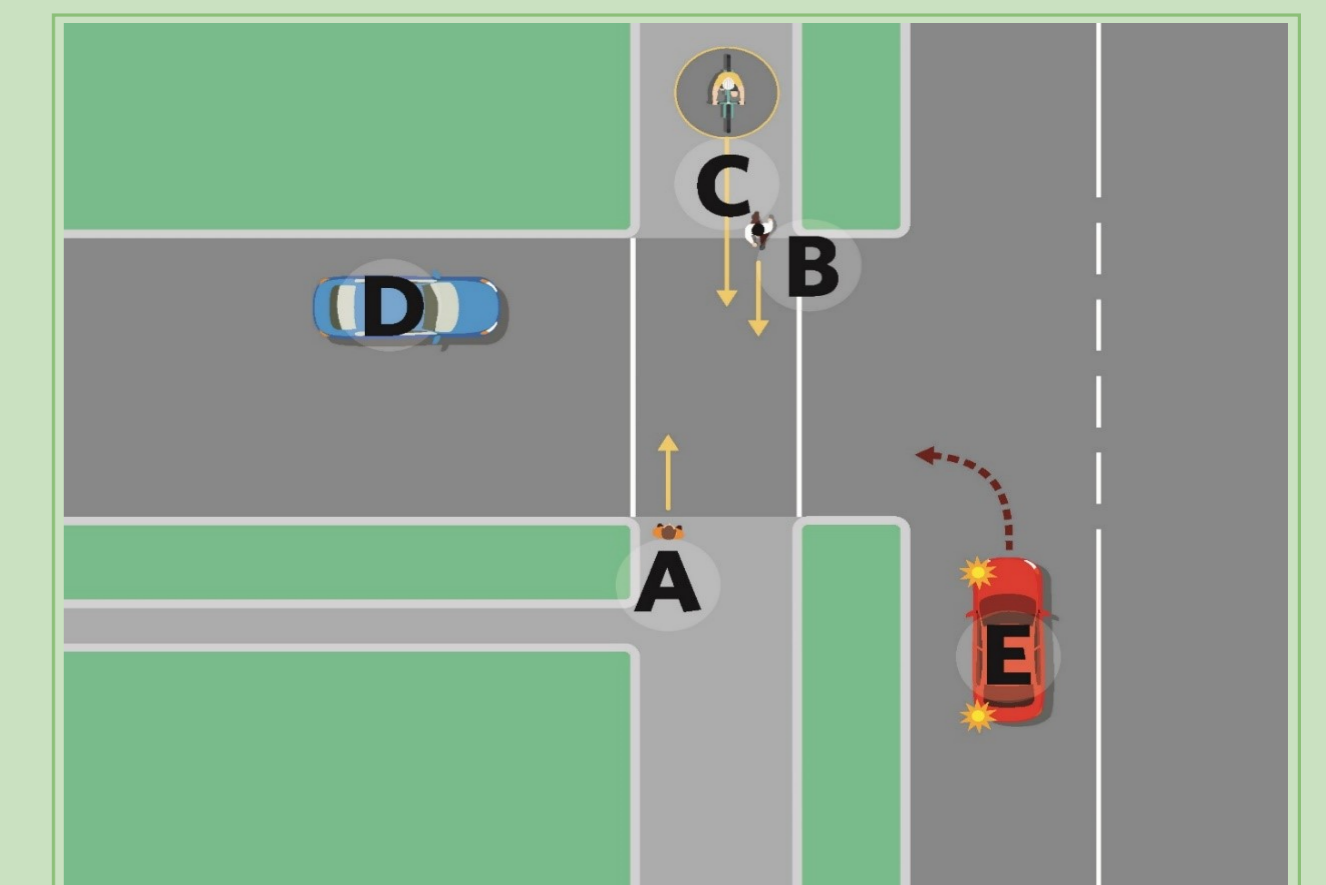


Outlook

It is acknowledged that these changes will take time, education, and enforcement for this to become the norm; however, this will significantly improve UK streets for active modes.

What about New Zealand?

In 2020, a consultation was undertaken on similar changes being proposed here in New Zealand under *the Accessible Streets*⁸ legislation package. The package aimed to increase the safety and accessibility of our footpaths, shared paths, cycle lanes and cycle paths, and encouraging active modes of transport.



Extract from legislation proposal - Priority on foot shown with simple white line markings

The Accessible Streets legislation package was awaiting Cabinet confirmation prior to the general election. Now we have a new government, the package will need to be reviewed by the new Minister of Transport before any decisions will be made. It is expected that this review will occur later in the year, one the 100-day plan priorities have been carried out.

Is New Zealand ready?

Key References

1. Highway Code – Success for Turning the Corner, British Cycling, UK, 03/02/2022
2. Reported road casualties Great Britain: pedestrian factsheet 2021, National Statistics, Department for Transport, UK, 29/09/2022
3. Cycling near misses: Their frequency, impact, and prevention, Dr Rachael Aldred, University of Westminster, London, UK, 29/04/2016
4. The Highway Code: 8 changes you need to know from 29 January 2022, Department for Transport, UK, 26/01/2022
5. Turning the Corner: Priority Changes at Junctions to Improve Safety and Comfort for People Cycling and Walking, Phil Jones Associates, UK, September 2016
6. The Highway Code, Department for Transport, 17/09/2023
7. Highway Code: One-in-four drivers still don't know correct rule on cyclist priority, Dan Alexander, Road.CC, 20/09/2023
8. Accessible Streets consultation, NZTA Waka Kotahi, 2024



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make everyday better.