LRAG News Update – 23 May 2023

The revised Highway Code, published on 29 January 2022, now clearly states a hierarchy of road users, developed in order to protect the most vulnerable in the event of a collision. For those old enough to remember, this hierarchy is reminiscent of a sketch from 1966 about the British Class System, featuring John Cleese, Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett, called "I Know My Place".

The Code demands that the pedestrian is "looked up to" by both drivers and cyclists, that cyclists should expect to acquiesce to pedestrians but in turn receive priority from motorists; drivers must "know their place"!

Highway Code new Rule H1 starts by stating: "*It is important that ALL road users are aware of The Highway Code, are considerate to other road users and understand their responsibility for the safety of others*." The significant word in the above extract is "ALL" – in capitals in the original. Every road user, whether pedestrian, cyclist, horse rider or motorist will be able to recount many examples of failures of other users to adhere to this required courtesy! However, it does seem strange that the only category of road user compelled to be aware of the Highway Code is the motorist, at the time of a driving test, but without re-qualification following major changes.

There have been recent media reports that demonstrate how dangerous situations can arise if highway designers do not anticipate these frequent and common transgressions when designing transformations of existing road space to incorporate cycling infrastructure. These reports are detailed on our website: Safety Issue Concerns, along with other reports of views about cycle lane installations from across the country Other Active Travel Schemes, and internationally The safest Dutch design described.

Ideally, given sufficient real estate, a suitable cycling infrastructure will permit ALL road users to operate in harmony, even allowing for occasions when behaviour falls below the demanded standard. The problems that get revealed are those of trying to cram all categories of highway user into narrow spaces.