

Updating the safety at street works and road works code of practice

Department for Transport Consultation

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts.

1 Executive Summary

The Department for Transport (DfT) has launched a consultation on proposed updates to the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice. The existing code was [last updated in 2013](#) and provides statutory guidance on the signing, lighting and guarding of street and road works on public roads and highways.

The code is relevant to highway and roads authorities, utilities companies and their contractors, as well as other organisations undertaking work on public roads. The proposed update has been developed jointly by the Department for Transport, Transport Scotland, the Welsh Government and the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, meaning that the revised code will be relevant to local authorities across the UK.

The proposed changes are intended to bring the code up to date with developments in legislation, guidance and working practices. They include changes to requirements and guidance around maintaining safe and accessible pedestrian routes, managing cycling routes affected by works, road closures, short duration works, and accessibility and inclusion.

The consultation also proposes clearer diagrams and explanations, alongside changes to terminology intended to distinguish more clearly between mandatory requirements and advisory guidance. The draft code places greater emphasis on maintaining safe and accessible routes for pedestrians and cyclists around works, including for disabled people and other vulnerable road users.

Local authorities have an important role in the consultation as both highway authorities and, in some cases, organisations undertaking works through their own services and contractors. The consultation provides an opportunity for councils to consider whether the proposed requirements are practical and whether sufficient flexibility is retained to manage different local circumstances.

Local authorities are encouraged to consider the proposed changes and provide feedback where

they have experience of the practical operation of the existing code or views on the proposed requirements. Responses are due by **Monday 14 December 2026**.

[Click here](#) for further information and to submit your response.

[Click here](#) to read the full report.

2 Overview

The Safety at Street Works and Road Works: A Code of Practice provides statutory guidance on the signing, lighting and guarding of street and road works on public roads and highways. It covers matters including risk assessment, site management and traffic control, with the aim of protecting workers, road users and pedestrians while minimising disruption caused by works.

The code applies to highway and roads authorities, utility companies and their contractors, as well as private contractors working under relevant licenses. It applies across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with the exception of motorways and high-speed dual carriageways. The code was [last updated in 2013](#), and the Department for Transport (DfT) is now consulting on a [revised version](#) to reflect changes in legislation, guidance and working practices since then.

The draft has been developed jointly by the DfT, Transport Scotland, the Welsh Government and the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, with input from the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC) safety working group and other organisations. The consultation is intended to ensure that the revised code is clear, practical and effective for those responsible for carrying out and managing street and road works.

2.1 Pedestrians, accessibility and cyclists

A significant part of the proposed update concerns the way pedestrian and cycling routes are managed when works affect the highway. The draft places greater emphasis on maintaining safe, continuous and accessible routes for pedestrians, including disabled people and those with mobility needs.

Where footways are obstructed, the draft proposes clearer requirements around the width and length of temporary pedestrian routes. In particular, a pedestrian route restricted to 1 metre in width would only be permitted for a maximum length of 6 metres, including where a temporary walkway is provided on the carriageway. The draft also sets out improved requirements for temporary walkways, including appropriate ramp gradients, smoother surfaces and barriers to separate pedestrians from traffic.

The proposed changes also give greater consideration to cycling. The draft sets out a clear hierarchy for managing cycle routes affected by works, with keeping cyclists on their original route wherever possible identified as the preferred approach. It also seeks to discourage narrow lane arrangements which could encourage unsafe driving.

These changes are particularly relevant to local authorities because temporary arrangements around road works can affect access to homes, businesses and public services, as well as the ability of pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people to travel safely. The consultation therefore provides an opportunity for councils to consider whether the proposed requirements can be applied effectively across different types of roads and works sites.

2.2 Road closures and traffic management

The draft introduces new definitions for ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ road closures, which were not distinguished in the 2013 code. The intention is to provide clearer and more consistent options for managing safety and access where works require a road to be closed.

The proposed update also includes changes to the way temporary road obstructions and restricted road space are managed. For example, the current guidance states that a temporary road obstruction sign cannot be reused until one hour has elapsed since being displayed. The draft proposes instead linking reuse of the sign to traffic conditions, with reuse of the sign permitted once traffic queues have cleared and traffic is flowing normally.

The consultation also asks how occasional large vehicles, such as lorries, should be managed where road space is restricted by works. The Government recognises this as an issue where local circumstances may vary considerably, particularly where temporary traffic management needs to balance safety with continued access for residents, businesses, deliveries and other road users.

2.3 Mobile and short duration works

The proposed code contains expanded guidance on mobile and short duration works, reflecting changes in working practices since the existing code was introduced. This includes clearer layout requirements and updated examples intended to make the guidance more relevant to current methods of working.

This may be particularly relevant to local authority highways teams undertaking shorter-duration maintenance activities, where traffic management arrangements may differ from those required for longer-term works. The consultation asks whether the expanded guidance would make these types of works safer and whether it provides a better reflection of current working practices.

2.4 Level crossings and tramways

The draft also provides more detailed guidance for works taking place near level crossings and tramways. This includes measures intended to manage the risks associated with works in these locations, including preventing queues caused by works from blocking level crossings.

The relevance of these provisions will vary between local authorities depending on the infrastructure within their areas. However, the proposed changes provide the opportunity for councils with relevant experience to consider whether the strengthened requirements are practical and whether they provide sufficient guidance for managing works safely in these locations.

2.5 Clearer guidance and implementation

Alongside the changes to individual types of works, the draft seeks to make the code easier to understand and apply. It includes updated diagrams covering signs, cones, tapers and safety zones, reflecting changes to the [Traffic Signs Regulations](#) and wider DfT guidance since 2013. A new diagram also sets out the order in which signs should be positioned on site, beginning with the safest and least disruptive options.

The draft also seeks to distinguish more clearly between mandatory requirements and advisory guidance, with changes to terminology intended to better reflect the underlying legal duties. The DfT states that the revised design and layout of the code are intended to improve accessibility, readability, and understanding for those using it.

The consultation also asks about the proposed six-month lead-in period before the revised code comes into force. Local authorities may need to consider the implications of any changes for staff training, contractor arrangements, internal procedures and the management of works undertaken on their behalf. The consultation therefore provides an opportunity for councils to identify any practical issues that could affect implementation.

3 Consultation Questions

The consultation questions are categorised as follows:

Topic	Questions
Information about you	7
Providing routes around works for pedestrians	2
Temporary walkways	2
Cyclists	2
New definitions	2
Diagrams and explanations	5
Accessibility and inclusion	2
Mobile and short duration works	8
Temporary road obstruction signs	2
Constricted road space	1
Closing questions	4

The consultation questions are available in full below:

The [draft code of practice](#) contains all of the relevant information for this consultation. You may find it useful to read or refer to while responding.

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your email address?

3. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?
Yes; No
4. Your organisation is located in:
England; Wales; Scotland; Northern Ireland; Another country (please specify)
5. What is the name of your organisation?
6. How many people are employed by your organisation?
1 to 100 people;
101 to 300 people;
301 to 1,000 people;
Above 1,000 people (please specify)
7. Your organisation is:
A disability representation organisation;
A highway authority;
A highway authority contractor;
A utility company;
A utility contractor;
Another type of organisation (please specify)

Providing routes around works for pedestrians

Where works will obstruct a footway, a safe and accessible pedestrian route should be provided. Page 51 to 55 of our draft code provides clarity on usable widths for pedestrian routes.

Where the width of a pedestrian route is restricted to 1 metre, the draft code states that this can only be implemented for a maximum length of 6 metres, including temporary walkways in the carriageway.

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the maximum 6 metre restricted width of 1 metre will improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians, including wheelchair and pram users?
Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know
9. Why?

Temporary walkways

Pages 52 to 60 of the draft code places greater emphasis on providing safe, continuous temporary walkways with appropriate ramp gradients, smoother surfaces and barriers to separate pedestrians from traffic.

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that our greater emphasis on safety will offer safer and more accessible routes when footways are obstructed by works?
Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

11. Why?

Cyclists

Pages 61 to 64 of the draft code sets out a clearer hierarchy that prioritises keeping cyclists on their original route wherever possible, and discourages unsafe narrow lane widths that can encourage dangerous overtaking.

12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this updated approach prioritising keeping cyclists on their original route will better protect people cycling near road works?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

13. Why?

New definitions

The [2013 code](#) did not distinguish between different types of road closures. Pages 108 to 110 of the draft code introduce new definitions of "hard" and "soft" road closures in order to give clearer, more consistent options for managing safety and access.

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the addition of these new definitions will improve how closures are understood and used?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

15. Why?

Diagrams and explanations

Pages 28 to 65 of the draft code include updated diagrams, clearer layouts and explanations for signs, cones, tapers and safety zones, reflecting changes in the [Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions](#) and wider Department for Transport guidance since 2013.

16. a) Overall, do you find the modernised diagrams clearer and easier to understand than those in the previous code?

Yes; No; Don't know

16. b) Overall, do you find the modernised explanations clearer and easier to understand than those in the previous code?

Yes; No; Don't know

16. c) If no, explain why not?

Page 33 of the draft code includes a new diagram showing the order in which signs should be placed on site, starting with the safest and least disruptive options.

17. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the diagram is clear in explaining how and where signs should be positioned?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

18. Why?

Accessibility and inclusion

Compared with the 2013 code, we believe the draft code places a stronger emphasis on accessibility and inclusion. This includes clearer requirements for ramp gradients which are stated on page 151 of the draft code.

19. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft code's new requirements for ramp gradients will better support disabled people and others with mobility needs?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

20. Why?

Mobile and short duration works

Pages 115 to 127 includes more detailed guidance for mobile and short-duration works than the 2013 code, including clearer layout requirements and modernised examples.

21. a) To what extent do you agree or disagree that the guidance in these expanded sections will make mobile and short duration works safer?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

21. b) To what extent do you agree or disagree that the guidance in these expanded sections will make mobile and short duration works more relevant to current working methods?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

21. c) Why?

Pages 128 to 140 of the draft code provides more detailed advice for working near level crossings and tramways than the 2013 code, including measures to prevent queues from blocking crossings.

22. a) To what extent do you agree or disagree that these strengthened requirements will improve safety for those conducting works?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

22. b) To what extent do you agree or disagree that these strengthened requirements will improve safety for the public?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

22. c) Why?

A summary table is at page 157 of the draft code which brings together site layout and the traffic management requirements as well as being detailed in the main text of the document.

23. Do you think it is helpful or unhelpful to include this summary table in addition to the detailed

requirements set out in the main body of the code?
Yes, having both the summary table and the detailed text is helpful;
No, the information is only helpful when set out in the main text;
No, the information is only helpful when set out in the summary table;
Don't know

24. Explain your answer

Temporary road obstruction signs

Under current guidance, a temporary road obstruction sign cannot be used again until an hour has elapsed since being displayed. Page 114 of the draft code proposes changing this so that the sign can only be used again once traffic queues have cleared and traffic is flowing normally.

25. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed change to how often the temporary road obstruction sign can be used?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

26. Why?

Constricted road space

Page 86 of the draft code displays table 6 which sets out situations where roads are narrowed during street or road works and road space is constricted.

27. Overall, in these situations, how do you think occasional large vehicles such as lorries should be managed?

Don't know;

They should be allowed through;

They should not be allowed through;

They should be managed in another way (please specify)

28. The previous 2013 update of the code had a 6-month lead in period before coming into force.

Do you agree or disagree that 6 months would be a sufficient lead in period for the draft code?

Agree; Disagree; Don't know

29. Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed updates to the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice will provide benefits to you?

Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree; Don't know

30. Why?

31. What, if any, further comments do you have on the proposed updates to the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice?

4 APSE Comment

The proposed update to the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice is relevant to local authorities across the UK, particularly those responsible for highway maintenance and management and for overseeing works carried out by utilities and contractors.

APSE welcomes the opportunity for councils to contribute to the review of a code which has not been updated since 2013. Changes in highway use, accessibility expectations, traffic management and working practices mean that keeping the guidance current is important for those responsible for delivering and managing works on public roads.

The increased focus on maintaining safe and accessible routes around works is particularly relevant to local government. Temporary traffic management arrangements can have a significant impact on pedestrians, cyclists and other road users, meaning councils need guidance which supports safe access while recognising that the space available and circumstances of individual works sites can vary considerably.

The proposed changes also highlight the importance of practical and proportionate guidance for local authority highways teams and contractors. Changes relating to pedestrian routes, cycling, road closures, mobile works and the management of large vehicles will need to be workable across different types of roads and locations. The experience of councils in applying the existing code will therefore be valuable in considering how the proposed requirements could operate in practice.

The proposed clearer distinction between mandatory requirements and advisory guidance may also help local authorities and contractors to understand what is required when planning and managing works. Similarly, updated diagrams and clearer explanations could make the code easier to use for those working with it on a day-to-day basis.

APSE encourages local authorities with responsibility for highways, street works and road works to review the proposed changes and consider responding to the consultation. In particular, councils may wish to highlight any practical experience which could help ensure that the revised code provides clear and workable guidance while maintaining safe and accessible highways for all road users. APSE members may also wish to respond on any likely cost or productivity implications of the changes.

5 How can APSE help?

The APSE Highways and Street Lighting Network provides a forum for local authorities to share information, discuss current issues and exchange practical experience across highways and street lighting services. All APSE Network meetings are free to attend for members, with previous presentations available online [here](#) and upcoming meetings listed [here](#).

APSE Training's [Health & Safety: Working on Highways and Verges](#) course was designed in response to councils seeking guidance for roads and highways works and covers key health and safety considerations for those working on or alongside highways and verges. The next course takes place

on Thursday 22 October 2026 via Microsoft Teams. [Click here](#) to see the full range of APSE Training courses.

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APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular network meetings, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The networks are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all in-person meetings end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE Network meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area, please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national networks include:-

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- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Social Value, Procurement and Commercialisation Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, Highways and Street Lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Veterans and Military Champions Network
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Waste Management, Recycling and Street Cleansing

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