



## Commercial Dog Walkers' Workshop Falkirk Wheel, 19 February 2013

### Summary, evaluation and recommendations



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**Scottish Natural Heritage**  
**Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba**

All of nature for all of Scotland  
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

Year of Natural  
Scotland 2013 

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. A pilot evening workshop in Falkirk was funded by SNH to positively engage with commercial dog walkers in February 2013.
2. The event aimed to promote greater awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and improve compliance with its messages, to benefit land management and other interests.
3. Assessment of workshop participants' interests, awareness and behaviour was derived from online questionnaires completed before and after the event.
4. The assessments showed that the event completely achieved its aims, and further inspired commercial dog walkers to take a more active role in promoting responsible behaviour.
5. The workshop also elicited previously unavailable data on the nature, type and location of commercial dog walking activity.
6. Given concerns expressed by access and land managers about commercial dog walkers elsewhere in Scotland, and the benefits for human health from dog ownership, further events are recommended, complemented by support information for access staff.
7. While the event was successful in itself, to optimise its benefits the management of commercial dog walkers needs to be just one of several elements in a strategic approach to managing access for commercial and private walkers with dogs.
8. Areas where the wording, promotion and delivery of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code could be improved were also identified.
9. The project also highlighted the potential benefits from similar engagement with other professionals providing services to dog owners.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Aims and objectives

This initial report aims to summarise and evaluate the delivery of a Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) funded workshop for commercial dog walkers, held at the Falkirk Wheel on 19 February 2013, in particular to:

1. Assess the overall relevance and effectiveness of the workshop;
2. Identify any desired changes in knowledge or behaviour arising from the workshop;
3. Better understand how commercial dog walkers (CDW) run their businesses, and the implications for the management of responsible access taking;
4. Assess the value and potential of delivering similar events in other parts of Scotland;
5. Make recommendations on how engaging with commercial dog walkers can complement SNH's wider aims for access taking by walkers with dogs.

This reflects SNH's initial objectives for this project, which were to:

1. Improve the understanding of access rights and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) by commercial dog walkers attending the workshop;
2. Influence and improve their practice;
3. Encourage them to spread the word;
4. Empower them to promote good practice within the sector, for example through local accreditation schemes / applying peer pressure.

### 2.2 Data sources

Data sources used in the preparation of this report are:

1. Anonymous pre-event online questionnaire (with paper version option) distributed to invited participants on 5 February 2013 for completion by 11 February;
2. Comments and notes made on post-its, worksheets and flipchart paper during the event;
3. Anonymous post-event online questionnaire (with paper version option) distributed to attending participants on 20 February 2013 for completion by 24 February, with separate area for personal details to be provided for follow-up contact and Crufts tickets draw.

In line with SNH policy and statutory data protection legislation, clarification on how, when and by whom any personal data provided would be used was explicitly made in the online questionnaires, with participants given the option to opt out of future contact or use of images featuring them taken during the event.

## 3 WORKSHOP DELIVERY

### 3.1 Logistics and planning

#### 3.1.1 Venue and timing

A Central Belt venue was sought to give accessibility to large centres of population and thus dog ownership and commercial dog walkers.

Falkirk is geographically well-placed to meet this need, and an offer to host the event by Scottish Canals at a competitive rate at the Falkirk Wheel was accepted. Falkirk was also very convenient for the guest speakers.

The event was planned for a midweek evening, to make this as accessible as possible based on the assumption that participants were unlikely to be walking dogs after dusk in winter. A light meal of soup and sandwiches was provided to make participants welcome and allow them to attend straight from work if required, especially if they had some distance to travel.

#### 3.1.2 Invitations

SNH had an existing dataset of commercial dog walking companies, but on further examination this was found to be out of date. An up to date list was commissioned from Business Lists UK and invitations sent out to 230 commercial dog walkers within an approximately one hour driving time of Falkirk, the week commencing 21 January 2013. The invitations could only be sent out by post due to contact data usage restrictions, but this also allowed a flat dog treat to be included with the invitation as a novel way of attracting the attention of the recipients and their dog(s).

A copy of the colour printed invitation appears below. While the underlying intention of the event was to promote awareness of the Code and reduce irresponsible access taking, the tone and content of the invitation was specifically designed to appeal to the positive personal interests of commercial dog walkers to optimise interest and attendance.

Dog owners in general are often suspicious of unsolicited contact from public bodies, as historically this has most often been of a restrictive and unwelcome nature. Consequently special efforts were made to promote the event as being in their interests, and formal endorsement obtained from dog-friendly organisations, namely the Kennel Club, Scottish Kennel Club and Your Dog magazine. The workshop host's positive national profile in the canine community was also intentionally highlighted for this reason. Goodie bags and a free prize draw for two season passes (value approximately £80) for Crufts Dog show in March (donated by the Kennel Club) were similarly used to capture the interest of the intended audience.

In total, 50 requests to attend were received, with the 40 places available allocated on a first come, first served, basis. Interest in attending was shown by some access officers and other public sector staff; while this interest was welcome, places were not allocated to people other than commercial dog walkers to promote the most open and mutually supportive environment for engagement at the event.

However, the convenor of the Scottish Outdoor Access Network (SOAN), Angus Duncan was invited to attend and help with facilitation, as this offered the opportunity for informal observation and feedback to SOAN members.

# Commercial dog walkers workshop

The Falkirk Wheel Conference Centre\*  
 Tuesday 19 February 2013  
 5.30pm for food, workshop 6 - 8.30pm

- Do you walk dogs for a living?
- Want to promote yourself as a caring and reputable business?
- Interested in getting ahead of the competition?

## Come along to this free event to:

**See** how voluntary accreditation schemes can help businesses like yours

**Hear** the success of the community-led Falkirk Green Dog Walkers scheme

**Get** top tips from vet Stephen Champion of [www.championvet.com](http://www.championvet.com) Grangemouth

**Be sure** where you can go & what you can do

**Tell us** how best to share good practice and help reputable commercial dog walkers

### **BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL AS SPACES ARE LIMITED**

Please email:  
[recreationandaccess@snh.gov.uk](mailto:recreationandaccess@snh.gov.uk)  
 with "dog walker" as the subject, stating your name, company and phone number  
**PLEASE BOOK BY 31 JANUARY 2013**

Can't come this time? Then email us to find out about future events and advice. Alternatively call Anne on 01463 725223



Supported by



## Free!

- Drinks, soup and sandwiches
- Raffle for two Crufts tickets
- Falkirk Wheel visit voucher
- Goodie bag for you & your dog
- On-site parking

Hosted by **Stephen Jenkinson**  
 for Scottish Natural Heritage  
 Kennel Club Access Advisor and  
 Your Dog magazine columnist



**DOGS: the enclosed Pedigree Schmacko is our gift for you to enjoy, but ask your owner first**

\* The postcode for Falkirk Wheel Conference Centre is FK1 4RS

**Image 1:** Invitation to event posted to commercial dog walkers

### 3.1.3 Attendance, content and delivery

In total 32 of the 40 invited participants attended the workshop, in addition to the seven speakers/organisers.

The programme content as below was delivered approximately to the times stated, although finishing at 8.40pm due to the interest and engagement of participants, particularly with the final speaker.



#### Commercial dog walkers workshop

**Tuesday 19 February 2013**

<b>From 5.30 pm</b>	Soup, sandwiches and refreshments	
<b>6.00 pm</b>	Welcome and introductions	
<b>6.15 pm</b>	Dog walking – opportunities and threats	Stephen Jenkinson Kennel Club Access Advisor
<b>6.25 pm</b>	Falkirk Green Dog Walkers	Michelle MillerAllen Green Dog Walkers Project Falkirk Council
<b>6.45 pm</b>	Approved professional dog walker accreditation scheme	Carl Howman Amenity Protection Officer East Lothian Council
<b>7.05 pm</b>	Discussion groups: what could these schemes mean for you?	All
<b>7.25 pm</b>	Where you can go and what you can do: Scottish Outdoor Access Code	Stephen Jenkinson
<b>7.55 pm</b>	Vet's top tips for dog walking	Stephen Champion www.championvet.com Grangemouth
<b>8.15 pm</b>	Summary, questions and the future	
<b>8.30 pm</b>	Depart	

#### Facilitators

Rob Garner, Recreation and Access Officer, Scottish Natural Heritage

Anne Murray, Communications Officer - Campaigns, Scottish Natural Heritage

Angus Duncan, Outdoor Access Team Leader - Falkirk Council



**Image 2:** Final workshop programme as delivered

## 4 COMMERCIAL DOG WALKER DEMOGRAPHICS AND PROFILE

The following sections summarise the key findings of the data from the pre and post event questionnaires and activities during the workshop.

Complete summarised and anonymised raw data have been supplied to SNH.

The profile of the 21 workshop participants completing the pre-event survey is as follows. Where absolute figures are quoted, the mean average figure is quoted with minimum and maximum limits in parenthesis (min – max).

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to data rounding.

### 4.1 Survey results

#### 4.1.1 *Frequency and number of dogs walked commercially*

- 86% walk dogs for clients at least once each day; 61% of those do so more than once per day;
- Most started walking other people's dogs commercially in 2010 (1999 to 2013);
- CDW walk an average of 3.5 clients' dogs at a time (1 to 6 dogs);
- The average dog walk is 55 minutes long (30 to 80 minutes);
- The maximum number of dogs they would walk at one time is 5 (2 to 10 dogs);
- Respondents spend 13 hours (4 to 30 hours) per week walking dogs for other people;
- On average 13 (4 to 30) different dogs are walked for clients each week;
- 95% of CDW transport dogs to where they are walked in a car or van;
- The average journey time to a dog walking area is 19 (5 to 90) minutes, with 28 (10 to 90) minutes being the longest journey they would undertake;
- 91% of CDW do not employ other people to walk dogs for their businesses.

#### 4.1.2 *Commercial dog walking locations*

- Woodland was by far the most popular place for walking clients' dogs, with town parks, river banks / canal towpaths and hillsides / moorland being collectively second most popular;
- The seashore, fields grazed by farm animals, arable fields and nature reserves were mostly avoided;
- 22% of respondents used land that they owned or rented for dog walking;
- 38% said it was not easy to find places to walk clients' dogs, and 43% felt there were fewer places to do so than 10 years ago.

### **4.1.3 Off-lead dog walking**

“Most” (52%) or “all” (19%) of respondents’ clients would prefer their dogs to be exercised off-lead at some time when walked. 86% of dog walkers would do this if a client’s dog had a good recall.

### **4.1.4 Removal of fouling**

Respondents reported a very high level of picking up after clients’ dogs, especially where fouling occurred in a more formal landscape or on a path’s surface.

The landscapes generally perceived as less formal (woodland and open hillsides / moorland) were those where around a quarter of commercial dog walkers did not always pick up.

## **4.2 Analysis and comment**

Commercial dog walkers reflect many of the same characteristics of people walking their own dogs in that:

- Off-lead access is highly valued and sought;
- Around half feel places where dogs can be exercised are becoming more scarce;
- They will readily drive on average 20 minutes on a daily basis to get to good dog walking areas;
- An average dog walk is around one hour;
- They are less likely to pick up in more informal landscapes such as woods and moorland.

However, they differ from people walking their own dogs in terms of:

- Having more dogs with them;
- Using a narrower range of landscapes more frequently for dog walking, primarily centred on woodland;
- Being less likely to walk a dog to where it is exercised from the dog’s home;
- Having the potential to be ambassadors for responsible access taking with their clients, and seeing a commercial advantage for doing so.

## 5 SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE AWARENESS

The pre and post event questionnaires tested participant awareness of dog-related elements of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

The findings are summarised here.

### 5.1 Pre-event Code awareness

Participants had a high level of awareness (over 95%) of the core principles of SOAC, such as using a lead around farm animals and not disturbing calves, lambs and ground nesting birds.

However, it is of concern that only 55% agreed that the Code advises dog walkers to release their dogs if chased by cattle, as such situations do lead to injuries and occasional deaths of dog walkers each year across the UK.

Where their knowledge of access rights was less clear, CDW appeared to err on the side of caution and assumed rights did not exist; for example, only 35% agreed that there was a right of access to sports pitches when not in use.

The responses did highlight that while almost all CDW understood the underlying principles of responsible access taking, they were less clear on what this means in practice in terms of where specifically to go at a local level. For example, 53% said it was not easy to know where you can go, and what you can do, when dog walking, and only 45% said it was easy to know where to use a lead to avoid disturbing ground nesting birds.

### 5.2 Post-event Code awareness

While 74% of respondents\* had already heard of SOAC before the workshop, in all of the six assessment factors tested, positive change still occurred due to the event, including:

- 79% knew more about the Code;
- 73% were more likely to look at: [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)
- 96% were more likely to tell their clients about the Code;
- 83% were now better able to tell their clients how to be a responsible dog walker.

In relation to fouling, of the five respondents (25%) who previously did not always pickup when dog walking in more informal landscapes, over half said that after the event they were more likely to pick up in woodland (67%), fields grazed by farm animals (60%) and hillsides / moorland (75%).

*\* The 74% awareness rate by respondents, is significantly higher than for the general public in Scotland, which was 40% in 2012. It is also higher than the peak rate of code awareness of 67% in March 2008 during a SNH television campaign.*

### **5.3 Analysis and comment**

Given the comparatively high level of general Code awareness before the event, the significant increases in awareness and advice to clients about responsible access taking is very encouraging and endorses the merit of holding such events.

The value of raising awareness about problems associated with fouling of less formal landscapes is also endorsed, given that most non-compliers are now more likely to pick up. While this does not necessarily make for actual changes in behaviour when out dog walking, it is clear that the need to do so has been communicated in a compelling manner.

Equally, this makes the areas where awareness is still lacking all the more notable, given that this is an engaged audience with a sound underlying awareness of Code principles.

In particular, the lack of locally-relevant knowledge about where precisely dog walkers can go, the location of ground nesting birds, and safest action if chased by cattle, is worthy of greater emphasis in Code communication. However, this needs to be backed up by clearer information (including engagement by access authorities and others), about what responsible access taking means at a local level, as this cannot be effectively communicated at a national level by SNH.

## 6 RESPONSIBLE DOG WALKING INITIATIVES

Two key initiatives from the Central Belt were included in the workshop programme, both of which can inherently promote Code compliant, responsible access taking.

### 6.1 Falkirk Green Dog Walkers

This is a community-based scheme that builds capacity amongst local dog owners, to positively promote responsible dog walking, especially in relation to fouling.

This innovative approach has successfully reduced fouling where it originated in Falkirk, and has been adopted under licence in several other local authority areas across the UK for a one off cost of £500. Leading the initiative is Michelle MillerAllen who presented an overview of the scheme at the workshop.

More information about the scheme can be found at: [www.greendogwalkers.org.uk](http://www.greendogwalkers.org.uk)

#### 6.1.1 *Participant perception of scheme*

Workshop participants responding to the post-event questionnaire were supportive of the Green Dog Walkers approach with:

- 96% agreeing it was a good way tackle dog fouling that also helps to show dog walkers can be responsible;
- 93% agreeing that CDW should get involved in such schemes;
- Only 1 respondent (4%) felt that such a scheme would not work in his/her area;
- 55% of respondents would try to get such a scheme operating in their area, if there was not such a scheme already.

### 6.2 East Lothian CDW accreditation scheme

As part of East Lothian Council's ongoing Dog Watch project, a voluntary accreditation scheme has been introduced. Regarded as successful by the Council, lead officer Carl Howman presented details of the scheme at the workshop.

To be granted approved (accredited) status, the dog walking company has to agree to a number of conditions including:

- no more than six dogs to be exercised at any one time;
- relevant pet business insurance;
- dogs to be transported in a vehicle fit for purpose with dogs adequately secured;
- to have a first aid kit designed for dogs;
- dogs to be tagged with the CDW own company tag whilst under their care;
- controlling dogs during exercise;
- cleaning up any dog fouling;
- being aware and responsible about when and where dogs are walked, for example keeping away from livestock and not disturbing ground nesting birds.

More information on the scheme can be found at: [www.eastlothian.gov.uk](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk)

### **6.2.1 Participant perception of scheme**

Pre and post event questionnaires asked respondents the same questions about these schemes to test for any change in attitude following the event.

Most participants felt positively about such schemes before the event, and these views were not significantly increased or decreased after the event. Key perceptions of the schemes before (first percentage) and after the workshop (second percentage) were that:

- 84% / 82% felt such schemes would be a good selling point for their businesses;
- 90% / 78 % agreed they helped dog owners identify responsible CDW;
- 6% / 0% felt such schemes were a waste of time and of no value to them;
- 47% / 35% felt such schemes would cost their businesses too much to join;
- 58% / 70% believed such schemes should be voluntary.

As with the Green Dog Walkers, most respondents were positive about such a scheme being established in their area, with 39% stating they would like to be involved in setting one up.

The East Lothian scheme's requirements were also felt to be "about right" by 77% of respondents.

### **6.3 Analysis and comment**

There is an inherently high level of interest and support for both these schemes amongst CDW, which if captured has the potential to improve responsible access taking by CDW themselves, their clients, and dog owners in general.

As this workshop was a pilot, no specific measures were put in place to capture the interest in developing schemes after the event, and this needs to be addressed in any subsequent workshops elsewhere.

Overall, facilitating greater consideration and understanding of these schemes appears to have significant untapped potential to support SNH's aims for SOAC and access taking more generally.

It is also noted that both these schemes are located in departments outwith the outdoor access teams (Environmental Health at East Lothian and Corporate and Neighbourhood Services at Falkirk), and thus it may also be appropriate to encourage greater liaison between SNH, access staff and wider teams such as environmental health to develop the most complementary approach to such issues.

## 7 EVALUATION OF WORKSHOP DELIVERY

The post-event evaluation showed that all but one of the participants felt very positive about all aspects of the event. For example, of the 25 participants responding:

- All (100%) agreed they were made to feel welcome, found it useful to meet other CDW and that issues were explained clearly;
- All but one participant (96%) agreed that the event was a good use of their time, they were able to express their views and that the presentations were relevant and interesting;
- Similarly, all but one participant felt the event was designed to help responsible dog walkers and would recommend such events to colleagues.

All participants agreed that evenings were a good time for such events for CDW.

Specific elements of the event are evaluated in the following sections:

### 7.1 Most and least useful parts of the event

Respondents were asked to identify the most and least useful parts of the event using free text answers.

Summary analysis of the responses showed the following:

Workshop element	“Most useful” mentions	“Least useful” mentions
All of it	3	0
None of it	0	11*
Opportunities, threats and host	2	0
Falkirk Green Dog walkers	10	3
East Lothian Accreditation scheme	7	3
Group discussions	7	6
Scottish Outdoor Access Code	3	1
Vet’s top tips	9	1

\* i.e. none of the workshop elements were not useful

Many respondents were keen to point out that while they personally classed some elements as “least” useful (e.g. when they already knew of the issue, or it was not relevant to their personal needs), this did not mean they felt the content was irrelevant to the other participants as a whole.

## 7.2 Most important thing to do after the event

Participants were asked to state the most important thing they were going to do as a result of the workshop using free text. From the 22 responses, the following generic themes were identified:

<b>Generic action to be taken after workshop</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Pursue Green Dog Walker activities	13
Pursue accreditation for their businesses	7
Improve dog health related practices, including vaccination checks and first aid kits	5
Promote responsible access taking by dog owners through marketing / spreading the word / speaking with clients	5
Engage / liaise with local council on relevant issues	4
Comply more with SOAC	1
Keep in contact with other CDW	1

## 7.3 Analysis and comment

The aim to produce and deliver a programme that was accessible, relevant and worthwhile for the participants was overwhelmingly met, as well as delivering the wanted messages about responsible access taking.

While content relating to the Code was rarely stated to be the “most useful” element, it was equally only “least useful” to one person. Other post-event questions also showed that the Code-related content did positively influence knowledge and perception in the desired way.

Moreover, the most and least useful comments validate the assumption made at the planning stage, that content of direct relevance to their businesses, and the credibility of vets, is critical in attracting CDW to such events.

It is not uncommon for group work to split opinion in such assessments, as it is greatly influenced by an individual’s preferred learning style, especially with a diverse range of participants as in this case. While most participants will be used to, and comfortable with, listening to talks / lectures, participatory activities can be more uncomfortable for some; equally as shown, some people very much like the opportunity to interact with others in this way.

Overall, the workshop appears to have delivered a balanced, engaging and relevant programme that met with widespread approval and support from the target audience.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

### 8.1 Value of workshop

The inclusion of pre and post event evaluation has clearly shown, as far as is possible in this context, that the event was effective in meeting SNH's desired aims.

Further evaluation would be helpful to see what change has occurred over a longer time period, but for now there is enough evidence to show the event was effective.

### 8.2 Opportunities from working with commercial dog walkers

There are clearly a significant proportion of commercial dog walkers who are very motivated to engage with these issues, both for their own interests and due to them perceiving commercial value in promoting responsible behaviour, both to attract clients and reduce calls for further restrictions on dog walking.

Almost half of all respondents wanted to take an active part in establishing and promoting responsible dog walking schemes. To the author's knowledge, such latent interest has not been widely exploited across Scotland.

While CDW are often mentioned by access authorities and land managers in a negative context, there is clear potential for a significant proportion of them to be engaged as part of the solution. This is in terms of their own behaviours and promoting responsible access taking to their clients.

However, as the commercial dog walkers at this event had, on average, only been working as such for two years, it is likely that ongoing engagement and / or repeated events will be needed to ensure key Code messages are communicated following staff turnover.

### 8.3 Workshop promotion

One reason for the success of the event was the positive and engaging nature of its promotion. While it is understood why some land managers and nature conservation interests have sought to engage with dog walkers primarily about the problems they can cause, the latter is far less likely to engage this audience.

The initial invitation to any such events will give a vital first impression, and so must actively address the audience's needs and aspirations, with the access management outcomes built around that.

Endorsement of the event by dog-friendly organisations was also held to have been helpful; these bodies can also be well-placed to promote the value and awareness of such workshops.

### 8.4 Workshop content

The content was very relevant to participants and the use of guest speakers with credibility in their field was seen as an essential element in achieving this. While other commitments and the distances involved may mean the speakers used at Falkirk are not able to attend future workshops, the inclusion of similar speakers is essential.

In particular, the presence of a vet was highly valued and is known to aid engagement; prior research has shown that dog owners give the highest priority to advice from other dog owners and their vets. Given participant interest in the workshop content and eagerness for discussion, extending future events by 30 minutes may well be helpful.

### **8.5 Involvement of access authorities**

Now that the event's concept has been shown to be a success, it is vital that any future events are planned in partnership with both access and environmental health staff. This is to both guide relevance of content, and to ensure participant enthusiasm for initiatives, such as commercial accreditation and community dog walking, is captured after the event.

### **8.6 Integration with wider access management**

As with dog owners in general, commercial dog walkers are predisposed to not cause conflict for themselves nor other interests. Equally, the value placed on off-lead access, and CDW's ability to drive to different locations, means that any management of off-lead access or other behaviour by walkers with dogs, must always consider the potential for displacement.

The established momentum for imposing dog bans and on-lead areas in England and Wales, appears to be gaining ground in Scotland; any such restrictions have a high potential to displace and concentrate perceived problem behaviours in other areas. Without a strategic overview about how best to accommodate the demand for access, particularly off-lead, by commercial and private dog owners, any such restrictions could heighten such problems, and work against the many benefits of dog ownership and the provision of commercial dog walking services.

Thus, work with CDW needs to be complemented by wider access management awareness and planning about where dog walkers can go and what they can do at a local level.

Great liaison between access authority staff, environmental health teams and local access forums may well be helpful to ensure positive work done with CDW is not undermined by other conflicting management initiatives.

### **8.7 Wider applicability**

The event appears to be readily transferable to other areas in Scotland, where there is a prevalence of commercial dog walking, be it to reduce current problems, or to prevent conflict occurring. While workshop content and speakers need to be accessible and locally-relevant, there seems to be ample potential for similar events to be delivered .

Additional events would also add to the value of funding the first event, by making additional use of the initial product development time, thus reducing time and cost.

While this project is targeted at CDW, the interest shown suggests that a pilot event or other engagement with wider sectors of the canine care industry (eg dog trainers, groomers, vet nurses etc) could be helpful to explore. These people could also be inspired and supported to become advocates for responsible access taking by their clients.

## 9 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Further workshops:** It is recommended that approximately four similar events are held in 2013/2014, to further test this concept and act as a catalyst for better engagement with CDW by access authorities across Scotland. It is suggested two similar events are held in spring / early summer 2013, and two further events in the autumn.
2. **Content and promotion:** Such events need to be expressly promoted and delivered to primarily engage with the personal interests and motivations of CDW, while inherently promoting responsible access taking. This may be challenging to some access staff and land managers, but it is essential to ensure positive and ensuring engagement from the start.
3. **Engagement of access authorities:** Additional events should be organised in partnership with those access authorities who have expressed an interest in the initiative, so they can act as ambassadors for the approach with their peers. This also enables them to assist in providing venues, identifying local issues and CDW.
4. **Sharing good practice with access staff:** It is recommended that a workshop is delivered to encourage access authority staff to make full use of this approach, once the concept has been tested on two more occasions. It is suggested this event is run in the autumn and combined with wider content on managing walkers with dogs in general, to make for a full day event (eg 10.30am to 3.30pm).
5. **Integrated working and liaison:** The need for liaison between access and environmental health teams must be emphasised in all related activity, along with the need for such initiatives to be integrated into strategic planning and management of where dog walkers go and what they do. The issues of displacement due to localised dog bans or on-lead restrictions, requires access authorities and local access forums to proactively seek consultation and engagement in any such proposals.
6. **SOAC messages:** The difficulties many CDW expressed in knowing what the Code meant locally, regarding where they could go and what they could do, needs to be considered in any future reviews of Code content and promotion. In particular, behaviour if chased by cattle needs specific consideration, given safety implications for dog owners and liability issues for farmers.
7. **Guidance to access authorities:** Irrespective of whether further events are delivered, it would be helpful for SNH to publish guidance for access authorities to help them better understand and engage with CDW, based on the new data obtained in this and any subsequent events. This would foster a more constructive approach and dialogue, that makes CDW part of the solution as much as part of the problem of irresponsible access taking.
8. **Other canine care professionals:** Given the latent enthusiasm of commercial dog walkers, consideration should be given to the merit of engagement with other professionals in the dog care sector, to assess their interest and ability to similarly become advocates for responsible dog walking and identify the most appropriate method(s) to achieve this.