New approaches to influencing dog owners

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Dogs - a scary issue?!
**Career path:**
Health ➔ Countryside ➔ Pet psychology =

**Specialist consultant:**
Dogs in the countryside & urban greenspace

**Other clients include:**
Dogs in the countryside: the reality

- Dog ownership is a major influence on access taking, choice and frequency
- Dogs accompany people around half of all visits to the countryside and greenspace
- Conflict does occur and can be acute; it all depends on the circumstances
- There are also significant benefits: eg for human health, social cohesion, site safety
- Dog owners are protective of existing access
- Not a significant problem everywhere... but it can be at a local level

Challenges the same all over the world:

No dogs on 30 miles of Sydney’s beaches?
Legal approaches can be the only option for a few acute cases

- Enforcement time consuming & outcome uncertain; may just displace

- More benefit with majority of owners from promoting positive behaviours, rather than just stopping bad ones

- Benefits: informal wardening; political support; reporting of fire; litter, antisocial behaviours; less hassle!

- Peer information from vets and other dog owners is the most influential
Influencing dog owner behaviour 4 December 2013

Know your audience

Who are dog owners?
- All socio-economic groups; C2DE highest (just)
- 25% to 33% of all households
- Most frequently parents
- Seeking companionship of other dog walkers
- Avoiding other people if they own dogs that are injured, being trained or have ‘issues’
- First-time visitors
- Daily visitors
- Needing access before dawn & after dusk
- Very active people involved in dog sports
- People whose only exercise is dog walking

Owner preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner preference</th>
<th>% single most important factor for a dog walk</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dogs off-lead</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away from traffic</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to home</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace and quiet</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely to meet dogs</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixing with other dogs</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away from livestock</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poo disposal facilities</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circular route</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding where dogs are unwelcome</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Supply and demand

City of Winchester study 2008: greenspace availability for dog owners

- 34 sites surveyed by local dog owners
- 54% felt there was less greenspace available compared to 10 years ago
- 12% did not know of alternative sites if local site access was lost/restricted
- Average 12 mins extra walking or driving to get to alternative sites where known
- Double impact of new housing: reduces greenspace and increases demand


Displacement

Question: Impact on owners if more restrictions on Kent’s coastline

- 28% would walk their dogs less often
- 17% less likely to get another dog
- 44% drive further

Where walk instead
- 49% farmland
- 41% nature reserves
- 34% heathland

Coastal access consultation survey Kent - Spring 2012. Kennel Club / S Jenkinson
The need for a strategic approach

In the face of local restrictions or access loss, dog owners have 4 options on a given site:

1. Keep visiting if needs still met
2. Go somewhere else
3. Practically and/or politically challenge the restriction
4. Ignore the restriction, given a low likelihood of being caught/fined

*In a climate of “fewer places to go” strategic planning is needed to minimise the ever-increasing potential for conflict.*
Keeping dogs & wildlife safe from each other

New Banff townsite off-leash dog park

Managing for

THEIR NEEDS

on

OUR TERMS
Dog owners and trust in peace deal

Hampshire Chronicle 2007

Our sales are slow. Please buy this sofa now to boost our profits. Thank you.
The comfort you deserve: a price you can afford. Indulge yourself on this sofa now.

Example: not using bins

CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR DOG

Example of not using bins, showing a sign requesting dog owners to clean up after their pets, and an image of a neglected bin with dog waste on the ground.
Interviews and online survey:
August 2007 – Sheffield Hallam University

Acceptable to put bagged poo in normal litter bins?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Have done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dev-</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes          No     Unsure             Have done

Influencing dog owner behaviour 4 December 2013
- Non-confrontational way to change attitudes in Falkirk
- 34% increase in picking up
- 600 volunteers & 14 partners
- Approach now used across UK
- Volunteers wear GDW armband or collar and pledge to:
  - clean up after their dog
  - carry extra dog waste bags
  - be happy to ‘lend’ a bag
  - be a friendly reminder to other dog walkers to clean up

Making it easy to DO THE RIGHT THING
Jeskyns woodland: Forestry Commission, Kent

- Traffic light scheme introduced
- New attractive leaflet produced
- Fenced-in training area provided with locally-run classes
- Dog dip area introduced
- Precise signage about horses
- Seasonal signage rotated
- Dog club site user database
- Significantly reduced complaints
- “No-dogs” areas welcomed by picnickers
Conservation grazing: Malvern Hills

- Specific, regularly-updated information about grazing locations in newspaper & website.
- Outdoor dog training made more accessible, motivating owners to more effectively control their dog and enjoy more freedom.
- Drop-in vet health checks provide opportunity for engagement and communication.
- Land managers working positively with a major site user, lessening conflict and bad publicity.

www.dorsetdogs.org.uk

- Clear information about off-lead opportunities – or not!
- Promotes consistency: signage & messages
- Strategic approach involving a wide range of partners
- Dog day events
- Launched 2009
### Signage – good practice 1

**Signage will be most effective when it:**

- Engages with owner motivations & beliefs: particularly the dog’s safety & well-being
- Is welcoming and makes requests in a positive matter
- Explicitly states behaviour requested, & when & where this is, and is not, required
- Gives reasons for restrictions or requests
- Has a contact name and telephone number
- Provides alternative sites and other options for unwanted behaviours – eg, off-lead

### Signage – good practice 2

**Information will be most effective when it:**

- Is provided at the key times: pre-arrival, start point, on route
- Gives choice in how to comply
- Signage has a limited effect if unclear, conflicting or left up longer than required
- Is removed when not needed - for example, after lambing and sensitive times for wildlife
- Has been piloted & interpretation checked with dog owners


**Keeping it fresh**

**FREEMAN'S MARSH**

**D O G O W N E R S**

Please help protect the marsh

Where shall we walk today?
Please observe the paws

- **Exercise Area**
  - Dogs may run freely off the lead all year round on land between the canal and the railway.

- **Dogs on a lead**
  - Protected area for wildlife — ground nesting birds.
  - Keep to the footpaths with all dogs on leads from 1 March to 31 July, on all land between the river and the canal.
  - Please help young ground nesting birds survive this critical period.

- **Sorry no dogs**
  - You are unlikely to see any of these.

**Conservation Plan**

March

Birds are starting to build their nests.

Please have your dog on a lead in the protected wildlife area as shown on map.

For more information contact:

Town Hall

Hungerford

Tel: 01488 721338
email: town.admin@hungerford-tc.org.uk

**Some good practice**

**Fellow Dogs!**

To your right is a trail for horses.

Horses, like us, can be unpredictable.

They may panic if we approach them.

Stay safe. Ask your owner to dip you on your lead when horses are approaching.

Thank you!

www.west berk.org.uk
Influencing dog owner behaviour

And not so good…

Know what you want – and say it!

Most countryside walks are trouble free - you can minimise injuries and unpleasant confrontations by:

- always keeping your dog in sight and using a lead if you don’t have a reliable recall
- preventing your dog from approaching wildlife and farm animals
- keeping your dog out of crops like fruit, vegetables and cereals
- picking up after your dog wherever you are, unless signs say you don’t need to
- always putting bagged poo in a bin; if there isn’t a dog waste or litter bin, take it home
- stopping your dog from approaching other people, cyclists or horse riders, unless it’s OK by them

From “Walkies! Guide”: www.thekennelclub.org.uk/kcdog
Influencing dog owner behaviour

Dog owners will gravitate towards:

- Direct access without crossing roads
- Sufficient shaded parking areas on hot days, without being unduly dark, isolated, or vulnerable for car theft
- Fenced-in training areas
- Off-lead areas and separation from traffic, horses, livestock and children’s play zones
- A ‘dog wash’ tap, hose & hard-standing and swimming areas
- ‘Dog-friendly’ notice boards for events, lost dogs, vets – plus your messages!

Dog activity trails

“Enhancing opportunities for people to experience and enjoy responsible healthy exercise and interaction with their dogs in the outdoors.”
Built at Coatham Community Woodland, Tees Valley

- Constructed by in-house team
- Construction costs: approx £2,600 including signage
- High level of media interest at launch in June 2008
- Very popular with local dog walkers
- Evaluation: 60% owners now more active; 36% dogs lost weight/healthier

www.dogactivitytrail.org.uk and journal paper with full details

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Cheshunt Country Walk, Windmill Lane, EN8 9AJ. M25 jct 25.

- Ranger Amy Lewis – built with volunteers
- Info: alewis@leevalleypark.org.uk
Planning out problems from the start

Pet owning victims in the making
Cheetham Wetlands, near Geelong, Victoria
Strategic planning is key

- Long lead times but can be well worth it for new developments
- Gives support to officers and politicians on difficult decisions
- Prevents all sectors of the community becoming victims and the “causes” of conflict
- Stops problems occurring in the first place
- Need to make it easy for planners to embrace new concepts

Natura 2000 sites stimulating new approaches

- Development can’t take place if “likely significant adverse effects” on designated SPA / SAC site
- Dog owner needs a key issue: can’t build if not addressed
- Builders need mitigation strategies
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace designed to be very attractive to dog walkers
- NE minimum 20 acres (8ha) SANG per 1,000 population. £4k to £10k developer contribution per home
An evolving concept

- Still under development and early days for monitoring
- Concept currently supported and promoted by NE
- Google “SANG” for info
- Will undoubtedly evolve – the best we have for now

- dogfriendlyhousing.org.uk
- whitehillbordon.com
Need for early engagement in the planning process

Managing demand rather than just suppressing it

Potential source of income

Management of new visitors, not existing ones (in theory!)

Displacement to and from SANG greenspace a reality

More than ever a need for integrated management

More information & ideas

Forestry Commission / Kennel Club good practice guide

General guidance and online case studies from across the UK

www.forestry.gov.uk/england-dogs

Research and pilot projects:
Hampshire County Council, Kennel Club & Natural England

www.hants.gov.uk/dogs

Contact me!
Principles for success

- Basic principles of visitor management
- Seeing importance and value of dogs and their owners as well as “problems”
- Addressing causes, not just symptoms
- Positive approaches to negative impacts
- Challenging stereotypes and assumptions
- Knowing problems can also reflect management limitations

- If what you are doing isn’t working, it’s time for something else!