

Devon Countryside Access Forum online survey response
West Devon Borough Council and South Hams District Council
Public Spaces Protection Orders (dogs) consultation

November 2023

Do you think we should continue enforcing that dog walkers must have a bag (or similar) to pick up their dog waste?

Do you think we should continue to enforce this?

Yes

The issue of fouling and associated diseases affecting humans and animals needs to be taken into account as not all dog owners are responsible. There are potential health implications for humans and animals.

It is currently necessary for owners to keep dogs on leads in certain areas, or to put their dogs on leads when asked to by one of our authorised officers.

- This article applies to all areas covered by Rule 56 of the Highway Code i.e., on the road, or on the pavement, or on a path shared with cyclists or horse riders, within 30 mph speed zones.
- Areas with retail premises designated as zone 1 under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 i.e., where there are 2 or more commercial / shop premises
- Car Parks
- Cemeteries and Churchyards
- Any fenced, hedged or walled pond, area of water or nature reserve
- Marked sports fields while organised sport is in progress
- Areas stated as formal gardens, and
- Specifically the site known as Courtenay Park, Salcombe. (South Hams)

Looking at the existing powers listed above, are you in support of continuing with the existing arrangements for placing a dog on a lead?

Yes

Having dogs on leads in these areas provides additional safety to other users and dogs and minimises collisions with vehicles. The Devon Countryside Access Forum is very keen to promote consistency between districts as the existing complexity in legislation is not helpful to dog owners in Devon or visitors to the County. Some authorities in Devon have, for example, stipulated a lead length. East Devon District Council's PSPO specifies a lead length of 1m whilst on a public road or on a pavement adjacent to a road. Teignbridge District Council's PSPO specifies a 2m length whilst on the public highway, a footway, footpath or cycle track. The Forum notes that the Highway Code rule 56 does not specify a lead length.

Extendable leads are a particular problem on multi-use or shared routes and any lead limit set in the PSPO should be clearly indicated on these routes.

In any urban environment or where there are significant numbers of people and/or where livestock or wildfowl are present, having dogs on lead is preferable. Requesting a dog to be 'under control' is too vague and difficult to enforce.

When seeking to put a dogs on leads restriction in public spaces, the Forum advises that there is a need to consider a fair balance between rights of owners and non-dog owners, particularly in urban areas where the restrictions can be extensive. This could have the effect of forcing dog owners into cars to go to rural areas with public rights of way and other public space not affected by restrictions. Alternatively, owners may ignore the legislation if they believe it to be unreasonable.

Dog owning is important to health and wellbeing and the major reason why people go out. For successful management of dogs, it is important that there are places where they are able to do things legitimately such as run freely off-lead and access water. The council should consider and consult on suitable, appropriate locations for this.

Which places do you think it would be better to keep dogs on leads?

Outside schools

Please explain why dogs should be on leads in these areas.

The Borough Council is advised to consider whether a dogs on leads stipulation in the vicinity of schools would be appropriate, for better control of fouling and to safeguard children as dog behaviour is not always predictable.

It is currently an offence to allow a dog into all land within our Council's control including:

- Any fenced, hedged or walled children's play area
- Any fenced, hedged or walled bowling green
- Any fenced, hedged or walled tennis court
- Any fenced, hedged or walled skateboard or BMX park
- Any fenced, hedged or walled putting green
- Any sporting or recreational facility pitch when sport is in play
- South Sands Beach – Salcombe (seasonal)
- Mouthwell Sands – Hope Cove (seasonal)
- Bigbury Beach – (seasonal)
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Do you support continuing these existing powers on council land?

Yes

Do you have any suggestions to places where you think dogs should not be allowed?

Sports fields is an area which is difficult and there appears to be no consistency across districts. Overall, the Forum would support an exclusion, regardless of whether sport is in play, but West Devon/South Hams should seek to ensure there is readily accessible alternative green space in the local area nearby where people can walk their dogs.

What are your reasons for your suggested places where dogs should be stopped from going.

The issue of fouling and associated diseases needs to be taken into account as not all dog owners are responsible.

How do you feel about the current PSPO guidelines?

Any other information you would like to add?

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is concerned that the dog legislation varies significantly from district to district and across different types of land. This makes it extremely difficult to promote clear, unambiguous messages and increases the likelihood of non-compliance. The Forum would urge authorities to work closely together to achieve maximum complementarity in their PSPOs.