



ACCESS & COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT
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People and Dogs in the Outdoors

Research report for
Cairngorms National Park Authority



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Disclosure of interests statement

As a specialist in managing access for walkers with dogs, the author has been professionally involved with projects and case studies mentioned in this report, and has worked with and for organisations including: Forestry Commission (Scotland and England); the Kennel Club; National Farmers' Union Scotland; Orkney Islands Council; Pet Fostering Service Scotland; Scottish Countryside Ranger Association; Scottish Government; Scottish Kennel Club; Scottish Natural Heritage; Scottish Rural Property and Business Association; Society for Companion Animal Studies; Your Dog magazine.

People and Dogs in the Outdoors



Research report for Cairngorms National Park Authority

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Walkers with dogs are a major access taker within the Cairngorms National Park although their specific access needs and behaviours (compared to walkers without dogs) are generally not proactively managed in a strategic context. Management of their access, and responses to associated unwanted behaviours at a local level can often be restrictive and reactive, although there are some notable exceptions.
- Walkers with dogs consist of both local residents taking access on a daily basis close to home, as well as more seasonal single and multi-day visitors from outwith the Park. These two different groups present different management opportunities and challenges.
- Dog ownership is a major influence on where access takers go and what they do. Although certain problem behaviours do undoubtedly occur, it is not possible - nor helpful - in management planning to generalise about local impacts of walkers with dogs. Impacts on land management, wildlife, other visitors and tourism can only be meaningfully assessed at a local, site-based level; even then it is difficult to quantify in terms of frequency or severity due to a lack of any meaningful monitoring data.
- There is a need for improved management approaches to minimise conflict, respond to pressure for action on the issue, and to enhance the conservation of protected species and habitats.
- To ensure public resources are allocated wisely, proportionately and effectively, it is important the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) sets out a clear policy to clarify when, how and to what degree it will become involved in facilitating and promoting improved management approaches across the Park as a whole, by critically examining the impact, frequency and potential consequences of unwanted behaviour at a given location.
- The limitations of relying on an enforcement approach, and the apparent shortcomings of restrictive management approaches to date, mean that new methods of proactively managing access for walkers with dogs may be the only practical way forward.
- Beyond understandable primary concerns about livestock and protected species, dog ownership also provides positive outcomes for residents and visitors, and can make a positive contribution to the CNPA's wider aims.

- Irrespective of limited objective data on the impacts of walkers with dogs, experiences elsewhere show that the current situation can be improved. To do this, the CNPA can play a vital strategic role by facilitating a consistent, credible and effective park-wide approach by all partners in terms of: core messages about how walkers with dogs should behave; how best to meet their needs; whether and how restrictions and enforcement can best be carried out.
- A long-term strategic approach to positively managing walkers with dogs must also be agreed, having due regard for corporate priorities, habitat designations and the needs of other stakeholders.
- Management initiatives at a local, site-based level, offer the best opportunity to influence the behaviour of residents and visitors; good practice exemplar projects and guidance to land and access managers will help promote more effective management.
- The behaviour of visitors can be improved by Park-wide, pre-visit information that helps them make informed, responsible choices about where they can go and what they can do at different times and places. Such information can also support tourist accommodation and facilities.
- Dialogue with dog owners needs to be positive and engaging. Messages and management must be clear, consistent and credible and differentiate between behaviours that are never acceptable (eg chasing livestock) and those where acceptability is dependant on where, when and how they occur (eg dogs off leads).
- Direct involvement of dog owners and canine service providers will encourage greater compliance and acceptance, through peer pressure promoting positive messages about desired behaviour, such as with the Falkirk Green Dog Walkers Scheme.

The author would like to thank the many access officers, land managers, and staff in partner organisations across the United Kingdom, who made the time to be interviewed and openly share their research, reports and experiences.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Aims and objectives

This review has been commissioned by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), in collaboration with Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), to help improve the management of access taking within the Cairngorms National Park by walkers with dogs.

The review has a particular, although not exclusive, interest in issues relating to ground nesting birds, given the Park's high level of nature conservation interest and related statutory designations, which reflect the presence of rare and threatened habitats and species, such as the capercaillie.

It also adopts a pragmatic and practical approach which seeks to stimulate management to reduce conflict, based on what we know now, as well as identifying areas where more research is required.

More specifically, the review has two main objectives:

1. to gain a greater understanding of the motivations of dog owners in relation to access taking;
2. to gain a greater understanding of opportunities to influence dog owner behaviour in protected areas.

2.2 Scope of review

Given the resources available for this review, the author has not attempted a complete literature review or nationwide study of all research and management initiatives relating to walkers with dogs.

Instead, this project has focussed on selected organisations, site managers and individuals known to be active in the subject area, to give a broad overview of developments over the last 10 years, with a particular emphasis on identifying successful practical management measures of relevance to the CNPA.

3 THE NEED TO INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR

The practical aim of this review is to identify how management can be improved, rather than undertake a comprehensive review of why being able to better influence the behaviour of access takers with dogs is important.

Nonetheless, it is useful to summarise the context and motivation for change, that arises from both the negative impacts and positive benefits associated with dog ownership.

3.1 Negative impacts

Where dog owners go with their pets and what they allow them to do, can have a wide range of potential impacts including, to varying degrees:

For farmers and land managers:

- disruption, injury, death and consequential loss of income from livestock production, including emerging concerns about neosporosis and sarcocystis transmission through fouling of grazing land;
- disruption to activities such as shooting and stalking with consequential impacts on income, estate viability and habitat management.

For nature conservation interests:

- stress, injury or death of animals from being chased or attacked;
- reductions in breeding success due to disturbance at nesting time;
- permanent displacement from habitat;
- enriched nutrient levels from canine urine and faeces and consequential changes in biodiversity.

For other visitors and residents:

- unpleasantness and potential illness from contact with dog faeces;
- disruption and diminishment of recreational experiences due to the behaviour of dogs and their owners;
- potentially fatal consequences from interactions between dogs, horse riders and cyclists;
- reluctance to visit areas frequented by walkers with dogs, due to cultural attitudes towards dogs, previous unpleasant experiences, or reports of dog attacks in the media.

While there is no doubt that all the above situations do arise to some degree, there is very little data to help quantify the frequency and, more importantly, the cumulative consequences of such incidents, be it nationally or for specific areas.

However, perceptions of problems are very real to the people experiencing them at a local level; no amount of statistics will reduce genuinely-held beliefs that more effective management approaches are needed. This report accepts the validity of such concerns, and their relevance to the activities and priorities of publicly-funded organisations.

3.2 Impacts on nature conservation

While there is considerable interest and debate about the impacts of walkers with dogs on wildlife, both nationally and within the Cairngorms National Park, objective data on the actual impacts on nature conservation is lacking.

An extensive review of available literature and evidence was commissioned by English Nature (now incorporated into Natural England) in 2005 (Taylor *et al*, 2005). It reviewed published and empirical evidence from across the UK and internationally, complemented by a structured survey of site managers in England and Scotland. In total the 158 page report cites 186 references, including Summers *et al* (2004) which studied capercaillie in Glenmore and Abernethy forests.

Key findings from this extensive piece of work include:

- “Research has rarely tried, or been able, to distinguish the specific effects of dogs on wildlife” (p10 *op cit*);
- “Disturbance [in the studies reviewed] is measured variably making it is difficult to compare across studies. Effects at population level have been studied in very few species” (p35 *op cit*);
- Nonetheless, the study shows that dogs can undoubtedly cause disturbance, with the greatest risk being predation of eggs or young of ground nesting birds when parent birds are flushed from nests;
- Disturbance from dogs can also reduce feeding opportunities and fitness;
- Disturbance “does not necessarily mean long-term impacts at a population level will arise” (p7 *op cit*);
- Most data influencing management is based on anecdotes and perceptions, rather than controlled experimental studies.

The report also found it was not possible to generalise about the short or long term impacts from dogs, as these were found to vary greatly due to factors such as species, habituation, adaptation, specifics of dog and owner behaviour, plus disturbance from other factors and environmental threats.

In relation to mammals, the study concluded that while effects have been observed, the effects on populations are not significant. Nutrient enrichment from dogs’ urine and faeces can have an effect on reducing biodiversity on land, but in practice the study showed this was concentrated around car parks, entrance sites and adjacent to paths rather than more generally diminishing the biodiversity of sites overall.

Following the review, a 2007 study published in Australia (Banks & Bryant) was widely reported in the general media and held to prove that dog walking had a negative impact on bird populations. However, the research identified a short term effect of *fewer birds being seen* in the presence of a walker with a dog; while this clearly has an impact on bird watching as an activity, this is not the same thing as an impact on bird populations. The study itself states: “We found no net difference in biodiversity or abundance between areas with and without regular dog walking receiving the same treatment, suggesting that long-term impacts in this area may be small.”

More recently and of greater local relevance, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Scotland, presented a paper to the National Access Forum (NAF) in 2010 on disturbance to birds in a variety of situations, and in particular regarding capercaillie (Austin & Orr-Ewing, 2010). The paper emphasises the Society’s concerns regarding

disturbance to birds from dogs, the related legal context and shortcomings in current management.

In particular the paper expresses concerns about the “impact of disturbance by dogs on sensitive bird species and protected areas, especially those managed as nature reserves” and that:

“disturbance by dogs has been identified as an issue affecting:

(a) the conservation of a vulnerable/sensitive species;

(b) the achievement of favourable conservation condition for an SSSI (and/or Natura site); and/or

(c) the management of a nature reserve that provides for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside, and its wildlife, for many members of the public without dogs.”

The report contains 17 references (with several more recent than the 2005 English Nature review) in the annex to substantiate that “capercaillie and other grouse species are adversely affected by disturbance resulting from human recreational activities”.

However, as with previous studies, evidence to specifically identify and quantify the significance of impacts from pet dogs – compared to all other forms of recreational activities and wider impacts – is lacking, once more due to the ongoing difficulties in obtaining this in scientifically-robust controlled studies.

A more recent study (Summers *et al*, 2007) in Glenmore and Abernethy forests found that trees near tracks were used less by capercaillies; the likely explanation for this was suggested as disturbance by people; effects of predators and microclimate changes were discounted. The study did not seek to identify the effects of disturbance from different types of human recreation, for example walkers with and without dogs. Other studies suggest capercaillies may be particularly sensitive to human disturbance because of their diet of conifer needles and stress hormone levels (Orr-Ewing, pers. comm.)

Both the English Nature and RSPB papers (*op cit*) refer to a paper by Marshall (2005), with this being cited as evidence that dogs off leads during the breeding season are the most significant disturbance-related issue for capercaillie in Scotland. This paper has particular relevance here given that it was produced for the CNPA, FCS and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

This questionnaire-based Delphi study (backed up by a participatory workshop) identified a consensus of opinion among 15 participants (land managers, gamekeepers, capercaillie ecologists, conservation and recreation managers) that capercaillie are adversely affected by recreational disturbance, with full consensus being that “Loose dogs allowed to range away from tracks are a disturbance threat throughout the year” (p15 *ibid*).

The report (p15) also identified a number of caveats and limitations that need to be considered when discussing and applying its findings:

- *“... caution was urged in the use of the results, given the many site and time specific variations that can influence the level of disturbance caused by an activity”;*
- *“There were those [participants questioned] who believed that more evidence was required as to the precise causes, effects and significance of disturbance, and those who felt that certain actions to mitigate disturbance effects (known or suspected) should be taken as soon as possible”;*

- “However a lack of real knowledge prevented answers to more specific questions relating to the nature of disturbance”;
- “The issue of disturbance is a complicated one. The degree to which individual experience varies, and the varied level of technical understanding of the many ecological and human interactions involved, means that a clear picture is currently not available”.

3.2.1 Impacts in context

In order to consider the relative merit of using public and private funding to influence the behaviour of walkers with dogs to enhance nature conservation, it is helpful to remain mindful of the wider context, and in particular the influences of other factors on species and habitats. Unless pet dogs were the only threat to given species and habitats, focussing too narrowly on them could unduly detract attention from other influences of equal or greater relevance.

While wider influences do not excuse irresponsible behaviour by walkers with dogs, nor undermine statutory obligations in relation to nature conservation, they do illustrate the need for a strategic and holistic view to be taken on where, and how, increasingly limited public funds are best used. It also forces the need for a strategic decision regarding the relative merits of:

- addressing impacts and concerns at a local level, especially where they may, over time, cumulatively reduce detrimental influences that have a regional, national or international component;
- taking a pragmatic approach and focussing on the influences and behaviours one can change, especially in the short-term, even though more complex and harder to tackle issues still need to be addressed.

The case of capercaillie, as discussed in the RSPB NAF paper (*op cit*), provides a useful illustration of this, given that identified factors that may limit their numbers in Scotland include:

- Weather (patterns of spring warming, June rainfall);
- Habitat fragmentation;
- Limited habitat availability;
- Predation;
- Fence strikes;
- Human disturbance.

3.2.2 Conservation versus welfare

In reviewing the data relating to dogs and nature conservation, it is submitted here as important to separate the issues of conservation from those of welfare, in relation to birds and other wildlife.

Conservation considerations relate to overall populations of a given species, rather than the survival of individuals *per se*. Accordingly, related European Union laws impose obligations on member states in relation to the conservation of collective species, rather than individual birds of those species. This distinction also explains why *conservation*

organisations (such as the RSPB) corporately concern themselves with populations of bird species, rather than treating or rehabilitating injured birds, unless the latter is to address a threat to the species overall.

The suffering and injuries to wild animals are a direct concern of **welfare** organisations such as the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, as *welfare* issues are centred on the suffering of individual animals or birds, irrespective of their species.

This distinction is important as discussions about the impact of dogs on wildlife often blur the distinction between conservation and welfare, whereas there are significant differences between the two in legal and practical management terms, including:

- The suffering of individual chicks being chilled or injured, and then dying, due to a dog's behaviour is a welfare issue; whether it is a conservation issue depends on the designation and population status of the species involved;
- Impacts of dogs on the welfare of specific wild animals can be deduced from individual incidents; impacts on conservation cannot be so deduced;
- The behaviours desired of dog owners can be more clearly explained and assessed in welfare-related terms (eg bird not killed), rather than conservation terms.

For practical management purposes, this means that:

- Anecdotal data on specific incidents is far more likely to be about welfare issues for individuals, rather than conservation of a species;
- As welfare impacts can in themselves be argued to be morally undesirable, they can provide a more direct and vivid message for influencing dog owner behaviour, even though enhancing conservation may be the underlying aim;
- As most dog owners can relate to animal suffering at an individual level, this has potential to be a much more persuasive reason for modifying their behaviour.

3.3 Extent and benefits of dog ownership and dog walking

The annual Scottish Recreation Survey undertaken by TNS Travel and Tourism (2010a) for SNH shows that 40% of all visitors to Scotland's outdoors in 2009 had one or more dogs with them. This figure has been largely consistent over the previous 5 years, with the figure for 4 of those previous years being 41%, with the 2007 figure being 45%. The comparable figure from TNS's research in England is 48% (TNS 2010b).

There are no precise records of the number of dogs at national, regional or local levels. UK-wide estimates have remained largely stable at between 7 and 8 million dogs, with the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association quoting 7.3 million dogs in the UK (PFMA, 2011). The TNS research found that there is a dog in 23% of Scottish households. Dog ownership is highest amongst families and people between 35-64 years old.

Irrespective of absolute figures, these statistics in themselves illustrate that dog ownership and walking is very highly associated with taking access to the countryside. The prevalence of dog ownership also shows that these pets must offer many people considerable benefits and enhancement to their lives, given the average cost of keeping a dog is £1,300pa; the dog food market alone in the UK is worth £900 million pa (PFMA, 2011).

The top five reasons for owning a dog are:

- Companionship;
- Owner/partner/child always wanted one;
- Believe to be easy to look after;
- The dog was rescued;
- Fits in with lifestyle.

(PFMA, 2010)

The English Nature study (Taylor *et al*, 2005) identified and summarised a wide range of physical, mental and social benefits associated with dog ownership. A subsequent critical review of the available literature (Cutt *et al*, 2007) concluded that dog ownership produces considerable health benefits, and provides social support that encourages dog owners to walk. It also identified that further research needs to determine precisely how such relationships work.

From the latter sources, the range of benefits associated with dog ownership for the owners themselves and wider society includes:

- Daily, year-round, motivation to go walking in the outdoors;
- making people, in particular women, feel safer in the countryside;
- making men feel less self-conscious or a perceived threat to others when out for a walk alone;
- dog owners make fewer visits to the doctor's and recover more quickly from illness;
- reducing suicide rates and improving mental health;
- facilitating social contact, thus reducing risk of social isolation;
- favourable changes in blood pressure and immune levels;
- pain relief from generating feelings of well-being;
- developing a sense of community amongst dog owners;
- enhancing empathy, learning and responsibility in children.

While these benefits will vary in relevance and extent, the sustained level of ownership illustrates that pet dogs must offer very tangible benefits to a large segment of the population.

3.4 Opportunities and challenges from dog walking for access managers

Due to the high level of perceived benefit and emotional attachment to their pets, dog owners can be highly protective of existing access, and become exceptionally vocal and proactive in the face of any perceived injustice or undue restriction.

High profile campaigns have arisen from proposed restrictions on access for walkers with dogs, such as in the New Forest National Park (Savill and Mole, 2008) and at St Catherine's Hill, Winchester (Bolton, 2006), which have been sufficiently influential to prompt the involvement of local politicians and, all told, are held to have done little to encourage compliance with legitimate restrictions where required. Such local conflict can also seriously further erode confidence and rapport with site managers and landowners.

Equally, such regular, repeat visits to specific areas of countryside can engender a sense of ownership, responsibility, and ability to recognise and report problems.

A survey of landowners in and around Winchester in Hampshire (Jenkinson and McCloy, 2008), found that alongside problems, over half reported benefits from dog walkers, including: early reporting of fires and animals in distress; deterring fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour. The Police have also engaged with dog owners to support rural “crime watch” initiatives and around Brighton the local council has successfully recruited local dog owners to act as shepherds for sheep used for conservation grazing (Dugdale, 2008). Between them, dog owners check the flocks several times a day when out for a walk (in the same way that a farmer would check a flock), because they have been trained to identify and report problems in their health and well-being.

3.5 Summary of impacts

Despite the prevalence of people walking dogs in the countryside, studies have rarely been able to quantify the frequency or extent of their impacts at national, regional, or local levels. This is particularly the case with wildlife conservation at a species level, given the many other many variables that can influence their numbers.

Nevertheless, the available evidence – from anecdotal comment to scientific studies – does justify the following conclusions:

- The behaviour of pet dogs accompanying walkers can have a detrimental effect on other interests and activities including wildlife, livestock and other visitors; the degree to which this occurs and its consequential impact have been little studied and are hard to quantify;
- Disturbance to wildlife – and in particular ground-nesting birds – by dogs has been studied in a number of cases, but these do not provide evidence of actual impacts at a population level;
- Dog ownership and walking – to varying degrees – have positive benefits for people, social inclusion, public health, wildlife and land management;
- National, regional or local evidence from elsewhere, will not help to solve, reassure or reduce the perceptions of land managers about problems on their specific sites;
- The Cairngorms National Park Authority, like all access authorities, will thus continue to get requests from land managers to improve the management of walkers with dogs;
- To ensure the best outcomes for public funding and political support, management interventions should seek to both minimise negative impacts and optimise the benefits of dog ownership, given the wide range of positive and negative consequences of influencing dog owner behaviour.

4 LEGISLATION AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL

A frequent and understandable response to problems caused by walkers with dogs is to “enforce the law”, be it landowners taking action themselves, involving the police or requesting access authorities to do so.

However, the motivations and perceptions leading to the commissioning of this report in themselves, illustrate that any such reliance on the law thus far has failed to sufficiently address land managers’ concerns.

In order to understand why later sections of this report advocate the use of different approaches, the following section summarises current weaknesses in a solely legislative approach.

4.1 Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

This gave a conditional right of access to most land for walkers with dogs (amongst other access takers), provided they take such access “responsibly” and keep dogs under “proper control”. Given the imprecision of such terms, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) and related publications sought to clarify what those terms meant in different situations.

Irrespective of the concerns expressed (for example at the National Access Forum by the RSPB and Kennel Club) about a lack of clarity in the Code about responsible behaviour, and the degree to which the courts have given regard to the Code in other respects, it is submitted that as an enforcement tool for dealing with irresponsible behaviour, the Act and Code provide very little for land managers.

Non-compliance by an access taker with, for example, the legal requirement that dogs are under “proper control”, merely leads to the loss of that particular right of access, rather than any criminal act in itself. Thus, in the absence of any other access right or permission, the dog walker maybe asked to leave the land, although the land manager only has recourse to civil law if they refuse to do so, unless a local authority bylaw or some other statute is broken.

4.2 Public rights of way

There is no specific general requirement for how a dog should be controlled on public rights of way. The imprecise term “close control” is often used, but in a legal sense this only applies in enclosures containing sheep: Dogs (Protection of Livestock Act) 1953.

As with access taken under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, exceeding the access rights provided by public rights of way and other highways is not, in itself, a criminal offence.

4.3 Other legislation making certain acts by dogs/owners illegal

There are various statutes that do make certain acts by access takers with dogs a criminal offence, and thus provide for formal legal sanctions, including prosecution of the owner in certain circumstances if a dog, for example: fouls land; chases or attacks livestock, injures other people, is dangerously out of control, of a certain breed, damages property,

intentionally or recklessly destroys or damages features of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, or kills, injures or takes any wild bird or its nest.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 impose obligations on everyone in relation to the disturbance of wildlife, and specific obligations on land managers responsible for Sites of Scientific Interest.

In particular, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird while it is nesting, has dependent young or (importantly for capercaillie) is lekking. The EU Directives also require member states to “take appropriate steps to avoid, in the special areas of conservation [and SPAs], the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species, as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of this Directive”.

In addition, various pieces of legislation (including the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003) give local authorities, and other public bodies (including national park authorities) the power to introduce bylaws which can similarly make certain acts a criminal offence.

Without the need to explore the detail of each specific Act, the ongoing concerns regarding negative impacts from walkers with dogs illustrate that, in practice, current laws are not meeting land managers’ needs. Quite apart from the evidential requirement to show that at a particular place, at a particular time, a specific walker with a dog committed an offence, the wording of the legislation in itself can be lacking in its ability to deal with land managers’ legitimate concerns.

For example, the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 (which repealed section 48 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982) does not apply to agricultural land, although the National Farmers Union Scotland is currently seeking to have this exemption removed (Johnston, pers. comm.).

In the case of protecting wildlife, the level of protection is very variable depending on the species, age, place, and time where any potentially unlawful incident occurs. For example, in Cornwall, England (where the legislation is similar to Scotland) a dog owner was successfully prosecuted under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) for recklessly causing disturbance to birds by releasing his dogs on an RSPB reserve within a SSSI in 2008; this was the first time Natural England had used these provisions. Horrific and extensive injuries were caused to swans, such that euthanasia was required; the dogs’ owner was fined £250 and ordered to pay the same amount in costs.

Whilst at face value this appears to be an endorsement of legislation for protected species and environments, in practice the modest fine and the amount of effort and cost to bring a prosecution, are arguably a far from positive endorsement of the legislation’s strength. For example, the case hinged on overwintering birds being a feature of the SSSI. If the exact same abhorrent incident had happened between April and September, the case could not have been brought, irrespective of the undisputed distress and suffering caused to the swans.

A notable difference in the latter case, if it had occurred in Scotland, is that (due to enhanced protection provided by Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004) it is an offence to “recklessly” kill or injure a wild bird, as well as to do so “intentionally”; in England the “recklessly” provision does not apply in the case of killing or injuring wild birds. However, the species and timing limitations of this case are still relevant to cases where only *disturbance* rather than *killing or injury* is the consequence. It is also worthy of note that while the latter case also raises concerns regarding animal welfare, the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 does not apply to wild animals.

4.4 Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010

This statute came into force across Scotland on 26 of February 2011 and is worthy of mention here, because it gives local authorities a far greater range of opportunities and options to deal with dogs that are “out of control” under criminal law. Compared to previous statutes (eg s49 Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982; Dogs Act 1871), it has greater potential to provide a more progressive and responsive approach to out of control dogs on any land.

Although it is too soon to judge its effectiveness, it allows a dog to be defined as “out of control” if its behaviour gives rise to reasonable “alarm” or “apprehensiveness” on the part of any individual, which can relate to the safety of an animal (not excluding wild ones), other than the dog in question.

Local authorities can serve a dog control notice which can specify the owner takes action such as using a muzzle, keeping it on the lead, away from certain areas, and attending training classes. Non-compliance with the notice is a criminal offence, which can lead to the owner being disqualified from keeping a dog and the dog itself being destroyed.

However, its success will still be dependent on the degree to which local authorities resource and enforce the Act.

4.5 Summary

Due to limitations in the legislation in itself, combined with limited and, in many cases, decreasing resources in local authorities for enforcement, existing laws in themselves have failed to address land managers’ concerns. Although the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 is a significant improvement on previous legislation, its effectiveness still depends on its degree of enforcement, which can be even more challenging in rural areas.

Whilst a “zero tolerance” legally-based approach may be needed (and the only option) for a few “hard core” *intentionally* irresponsible dog owners, it can be very costly in terms of resources. An approach simply based on enforcement can also often just displace unwanted activity to other sites that may actually be more sensitive and less well managed.

Thus it is submitted that the more proactive management approaches recommended later in this report, have much more potential to improve matters, by promoting the wanted behaviours by the majority of dog owners. However, use of the law in specific cases will still be required to deal with particular individuals.

5 ACCESS MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

While Section 3 of this report summarises impacts that land managers, conservation interests and other visitors seek to minimise, identifying and quantifying problem behaviours does not in itself identify practical solutions.

A useful analogy is that one readily can identify that a car isn't behaving as it should, for example, the engine has stopped running. However, that doesn't in itself tell you whether one needs to replace the battery, add more fuel, replace the timing belt etc.

Accordingly, attempting to change dog owner behaviour without understanding the reasons why unwanted behaviours are occurring, would be similarly ineffective and a likely waste of resources. However, until recent times, this approach was often adopted and interventions (e.g. changing signage or running education campaigns) implemented without consideration of why a particular problem was occurring, or why existing management methods failed to solve the problem.

Recent and more successful management approaches have overcome this deficiency by identifying, or at least acknowledging, that the reasons why dog owners do what they do are complex and multifaceted, thus introducing the relevance of behavioural psychology to resolve the issue.

5.1 Understanding access needs and priorities

Perhaps understandably, when a land or access manager becomes aware of an access taker behaving in a manner which they regard as "irresponsible", a natural reaction can be to judge the person concerned to be, for example, "ignorant", "stupid" or "selfish".

However, behavioural psychology tells us that, unless there is some mental illness, there is always a reason why a person acts in a particular way. This is particularly relevant in the case of walkers with dogs, as research shows that behaviours regarded as "irresponsible" are almost always the result of a person's beliefs and motivations, rather than an intention to cause problems.

Dog owners have a uniquely different set of motivations and priorities compared to other types of access taker; until relatively recently these had not been studied in a structured, scientific way. Thus two complementary studies (Edwards and Knight, 2006; Sport Industry Research Centre, 2008) were commissioned to provide quantitative and qualitative data from on-site interviews, focus groups and anonymous online questionnaires (see case studies in appendix 11.1 and 11.9).

The greatest priority for walkers with dogs was found to be the health and enjoyment of the dog itself. This is not surprising as owning a dog is a very definite choice, from which a strong bond between owner and pet develops; the latter also explains the often passionate defence of their dog and strong reactions to any criticism of it.

From a management perspective, arguably the single most important findings of the latter research, especially in relation to ground nesting birds, are the factors that influence dog walkers' behaviours:

**Most important single influence on walk selection for dog owners:
top 10 factors ordered by percentage of owner selection.**

1. 41% Dogs can be off-lead
2. 10.7% Away from traffic
3. 10.5% Close to home
4. 8.7% Personal safety
5. 4.7% Peace and quiet
6. 4.1% Unlikely to meet other dog walkers
7. 3.6% Mixing with other dogs
8. 2.9% Away from livestock
9. 2.5% Poo disposal facilities
10. 2.2% Circular route

(From Sport Industry Research Centre, 2008)

The very high importance of off-lead access has been subsequently validated by other survey and focus groups with dog owners, eg Jenkinson and McCloy 2008.

5.2 The need to manage, rather than restrict

The very high priority dog owners place on their dog having a safe and happy life, combined with the daily priorities of most for off-lead access, away from traffic and close to home (or close to where visitors are staying), is pivotal to developing effective management approaches.

These priorities also help to explain the failings of past approaches, as the latter have almost exclusively focused on trying to tell dog owners what not to do, justified by the impact on, for example, wildlife, livestock, and other people.

The weaknesses of such restrictive approaches are thus:

- Increased awareness about, e.g. ground nesting birds, will have a limited effect on a dog owner's behaviour unless it becomes more important than the primary, dog-related, reasons they have come to a specific site;
- Asking for dogs to be kept on a lead for many months at a time is a big "ask", especially if off-lead access taking on the site is long-established;
- Education and awareness about impacts are very unlikely to become more important than the dog owner's practical and emotional relationship with their dog and their mutual well-being;
- They do not help dog owners obtain the primary experiences they seek, in places where they will cause less disturbance to other interests;
- Enforcement is difficult in both legal and practical aspects;
- Government has specifically chosen not to prohibit off-lead access in principle; it instead seeks to restrict this where it is irresponsible to not use a lead.

A study of dog walker behaviour in Winchester (Jenkinson and McCloy, 2008) also identified four possible outcomes for dog owners faced with a new restriction at a particular site:

1. Keep visiting the site if their needs are still met with the restriction in place;
2. Go somewhere else that seems to better accommodate their needs;
3. Practically and/or politically challenge the restriction;
4. Ignore the restriction given a low likelihood of being caught/fined.

Given the above, unless the restriction is not incompatible with the experience they were seeking, the result will either be a lack of compliance, increased conflict, or displacement to somewhere else that may be more sensitive.

It is important to recognise here that these challenges in management are not due to a specific behavioural trait in dog owners. Current approaches to reducing disturbance to deerstalking by walkers in general (with or without dogs) is based on the same principle namely that, quite apart from very limited legal sanctions, simply telling walkers to not engage in the primary reason they have turned up at a specific car park (i.e. walking on the hills) leads to conflict and is very unlikely to reduce the walkers' desire to go for a walk.

Consequently, rather than just saying "no" or "don't" about an unwanted activity, helping access takers to do the right thing by saying where such activity can occur in less sensitive locations, reduces the potential for conflict and increases long term compliance. The Hillphones scheme and complementary pilot website, are a good example of why approaches that accept, manage and accommodate behaviour that can cause problems at the wrong place or time, are now seen as a more effective way forward.

The following approaches and examples in Section 11, illustrate how such an approach can be used to influence the behaviour of walkers with dogs.

5.3 Practical application of behavioural psychology

The practical application of behavioural psychology is now routinely used to influence behaviours such as compliance with speed limits, increasing recycling, health promotion and commercial advertising.

While there is a breadth of research and models relating to why people behave as they do, the successful application of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), has led to its increasing use for walkers with dogs in the UK over the 6 years.

TPB already had an established role in the countryside management field in North America through the work of Professor Sam Ham and others (Ham *et al*, 2009). However its application to the behaviour of walkers with dogs is a relatively recent development in the United Kingdom, arising from a conference in the New Forest in 2005 addressed by Professor Ham.

In essence, Ajzen's theory states that the likelihood of a person doing a particular behaviour, such as complying with a "birds nesting – keep dogs on a lead" sign depends on three distinct areas of belief and attitude for that individual, namely:

- **Personal beliefs:** how the person feels about doing a particular behaviour;
- **Societal Beliefs:** how the person feels they will be judged by others for doing a particular behaviour, often referred to as "peer pressure";
- **Control beliefs:** their knowledge and ability to do the behaviour, if they wanted to.

Thus, even if a dog walker believes a certain behaviour is the right thing to do, and that they will be seen favourably by others in doing it, they will still not be able to do it if they do not have the ability or knowledge to do so.

Thus, to most reliably influence behaviour, all three belief areas need to be addressed, with control beliefs being pivotal, as without them, peer pressure or trying to just educate someone about the impacts of their behaviour will not be effective.

Accordingly, all the case studies in Section 11 have sought to address one or more of these three beliefs; the most successful have addressed all three and thus ensured that the underlying reasons for non-compliance, rather than just the symptoms, are addressed.

5.4 Applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour

Table 5.1 overleaf illustrates how TPB can be used to identify and explain the reasons for non-compliance (in this example, a dog being off lead, contrary to a local sign about ground nesting birds), and the management interventions to increase compliance.

Table 5.1: Using TPB to identify reasons for non-compliance with “on lead” request

Beliefs	Reasons for non-compliance	Management interventions to increase compliance
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • my dog wants to be off lead and have a good time • the birds are still nesting here anyway • I've never seen the birds • there are bigger problems for birds than dogs • I've always let my dog run off lead here • the sign is: out of date / not true / left up all year / because the ranger hates dogs / for visitors not locals 	<p>Increase credibility, empathy and accessibility of messages by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appearing to be pro-responsibility rather than anti-dog • providing signage that varies throughout the season • clarify that dog owners are being asked to do their bit, rather than the only problem • suggest/provide alternative accessible places for off lead • target information, events, guided walks at dog owners • brand information with canine partners to increase credibility
Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'll look like a bad owner if my dog doesn't run about • it looks like I can't control my dog if it's on a lead • no-one else has their dog on a lead • no-one else is asked to keep their dog on a lead • other people without dogs don't behave well • birdwatchers don't like dog owners, so why should we help them in return? 	<p>Engage with the local community of dog owners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify advocates within the community • develop a greater sense of community towards access taking • involve dog owners in reporting problems, checking on livestock • facilitate greater rapport between them: events, online forums / Facebook • involve local vets and other canine service providers • engage with other access takers to foster greater mutual tolerance and understanding
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • my dog will cause problems at home if he doesn't get tired out • my dog pulls on a lead • I'm not sure where the sensitive areas finish • I don't know where else to go • the suggested place for off lead is too far away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure there is off-lead access somewhere else in the locality all year round • provide an off-lead area on site in a less sensitive area • clearly identify where off-lead access is permitted on site • work with local dog trainers to run training sessions on site

5.5 Summary

In practical terms, TPB shows us that:

- The most effective solutions will come from addressing this as a *people* management issue, rather than a dog management issue;
- The key to influencing dog owner behaviour rests in understanding and addressing their needs, even though the motivation to influence their behaviour may come from the needs of land managers and nature conservation;
- An approach that relies on just “educating” dog owners about responsible behaviour, at national or local levels, will not be effective on its own;
- Changing established behaviours on a given site involves changing many personal and group beliefs, and so will be much harder than establishing wanted behaviours when access is first provided to a new site;
- The beliefs influencing dog owner behaviour at a given place and time will be highly dependent on a number of local factors, which will often be unique to that particular situation. Thus it is extremely difficult for national messages (such as those in SOAC) to effectively deal with behaviours that vary in their acceptability at a local level; for example when to use a lead;
- National campaigns are best suited to behaviours that are unconditionally unacceptable across Scotland; for example, chasing livestock or wild animals;
- Dog owners’ overriding priority for their dogs’ health and well-being is a common and powerful hook for developing dialogue and ultimately influencing their behaviour.

6 RELEVANCE TO THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

The prevalence of access taking with a dog is sufficient in itself to make it of relevance to the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA). Irrespective of any local data about the frequency or impact of unwanted behaviours, there is clearly a perception that the CNPA needs to take some action, for both practical and political reasons.

Walkers with dogs also have a broad relevance to the CNPA's wider statutory purposes, far beyond any specific concerns for impacts on ground nesting birds, livestock or other people's enjoyment.

Previous sections of this report have illustrated the need for a holistic view of dog ownership and walking within the Cairngorms National Park, as apart from negative impacts, management of this issue can support wider aims for recreation, and sustainable economic and social development, as defined in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

This relevance and consequential benefit of developing a more proactive approach in the CNP can be expressed more practically as:

- Walkers with dogs are a significant consumer of recreation and efforts to improve their management are relevant across the whole park, particularly given the high proportion of designated areas;
- The presence of significant numbers of visitors from outside the region provides the opportunity for projects to also support sustainable local tourism through better meeting visitors' needs;
- There are also opportunities to better engage with residents who will be walking their dogs within the National Park on a daily basis;
- There is a need for more Scotland-based case studies and pilot projects on integrated management of access for walkers with dogs; CNPA's reputation for innovation with partners makes it well-placed to take these forward and increase its reputation from this work;
- Developing pilot projects which ostensibly seek to improve economic and social benefits from walkers with dogs (e.g. tourism and healthy lifestyles), may well be more likely to attract external grant aid than projects solely based on reducing negative impacts;
- There are already examples of good practice within the CNP on which further developmental work can be based;
- Any projects need to be developed from a clear policy context, backed up by baseline data and evaluation to ensure relevance and value for money.

7 INFLUENCING BEHAVIOUR IN PRACTICE

As part of this research, site managers involved in management-based approaches were contacted for details and updates on progress. Projects piloting new approaches, especially where evaluation was carried out, were particularly targeted.

The key overarching themes and elements are summarised in the following subsections.

Unless otherwise stated, all such initiatives have been reported as worthwhile and positive by the managers involved; there have been no reports that changes have made problems worse. Incremental improvements that significantly increase compliance rates overall are most frequently reported. However it is, so far, rare that unwanted behaviours have been completely eradicated by all dog owners, although there are notable exceptions, such as Danbury Hillfort (case study 11.3) here no further attacks on livestock have been reported since new measures were introduced.

The appendix gives more detail on many different types of management methods used.

Relevance of case studies from outwith Scotland

Much of the development work on these new approaches has taken place in England, and hence the case studies reflect this.

However, this does not diminish their relevance for access managers north of the border, as their successes are built around understanding and managing dog owner needs and beliefs. Evidence (eg TNS 2010a and 2010b) shows no intrinsic difference between the countries about why people keep dogs and their preferences when walking them.

Moreover, the English case studies are in no way reliant on the country's different legal framework for public access to the countryside; indeed (as in Scotland) it was the general inability of legally-based approaches to influence behaviour, that prompted the interest in the use of behavioural psychology and positive management approaches.

Thus, the fact a given case study comes from elsewhere in the UK is irrelevant, and does not undermine how it can illustrate the advantages of applying management approaches based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour in Scotland.

7.1 Policy development

As a precursor to any successful initiative, the clarification by land and access managers about what precise behaviours are expected is key to ensuring the most relevant, proportionate and effective approach.

It is vital that the development of any such policy, be it at local, regional or national levels, engages with stakeholders and, in particular, dog owners and all partners who provide information about responsible behaviour.

Audits of existing site management (eg case study 11.4) repeatedly show inconsistencies and lack of clarity about expected behaviours; such inconsistency often also exists between site staff. Until land and access managers in a given area are clear about expected behaviours, which both accommodate dog owners' needs and address negative impacts, any attempts to influence behaviour will be hampered and lack credibility.

7.2 Pre-visit information

These initiatives have used printed and online media to help dog owners make positive choices about where to go, based on prior knowledge of the opportunities and restrictions in place at different sites at a regional or local level.

The “Holidays with your Best Friend” approach taken by the Tourist Board in Pembrokeshire, South Wales, was found to both deal with the immediate problem (lack of compliance with restrictions on dogs on Blue Flag beaches) and also provide effective niche marketing for dog owners, in turn supporting local accommodation providers and canine-related businesses.

In the Malvern Hills, “Stock Watch” information on the Conservator's website, in the weekly paper, and sent out on request by e-mail, identifies which compartments are being used to graze sheep giving dog owners an informed choice about where to exercise their dogs, and avoid conflict with livestock.

Common factors for success are:

- A multiagency approach which presents information in the most accessible way for dog owners, rather than being defined by administrative and operational boundaries;
- Keeping content updated and fresh to encourage frequent engagement with the information;
- Designing leaflets and websites so that dog owners are inherently attracted to them, because they offer positive images about dogs;
- Positively and precisely identifying where dog owners can go for the experiences they desire (e.g. beach walks, off lead access) rather than just listing restrictions;
- Clear mechanisms for making the information accessible to dog owners from the outset: e.g. in tourist accommodation, online, and supplied with accommodation lists;
- Collecting dog owner contact details as part of the process, to further help target information in the future and evaluate projects.

Examples:

- www.dorsetdogs.org.uk
- www.petsonholiday.com
- www.malvern hills.org.uk

7.3 Zoning

These site-based initiatives have been introduced to reduce conflict on sites used regularly, and usually heavily, by dog walkers. Orientation maps on arrival and waymark-type signage using a traffic light approach, indicates where dogs are, or are not, allowed, and whether leads are required. This system allows informed choices to be made about where to go, and so helps reduce conflict for all visitors, not just those with dogs.

By ensuring that sufficient off-lead access is always available, compliance with 'on lead' and 'no dogs' areas is high, even though the schemes mentioned here have no legal basis for enforcement. They work because dog owners will choose to avoid conflict and respect restrictions if it's made easy for them to do so and still have an enjoyable visit.

Dog owners will choose to avoid conflict and respect restrictions if it's made easy for them to do the right thing instead.

While the case studies below have introduced formal zoning with associated signage, zoning can be successfully introduced more discreetly by simply identifying/providing places that will be naturally attractive to dog owners, thus they will go there anyway without the more restrictive 'on lead' or 'no dogs' areas being specifically identified. Blair Castle and Estate, Dalry, Ayrshire has successfully used such an approach by creating an area of community woodland to reduce disturbance to game and other commercial business interests elsewhere (Gray, 2011).

Similarly, Brahan Estate, Dingwall encourages dog owners onto the 50 acre Dunglass Island as it is not grazed; while the island is a SSSI and used by some wildlife, this approach is seen as a pragmatic and effective approach to keep the pressure off other more sensitive parts of the estate where game, wild animals and birds also breed (Gray, *ibid*)

Site managers report that zoning makes considerable improvements in compliance; at Danebury Hillfort (case study 11.3) there have been no more dog attacks on grazing livestock since the scheme was introduced.

Common factors for success are:

- ensuring a sufficient range of off lead opportunities are always available, and that dog owners still feel welcome visitors;
- orientation information on arrival, backed up by clear credible signage of zone boundaries;
- signage that varies to reflect seasonal sensitivities for wildlife and changing locations of livestock (case studies 11.3, 11.5, 11.7);
- working with dog owners as part of the implementation process;
- explaining the reasons for restrictions; at Danebury occasional ranger-guided walks for dog owners are arranged in the 'no dogs' areas.

Examples:

- Danebury Hillfort (case study 11.3): www.hants.gov.uk/dogs
- Jeskyns community woodland (case study 11.5): www.forestry.gov.uk/jeskyns
- Town and Manor of Hungerford (case study 11.7)

7.4 Training for access staff and land managers

As the new approaches here are significantly different from the methods traditionally relied on by most land-managing individuals and organisations, related training has been organised at many locations across the United Kingdom. Irrespective of whether the training need has come from frustration at the ineffectiveness of existing methods, or the desire to better meet the needs of dog owners as a significant access taker, post-event evaluation has found the events have significantly helped participants to identify more effective ways forward. See case study 11.8.

Evaluation forms from the November 2010 training event organised by the CNPA and Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA) near Aviemore, showed that all participants felt the event was helpful, gave them more ideas how to promote responsible behaviour, and made them more likely to do so.

Apart from providing information and guidance, training events focussing on a specific region or site have helped participants develop partnership-wide action plans, to promote a more integrated approach, such as on Cannock Chase AONB (case study 11.4).

7.5 Dog friendly facilities

A range of dog friendly facilities have been developed and found to be a useful management option to influence behaviour.

Although 'dog friendly' facilities have been criticised by some non-dog owners as, in effect, pandering to people with dogs at the expense of others, when used as part of an overall management plan, such facilities can benefit all site users and interests, by attracting dog owners in general, and accommodating certain behaviours, in areas where they cause the least impact. They also, by definition, make it easier for people who do not wish to have contact with dogs, to avoid them.

Such facilities include:

- **fenced-in training areas:** these are often exceptionally popular, and provide a less disruptive environment for less well-controlled dogs (case studies 11.3 and 11.5);
- **notice boards for dog owners:** frequently changing information about lost dogs, canine services, events, etc attracts owners to check the board regularly;
- **dog dips:** providing dedicated, well-designed areas where dogs can access water reduces or eliminates disturbance on more sensitive areas of riverbank or standing water (case study 11.5);
- **activity trails:** permanently sited agility-type obstacles for dogs (e.g. jumps, tunnels, weaves) attract dog owners from other sites and areas, encourage greater physical activity and greater dog control. Design guidance and pilot project evaluations available (case study 11.11);
- **dog wash:** a tap with a short hosepipe on a well-drained area attracts dog owners, especially at times and near places where the surrounding area can be muddy;
- **shaded car parking:** popular in the summer and helpful in encouraging dog owners to use certain car parks;
- **cafe facilities:** hooks for leads on tables, water bowls, dog biscuits and shaded areas can help separate people with dogs from those seeking to avoid them, and help to enhance control and engagement (case study 11.11). They can also help boost income.

Apart from providing a valued service to dog owners, the wider benefits of such facilities include:

- providing a focal point for messages to dog owners, for example seasonal restrictions;
- attracting dog owners away from more sensitive areas and sites;
- avoiding uncontrolled displacement of behaviours;
- providing a source of income, for example leasing-out training areas and activity trails to dog trainers;
- a very positive way of engaging with this community, overcoming perceptual barriers that site managers are "anti-dog".

7.6 Increasing clarity: signage and language

Focus groups with dog owners by Natural England (Stephenson, pers. comm.), confirmed the ineffectiveness of traditional communication using imprecise terms such as "close control" and "be responsible". Such terminology is commonly used in national, regional and local publications and signage for dog owners across the UK.

In addition, pilot projects have also found it helpful to avoid the traditional practice of quoting phrases verbatim from national legislation and guidance (for example, wording in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code), and instead develop more accessible, locally-relevant wording.

Common factors for success are:

- testing the understanding of planned wording and other management measures with dog owners themselves before implementation;
- using the dogs' health and well-being as a primary hook for owner engagement;
- working with partners to agree consistent phrasing within a given area, to avoid visitors and local residents getting different messages for the same area or site (case studies 11.2, 11.4);
- refreshing and rotating signage so that repeat visitors will engage with the materials (case study 11.7);
- identifying the precise behaviours that are wanted on a site (e.g. keeping dogs on paths during the nesting season) to suit local needs;
- joint branding and endorsement of messages with partners from the canine community, e.g. vets, dog organisations and charities.

7.7 Engaging with local dog owners

Proactively engaging with dog owners in general, as well as in relation to specific projects or issues, is a common theme in almost all successful projects. Apart from the opportunity it provides to better understand why dog owners do what they do, the process of developing rapport in itself has been found to be advantageous, for example by breaking down perceived barriers or mistrust between dog owners and site/land managers.

Although a common claim is that it is difficult to consult with dog owners about site management and changes, in practice the regularity of their repeat visits and common interest in dogs can make it easy to engage with this group.

Methods used successfully have included:

- formally organised schemes such as the Falkirk Green Dog Walkers (www.greendogwalkers.blogspot.com), where members sign a pledge and act as ambassadors for good behaviour;
- pit stops: a strategically placed Ranger with dog food samples, water, and other materials of interest to dog owners (case studies 11.6, 11.11);
- a Facebook page for local dog owners (case study 11.4);
- recruiting dog-owning representatives on access liaison groups and local access forums (case studies 11.3, 11.4, 11.6);
- special events, particularly when run in partnership with local vets, canine charities etc (case study 11.11);
- local focus groups recruited through temporary notices placed in popular car parks (case studies 11.4, 11.10);
- canine community notice boards (see 7.5 above).

7.8 On-site dog training

Dog training predominantly takes place indoors, and so ill-prepares dogs and their owners for the sights, sounds and many other dangers and distractions in the countryside.

Several sites have found it helpful to work with local dog trainers to run outdoor training sessions on general dog control (e.g. case study 11.3, 11.5, 11.11); others have specifically sought to increase control and responsibility around sheep (eg Malvern Hills: www.malvern hills.org.uk). In some cases, public funding has wholly or partly paid for training sessions; in others, the land manager has provided the venue free of charge, or charged commercial dog trainers for specialist facility, such as a fenced-in area.

There is generally felt to be a growing demand for safe outdoor training opportunities, fuelled partly by increasing restrictions on dogs, and limited availability of indoor training venues. Apart from helping to increase owners' control over their dogs (e.g. recalls and lead walking without pulling), working with local dog trainers adds legitimacy and engagement to wider projects.

In the case of Thames Chase Community Forest (case study 11.11) on the outskirts of London, participants in the training classes developed into ambassadors for responsible behaviour, and moreover actively sought to report and, in some cases, confront irresponsible behaviour (although the latter was discouraged on personal safety grounds).

7.9 Development control planning

There is increasing interest and emerging good practice on planning for the access needs of dog owners in new developments, both as good practice in providing Green Infrastructure that meets the needs of all communities, and to minimise impacts on nearby areas that are sensitive for wildlife, livestock, or other interests.

In particular, the responsibilities of Planning Authorities towards Natura 2000 sites (SPAs and SACs) that could be affected by significant areas of new housing in the Thames Basin area of south-east England, have prompted greater research into existing dog owner behaviour and the need for mitigation planning to meet their access needs away from Natura 2000 sites.

The concept of SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) was thus developed; these areas are designed to be especially attractive to dog owners. A key design and management requirement is that "access within the SANGS must be largely unrestricted with plenty of space provided where it is possible for dogs to exercise freely and safely off lead. (Natural England, 2008); this also reflects Natural England's (2010) wider policy aspirations for Accessible Natural Greenspace and associated standards.

At the time of writing (March 2011), the principle of SANGs is now being applied in a different context in the Whitehill-Bordon Eco-town planning process in East Hampshire (www.whitehillbordon.com). Here the aim is to provide new greenspace that meets the access needs of dog owners within walking distance of their homes, so that a car is not needed for the daily dog walk; this helps reduce both car use in itself, and the potential for dog owners to drive to the many attractive SPA/SAC sites nearby. Good practice guidance on planning for dog owners in new developments is expected in late 2011, which will further highlight the opportunities of such a planned approach, particularly when it can be funded by developer contributions and essential mitigation measures.

While SANGs, as such, have not been identified in Scotland as part of this research, there is no legal or practical reason why the underlying concept of planning attractive greenspace for dog owners in new developments cannot be applied north of the border, or in and around the Cairngorms National Park.

7.10 Fouling of land

The fouling of land is an enduring and sensitive issue, the management of which deserves special mention here. As high profile campaigns, backed up by enforcement action, are held to have significantly reduced fouling of more formal open spaces and pavements in towns and villages, attention is increasingly turning to the issue in rural areas.

Although efforts are being made to change the exemption for agricultural land in the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003, so that there is the option of enforcement on farmland, the usefulness of any such change will be limited by the local council's willingness and resources to take action. Since 2005 district and parish councils in England have been able to impose fines for not picking up dog faeces on any land (including all countryside areas) but yet there are few signs that this has been attempted.

In addition, the problem of dog owners placing dog faeces in a bag but not removing it from site, is often quoted as an increasing problem. Given the regularity of repeat visits by dog owners, this will appear to be an obvious issue even if only one or two local dog owners engage in the practice.

Faced with limitations on enforcement, complementary approaches that have reduced fouling include:

- providing and labelling 'dual use' bins, given confusion amongst dog owners about whether bagged faeces can be placed in normal litter bins (case study 11.1);
- being precise about the behaviour wanted (e.g. bag it and bin it), rather than imprecise terms such as "dispose of responsibly" (case study 11.4);
- moving existing bins closer to where fouling occurs, rather than having them where it is easiest for the contractors to empty them (case study 11.3);
- using small flags and marker spray to highlight the extent of fouling, with associated publicity (case study 11.3);
- highlighting different methods and products for carrying faeces when out on a walk and on the way home in the car.

In Stirling, adapting using SNH responsible dog owners posters in a very targeted and site specific way was found to be effecting in getting more owners to pick up due to concerns about possible links between in cattle aborting and *neosporosis* carried in dog faeces. (Gray, 2011)

7.10.1 Flick it initiatives

Land managers such as the Forestry Commission in England and Scotland have introduced a policy for dog owners to "flick it" off paths into adjacent vegetation on some sites (case study 11.4 and 11.11). This is a response to bagged faeces being left in places where the habitat, and intensity of use, at a local level mean allowing the faeces to biodegrade naturally is acceptable and reduces both calls for bins to be provided and bagged faeces being left behind.

The approach has also been adopted at Invercauld Estate, Braemar (Gray, 2011) as preferable to a "bag it and bin it" message where there are no bins provided and naturally degrading faeces do not cause a problem here livestock or vegetable crops.

A "flick it" approach is seen as a pragmatic approach by the land managers concerned which also reflects the environmental impact of transporting a biodegradable product to landfill or incineration. If dog owners do not pick up after their dogs with the consent of the landowner, then it is not an offence under the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003.

To ensure such a pragmatic approach at a local level does not undermine wider initiatives, the boundaries of "flick it" zones need to be made clear. The national wording used by the Kennel Club to be consistent across the UK while embracing such approaches is:

"picking up after your dog wherever you are, unless signs say you don't need to" and

"always putting bagged poo in a bin; if there isn't a dog or litter bin, take it home"

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Impacts

8.1.1 *General*

There is no doubt that dogs accompanying walkers can have positive and negative impacts on land management activities, nature conservation, tourism, other visitors (with and without dogs), and on dog owners themselves.

At national or regional levels, there is no data to accurately quantify the frequency, extent, costs or outcomes of such interactions. It would also be very difficult to obtain such accurate data, given the many variables involved and the need for controlled studies. National or regional impact research would also not necessarily assist with identifying how best to manage issues at a local level, although such data could help justify greater investment or grant aid to better address the issues.

Data on observed interactions at a local level is easier to identify and can help guide how best to improve management in that area. Although local reports of impacts by land managers, conservationists and other visitors are usually anecdotal and rarely quantified, they can be legitimately taken as a sign that both practically and politically, the access authority needs to acknowledge and investigate the concerns, in line with the available resources and priorities.

8.1.2 *Ground nesting birds*

As with general impacts above, there is no doubt that dogs accompanying walkers can have negative impacts on ground nesting birds, in terms of both conservation (maintenance and enhancement of the population of a given species) and welfare (suffering of individual adult birds and chicks).

Qualifying these impacts at a national, regional or local population levels is exceptionally difficult to do, given the many other influences on bird populations and breeding success; again controlled studies would be needed.

8.2 Legislation for management

Although the spirit of legislation has attempted to address negative impacts from walkers with dogs, in practice weaknesses in the statutes themselves, combined with the practical and financial implications of enforcing them in rural areas, means that they have a limited role in day to day management. However, they do still have a role to play as a deterrent, and the only means of action against the small minority of dog owners who intentionally cause problems.

Unless there is a substantial change in legislative powers and enforcement resources, these limitations are a compelling endorsement for the management-based approaches advocated below.

8.3 The need for the Cairngorms National Park Authority to act

The CNPA's statutory aims, combined with expectations of its responsibilities as an Access Authority, mean that it does need to take action to encourage more effective management methods and address the expectations of land managers.

However, this must be done in an objective, proportionate way to ensure publicly-funded resources are allocated to projects which result in needed and worthwhile improvements.

8.4 Management initiatives

There is a body of evidence to show that the Theory of Planned Behaviour can be used to diagnose why unwanted behaviours occur, and thus develop the best management initiatives to address those. Such approaches can also develop wider societal and site-based benefits through positively working with dog owners.

A range of approaches and case studies in the UK illustrate how these can be usefully applied in the Cairngorms National Park. While they will rarely prevent 100% of unwanted behaviours occurring, they have been found to significantly and incrementally increase wanted behaviours for the benefit of all concerned.

The common factors in the most successful initiatives are:

- Addressing the underlying reasons for irresponsible behaviour, rather than reacting to the symptoms;
- Recognising and accommodating the experiences dog owners desire, as much as supporting and protecting the equally legitimate needs of land managers, nature conservation and other visitors;
- Targeting specific issues at regional, or in most cases, local/site levels;
- Clearly communicating in behavioural terms where dog owners can go and what they can do;
- Management that accommodates off-lead access, close to home and away from traffic;
- Making dog owners part of the solution by developing dialogue, involvement and a sense of community;
- Selecting the most appropriate techniques for use at a specific site by considering a range of options;
- Identifying and addressing dog owners' personal, societal and control beliefs;
- Objective assessment of the nature and extent of specific wanted or unwanted behaviours at a local level;
- Baseline and post-intervention surveys assessing changes in behaviour;
- Seeking incremental improvements, rather than expecting 100% solutions;
- Accepting and promoting positive aspects of dog ownership to optimise engagement and secure funding from wider sources, eg health promotion.
- Retaining the option for formal legal action against specific individuals who will not be influenced by other methods.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations for the CNPA to take forward, although to be successful they need to be supported by land managers and other partners to achieve their full potential.

9.1 Priorities and resources

The CNPA needs to objectively and sensitively assess the need for directing its resources to enable others to better manage access for walkers with dogs. This is to ensure public resources are proportionately allocated to support initiatives where improvements are needed, likely to be achieved and worthwhile, given the extent and frequency of impacts at park-wide and site levels.

It is recommended that a simple policy is developed to define a hierarchy of when management action will be taken, with particular regard to the most sensitive sites and species, eg Natura 2000 sites. This will help ensure public resources are used to best effect, and not targeted at unpredictable, infrequent events which, whilst concerning for those involved, are unlikely to be eliminated by management or enforcement action.

The intention should be for projects to become examples of local good practice to facilitate better management by other land managers and partners, rather than promote an expectation that the CNPA will deal directly with every issue.

All the following recommendations should be assessed in this light.

9.2 Development control planning

The emerging Local Development Plan and planning framework needs to incorporate as a material consideration, the access needs of walkers with dogs, and in particular the need for local, off-lead access. This is to ensure that any consequential increase in local demand for access (eg from multiple new homes), or land use change leading to the loss of existing access used by walkers with dogs (thus giving rise to displacement), is considered and mitigation provided, especially where this could impact on protected areas and species.

Such plans and policies need to acknowledge that the impacts of displacement can be some distance from the development site, as well as adjacent thereto, given the potential for walkers with dogs to drive to other areas if there is insufficient relevant local access provision.

The desirability of making developers provide sufficient, attractive and accessible additional greenspace for dog owners occupying new housing, to mitigate against consequential increases in disturbance on protected sites, especially SPAs and SACs, needs to be considered. The merits of the SANGs-based approach should be considered, and - if considered appropriate - be adapted and adopted to suit local requirements.

In the interim, consideration should be given to accommodating the above principles in development control work under the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan and associated planning guidance.

9.3 Access management planning

9.3.1 Strategic approach

As with development control planning, access management policy and practice must recognise the strategic need to accommodate the unique access needs of residents and visitors with dogs at a local level, to ensure these are actively and strategically managed. This is to ensure any changes in management do not: displace problems (potentially to more sensitive sites); needlessly increase car journeys; undermine the positive aspects of dog ownership; or antagonise or disengage dog owners as significant access takers, visitors and voters within the community.

9.3.2 Management and restrictions by third parties

The CNPA should raise awareness of its desire to be involved in any significant management changes (eg bylaws, enforcement policy, access changes/restrictions) from councils and land managers within and adjacent to the National Park, that could have a consequential impact on where dog owners go and what they do.

9.4 National management initiatives

While local and regional initiatives are submitted as having more relevance for improvements in the Cairngorms National Park, the Authority may wish to pursue with SNH and other partners:

- Improvements to the wording of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, and derived materials and guidance to increase clarity and relevance to the National Park;
- Adaptation of the Paws on the Moors animation to a Scottish or Cairngorms National Park context, if there is clarity about how and where this can be effectively used (case study 11.11 and www.pawsonthemoors.org).

While national materials for dog owners are already available, their generic nature limits their potential to convey locally-specific messages; for this reason it is recommended that priority is given to developing Park-wide or site-based messages, as below.

9.5 CNPA-wide/regional initiatives

9.5.1 For visitors

Regional and CNPA wide information and initiatives are of most relevance to influencing visitor behaviour, especially when delivered at the pre-visit stage, highlighting to visitors the less sensitive times and areas where they will be especially welcome. It is thus recommended that the CNPA:

- Consult with tourism partners about publishing online and hard copy information for visitors with dogs identifying sites, venues and accommodation where they will be particularly welcome, as well as restrictions and behaviour required at other times and places to conserve and enhance the National Park's special qualities;
- Target such information at the pre-visit and during visit stages (visitor accommodation, attractions and information centres);
- Promote this information to people moving into the area, especially in new home packs, to help ensure wanted behaviours are known from the start, and prevent unwanted behaviours from becoming established.

9.5.2 Social networks for residents and year round residents

Residents and regular visitors from adjacent areas are key stakeholders for the places where they repeatedly take access. It is recommended that, in conjunction with partners, the CNPA considers developing and sustaining better links with these people across the Park to help with targeted communication, as well as liaison on management changes and feedback on proposed signage etc.

To limit setup and maintenance costs, while still developing an enhanced level of community and relevance for dog owners, established social media such as a Facebook could be used. Members of the dog-owning community should be encouraged to take on day-to-day ownership and management of the network.

Promotion of the network could also be linked to other management initiatives, and promoted via facilities, sites and events of relevance to walkers with dogs. Vets and proprietors of dog related facilities (eg trainers, food suppliers, professional dog walkers) should also be encouraged to join, to support the CNPA's aims and for commercial gain from exposure to potential customers.

Less frequent visitors could also be guided to the online community when researching and following up visits.

9.5.3 Local Access Forum

Representation in the Local Access Forum should also be reviewed to ensure dog owners' views are included.

9.5.4 Core Cairngorms National Park-wide messages

To assist clarity for visitors, residents, land managers and CNPA and partner staff, the Authority should develop and promote a handful of concise, precise behaviourally-described core messages for use in all management initiatives and inclusion in all material targeted at walkers with dogs.

For example, from workshops with partners the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (case study 11.4) agreed these 6 core messages:

- Always keep your dog in sight and use a lead if you don't have a reliable recall;
- Prevent your dog from approaching other people, dogs, cyclists or horse riders, unless it's OK by them;
- Pick up after your dog wherever you are, unless signs say you don't need to;
- Always put bagged poo in a bin. If there isn't a dog or litter bin, take it home;
- Prevent your dog from approaching, chasing or flushing any wildlife or farm animals;
- Follow requests to keep all dogs on a lead at certain times and places, for wildlife and nearby children's play areas.

The emphasis should be on promoting positive behaviours in a local context. These general messages should be relevant Park-wide, rather than trying to cover the precise requirements of every individual site.

The CNPA should liaise with constituent authorities and other partners to ensure these core messages are, as far as possible, are accepted, adopted and not undermined by other materials or policies.

Developing the core messages will also have the added benefit of, if needed, more clearly defining policies on, e.g., fouling and lead use. Local dog owners should be involved in the development of policies and testing of the core messages, as their buy-in is essential for success.

9.5.5 Enforcement

The CNPA should liaise with the constituent authorities (in particular dog warden teams) and other partners to develop an understanding of if, when and how formal enforcement can take place, to ensure this option is used efficiently and to best effect when needed. This knowledge should then be used to guide the actions and expectations of staff and land managers.

Where enforcement appears to be a necessary option in specific areas or issues, CNPA should explore with constituent authorities the option, benefits and drawbacks of CNPA staff, land managers, rangers or wardens becoming authorised officers for, e.g., fixed penalty notices for fouling. Liaison with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority may be helpful, as they have adopted this approach in some areas.

9.6 Local initiatives

9.6.1 Training and good practice guidance

To help individual land managers identify and apply the best management tools to minimise negative impacts and promote wanted behaviours, it is recommended the CNPA:

- Work with partners to deliver some on the ground examples of good practice covering a range of situations and issues (eg livestock, ground nesting birds, fouling), which can then be visited by other land managers and provide a resource and venue for additional structured training;
- Consider expanding and updating its guidance about managing walkers with dogs in light of this review.

9.6.2 Practical good practice pilot projects: local solutions for local places

The CNPA should support partners in applying good practice (listed herein and elsewhere) on the ground at selected sites covering:

- Ground-nesting birds on designated sites;
- Livestock issues;
- Interaction with other visitors;
- Engagement and ownership of projects by local residents with dogs;
- Baseline and ongoing monitoring and evaluation;
- Production of resources (eg assessment of best methods to use, signage, simple monitoring systems) which can be used on other sites as-is or with little adaptation.

9.7 Research, monitoring and evaluation

Any initiatives and changes need to be monitored and evaluated to address the general deficiencies in this (and many other) area of work, in quantifying improvements, including baseline assessments before changes are made. Even the most basic of monitoring and evaluation will be helpful to ensure best use of public funds and address the limited evaluation of such projects elsewhere in the past.

Monitoring and evaluation should also cover positive impacts (e.g. for tourism, health, feelings of welcome by dog owners, meeting dog owners' needs, engagement of residents in their local environment) as well unintended consequences, such as displacement of problems to other sites.

Research and monitoring funded by the CNPA and others should primarily focus on how best to make practical improvements in identifiable and measurable behaviours of walkers with dogs, at a site level and park wide. Such research should be linked to the practical projects suggested herein, such as a National Park guide for dog owners, or exemplar projects of positive, proactive management which can then further refine and promote the most effective approaches.

Assessment of consequential intended outcomes (such as increases in protected bird populations) needs to be considered separately, given the much greater complexity in identifying causal links, rather than associations that can be influenced by many other factors. Robust, scientific studies are needed and to be encouraged, although it is submitted that these are such as to be worthy of external support and funding given their national, UK-wide and international relevance. The CNPA may wish to investigate partners for such studies, but doing so should not unduly delay making progress on applying management techniques that are known to promote wanted behaviours, irrespective of consequential impacts at a population level.

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11 APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES AND RESEARCH SUMMARIES

11.1 Perceptions, behaviours and understanding of walkers with dogs

Location: Hampshire, England and national online questionnaire 2008

Organisation: Sport Industry Research Centre, commissioned by Hampshire County Council and the Kennel Club

Purpose:

Identify levels of welcome, engagement and expected behaviours and so identify improved practical management approaches.

Method:

- 487 on-site interviews on public rights of way and at country parks;
- online survey eliciting 813 responses;
- dog owners and non-dog owners interviewed.

Outcome:

This was one of the biggest consultations of its type to focus on walkers with dogs and their management in the countryside, and contains an extensive insight into why dog owners do what they do. In particular the study found:

- dog walkers are not a homogenous group and there are significant differences in their needs, tastes, preferences, and attitudes;
- off lead access was by far the single most important factor for dog walkers, with accessibility from home and being away from traffic the next most important factors;
- dog owners were often unaware of existing facilities and provision ;
- there was significant confusion and uncertainty surrounding what bins could be used, and the need to pick up after their dogs in different circumstances and landscapes;
- the majority of dog owners were capable of controlling their dogs, although perceptions varied about when such control should be used to be “responsible”;
- problem behaviour caused by dogs was less prominent than was generally perceived, by those with and without dogs;
- there is generally no existing structure for eliciting the views of walkers with dogs;
- required behaviours need to be explicitly stated with credibility and consistency.

Source: personal communication, research report (Sport Industry Research Centre, 2008), www.hants.gov.uk/dogs

11.2 Greenham Common zoning for nature conservation

Location: Greenham Common, near Newbury, Berkshire, England. 2010 - ongoing

Organisation: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust

Purpose:

Reduce disturbance to ground-nesting birds by free-running dogs on a former military airfield with high nature conservation value.

Method:

- introduction of clearer and more engaging seasonally variable signage;
- introduction of zoning for off lead, on path and dog exclusion during the bird nesting season, compared to previous blanket restriction approach.

Outcome:

The project is being monitored over a three-year period; monitoring and evaluation is hampered by a lack of baseline data prior to changes in access management.

Site manager accepts it will be difficult to link current data on breeding success with the behaviour of dogs, given the many and complex variables on the site. Thus observed behaviour of dog owners and complaints is also being monitored, supplemented by visitor surveys.

Site manager reports a big improvement in dog owner behaviour and acceptance of restrictions since the changes were made, including:

- 90% of all visitors, and 80% of dog owners accept the need for seasonal restrictions on access;
- reduction in complaints from the public overall;
- few complaints about zoning system;
- dog owners value off lead areas and water access being explicitly identified;
- request for dogs to be kept on the path, rather than on lead, is felt more acceptable and effective than asking for "on lead";
- increased clarity about zoning and requested behaviours from improved signage and wording has increased consistency and effectiveness of rangers.

Source: personal communication; visitor survey data

11.3 Hampshire County Council: practical management initiatives

Location: Hampshire, England 2007 - present

Organisation: Hampshire County Council

Purpose:

Reduce conflict arising from walkers with dogs on countryside sites and public rights of way.

Method:

Pilot projects at specific sites to test the recommendations of previously commissioned research. Provision of:

- “taking the lead” good practice publication for site managers;
- specific on-site events for dog owners;
- introduction of zoning system at sites with conservation grazing;
- relocation of dog bins to more relevant locations;
- provision of fenced-in training area;
- producing locally relevant messages about responsible behaviour.

Outcome:

- events were a very popular and positive way to develop rapport between access and site managers and dog owners;
- zoning system worked well and with no further attacks on livestock; easier to retain graziers;
- 82% reduction in amount of faeces not picked up;
- fenced-in training area very popular; local dog trainer authorised to run classes there for a modest fee;
- positive feedback from dog owners went down very well with local councillors.

Source: personal communication; published reports at www.hants.gov.uk/dogs

11.4 Improving the management of for walkers with dogs on Cannock Chase AONB

Location: Cannock Chase, West Midlands, England 2009 - 2010

Organisation: Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Purpose:

Investigate current management approaches: identify trends, perceptions and evidence from site visits and interviews with access managers; hold focus groups with dog owners; develop consistent core messages; increase understanding of dog owner behaviour and benefits of integrated management by staff; recommend opportunities to increase management effectiveness.

Method:

- site audits by consultants;
- assessment of existing information provision and integration;
- focus groups with dog owners;
- training events for staff.

Outcomes:

AONB staff believe the process has been very helpful in achieving a more integrated and consistent approach, in an area where access is managed by many different bodies, which will in turn help to promote more responsible behaviour by walkers with dogs.

Specific outcomes so far include:

- identification that dog owners are loyal and frequent year-round visitors;
- off lead access was the most important issue for 58% of dog owners, with 70% saying there were slightly fewer places to go compared to 5 years ago;
- most dog owners made a journey of between 5 and 10 minutes by car to get to the walking area, with 94% of walks lasting between one and two hours;
- detailed understanding of advantages and disadvantages of the area for dog owners;
- acceptance that traditional information for dog owners about responsible behaviour in the area was often unclear, conflicting or insufficient;
- dog owners are willing to change where they go and what they do, if engaged with positively and with clear messages;
- prior to the workshops, dog owners were suspicious of the motives of access management staff and thus dialogue or engagement was generally low;
- much improved rapport, mutual understanding and management integration between partners, including environmental health teams and dog wardens;
- core messages about responsible behaviour agreed by all partners following consultation with dog owners;
- recruitment of dog owner to management consultative panel;
- Freda's* footsteps theme developed to engage with dog owners, including Facebook page and Freda branded "credit card" publication, detailing six clear core messages about responsible behaviour;
-

- positive and direct rapport developed with a number of local dog owners who now act as advocates and a link to the wider dog owning community;
- good publicity in the media and feedback from local councillors;
- recommendations for further work to more fully engage with local vets, pet shops and other related service providers.

* Freda was the canine mascot of a nearby military regiment who is buried on the Chase.

Source: personal communication, published reports (Jenkinson and McCloy, 2009), www.cannock-chase.co.uk

11.5 Jeskyn's community woodland

Location: near Gravesend, Kent, England. 2010

Organisation: Forestry Commission

Purpose:

Reduce conflict between dog owners and walkers without dogs, horseriders and in nature conservation ponds.

Method:

- zoning scheme introduced including new exclusion areas and on lead requirement in car park;
- improved signage of equestrian routes and explanation of behaviours when meeting horses;
- Jeskyn's dog club membership scheme created;
- attractive new leaflet with precise information about behaviours and zoning;
- dog dip area created on one pond; all other water access fenced off;
- seasonally varying signage introduced.

Outcome:

Site manager reports a positive impact from the changes, with a significant decrease in complaints. In addition:

- the dog exclusion areas have gone down well with picnickers and people seeking to avoid contact with dogs; exclusions respected by almost all dog owners, even though they have no legal basis;
- the fenced-in dog training area has been very popular for training and for people whose dogs have poor recall. Consequently subdividing the area, or providing an additional facility is needed to reduce competition for its use;
- significant reduction in complaints from horseriders about conflicts with dog walkers;
- professional, locally adaptable signage templates provide a cost-effective way of maintaining and varying messages;
- designated dog dip area popular; entry of dogs into undesignated ponds only happens very rarely;
- some improvement in "on lead" in car park, although signage needs to be more obvious;
- dog club membership has elicited contact details of 250 regular dog owning visitors, allowing targeted communication by the site manager.

Source: personal communication, leaflet. www.forestry.gov.uk/jeskyns

11.6 Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority

Location: predominantly Balloch Castle Country Park and Balmaha / Conic Hill, 2009 - 2010

Organisation: Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority; some elements in partnership with the Scottish Canine Consultative Council.

Purpose:

To improve responsible behaviour in general by visitors with dogs, and in particular in relation to sheep and lambs on Conic Hill.

Method:

- meet and greet activities at key entry points targeted at visitors with dogs to promote responsible dog ownership, particularly with visitors from outwith the area;
- responsible behaviour poster campaign;
- promotional leaflet produced;
- delivered in partnership with Scottish Canine Consultative Committee.

Outcome:

- face-to-face communication perceived to be the most effective approach;
- improved relationships and perceptions of issue by affected landowners;
- identification of entry points most attractive to dog owners is critical.

Source: personal communication (Jan 2011), website: www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

11.7 Town and Manor of Hungerford

Location: Hungerford, Berkshire, England. 2009 - ongoing

Organisation: Town and Manor of Hungerford *

Purpose:

Reduce disturbance by dogs to ground nesting birds on SSSI area, partly funded by access management grant from Natural England.

Method:

- site audit and management report commissioned;
- large off-lead area designated on non-SSSI land and identified in publications;
- seasonally variable signage introduced;
- watercourses fenced off to prevent bank damage by cattle; one area left unfenced to allow dogs to access the water;
- “pit stops” organised in the summer to engage with local dog walkers;
- training events for volunteer wardens.

Outcome:

- site manager reports “an awful lot better than it was”;
- increased biodiversity on watercourses apparent, although this may also be wholly, or partly, due to the exclusion of cattle;
- much greater clarity and consistency about expected behaviours by voluntary wardens;
- more positive interactions with dog owners in the local community;
- occasional damage to seasonal signage, but in most cases survives well;
- better engagement with local authority dog warden still needed.

Source: personal communication with site manager (January 2011), site audit report (Jenkinson, 2009), website: www.townandmanor.co.uk

* Ancient body overseeing commoners rights, including grazing and fishing, akin to the Verderers court in the New Forest. Manages approximately 300 acres of permanent grassland around the town.

11.8 Training for access and land managers

Location: Scotland (Aviemore 2010) and various venues in England. 2004 - present

Organisations: Cairngorms National Park Authority/SRPBA; Scottish Countryside Ranger Association; Natural England; Hampshire County Council; Bedfordshire County Council; Forestry Commission; Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust; Town and Manor of Hungerford; Losehill Hall / Peak District National Park Authority; National Trust; Urban Heaths Partnership, Dorset.

Purpose:

To help landowners, access managers, rangers and voluntary wardens understand why dog owners do what they do, and so develop new management approaches to reduce conflict and promote the positive aspects of dog ownership.

Method: predominantly one-day workshops.

Outcome:

Anonymous evaluation forms show participants leave with significantly improved awareness, skills and ideas to develop new approaches to address conflict, compared to before the event.

Anecdotal follow-up work indicates many attendees do go on to successfully apply their learning.

Source: personal communication; evaluation forms.

11.9 Psychology of walkers with dogs: new approaches to better management

Location: Hampshire, England 2006

Organisation: University of Portsmouth, commissioned by The Countryside Agency, Hampshire County Council and the Kennel Club

Purpose:

Identify and understand the attitudes, needs and beliefs of walkers with dogs in the countryside: identify the attitudes and beliefs of site managers in relation to dog walkers; to ask how improved management and communication can minimise the impact of walkers with dogs and enhance their experience of visiting these sites.

Method: literature review; focus groups with dog owners and site managers.

Outcome:

A detailed, largely qualitative insight into why dog owners do what they do, and the most effective ways to influence this. Specific findings included:

- the health, exercise and well-being of the dog was most important; management messages constructed around this principle will have the greatest influence;
- dog owners felt very strongly that their dogs brought significant benefits to their lives;
- peer pressure and the potential for confrontation are the biggest influence on their behaviour;
- dog owners take most heed of advice from other dog owners and their vets, especially compared to land managers and council officials;
- despite being significant countryside visitors, dog owners felt they were not listened to and were being pushed out of sites, and so were less inclined to be sympathetic to requests to change their behaviour;
- a complex range of issues influence where dog owners go and what they do at a specific time and location;
- dog owners do accept the need to behave responsibly, and are more likely to respond to messages to change their behaviour if they do not feel singled out;
- specific dog owner representation on the Local Access Forum was seen as important both practically and perceptually;
- a lack of clarity about what behaviours are responsible in specific circumstances.

Source: personal communication, published report (Edwards and Knight 2006), www.hants.gov.uk/dogs

11.10 Walkers with dogs around Winchester

Location: Winchester, Hampshire, England 2008

Organisation: Hampshire Countryside Access Forum, commissioning Access and Countryside Management.

Purpose:

Research project to identify the extent and nature of all types of local access to the countryside and green space for dog owners in Winchester: understand the access needs, use and demands of dog owners at a local level; review management practices and identify pressures and conflicts for land managers; produce an action plan and recommendations to improve management and reduce conflict.

Method:

- focus groups with dog owners;
- one-to-one interviews with local land managers;
- audits of countryside access and urban green space by volunteer dog owners;
- follow-up surveys of access identified by researchers.

Outcome:

A better understanding of the reasons for local conflict arising from walkers with dogs, and opportunities to better manage this including:

- imposing additional restrictions on sites currently in use by walkers with dogs will lead to increased conflict or unmanaged displacement (potentially to more sensitive area), unless an integrated and area-wide management approach is adopted;
- local access forums can play an important role in ensuring an integrated and inclusive approach to management, restrictions and development that affects access for walkers with dogs;
- 56% of dog owners felt there was less access available to them than 10 years ago, increasing pressure on existing sites;
- landowners reported problems arising from some walkers with dogs, as well as benefits; whilst these issues were very real to the landowners, there was little data to quantify the frequency or impacts;
- there was a lack of locally-relevant information on what responsible behaviour meant on specific sites for walkers with dogs;
- dog owners were often unaware of alternative accessible places for exercising their dogs, although these did exist and if used could have reduced conflict on more sensitive sites.

Source: personal communication; published report - www.hants.gov.uk/dogs

11.11 Managing dogs in the wood

Location: UK wide

Organisations: partnership project between the Forestry Commission and the Kennel Club.

Purpose:

To identify, assess and compile information from across the UK about good practice in influencing dog owner behaviour.

Method: site visits and telephone interviews.

Outcome:

Online resources published at www.forestry.gov.uk/england-dogs including principles of good design and management, backed-up by case studies covering:

- on site dog training;
- staff training;
- dog pit-stops;
- innovative communication and persuasive publications;
- providing alternative facilities – eg dog dips;
- conservation grazing;
- events for dog owners;
- human-dog activity trails to increase human and canine health (also at: www.dogactivitytrail.org.uk).

Source: personal communication; Jenkinson and Harrop (2007), www.forestry.gov.uk/england-dogs

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