

Cabinet – 7 November 2023

Statements from the Public

1. Statement from Linda Stevenson

Since 2017 DogFriendly. Social have been making people aware of PSPOs, including where locals and visitors can find information. We look to our members to engage in consultations which impact on our ability to exercise our legal duty to look after our pet's welfare.

We encourage members to be environmentally aware, using compostable bags to pick up after our dogs. Members will carry extra bags and freely give these to those in need. Many of our members pick up litter while out walking, often removing items that could cause injury to people as well as dogs.

We engage with the dog warden service, advising members on contacting the dog warden service where that is required.

Dog Friendly have been active in the Weymouth community, attending local events

Bark in the Park 2022 Radiople Park
BIG Walkies Event April 30th 2021 2022 2023
Big Walkies Event October 1st 2021 2022 2023
The Marsh Community Events 2021 2022 2023
Expo Weymouth
Dog Sausage and Cider Festival 2021 2022 2023
Margaret Green County Show Dorset 2023
Paws 4 Fort and Dorset Dog Friendly Business Awards 2022 and 2023. With more events planned in 2024

In 2023, we have Dog Friendly Groups in the following locations within Dorset:

Weymouth and Portland.
Dorchester and Poundbury
Bridport and West Bay
Swanage and Purbeck
Lyme Regis

Dog friendly were pleased to see that Dorset council have looked to have a consistent approach to restrictions throughout the county. We were also happy to see that the question of access early or late in a day was included in the consultation.

We were disappointed that the approach to 'timed access' failed to use information from Cornwall council. The question should have been split into 2 distinct questions. One on the duration of the ban (May to September, June to August sort of thing) and another looking at whether timed access was supported.

We hear comments about blue flag beaches and cleaning the beach at specific times. Neither of these have been an issue in Cornwall

It should also be noted that if the timed access was introduced, this would actually give the ability to dog walkers to use Dorset's beaches at quieter times and be better for our dog's welfare.

It's disappointing to see the council glibly saying that this can be looked at in another 3 years. It's 3 more years of near deserted beaches in the early morning and late evening.

We also note that the situation at Lyme Regis, is being influenced by the town council. The closeness of the vote for dogs on leads in winter being discontinued needs to be respected. If memory serves the restriction was introduced on a similarly close vote.

There needs to be strong evidential support for the dogs on leads during winter to be retained. It goes against a stated aim of consistency across Dorset. Doing so without this would be damaging to the view of the consultation as a democratic process. It could even lead to the PSPO legality being challenged.

2. Statement from Cllr Caroline Aldridge, Chair Lyme Regis Town Council Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee

Recommendation 1.7.3 Lyme Regis Front Town Beach – proposed change in arrangements to allow dogs off leads 1 October to 30 April.

I strongly object to this proposal which would mean that a relatively small number of dogs and their owners were prioritized over the health, safety and wellbeing of the people of Lyme (and their visitors), many with young children and vulnerable relatives who use the small, sandy beach throughout the year to play in the sand and swim. This is the only sandy beach in Lyme.

I challenge the statement at para 1.1.9 that the consultation had a good representation of respondent dog owners and non-dog owners. Para 1.1.13 states that two thirds of responses were from dog owners. PDSA statistics 2023 state 29% of UK adults are dog owners. Statistics from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (2016-2019 being most recent) show 25% of households owning a dog. That same agency has 2023 postcode information for Lyme Regis (DT7) showing 0.22 dogs per household. Thus a survey where 62% of respondents were dog owners is not representative. This was admitted at the Place and Resource Committee discussion on 5th October as was the fact that no attempt had been made to adjust for this imbalance. Additionally 49% of respondents were not local people with a high percentage of these non residents wanting dogs off the lead. This is therefore not representative of the views of the local population.

It is untrue that there is limited suitable alternative space to exercise a dog off lead on the flat during the winter months and shows that the authors of this report are not familiar with Lyme, there are suitable beach, river and field walks.

It is stated “ there is no evidence of significant use of this beach by families and children compared with other beaches in Dorset...” Families use it regularly in winter because it is quieter than in summer. It is accessible and safe for young children and vulnerable elderly – dogs being allowed to race and play there will destroy that opportunity for many families as they will fear being knocked over, attacked or pollution from the beach and sea being used as a dog lavatory.

As Chair of LRTC Tourism Committee, I have seen many complaints about poorly controlled dogs being aggressive, knocking people over and sometimes injuring them, frightening small children by grabbing their toys, attacking other dogs and fouling, with their owners often managing this poorly.

We need this restriction to keep our vulnerable safe.

3. Statement from Mrs Cynthia Sharp

As an older (mid-70's) resident of Lyme Regis, I am extremely concerned about the possibility of dogs being allowed off leads on the sandy beach in the winter months.

I already witness many dogs along the seafront completely ignoring their owners pleas not to jump up, even though they are on leads, and on more than one occasion I have been almost knocked over as I pass them.

My balance is not good and, especially in the colder months, the sandy beach is one place where I can walk safely, alone or with my peers, as pebbles are difficult for me.

I recently saw one young mother yelling at her children as they were scrabbling about on the pebbles in the exact spot where a dog had deposited a dropping just minutes beforehand. Though it was picked up, the surrounding pebbles were wet and of course contaminated with the remains of the faeces.

The sandy beach is known as a safe space locally, and, particularly when the tide is in, there is just not enough space for families, people like myself and loose dogs to enjoy themselves.

I met a local single friend recently who had ended up in hospital after falling on a beach not far from Lyme due to a large dog leaping up at her. She was off work for several weeks and was badly affected mentally. I am very afraid this may happen to me.

There are so many other places to exercise dogs in Lyme including along the River Lym to Uplyme, along Ware cliffs, on Monmouth beach and on Timber Hill.

Please may we keep a few spaces for older residents, many with small grandchildren, where dogs are under control.