



ConsultationResponse

Bridgend County Borough Council: Public Space Protection Order - control of dogs

July 2023

RSPCA Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to Bridgend County Borough Council's consultation on the proposed Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). PSPOs provide local authorities with a means of tackling dog fouling and other dog-related issues, such as access to public spaces. While RSPCA Cymru understands that local authorities have a duty to improve the communities they serve and protect human health, we would always urge any council to consider whether a PSPO is needed to achieve this. PSPOs risk punishing responsible dog owners for the actions of the less responsible, while potentially creating less spaces for dogs to exercise and express their natural behaviours. While PSPOs offer an effective means of tackling dog fouling via the introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices for those who fail to clean up their dog's mess, we would encourage a more flexible approach to other issues relevant to dogs as outlined below.

Dog fouling in public areas

RSPCA Cymru understands that dog fouling can be a major issue for towns and cities across Wales. In order to encourage responsible dog ownership and keep our communities clean and healthy for people, pets and wildlife, the RSPCA agrees that local authorities should require owners to clean up their dog's waste. To assist with this, Bridgend CBC could look towards the introduction of educational and promotional schemes around responsible dog ownership in areas where dog fouling is a significant issue. Other local authorities in Wales such as [Conwy CBC](#) work with the local community to reduce instances of dog fouling in their areas by encouraging the reporting of offenders, with this being something Bridgend CBC could also consider.

We would also support the introduction of measures that would require all dog owners to carry an appropriate bag to pick up their dog's faeces on land listed within the order. As stated, dog owners are currently able to put dog waste in the bins provided by the council. To encourage the use of these facilities, clear-signposting to these bins, along with ensuring there are a sufficient amount of them available and that they are emptied regularly, is needed.

In 2018, the council passed a PSPO for dog control in an attempt to target irresponsible owners. The previous PSPO set out conditions for dog owners to collect and dispose of dog faeces by removing it and depositing it in a bag, or other means of collection. All dog owners were also required to carry bags or other suitable means for collecting faeces. RSPCA Cymru believes similar ongoing action from Bridgend CBC would encourage responsible dog ownership while facilitating more harmonious relationships between canine owners and the wider community.

Other dog-related issues

Bridgend CBC's previous PSPO on dog control required owners to put their dog on a lead when requested by an authorised officer. To ensure that this condition is administered appropriately if continued, RSPCA Cymru believes the experience and knowledge of the officer imposing the condition should be sufficient enough to prevent dog welfare from being compromised. Consideration should always be made in terms of whether such an instruction is necessary, especially if there is no risk to the safety of people, the dog themselves or other animals, or if the dog is not out of control or causing alarm/distress.

Many dogs enjoy interacting with each other and other people, and it is important that dogs are able to express normal behaviour off the lead in the appropriate places. Being given an opportunity to be walked off a lead and being able to interact and play with new animals and people in an appropriate place is important in terms of ensuring a dog is well-socialised. Interaction with others is particularly important for puppies and younger dogs to ensure they develop into well adjusted adults. However, RSPCA Cymru recognises that not all dogs will be well-socialised and some may find other animals or people threatening, therefore not all places will be appropriate for time off-lead. For example, we are fully supportive of all dogs being kept on leads in children's playing parks, on school grounds when they accompany those picking children up and in cemeteries when providing comfort to their owners. However, we would encourage a more flexible approach towards dogs being allowed off-lead on council-owned land such as commons/fields and marked sports pitches.