



Consultation response

Swansea Council: Byelaw - Swansea Bay (Dogs on Beaches)

RSPCA Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to Swansea Council's review of the Swansea Bay byelaws that disallow dogs on certain beaches during certain times of the year. Byelaws provide local authorities with a means of tackling dog-related issues, among others, 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 byelaws that exclude dogs from spaces are needed to achieve this. Such byelaws risk punishing responsible dog owners for the actions of the less responsible, while creating less spaces for dogs to exercise and express their natural behaviours.

Under the current byelaw, dogs are excluded from specific beaches on Gower and sections of Swansea Bay between the months of May and September. This byelaw excludes dogs from the beach from the West Pier to the eastern edge of the slip opposite the Swansea Municipal Baths. A second byelaw was introduced in 1998 excluding dogs from the slip opposite The West Cross Inn to the beach access point opposite Sketty Lane.

Exclusion of dogs on beaches

RSPCA Cymru welcomes Swansea Council's current provision of dog friendly beaches, and understands that irresponsible dog ownership can impact the quality of life within local communities and in recreational spaces. However, we encourage Swansea Council to consider whether the exclusion of dogs from specific beaches in the Swansea Bay area is still just and needed - especially with the byelaws in question being at least 26 years old. We would also ask for consideration to be given with regard to the success of the byelaws to date and for any recurring issues reported to the council by responsible dog owners to be addressed.

RSPCA Cymru generally encourages a flexible approach towards dogs being allowed in public spaces such as beaches. Areas such as beaches can provide owners with the option to exercise their dogs responsibly, especially if adequate space is not available nearby. Additionally, we believe Swansea Council's existing efforts to tackle the issue of dog fouling go some way in mitigating the potential risks associated with allowing dogs on areas such as beaches. With the exclusion of dogs on specific beaches within the Swansea Bay area being potentially confusing and restrictive - especially for those visiting the area - the RSPCA would consider allowing dogs on leads on all beaches a better proposal than a blanket ban in some areas.

With dogs already excluded from many public places, additional restrictions and bans on places such as beaches inevitably leave dog owners with fewer options. Excluding dogs from specific areas within Swansea Bay for almost five months could be considered both limiting and restrictive to responsible dog owners, especially those with accessibility issues. As such, we would encourage Swansea Council to trial allowing dogs on leads on all beaches in the coming years. This approach has been adopted by other local authorities which cover beaches in Wales, with many considering this a sufficient means of tackling dog-related issues in their communities.