

Dr Ed Hayes
Head of Public Affairs
The Kennel Club
Clarges Street
London

Gary Mumford
Acting Senior Environmental Health Officer
Penallta House,
Tredomen Park,
Ystrad Mynach,
Hengoed,
CF82 7PG

23 June 2021

Dear Mr Mumford,

Re: Exclusion of dogs from marked playing pitches

Alongside our response to the Public Spaces Protection Order consultation relating to dog control, we are writing to raise our concerns regarding access restrictions for dog owners, with a proposed new measure excluding dogs from marked playing pitches. We have been contacted by a number of local dog walkers who are understandably concerned about the potential impacts of this exclusionary measure.

As the leading national organisation on dog access, The Kennel Club regularly engages with local authorities on PSPOs to ensure that restrictions are both proportionate and evidence-based.

Regarding sports pitches, we ask local authorities to consider whether or not access restrictions are absolutely necessary. If they are deemed to be so, time or seasonal restrictions may be more appropriate than a continuous exclusion order. We are aware that in many areas, dog walkers do allow their dogs to exercise on playing fields when they are not in use.

We believe that banning dogs from marked sports pitches is counterproductive, and will unfairly punish responsible dog owners and result in these walkers and their dogs being displaced onto other areas of land nearby, creating new conflicts where previously none existed. Given the difficulty of predicting the effects of displacement, the Council should consider whether alternative sites for dog walkers are suitable and can support an increase in the number of dog walkers using them. For example, the All-Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare has previously highlighted the increased risk to livestock if dog walkers are displaced to farmland.

As well as this, Councillor George highlighted his concerns relating to the presence of disease on sports pitches that dogs use. The risk of toxocara remains incredibly low: to pose a risk, dog faeces must go uncollected for between ten and fourteen days. Banning dog walkers that are compliant with rules will likely result in fewer people with waste bags walking across the pitches picking up after less responsible dog walkers. It is also worth noting that cat and fox faeces are also a big source of toxocara – so regardless of whether dogs fouled on the pitch, there would still be an ongoing risk. Indeed, once contaminated, the soil remains ‘dangerous’ for a considerable time period.



THE KENNEL CLUB

We hope that you take these views into consideration when deciding whether to implement this measure. Should you have any comments or wish to discuss this point any further, please do not hesitate to get in touch by emailing william.pickworth@thekennelclub.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ed Hayes
Head of Public Affairs
The Kennel Club

