

**DRAFT**  
**LCAFs Feedback to Consultation re. Dog Walking Advice**

**1. Have we chosen the right themes?**

- Train your dog well
- Leave no trace of dog poo
- Take stock of farm animals
- Get to know your surroundings
- Keep your dog happy and healthy

All themes seem appropriate, although the ‘*Get to know your surroundings*’ theme could perhaps be set out a bit differently (see ‘d’) and there’s scope to expand on information in relation to identification (see ‘e’).

**2. Have we got the messages right within the themes?**

Some feedback from forum members is that there’s an opportunity to communicate important messages across in relation to a dog walkers legal obligations, which in some cases they may not be aware of e.g. identification (see *point 2e*), dog fouling etc. Other advice guides (including [Bracknell Forest Code of Conduct for Dog Walking](#)) try to achieve a balance between engaging dog walkers whilst getting some stronger messages across.

- a) A concern raised by certain LCAF members is that there’s the potential for conflict between dog walkers and other users, which is covered only very briefly in the advice guide under ‘*Train your dog well*’  
In this section, people could be signposted to organisations that run dog training schemes such as the Kennel Club and their Good Citizen Dog Training Scheme.  
[www.thekennelclub.org.uk/training/good-citizen-dog-training-scheme](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/training/good-citizen-dog-training-scheme)

The point about needing to be mindful about ground nesting birds could be referenced under the theme ‘*Train your dog well*’, under the sub-heading ‘*Lead*’ and then expanded on under ‘*Get to know your surroundings*’.

- b) ‘*Leave no trace of dog poo*’ –  
Dog fouling is a serious issue that needs proper attention.  
I would make it clear that people can use any **public** litter bin or your council bin at home, to avoid people depositing dog waste in their neighbours bins! There’s also no reference to how people can report incidences of dog fouling. In the case of Bracknell Forest Borough, people can report dog fouling via a street cleansing form or they can complete a dog fouling witness statement form if they witness a person failing to pick up after their dog has fouled.

- c) *'Take stock of farm animals'* – Include information about the need to pay attention to signs advising about livestock, under *'Stop, Look and Listen...'*
- d) *'Get to know your surroundings'* – I understand the reasons for wanting to provide dog walkers with information about good places to walk their dogs, but I'm not sure this section works by being set out under the following sub-headings 'on the beach' 'in the woods' and 'out in the hills'.

Open access land is mentioned in relation to the *'Out in the hills'*, but there are other types of open access land e.g. forests, heathland etc.

Should we be encouraging people to walk their dogs in areas where there might be ground nesting birds, that are sensitive to disturbance?

Bracknell Forest Council manages Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) to draw people (particularly dog walkers) away from ecologically important places such as the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA).

[www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/suitablealternativenaturalgreenspaces](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/suitablealternativenaturalgreenspaces)

If we are going to reference areas such as heathland, perhaps more emphasis could be given to how ground nesting birds are **vulnerable** to disturbance and what the consequences are e.g. birds may be prevented from settling, or if already nesting they will fly away from their nests, neglecting their eggs or chicks. Is it worth pointing out that it is a **criminal offence** to disturb rare breeding birds, or would this detract from the friendly tone used in this leaflet?

Some of the other information is a bit too specific and could raise expectations. For example – a lot of publically accessible woodland doesn't have facilities such as visitor centres and not all woodland is owned and managed by the Forestry Commission.

What about referencing sources of information about where makes good places to walk your dog?

[www.dogfriendlybritain.co.uk/directory.asp?Category=4](http://www.dogfriendlybritain.co.uk/directory.asp?Category=4)

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1356393897898/](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1356393897898/)

[www.walkiees.co.uk/](http://www.walkiees.co.uk/)

- e) *'Keep your dog happy and healthy'* - I would suggest that the important information about identification is lost under this theme. A dog owner has a legal responsibility to ensure their dog is properly identified and all dogs should be microchipped to allow prompt return if lost (this will be a legal requirement in 2016). No reference is made to lost or found dogs. Perhaps it's important enough to warrant being included as a separate theme?

The need to worm dogs is mentioned, but what about vaccinating dogs against diseases including canine parvovirus and kennel cough? People

could be signposted to further advice from the RSPCA, The Dog's Trust or to their local vet.

Should dog walks (particularly professional dog walkers) be encouraged to take out insurance? An article in the [Daily Telegraph on 10 August](#) refers to a vicious attack on Maxine Frith's small dog by a mastiff being walked by a paid dog walker which led to a £1000 veterinary bill. Fortunately the Jack Russell/ poodle cross survived and Maxine was able to claim on the company who engaged the dog walker and recovered her vet costs as the company had insurance.

Slight changes to wording:

*'Get involved*

*Dog walkers are often the first people to notice and report problems on a site or on a path. In some areas dog walkers have formed volunteer groups that help spread positive messages about dog walking and are eyes and ears on the ground, helping site managers and the local council deal with problems **such as** fallen trees **across** paths **and** vandalism.'*

**3. Do you agree with the principle of focusing on themes that can be developed either separately as individual campaigns or used together as a single advice publication?**

Combining the advice into a single publication would seem to make the most sense.