cadwch keep
gymru'n wales
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DOG FOULING GUIDANCE



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SUMMARY

Dog fouling is frequently noted as one of the top issues in our communities, with recent data painting an unclear picture of whether it is increasing or decreasing. It is not only a visual concern and a nuisance, but it also creates health concerns around the spread of infectious diseases to humans, pets, wildlife and livestock.

There are various interventions to tackle dog fouling. Although bins are a publicly popular and effective tool, bin provision and servicing are not viable everywhere. Other interventions like stickers, signage and floor stencils should be considered based on the local context.

Where messaging is used to target people who do not pick up after their dog, clear and positive messaging is more effective than enforcement-based communication. People are more likely to respond favourably to behavioural messages that encourage them to follow social norms i.e. to clean up after their dog, or messages that are relatable and positively emotive.

Providing the right infrastructure to enable people to bin their dog waste is essential, and even though public bins play a key role where viable, other ideas can also be explored (such as dog fouling bag provision). It has become increasingly difficult for residents to dispose of their household-generated dog waste due to less frequent black bag collections and therefore, new services or allowances could be trialled to address these issues and subsequent consequences, especially around summer months when storage at home is particularly unpleasant.

Furthermore, innovative ways of dealing with dog waste once it enters the waste stream are being researched and trialled. The most promising are the potential to use anaerobic digestion or in-situ wormeries which would be worth pursuing given sufficient resources, however, both require further research, investigation and testing.

Community and volunteer action are proving to be considerable tools in addressing dog fouling, but they must be managed and supported properly to be effective and sustainable. Examples of both preventative and responsive action are present across Wales and could be expanded to more local authorities.

Lastly, whilst enforcement is usually one of the most sought-after tools by the public, the resources required to create a deterrent through visible patrols are restrictive. Therefore, it is recommended that enforcement efforts in a given area should be infrequent but widespread or focus on problematic and high-risk places. The community can also help act as watchful eyes and witnesses from an enforcement point of view. If public spaces protection orders (PSPOs) for dog-related activities are being explored, caution should be taken to not negatively impact on dog welfare.

SUMMARY

Overall, dog fouling is a persistent and impactful issue across Wales. Bin provision and enforcement are popular and effective solutions but are not always viable due to resources and local context. For long term results, trials and messaging should utilise behaviour change principles, and partnership working with local communities should be prioritised. Changes to recycling targets and waste collections mean new ways to deal with the dog fouling waste stream should also be explored.



WHY DOES DOG FOULING MATTER?

Responsible behaviour by dog owners is largely the norm, however, the irresponsible behaviour of a minority continues to be an issue which has significant social, environmental and economic impacts. For this reason, dog fouling continues to top many peoples list of concerns about litter and refuse on our streets, parks and other public spaces.

Currently, it is unclear if dog fouling is increasing or decreasing over the long term. For around 20 years, Keep Wales Tidy has monitored litter across Wales, and in the previous litter monitoring system called LEAMS (Local Environmental Audit Management System) that spanned from 2007-08 to 2024, the presence of dog fouling on Welsh streets appeared to have decreased by almost half. Keep Wales Tidy volunteers also submit data on their activities that allows trends to be monitored over time and conversely to organisation-lead surveys, volunteer-reported dog fouling increased from 18.7% to 41% of submissions between 2023 and 2025.

In 2025, Keep Wales Tidy piloted a new litter monitoring methodology called Geospatial Litter Analysis (GLÂN), which includes a wider range of land uses and spaces, and now records instances of both bagged and loose dog fouling. So far, the data shows that around half of all dog fouling instances are bagged, indicating that people are half way to doing the right thing. Litter data from GLÂN, including trends and estimated instances of dog fouling across Wales, can be viewed on our website.

The presence and visual impact of dog fouling is not the only reason it has such a significant impact on people. Dog fouling, along with other local environmental quality (LEQ) indicators like litter, can impact economic investment, democracy, trust, nature, and wildlife. The largest concern, however, relates to health and wellbeing, due to the potential contractable diseases associated with dog waste – some of which are explored below.

Toxocariasis

Toxocariasis is an infection that can be passed onto humans by the parasitic roundworms commonly found in the intestine of dogs and cats (Toxocara canis and Toxocara cati). Humans can become infected by accidentally swallowing dirt that has been contaminated with dog or cat faeces that contain the Toxocara eggs.



Few people infected with Toxocara get sick, but the infection can be serious with symptoms like fever, coughing or wheezing, stomach-ache, rashes and changes to vision[1]. The infection can also make young animals, especially puppies, very ill and can be passed on to livestock. Regular deworming of pets is a vital element for the prevention of infection.

WHY DOES DOG FOULING MATTER?



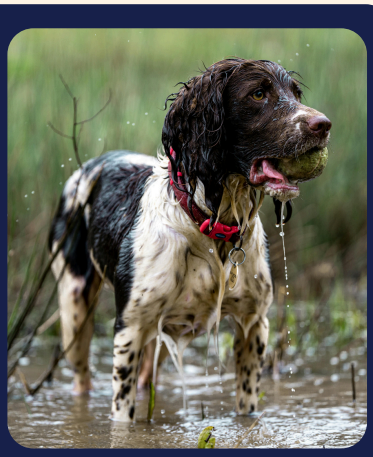
Neosporosis

Neosporosis is caused by an infectious parasite called Neospora caninum. Although it poses less risk to humans than Toxocara, it can still be dangerous and potentially fatal to dogs. Neosporosis is also well known to result in abortions in cattle. In 2018, the Neospora caninum parasite was found in Denbighshire causing some farmers to have to cull their herds, many of which had already lost young in pregnancy. It was thought that the infection had been passed on through their feed (silage) which had likely been contaminated by dog faeces[2]. Dogs can be treated with antibiotics, but no vaccine currently exists for dogs or cattle.

Hydatidosis / Hydatid Disease

Hydatidosis is caused by infection from the larvae of Echinococcus granulosus tapeworms. It originates in dogs but can be passed onto humans and livestock through ingestion of the eggs in dog faeces.

It can lead to the growth of cysts on various organs, causing pain and other health issues. In the UK it is most prevalent in mid-Wales, particularly Powys, and is believed to be increasing again. A recent BBC article discussed a farmer who contracted Hydatid disease in Wales.



Preventative measures

There are also other diseases, modes of transmission and contributing factors to the spread of disease from dogs[3]. Therefore, as well as minimising the spread of infection through picking up dog poo, dog owners should also take care to:

- Feed dogs with cooked dog foods
- Worm dogs regularly
- Not allow dogs to roam or come in contact with livestock carcasses
- Not allow dogs to lick the face
- Wash hands thoroughly after handling dogs

As other measures in addition to addressing dog fouling can help prevent the spreading of disease, all aspects of dog health and dog ownership should be taken into account.

Key points:

- The direction of the data is unclear, but dog fouling remains a persistent issue across Wales.
- Dog fouling can cause a health risk to humans through the transmission of diseases.
- Parasites in faeces can also transmit to other animals and livestock.

INTERVENTIONS

As with many behavioural issues, awareness and education alone is not enough. Keep Wales Tidy have a suite of tools, trials and campaign materials that have been developed to directly change behaviour, and have proven effective when applied correctly. It is strongly encouraged that, wherever possible, interventions are employed on the ground at key locations and are accompanied by the relevant infrastructure. When considering possible interventions, it is important to consider locations and context. For example, a successful residential street intervention may well not work for a country footpath or a beach.

Intervention options for various locations and land management areas

LEVEL OF USE	EXAMPLES OF AREAS	EXAMPLES OF INTERVENTIONS
High level of use with frequently management	• High streets • Popular beaches • Urban parks • Routes to school • Some tourist destinations • Some types of residential estates	• Bins • Innovative solutions • Stickers • Physical signage • Floor stencils • Dog waste bag provision • Targeted social media or campaign(s)
High level or seasonally high level of use, with infrequent management	• Residential streets • Some types of residential estates • Bathing beaches • Country parks • Recreation grounds • Popular footpaths, • Some tourist destinations	• Bin provision where appropriate • Physical signage • Floor stencils • Community engagement or management • Target car parks and beginning and/or end destinations
Medium or variable level of use, with no management	• Rural footpaths • Common land • Farmland with rights of way	• Waymarker signs • Beginning and/or end destination signage • Floor stencils • Landowner engagement or management

INTERVENTIONS

Bins are a critical element of creating an environment where dog owners can do the right thing, but it is recognised that bins are not appropriate for all locations. In low-management areas, other infrastructure can be used as visual prompts to pick up and take waste home, such as way marker badges on stiles or stencilled pawprints at the end of a common walking route.

Intervention suggestions by location type can be seen above, and a case study on visual prompts trialled by Keep Wales Tidy can be seen below.

Behavioural Trials: Pawprints to Bins by Keep Wales Tidy



Keep Wales Tidy used floor stencils to spray bright pink pawprints on the ground leading to the nearest bin at three locations across Wales. The trial used a traditional 'nudge' technique and a variation of the 'green footprints to bins' trialled in Copenhagen (which reduced street litter by 46%)[4]. It also applied multiple behavioural concepts devised from extensive research and supported by the Behavioural Unit in Cardiff University.

It addressed two unique aspects of dog fouling behaviour:

Visibility and contrast

Many bins are designed to blend in with the urban environment, but bins are more effective at capturing potential litter when they are designed to stand out[5]. The bright pink made the symbols stand out, especially in darker months when dog fouling instances have been reported to increase (likely due to colder and darker evenings).

Public bin usage

There is no common approach by local authorities on whether dog fouling waste is allowed (or encouraged) to be disposed of in public bins. This is still reported as a source of confusion by some members of the public. To overcome this, we provided every local authority with pink pawprint stickers and encouraged them to put them on any / all relevant bins to signal that the disposal of dog waste was accepted. Each of the three locations in the trial used floor stencils and a range of signage. To support this, we ran a simple 'Bag it, Bin it, or take it home' messaging campaign. The trial demonstrated a reduction of dog fouling of 53.4% overall when combined with the signage. The full report can be seen on our dog fouling issues page on our website.

Key points:

- Education and awareness alone don't always work to change behaviours.
- Determining suitability of interventions based on location, frequency of management and intensity of use is essential.
- Bins are important, but not viable to provide everywhere. In some locations, visual reminders to dispose of dog waste responsibly should be employed instead.

MESSAGING

It is well known in behavioural research that positive messaging is more effective than negative messaging. Whilst 'hard-hitting' enforcement focused messaging may seem publicly or politically popular, it has shown to be less effective unless backed up by a consistent and visible enforcement presence. However, enforcement is largely impossible due to the problem locations and the resources involved, and is demonstrated by the low levels of dog fouling Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued by local authorities.

Keep Wales Tidy have implemented the **'Leave Only Pawprints'** slogan for national campaigns since October 2021 and encourage local instructional messaging to be simple i.e. 'Bag it, Bin it, or take it home'.

Further themes for our campaigns have been developed from a behavioural perspective and can be used to suit the issue location context, including:

- **'9 out of 10 dog owners pick up after their dog, do the right thing'** – this promotes social norms and works by using the desire to belong to encourage people to change their behaviour in a positive way.
- **'Dog poo can harm people and pets / animals, spread the word not the mess'** – this speaks to the emotional values we hold as a nation of dog and animal-lovers.
- **'Dog owners who care pick up everywhere'** – this uses both the social norms and emotional values from above.
- **Using real dogs and names** – using a variety of dog breeds and names helps the material be relatable to as wide of an audience of dog owners as possible.



The fact that dog fouling can pose a risk to pets is a powerful emotive for promoting responsible behaviour. This may be especially effective in areas where certain diseases are particularly prevalent as discussed in "Why does dog fouling matter?".

For this reason, messaging and interventions around dog fouling link closely with efforts to promote responsible dog ownership and preventative measures relating to dog health. Our aim, and all messaging to that effect, should be to create a culture where picking up after your dog is a vital aspect of maintaining your dog's health and is essential part of being a good dog owner.
To this end, the Dog's Trust have developed the Dog Ownership Guide which covers all aspects of responsible dog ownership and includes picking up dog fouling. Sharing the Guide can help current and potential future dog owners make informed decisions and understand their responsibilities before committing to becoming a pet owner.

MESSAGING

Key points:

- Use positive messaging and avoid enforcement messaging (unless backed up by visible and consistent enforcement).
- Have a clear consistent overarching message (e.g. Bag it, Bin it, or take it home).
- Tailor sub-messaging through behavioural insights depending on local context and issues.
- Picking up dog faeces and preventative health interventions are a key part of reducing the spread of disease.

INFRASTRUCTURE

As with any attempts to promote responsible environmental behaviour, the underlying principle in any area where dog fouling is a problem is to create an environment which enables dog owners to do the right thing. It is important to assess the frequent calls by community members and councillors for infrastructure like additional bins through this principle.



Nonetheless, each local authority operates a different policy on the disposal of dog fouling and the provision of bins, and this should be made clear on or around each bin. Where there are both public recycling and general waste bins, contamination of recycling with dog fouling is an ongoing concern, especially as recycling targets are continuously increasing.

Despite bins being an important tool for litter reduction and prevention, not all areas are suitable for the installation and servicing of general waste bins, dog fouling bins or bag provision, and it is therefore recommended that infrastructure is considered on a case-by-case basis depending on local context.

The provision of dog fouling bags is a popular suggestion with the public and is a symbol of the behaviour expected by dog owners, however, it is unclear whether bag provision is a viable solution as in practice they raise a number of issues:

- There is no research to support that they are successful at reducing dog fouling.
- There have been concerns that this passes the responsibility on to the council rather than the individual and can cause a problem if there is a re-stocking issue.
- Many local authorities report whole rolls of bags being stolen at help-yourself type settings.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Dog owners that rightfully use their household general waste bins for dog fouling are also facing challenges including high summer temperatures and reduced frequency of general waste collection. The smell and the potential environmental health risk can disincentivise residents from doing this despite best intentions. To avoid unintended consequences like increased fly-tipping of household bin bags, littering of bagged dog fouling, or disincentivising people to pick up after their dog altogether, there may be an argument to make changes to operations. For example, local authorities could collect this waste separately at kerbside (similar to nappy collections in some local authorities), consider temporary increases in public bin provision, or avoid heavy enforcement of public bin misuse for household dog fouling[1], even just over the summer period.

Other infrastructure options that should be considered include increasing street lighting in relevant locations. Being perceived to be more visible encourages people to pick up after their dog, and lighting would not only reduce the chances of the dog's activity going unnoticed by the owner, but it would also help people avoid stepping in dog fouling that hasn't been picked up. Signposting dog walking routes that have appropriate infrastructure or facilities is another option that could be explored.

Key points:

- The creation of an enabling environment should be at the heart of efforts.
- Clearly communicate the bin policy in the area e.g. pawprint stickers or spray paint.
- Bin and bag provision should be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Additional household waste or public bins provision for dog fouling should be considered, even if just seasonally.



INNOVATION

Dog fouling doesn't just affect local authorities by being a nuisance on the ground, but it also contaminates recycling streams and adds to the amount of waste that needs to go to landfill. These issues are particularly problematic as the recycling targets placed on local authorities are getting higher every year.

There are some innovative solutions in this area, but they all need further research, testing and come with challenges around maintenance, capital costs and exhausting of the novelty effect, however, this does not mean they should be ruled out.

The below case studies can have two benefits:

- To incentivise people to pick up after their dog in knowing that the waste could be useful
- To help safely deal with dog waste as an alternative to landfill.

Monmouthshire County Council as part of the Infuse – Innovative Future Services programme

Monmouthshire County Council sought to investigate if anaerobic digestion with energy generation was a viable solution in addressing the dog fouling waste stream in the county.

They concluded:

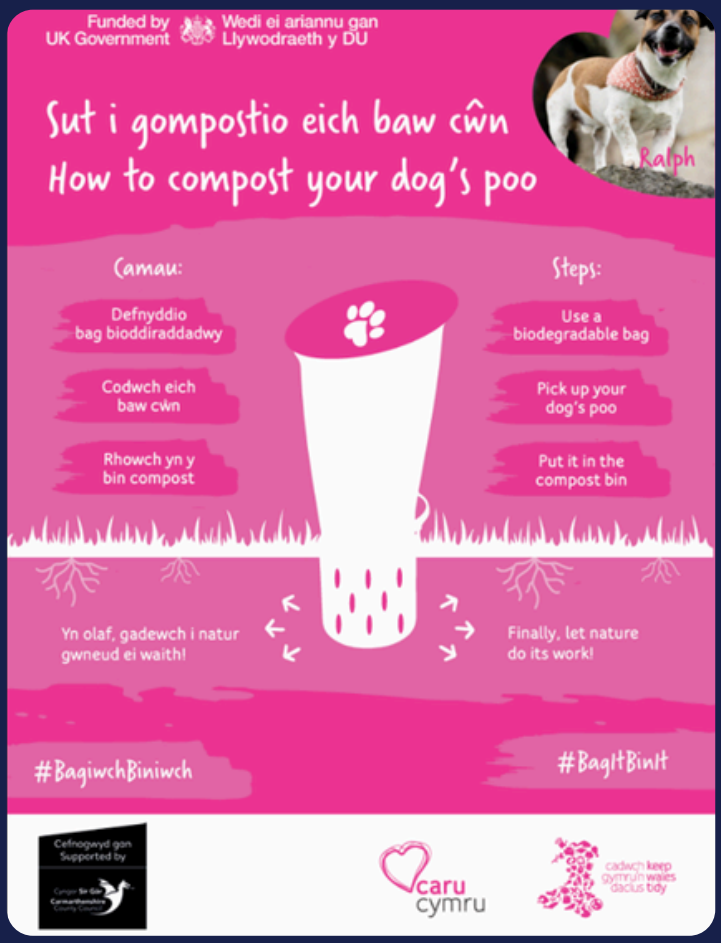
- More research would be beneficial, but the concept is viable.
- The current regulatory framework seems to allow dog fouling use for feedstock, but it needs clarification in some areas due to the topic being untested.
- Mixing the dog fouling with other organic waste like grass cuttings would provide the best gas yield.
- Debagging of the dog waste needs more exploration.

Other things to consider include how a sufficient volume of dog waste could be collected, whether from public bins, households or relevant businesses.

Therefore, if sufficient funding or resources became available, local authorities may want to explore this disposal method further. The case study can be accessed here.



INNOVATION



Carmarthenshire County Council dog fouling wormery bins trial

In 2024, Carmarthenshire County Council, in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy, trialled in-ground dog waste composting bins at a park in Glanamman through the Sustainable Development Fund.

The system involves partially burying specially designed bins in the ground, where dog waste deposited in biodegradable bags can break down naturally with the aid of composting treatments. Information signage was installed around the park and biodegradable dog waste bags were provided to encourage correct use. Once a bin reaches capacity, it can be relocated to a new site and the composting process restarted.

While the trial generated considerable interest, several challenges limited its effectiveness. These included vandalism of signage, misuse of the bins, theft of biodegradable bags, and the disposal of dog waste in non-biodegradable bags. In addition, the high volume of use meant that the bins filled more quickly than the composting process could accommodate.

Despite these challenges, similar initiatives have proven successful elsewhere, including in Bannau Brycheiniog National Park[6]. Their experience suggests that this approach may be more suitable in quieter, rural locations where dog fouling is an issue but usage levels are lower, allowing the composting process to operate as intended.

Key points:

- Tackling dog fouling is a waste stream problem as well as an issue on the ground.
- Innovative solutions are being developed but still need more research, testing and resources invested in them before their efficacy can be confirmed.

COMMUNITY ACTION

Harnessing the power of the dog owner community can have a powerful impact for establishing social norms and deterring irresponsible behaviour.

Community action should not be seen as passing over responsibility to the community completely - even the most dedicated community volunteers require a consistent liaison. Thus, the most critical aspect for the sustainability of any community-led scheme is the requirement for a long-term coordinator dedicated to the role within the local authority or a third party that can bridge the two.

In many areas in Wales and beyond, volunteers have taken on the management of dog fouling bins, especially in parks and recreational areas where dedicated groups are active. Other examples are where dog bag provision stations are serviced by volunteer groups and occasionally, local businesses. These services should not be seen as a replacement for local authority duty but rather a complement to existing activity around prevention that also require support.
Communities of interest should also be engaged in interventions such as the growing number of dog walking businesses and the farming community to ensure buy-in to schemes.
The most 'formalised' community initiative is the 'Green Dog Walkers Scheme', developed and owned by Falkirk Council in Scotland. The case study can be seen below.

Falkirk Council / Flintshire Council – Green Dog Walkers Scheme
The Green Dog Walkers scheme is a non-confrontational, friendly way to change attitudes about dog fouling. The scheme was developed and owned by Falkirk Council and has since been adopted by many councils across the UK, including Flintshire County Council in Wales[6].

The scheme involves a pledge where volunteers are asked to:

- Use the merchandise (bandana or lead for their dog and a badge for the person) every time they walk their dog.
- Always pick up after their dog and dispose of it in a bin.
- Carry spare bags for anybody else that needs one.
- Give a friendly nudge to other dog walkers when asking others to pick up after their own dogs rather than having an aggressive confrontation.



COMMUNITY ACTION

Other aspects of the scheme include running campaigns to spread the word through:

- Path-side stalls in hotspot areas.
- Working with local business, groups and schools, and in partnership with community councils.
- Partnering with other events (such as Party in the Park and World Heritage Day).
- Print and social media messaging and promotion.

Some communities that have adopted the Green Dog Walkers Scheme have reported a 99% reduction in instances of dog fouling, with people from all parts of the community signed up including vets, dog trainers and dog walkers[7].

The scheme in Flintshire is managed by Keep Flintshire Tidy and the 'Your Green Dog Walker® Guide' can be accessed here.

Link: Green Dog Walkers Scheme, Falkirk

Key points:

- Volunteer groups can support the maintenance of dog fouling infrastructure and interventions, but this should be complementary to existing local authority or third-party efforts.
- Engagement with 'communities of interest' as well as local environmental volunteers is critical for establishing widespread buy-in to schemes.
- Community initiatives have seen successes in reduction but long-term resources for local coordination are vital.

ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement can be a powerful deterrent, but only if it is visible and consistent.



Awareness of the potential to receive a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for dog fouling has been found not to influence behaviour unless the probability of being caught is tangible[8]. Additionally, the cost and resources required for widespread effective coverage can be prohibitive and unsustainable and therefore, enforcement is unlikely to lead to long term behaviour change. A piecemeal approach risks shifting the problem to a nearby area, particularly in more rural areas where dog walkers have more choice of walking space.

Based on current resources, enforcement in a given area should either be infrequent but widespread or focus on problematic and high-risk areas where it will have the largest positive value, like sites where children play. Other enforcement tools for dog fouling include Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). A PSPO prohibits or mandates behaviours within a geographically designated zone to stop anti-social behaviour. An FPN can be issued to anyone found to be breaking the rules.

Examples of conditions include:

- Dog exclusion areas (usually children's play areas or sports grounds)
- Dogs on leads areas
- The requirement to carry dog poo bags

When using PSPOs, it is important the conditions do not conflict with animal welfare duties. Together with local authorities and the Dogs Trust, Keep Wales Tidy have developed a series of guidelines to follow to ensure that a balance can be reached between tackling dog fouling and animal welfare concerns, and that enforcement is effective and not overly restrictive.

- Local authorities should always seek to consult specifically on new PSPOs with animal welfare organisations and other relevant stakeholders.
- PSPOs should only be considered in areas where there is a problem, i.e. where the behaviour is having a demonstrable detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the community.
- Local authorities should be aware of the need for dog exercise areas and avoid 'blanket' PSPOs which could restrict access, restrict the ability for dogs to exhibit normal behaviour patterns (Animal Welfare Act, 2006) and penalise responsible dog owners.
- Gaining community support – both from dog owners and the general public – will be key to compliance, positive reception and sustainability.

Alternative measures include the creation of 'dog friendly' areas which could be more effective in some communities and could solicit a more positive public reception whilst fostering 'self-policing' in the dog walking community. For both dog fouling and PSPO enforcement, a partnership approach with clear aims and multiple stakeholders will likely foster more success with tackling the issue.

ENFORCEMENT

Monmouthshire County Council and their 'Give Dog Fouling the Red Card' scheme are an excellent example of this, the case study of which can be seen below.

Monmouthshire County Council – Give Dog Fouling the Red Card
Monmouthshire County Council recognised that a holistic approach to help bring about behavioural change was needed to achieve long lasting impact. While recognising that it was important for the authority to make full use of the legislative tools and powers available, the focus since 2015 has been on collaborative working with Town and Community Councils (TCCs).

The majority of the TCCs in Monmouthshire work closely in partnership with Waste / Street Services and Environmental Health as part of the scheme. The primary focus of the Group is to raise awareness of the anti-social nature of dog fouling and help develop a social conscience that dog owners should 'pick up' under the brand 'Give Dog Fouling the Red Card'.

The Group enables everyone to maximise limited resources and ensure that there is a consistent message to residents to 'pick up'.

The work they do includes[9]:

- Education
- Provision and trialling of signage and interventions
- Provision of dog waste bins and bags
- Community reporting
- Days of action in hotspot areas
- Sharing best practice
- Raising awareness of the work and message

In addition, one key aspect of the scheme is encouraging the reporting of dog owners who do not 'pick up' to the council. Complaints not supported by a statement are considered by TCCs at the 'yellow card' level, and these may result in an advisory letter to the dog owner and help create local solutions and peer pressure. Where a statement is provided, these constitute 'red cards' and are considered for enforcement action[10].

Key points:

- Enforcement is resource intensive and only acts as a deterrent if visible.
- Enforcement efforts in a given area should either be infrequent but widespread or focus on problematic and high-risk areas.
- PSPOs are a useful tool but animal welfare should always be considered.
- Partnership approaches are likely to be the most effective way of tackling dog fouling in the long term.

CONCLUSION

Dog fouling is a persistent and impactful issue across Wales. Whilst bin provision and enforcement are the most requested forms of action to tackle to issue, they are resource intensive and do not always create long term behaviour change.

There are many other tools that can help with prevention efforts, with a holistic, collaborative approach that considers local contexts being essential for sustainable results. Changes to recycling targets and waste collections mean new ways to deal with the dog fouling waste stream should be explored.

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