

## - DOG-FOULING -

Continued complaints about dog-fouling suggest this is a key concern for residents of South Kelsey. Discussions have previously taken place regarding additional dog fouling signs warning dog walkers of punitive measures that could be taken if there's evidence they haven't picked up after their dog.

Research indicates that dog fouling is an issue for many local authorities; second only to litter.<sup>1</sup> Reasons it's difficult to tackle include:

- People are aware they could be fined, but don't believe they'll ever be caught;
- Fouling can happen at any time, so patrolling rarely catches perpetrators;
- Residents are hesitant to confront neighbours who persistently dog-foul;
- Prosecution requires good evidence.

Whilst it's difficult to tackle the issue, it's clear that dog fouling has a negative impact on the environment and quality of life. In 2013, Defra published a ten-point scale to place a value on the unit changes in local environmental quality.<sup>2</sup> Ten years ago, the value attached to reducing the incidence of dog-fouling carried a significant cost benefit of between £1.89 and £4.73 per person per month (£2.45-£6.30 in 2023, adjusted for inflation.)

To address dog fouling, increased signage is often the 'go-to' response of parish councils, and larger authorities. But there's little evidence this strategy actually works. Within South Kelsey, where signage has increased over the years, dog-fouling continues to be a concern which suggests this alone isn't an effective solution.

A number of innovative solutions have been introduced by councils across the UK. These include: highlighting fouling with bright coloured sprays (intended to 'shame' perpetrators); installation of CCTV; rewards for residents reporting fouling; 'dog watch' schemes (similar to neighbourhood watch); and marked dog-walking routes. The general message is that education and engagement are more effective than the threat of punitive measures alone.

One project which has shown measurable benefit is the installation of dog bag dispensers. An average 57% reduction in complaints has been seen in areas where these are installed. The cost of the dispensers doesn't appear prohibitively expensive - three quotes obtained are £79-£94, exc VAT, for the dispenser, and £30-40 (exc VAT) per 800 bag refill. Depending on where the dispenser is sited, there may be an additional cost for pole/brackets. Some councils have managed to secure funding towards the installation of the dispenser and replenishment of bags by offering advertising space on these.

Previous information circulated talked about the importance of a 'sense of community' in dealing with dog fouling. We need to make allies out of responsible dog owners and ensure mechanisms for reporting are publicised and accessible. In addition, the provision of dog bags for people who 'may have forgotten theirs' should be seen as a supportive stance: a provision of this type is a positive action which demonstrates that the Parish Council is listening and doing its utmost to encourage residents to do the right thing.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dog Fouling - Why it is difficult to tackle and potential solutions*; Association of Public Service Excellence; December 2019

<sup>2</sup> *Local Environment Quality: Economic Analysis*; DEFTA; 5 August 2013.