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# TACKLING DOG FOULING IN TORBAY

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## Background

Dog fouling in Torbay is a problem. Between April and December 2008 approximately 200 complaints were recorded about dog fouling by Torbay Council's Environmental Health and Consumer Protection team. Whilst this figure raises concern about the issue, it cannot be considered a true reflection of the issue, as it fails to take into account complaints received by other council departments, the consultation unit, the Mayor, Members and informal comments received.

In addition to formal complaints recorded, the council has received negative publicity about dog fouling within the local media.

Earlier in 2009 a decision was taken to launch a campaign to tackle dog fouling. The campaign was planned as one element of a year long strategy to tackle dog fouling in Torbay.

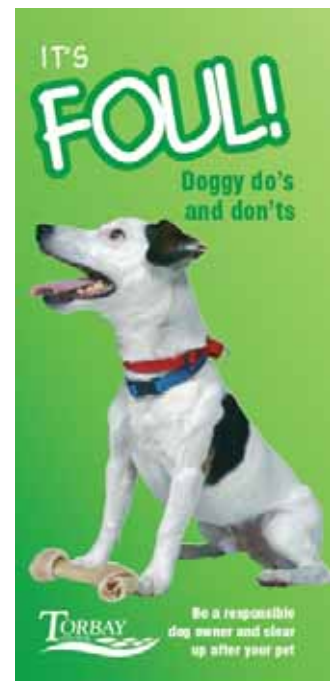
## The council's position

Torbay Council's position on dog fouling is clear – dog fouling is unacceptable within our community.

Dog fouling is anti-social and those that fail to pick up display a disregard for other people, public health and the environment. Failing to pick up immediately after a dog is an offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 1995. Those caught in Torbay can be issued with a £75 Fixed Penalty Notice (with a £25 reduction if paid within 7 days). Any non-payment may be referred to the council's Legal Team for consideration of a prosecution. If prosecuted and found guilty the maximum fine is £1,000. Those that bag the mess but don't bin it (i.e. they dispose of bagged faeces in a hedge or tree) can face a fine of up to £2,500 in court for the offence of littering.

## Corporate priorities

Work to tackle dog fouling supports the corporate objectives of 'Pride in the Bay' and 'Stronger Communities'. Efforts to reduce dog fouling in Torbay are in accordance with the council's commitment to create and maintain quality environments that are clean, safe, accessible and pleasant.



Torbay Council  
Information Leaflet

## Phase one - the campaign

The aim of the campaign was to reduce the prevalence of dog faeces in public spaces, within Torbay. The campaign objectives were:

- To increase awareness of the issues associated with dog fouling.
- To increase awareness of the penalties associated with dog fouling.
- To highlight that public litter bins can be used to dispose of bagged dog faeces.
- To increase the number of 'intelligent' dog fouling reports received by the council.
- To reduce the number of complaints received by the council with regard to dog fouling in Torbay<sup>1</sup>.



Torbay Council 2009 Campaign Artwork

On 27 April 2009 the council launched its anti-fouling campaign. The campaign utilised two key communication methods to convey the campaign message, namely an advertisement with local radio station Heart FM, and 'hard-hitting' artwork featuring on 30 bus shelters throughout Torbay.

Over a 6 week period, the council's 40 second anti-fouling advertisement on Heart FM, reached approximately 60,730 adults per week. The advert was aired 56 times per week.

Accompanying the airtime campaign was a Short Message Service (SMS). This enabled the public to send a text to a designated number, and then receive a message from the council which included a telephone number for reporting fouling. During the radio campaign, 16

people used the message service. Given this fact the appropriateness of such a service would need to be given careful consideration for future campaigns.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that dog fouling 'complaints' and dog fouling 'reports' could be considered as two separate issues. For example a dog fouling 'complaint' may inform the council of a dog faeces problem within a specific area. A dog fouling report however provides intelligence that can be used by a council dog warden to target their patrols and catch persistent offenders.

The highly controversial artwork for the bus shelter advertising was specifically designed to 'compliment' the airtime message by providing consistency and continuity. The artwork was purchased from Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority in Wales. Whilst it was envisaged that the campaign artwork would generate a number of complaints from the public, a total of 1 was received.

Radio advertising ran from 27 April – 8 June 2009 and the bus shelter artwork featured in Torbay between 11 May and 25 May. The total cost of this element of the campaign was £7580.

In addition to advertising, the anti-fouling campaign consisted of a number of tasks to reduce fouling including:

- **Creation of a dedicated webpage** giving information and advice about fouling at [www.torbay.gov.uk/dogfouling](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/dogfouling). The webpage encouraged the public to report persistent offenders, and the information required by the Dog Warden to enable enforcement action to be taken. The webpage also featured an online survey on fouling and an interactive game for young people. The flash game aimed at the 5-8 year olds allowed young children to play dog warden following dog owners and their pets through a series of park and street scenes and watching whether characters picked up after their pets, If they didn't the children could click on the offending dog faeces and issue the owner with a £75 fine. The game included a range of sounds linked to the activities of the dogs and wardens and provided educational as well as entertainment messages. The game was kindly provided courtesy of Exeter City Council. There were 726 web hits on the dog fouling webpage from 27 April to 22 July 2009 and 306 web hits relating to the Dog Warden service during this time (overall this was an increase of 72% over the same period the previous year). During the same



Torbay Council Webpage



Interactive Dog Fouling Game



Torbay Council Dog Fouling Calling Card

period in 2008 there were 12 web hits relating to dog fouling and 277 relating to the Dog Warden Service. An online reporting system is now available on the council's website, a link to which can be found from the 'Dog Fouling' page.

- **A partnership agreement with the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary** to enable Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for dog fouling. During the campaign, briefing information was provided to the local Police and two FPNs were issued by PCSOs in Torbay.
- **Production of standard 'cards'** giving advice as to what intelligence is required by the Dog Wardens to enable enforcement. The cards can be delivered to residents in fouling 'hotspot' locations to raise awareness about the issue and encourage reporting.
- **Implementation of lamppost stickers** to raise awareness about the penalties associated with dog fouling. The brightly coloured lamppost stickers are in accordance with Torbay's dog fouling 'brand' and have generated positive feedback from the public. Throughout the campaign approximately 200 of the anti fouling stickers were placed in Ellacombe, Babbacombe, Hele, Plainmoor, Wellswood and the Willows (Torquay). Approximately 80 of the stickers have been implemented in Brixham to date. The Dog Wardens continue to implement the stickers throughout Torbay



Torbay Council Lamppost Sticker

- **Circulation of 'Dog Watch' initiative'**. Dog Watch consists of large, brightly coloured, branded tri-signs which are placed into dog fouling hotspots and accompanied by targeted enforcement. Each tri-sign informs the public of the penalties associated with fouling, and how to report offenders. Dog Watch signage is placed in areas for up to 2 weeks and then circulated to prevent desensitisation of the message. Further information about Dog Watch can be located under the heading Phase two - next steps on page 10 of this document.
- **Publicity.** A series of press releases were issued to the media throughout the campaign. A positive news story about the anti-fouling campaign featured on BBC Spotlight (1.4 million viewers) on two separate occasions. Whilst the campaign initiated debate on the local radio disappointingly news of the campaign was not featured within the local newspaper. The council also received publicity about the campaign via BBC Radio Devon, BBC Radio Scotland, The Telegraph, The Brixham Signal and The Street Warden Resource Centre Newsletter. In response to publicity the council received requests for campaign information from various agencies including the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, East Devon District Council, Hull City Council, South Derbyshire District Council, North Lanarkshire Council, Durham Police, Thames Valley Police, Broadclyst Parish Council, Chalford Parish Council and Looe Parish Council. The media value of the campaign publicity generated by local

television coverage alone was £4,383. The media value of the publicity generated by radio and other forms of media cannot be calculated accurately for this campaign.

- **Communications.** Information about the campaign was placed on the council’s website. Emails were also sent to all staff and all Community Partnerships in Torbay. A feature on the campaign was paid for in the Beach Hut Users Magazine which is distributed to approximately 9000 people.

Throughout the duration of the campaign (over a 6 week period) a total of 11 FPNs were issued (1 of which by a PCSO) for dog fouling offences throughout Torbay. During the campaign a total of 19 dog fouling reports were received, compared with 12 complaints with regard to dog faeces. A full comparison of reports will be undertaken at a later date to evaluate the level of reporting in accordance with the strategy. The Dog Wardens continue to forward details about the non payment of Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling offences to the council’s Legal Team for consideration.

## Results on the street

Data from the council’s Cleansing Team indicates that at the end of April 2009, 400 cases of faeces were recorded in Paignton. At the end of May 2009, the figure was 153 for the same area. The figure at the end of June was 201. Whilst these figures would indicate a reduction in dog faeces in public spaces during the campaign period, a sustained decrease has not been achieved. To provide a more accurate reflection of how the council’s dog fouling strategy is performing, faeces counts from ‘hotspot’ locations will be monitored at regular junctures throughout the year. This activity will provide a sound baseline of information from which to evaluate the performance of further work to tackle dog fouling in Torbay. The results of the Dog Watch initiative so far are as follows:

Month (2009)	Location	Faeces Count Before	Faeces Count After	Percentage Difference
March	Furzeham Green, Brixham <sup>2</sup>	79	56	29% reduction
March	Pretty Park, Torquay	58	53	9% reduction
March	Babbacombe Downs, Torquay	88	22	75% reduction
April	Torwood Gardens, Torquay	28	19	32% reduction
May	Roundham Gardens, Paignton <sup>3</sup>	86	36	58% reduction
May	St Andrew’s Churchyard, Torquay	23	16	30% reduction

<sup>2</sup> The Dog Warden for the area issued 2 FPNs for dog fouling immediately after the Dog Watch Signage was removed from Furzeham Green, Brixham.

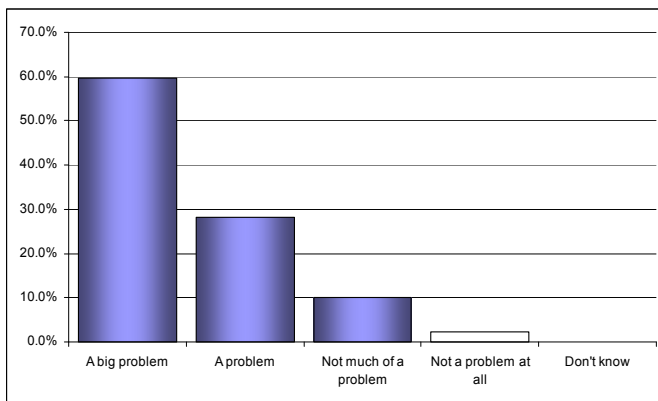
<sup>3</sup> The Dog Warden for the area issued 2 FPNs for dog fouling immediately prior to erecting the Dog Watch Signage in the area. These points are relevant as they indicate that targeted enforcement is taking place in accordance with the signage.

June	Cary Park, Torquay	98	61	38% reduction
July	Brewery Park, Torquay	163	64	61% reduction

## What the survey said

To establish public perception about dog fouling in Torbay, a questionnaire was produced and made available online and in council libraries. Council Street Wardens were also tasked to collate the views of the community using the questionnaires. Questionnaires were completed prior to and during the campaign.

Whilst the response rate to the questionnaire is not reflective of Torbay's population (89 respondents) it does provide a sample of perception, and provide an insight into where further work is required. The results of the questionnaires cannot be used to directly assess the impact of the campaign, but some of the information gained can be used as a baseline for future related studies. It should also be noted that 35% of respondents owned a dog.



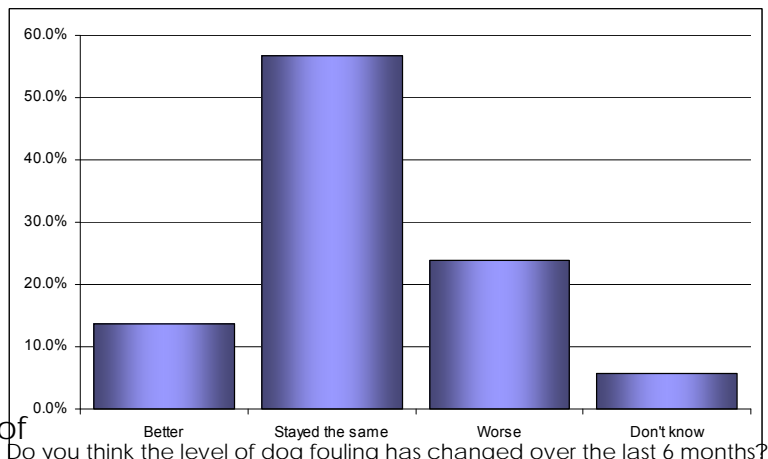
How much of a problem do you think dog fouling is in Torbay?

The questionnaire revealed that 60% of respondents viewed dog fouling as a big problem. 62% of respondents also claimed to have seen dog faeces in a public place, on the day that they completed the survey. 40% of respondents indicated that dog fouling was worse in residential areas, with 29% stating that fouling was a

problem in parks, and 5% for beaches. Main roads were only considered as a

problem fouling area by 2% of respondents. The council has been carrying out work to reduce dog fouling in town centres and parks, however given the results it would suggest that further work is also required in residential areas.

In terms of the scale of the dog fouling problem in Torbay, whilst 60% of respondents viewed dog fouling as a big problem, and 28% a problem, 57% of respondents felt that the levels of dog fouling had stayed the same during the last 6 months (i.e. prior to the campaign). 14% of respondents stated that the

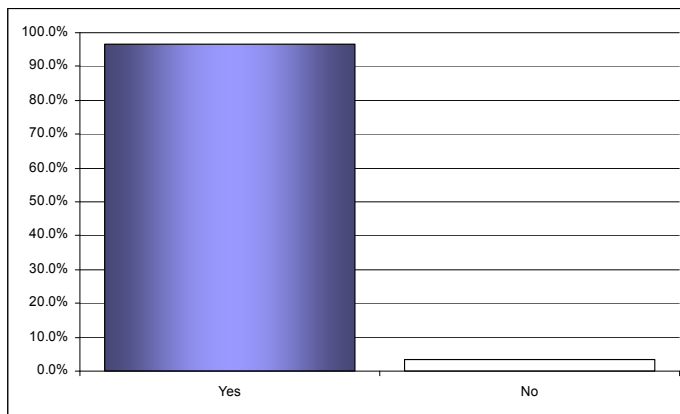


Do you think the level of dog fouling has changed over the last 6 months?

amount of dog fouling had got better in the last 6 months, and 24% thought it had worsened. These results do not necessarily reflect anecdotal evidence which had suggested that local people perceived the dog fouling problem as getting worse. Whilst over half of respondents felt that dog fouling levels had stayed the same, the council must make additional efforts to reduce dog fouling and ensure that the public is informed.

97% of respondents suggested an awareness of the health implications associated with dog fouling. 33% stated dog fouling could cause blindness, 20% said it was a danger to young people and 18% displayed an awareness of Toxocara. One of the campaign objectives was to raise awareness about the issues associated with dog fouling. These results are encouraging as they indicate that the public understand that failing to pick up after a dog can pose a danger to public health.

89% of respondents thought that it was a criminal offence not to pick up after a dog. 62% felt that they knew what the penalties for a dog fouling offence were. Whilst only 32% knew that the Fixed Penalty Notice charge for dog fouling is £75, from the total responses 85% recognised that there was some financial penalty for dog fouling offences. Again, a campaign objective was to raise awareness about the penalties associated with dog fouling. The results would indicate that the majority of people understand that dog fouling is an offence, and that there is a financial penalty for those that are caught.



Are you aware of the health implications associated with dog fouling?

In terms of reporting offenders, 40% of respondents stated that they knew how to make a report. 43% said that they would contact the Dog Warden and 18% said that they would contact the council's Community Protection Team. As nearly 50% of respondents did not know how to make a report the council must continue to provide information to the community about reporting offenders to the Community Protection Team.

When asked what information would be of most use to a Dog Warden to help catch persistent offenders, 17% said the time/frequency of offences, 16% said a location, 15% said a description of the offender and their dog and 14% said details about the breed of dog. A large element of the campaign was to try and improve the standard of intelligence in dog reports made to the council, to enable Dog Wardens to target their patrols and catch persistent offenders. These results would

indicate that the public understand the need to give certain information and details when making reports, however further work is required in this area.

57% of respondents knew that it was not illegal to dispose of dog faeces using a litter bin but 80% said that there were not enough designated dog bins in Torbay. These results indicate that the council needs to carry out more work to highlight to the public that standard public litter bins can be used to dispose of bagged dog faeces.

Further work to establish public perception about the issue of dog fouling will take place at a later date and in accordance with the strategy.

The key points to note from the results to inform future work were:

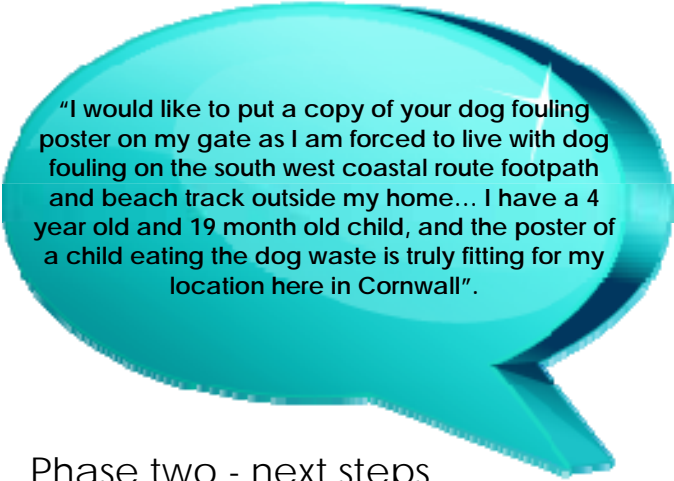
- Targeted enforcement and education should focus on residential areas.
- The local newspaper, public meetings and the internet represent key communication methods to raise the profile by which Torbay Council communicates what is being done to tackle dog fouling.
- The vast majority of people know that there are health implications and financial penalties associated with dog fouling. Future campaigns will be able to focus on other key messages to reduce the problem (e.g. encourage reporting and bust myths relating to litter bins and faeces disposal).

## Making a real difference

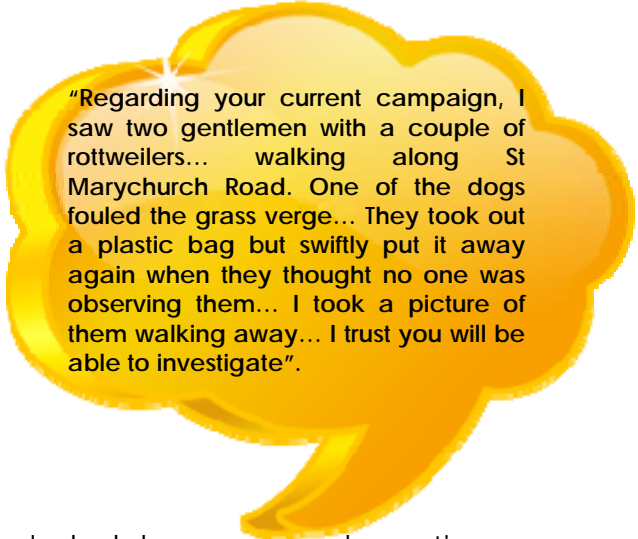
Whilst statistics provide a good indication of performance, the views expressed by representatives of the community, in their own words, are also vital to evaluating campaigns and projects.

The following comments have been taken directly from email correspondence received during the campaign.





"I would like to put a copy of your dog fouling poster on my gate as I am forced to live with dog fouling on the south west coastal route footpath and beach track outside my home... I have a 4 year old and 19 month old child, and the poster of a child eating the dog waste is truly fitting for my location here in Cornwall".



"Regarding your current campaign, I saw two gentlemen with a couple of rottweilers... walking along St Marychurch Road. One of the dogs fouled the grass verge... They took out a plastic bag but swiftly put it away again when they thought no one was observing them... I took a picture of them walking away... I trust you will be able to investigate".

## Phase two - next steps

The first phase of the anti-fouling strategy has concluded, however work continues to tackle dog fouling in Torbay. Whilst the summer campaign was one element of a wider strategy to tackle the issue, the results have informed future work and highlighted areas where resources should be targeted.

A number of activities are scheduled in accordance with the strategy and these include:

- Standard monitoring and evaluation  
The council must be able to evidence any change 'on the ground' as a direct result of activities. Standard monitoring of 'hotspot' areas will continue throughout the year, and further work will be completed to assess public perception about dog fouling in Torbay.
- Review and implement Dog Control Orders (Dogs on lead and dog ban areas)  
Consideration will be given to the further implementation of Dog Control Orders in Torbay.
- Briefing/training for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and council staff  
Training and briefing materials will continue to be provided to PCSOs as appropriate, to ensure that officers are given the information/materials required to issue FPNs for dog fouling in Torbay. Further work will also be completed with 'front-line' council staff to encourage reporting of persistent dog fouling offenders.
- Enforcement (PCSOs and targeted Dog Warden Patrols)  
The council will continue to raise awareness about the penalties associated with dog fouling and take enforcement action against offenders. FPNs for dog fouling can be issued by Dog Wardens, PCSOs and council Street Wardens. Where possible the council will use intelligence from the community to target resources to catch persistent offenders.

- Monthly review of Fixed Penalty Notices issued

The monitoring of FPNs issued helps to evaluate use of resources and identify problem or 'hotspot' areas. FPN payment rate is also monitored and non payment of Notices flagged for prosecution.

- Circulate Dog Watch signage (with targeted enforcement)

The effectiveness of the Dog Watch scheme has not yet been fully evaluated. However early indications using data gathered and anecdotal evidence from the community, would indicate that the signage along with targeted enforcement, is having a positive impact in some areas. Dog Watch also enables the council to provide a visible and prompt response to concerns raised about dog fouling in a specific area. Dog Watch will continue to be implemented in dog fouling 'hotspot' areas throughout Torbay.



Dog Watch Signage in Situ

- Issue press releases (e.g. successful prosecutions etc)

The council is proactive in issuing information to the community via press releases. The summer anti-fouling campaign achieved widespread media coverage locally and nationally. Press releases providing information about the council's efforts to tackle dog fouling and successful enforcement action will continue to be issued to the media. Between August and October 2009 Torbay Council prosecuted 4 individuals for dog fouling offences. Each offender was ordered to pay a fine and additional costs which in these cases totalled £820



Torbay Council Dog Watch Signage

- Develop community anti-fouling groups

It is more likely that a Dog Warden will be able to target their patrol and catch persistent dog fouling offenders, when using intelligence provided by the community. Encouraging individual members of the public to report offenders, is not a simple task however and the council will seek to develop community anti-fouling groups. Each group of volunteers will be provided with an information pack and will act as the 'eyes and ears' of the community, working with the council to catch offenders and clean up their environment.

- Install additional dog bins

New dog bins are purchased and installed annually. The council will continue to work in partnership with the community to install dog bin in appropriate areas. Further work to highlight that bagged dog faeces can be disposed of in a litter bin, will also take place to balance the demand for designated red dog bins.

- Erect flag signage in parks

Two dog fouling sail banners have been purchased and have been used at specific events, particularly in parks and on beaches. The banners have been designed in accordance with Torbay's dog fouling 'brand' and provide a contact number for the reporting of offenders.

- 'After Dark' winter anti-fouling campaign

Should funding be available, the council plan to conduct an autumn/winter anti fouling campaign in 2009. The campaign will build on the work completed for the summer campaign, however the key messages will be adapted as appropriate. Dog fouling during the autumn/winter has historically been a problem in Torbay as darker mornings and evenings, provide a greater opportunity for irresponsible owners to avoid picking up after their pets.



Sail banner

- Development of pages on website

Whilst dog fouling information is currently available on the website, the webpages do not reflect the amount of work that the council is doing to tackle dog fouling in Torbay. The website will be developed to provide information and guidance to the public, provide information about campaigns, encourage local action, along with details of how to report offenders.

- Bay-wide implementation of lamppost stickers

Lamppost stickers will continue to be implemented throughout Torbay, particularly within 'hotspot' locations.

- Implement bin stickers

There is still a perception in the community that it is illegal to dispose of dog faeces in a litter bin. There is also a perception that the council should invest in a large number of designated dog bins. Bin stickers have been designed and produced to highlight to the public that if there is not a designated dog bin in the area, bagged dog faeces can be disposed of using a standard public litter bin. Bin stickers will be



Bin sticker

trialled in 'hotspot' locations. If successful, stickers will be implemented on a Bay-wide basis.

- Implement floor stencils

It is planned that floor stencils will be used as a creative method of communication to convey anti fouling messages in specific locations.

- Issuing of information cards in hotspot areas

Dog fouling standard cards have been produced and enable particular residential and commercial properties to be targeted in dog fouling 'hotspot' locations. The cards can be delivered by Dog Wardens and highlight that there is a fouling problem in the area, and that information is needed to catch persistent offenders. The standard cards also negate the need for correspondence to be issued in some cases, reducing administration for the Dog Wardens and enabling more time to be dedicated to patrol.

- Review of online reporting system

An online reporting system has now been introduced to enable a number of environmental crimes, including dog fouling, to be reported to the council and will be reviewed and developed as appropriate.

- Distribute information packs to voluntary groups and community partnerships

Information packs about how to report dog fouling offenders, and wider issues around responsible dog ownership will be issued to voluntary and community groups in line with an autumn/winter anti fouling campaign.

- Encourage community organised events and attend group meetings as appropriate

As dog fouling is an emotive issue of concern to many community groups, staff from the Community Protection Team are able to attend meetings as appropriate. Attending meetings provides an opportunity for the community to give information and feedback to council staff, and to find out what steps are being taken to tackle the problem in their area.

- Design a dog sign children's competition

To date the anti-fouling message has been aimed at adult members of the community, and therefore it is important that work is conducted with children and young people. To engage young people the council will launch a 'design a sign' competition where schools will be encouraged to submit designs for an anti-fouling graphic and message which can be transferred onto signage and erected in a specific area.

- School visits

A series of school visits will be scheduled whereby council Dog Wardens will provide information and advice to young people on dog fouling and responsible dog ownership.

- Public perception surveys

Further work will be completed to assess public perception about dog fouling in Torbay and used to assist in the evaluation of the strategy.

## Conclusion

Torbay Council will continue to undertake education and targeted, intelligence led enforcement to tackle dog fouling. Proactive work with the media will also continue to ensure that the efforts of the community and the council are widely communicated. A full evaluation of the dog fouling strategy is planned for May 2010 and at that time recommendations will be made for future activities and projects relating to dog fouling.

## Contact details

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Campaign Coverage on the Telegraph Website



Campaign Coverage on American Website



Campaign Coverage on BBC Website