

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest and Commons Committee Open Spaces Committee	4 th July 2016 18 th July 2016
Subject: Update Report: Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches	Public
Report of: Superintendent – The Commons	For Information

Summary

At the September 2014 meeting of this committee Members approved the introduction of Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches commencing 1st December 2014. As part of that approval Members requested that the Superintendent produce a report in July 2016 to provide an update on the implementation of the Dog Control Orders.

This update report addresses that requirement and draws on data collected during the period commencing the introduction of DCO's on 1st Decembers 2014 to 31st March 2016.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

1. Note the contents of this report.

Main Report

Background

1. On the 9th September 2014 meeting of this committee Members approved the introduction of the following Dog Control Orders at Burnham Beeches - See Appendix 1 for map.

Schedule 1. Fail to remove dog faeces. To be applied across the whole site.

Schedule 2. Fail to keep a dog on a lead in an area so designated. To be applied across 59% of the site.

Schedule 3. Fail to put and keep a dog on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer. Maximum lead length to be 5m. To be applied across 41% of the site.

Schedule 4. Permit a dog to enter land from which dogs are excluded. To be applied only to land covered by the existing zone around the Burnham Beeches café since 2007.

Schedule 5. Take more than 4 dogs on to the land. To be applied across the whole site.

2. As part of that approval Members requested that the Superintendent produce a DCO update report in July 2016.

3. To deliver the above Superintendent and his management team at Burnham Beeches devised a monitoring programme.
4. The summary data collated during the monitoring period to date is set out in the remainder of this report in two distinct sections.

Section 1. Outcome of monitoring programmes to date.

DCO Challenges resulting from Ranger activities since December 2014

Table 1				
Period	No of DCO challenges	No challenges/month	No of people –ve reactions	% unhappy
01/12/14 – 31/03/15	259	64.75	11	4.25%
01/04/15 – 31/03/16	517	43	23	4.45%

DNUEC = Dogs Not under effective control.

5. Since the introduction of DCO's Rangers have adjusted their patrol activities slightly to facilitate the consistent reporting of incidents and to generally improve their visibility to all site visitors. For example, the Rangers now carry the DCO explanatory leaflets on their patrols with the instruction to use for any DCO offence seen. They are also carry out the transect walks mentioned later in this report.
6. Underneath the headline figures the data indicates that the bulk of DCO challenges involve dogs 'off lead' in the Schedule 2 area.
7. Table 1 indicates that monthly approaches are being required less frequently with the passage of time (at 2014/15 levels the expected number for 2015/16 would have been nearer 800 approaches). Table 1 also indicates that 'negative responses from visitors approached for DCO infringement issues remains constant at just above 4% of the total.
8. Encouragingly the % of dog fouling and dogs being seen or reported as not being under effective control have decreased.

Comparing pre DCO data with Post DCO data

9. Rangers have also continued to record dog related incidents in the same format as they did before the introduction of DCO's in 2014. This allows a direct comparison pre and post DCO. Incidents recorded in Table 2 tend to be of a less serious or 'nuisance' nature and are simply noted under the categories shown below.

Table 2. Pre and Post DCO 'Nuisance' data						
Year	Dogs reported missing	DNUEC Dogs seen with no owner in sight	DNUEC – Owner hasn't got dog UEC	DNUEC Dogs running up to other visitors	Fouling	No collar
12/13	15	56	78	18	72	13
13/14	10	45	92	19	28	14
14/15	14	36 Pre DCO =28 Post DCO = 8	70	15	34 Pre DCO = 24 Post DCO = 10	16
15/16	9	16	37	9	11	7

10. Table 2 indicates that 'nuisance' dog behaviour issues recorded before and since DCO's were introduced have reduced significantly, even those not directly affected by it e.g. collars. All measures indicate improvement.
11. The more detailed data indicates that most lost dogs have occurred in the Schedule 3 area with only 1 reported from the Schedule 2 (a dog slipped out of its harness).
12. Some dog related issues are not DCO offences and must still be dealt with by the site's byelaws. E.g. if a dog is not under effective control in the Schedule 3 area then that is a Byelaw Offence. It only becomes a DCO offence if the owner is asked to put it on a lead and refuses. See Table 3 below

Table 3. <u>Serious or Byelaw</u> Incidents requiring a formal report (dog related but not covered by DCO's)			
	DNUEC	Lost	Total incidents
2012/13	21	4	25
2013/14	12	4	16
2014/15	20	16	36
2015/16	19	4	23

13. DNUEC incidents in Table 3 are therefore generally of a more serious nature than those shown in Table 2 and require a more formal record. A typical example of a serious incident would be a person being bitten rather than simply being jumped up at by a dog. As can be seen from Table 3 figures do tend to vary year on year so further data is desirable to investigate any significant patterns.
14. Data sitting beneath the headline figures shown in Table 3 indicates that since the introduction of DCO's there have been no 'serious' DNUEC incidents in the Schedule 2 (dogs on lead) area. All have occurred in the Schedule 3 (dogs off lead area).

DCO Signage issues

Table 4. Vandalism to signs			
Year	2014	2015	2016 to date
	0	10	29

15. Table 4 shows that 39 DCO signs have been vandalised and replaced over the 17 month period. Each sign costs approximately £12 to purchase and erect on site. The total cost of vandalism is approximately £500.
16. A male dog walker was reported to Rangers in March 2016 and the person concerned was approached concerning the vandalism of signs. He denied involvement and the witness wished to avoid further involvement. The Police were informed and since then no further incidents of this type have occurred.
17. One sign was moved by staff on The Avenue as it was in line of sight of a house bound neighbour who had very politely commented that the view was less favourable since its installation and requested that it be repositioned.

Number of Fixed Penalty Notices Issued for DCO offences.

Table 5. Fixed Penalty Notices			
Year	2014	2015	2016 to date
	0	0	0

18. Table 5 shows that no FPN's have been issued. This is seen as a positive outcome and goes some way to indicating that the Dog Management Strategy and Enforcement protocols developed by the site are effective, fair, proportionate and effective.
19. Three people have received final warning letters and will be issued with an FPN (or will appear in court) should the behaviours continue. One person's details are being traced so that they may also receive a final warning letter.

Use of Dog Bags

Table 6. Use of Dog Bags				
	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Dog Bags	100375	112775	115100	102550

20. Use of dog bags provided at the site can be a relatively reliable tool for monitoring the level of dog walking on the site. During the initial DCO period use of dog bags fell to levels last recorded in 2012/13. This equates to the potential loss of around 20 regular dog walkers from the site. That reduction appears to have been temporary as dispenser records since April 2016 indicate that numbers have returned to their previous high.
21. Figures for the 2016/17 should help to provide a clearer picture.

Dog Mess incidents

Table 7. 'Flag the Poo' Before the introduction of DCO's			
Date	March 2014 (single day event)	June 2014 (single day event)	Sept 2014 (single day event)
SCH2	46	72	41
SCH3	55	61	54
Total	101	133	95

Table 8. 'Flag the Poo records' After the introduction of DCO's							
Date	31/01/15	21/02/15	16/05/15	02/08/15	01/11/15	30/01/16	23/05/16
SCH2	2	3	1	1	1	1	2
SCH3	14	18	11	10	14	11	6
Total	16	21	12	11	15	12	8

22. Tables 7 and 8 indicate a significant reduction in dog mess found on site since the introduction of DCO's. This is seen most dramatically in the Schedule 2 area where dogs are required to be on lead.

Transects – Compliance with Schedules 2 and 3.

Table 9. Transects				
Schedule 2. Dogs on leads at all times				
Transect occasions	Total number of people seen	Total no of dogs seen	No. dogs on lead	No. dogs off lead
16	286	82	66	16
Schedule 3 – Dogs off leads				
Transect occasions	Total number of people seen	Total no of dogs seen	No. dogs on lead	No. dogs off lead
10	170	114	33	81

- 23. Two transects were designed that could be walked as either a single long transect or two shorter ones. They cover both Schedules 2 and 3 and are designed to indicate compliance levels for each schedule.
- 24. Investigation of the detailed data suggests that either some dog walkers are favouring the Schedule 3 area or more ‘non dog walkers’ are using the Schedule 2 area. This issue is also picked up later in this report
- 25. Data sitting beneath the headline figures for Schedule 2 (dogs on leads) indicates that the lowest compliance was recorded during the earliest transects i.e. closest to the introduction of DCO’s (12 of the 16 incidents). Compliance levels thereafter appear to have improved significantly over time.
- 26. Data for the Schedule 3 (dogs off lead) area indicates a higher level of dogs being kept on lead than anticipated (29%). Again, this would make an interesting area for further study should resources allow.

Section 2 – Issues and concerns raised prior to DCO introduction

Concentrating dogs on main common café area will see an increase of incidents in these busy areas.

Table 10. DNUEC incidents on Main Common and Café areas				
Year	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Incidents on Main Common and café areas as a percentage of all incidents	50%	55.5%	31%	33%

- 27. Table 10 indicates a significant reduction in reported incidents in the café and Main Common Areas following the introduction of DCO’s. These areas are within the Dogs off Lead Schedule.
- 28. The underlying data also indicates a significant reduction (to zero) of incidents in the other busy areas around the ponds and easy access paths. These areas are within the Dogs on Lead Schedule.

Dog walkers will show a preference for Schedule 3 area (Dogs off leads)

29. A survey was conducted in 2016 to indicate patterns of visitor activity. This allows a comparison of similar data (not exact) collected in 2013.
30. A random sample of visitors were given GPS devices (or filled in paper maps) and their movements were tracked across the site during their visits. Visitors were also asked a few standard questions to facilitate data analysis.
31. Whilst the lengths of routes walked between 2013 and 2016 remain very similar the data indicates that the western side of the site (dogs on leads) appears to be used slightly less than it was pre DCO's with the balance appearing in the eastern side (dogs off leads).
32. The quantum difference is unclear at present but the data indicates that this is a small shift. NB. Table 9 indicates that visitor numbers within Schedules 2 and 3 areas are about equal when the frequency of survey activity is accounted for.

Dog Walkers will leave Burnham Beeches and use other local open spaces.

33. One issue of concern raised by objectors to the introduction of DCO's at Burnham Beeches was that dog walkers would 'desert the site' and any associated problems would move to other local open spaces. This was of particular concern to local Councillors.
34. When compared to a similar survey in 2013 the 2016 GPS survey indicates that the percentage of dog walkers using the site has remained constant at around 56% of total visits to the site.
35. To further investigate this issue the main local open spaces were recently contacted to seek information any observed changes since the introduction of DCO's at Burnham Beeches:

Buckinghamshire Country Council - Black Park Country Park, Langley Park and Denham Park.

- a. Have not reported any significant displacement of dog walkers to their sites since December 2014 nor do they report any increase in dog related incidents/issues.
- b. Black Park reports an increase in commercial dog walkers during the period i.e. people bringing over 4 + dogs. Burnham Beeches does not record a similar marked reduction in commercial dog walking at the site. Other recent influences that might explain this increase are the licensing of commercial dog walkers at the Royal Parks and parking restrictions at Windsor Great Park.

The National Trust - Cliveden

- a. Visitor numbers have not shown an increase over last 3 years
- b. Commercial Dog walking is not allowed
- c. Anecdotally the Trust's managers feel that they have seen an increase in dog numbers in recent years but not suddenly over the last year – just a gradual year on year increase.

Reputational harm will be caused to the City if DCO's are introduced.

Table 11. Complaints and comments of support since 1/12/14.				
Year	No of letters/emails/calls received relating to dog walking	Negative towards DCO's	Neutral or asking for information re DCO or other non DCO dog issues	Positive Re DCO
01/12/14 To 31/3/15	15 (12 individuals)	11	3	1
01/4/15 To 31/3/16	16 (13 individuals)	10	5	1
01/4/16 – To 31/05/16	4 (4 individuals)	0	2	2
Totals	35 (26 individuals)	21	10	4

- 36. Table 11 indicates that the number of comments received over the 17 month period is low and decreasing further with the passage of time.
- 37. The number of complaints outweighs the neutral and supportive comments although some of this difference is due to the incidence of repeat complaints from the same individuals.

Table 12. Press activity Pre and Post the introduction of DCO's		
Pre DCO introduction		
Number	For DCO's	Against DCOS
	0	5
Post DCO introduction		
	1	1

- 38. From Table 12 it can be seen that press activity since the introduction of DCO's has been low and balanced.

Table 13. Visitor surveys and similar feedback		
2014/15	60 second survey - 2014/15. 104 respondents.	7 comments on dogs (7%)
2015/16	60 second survey - 2015/16. 90 respondents	13 comments on dogs (14%)

- 39. Table 13 indicates that visitor feedback from the 60 second surveys shows a small response concerning dog issues at Burnham Beeches since the introduction of DCO's on the site. Data sitting beneath the headline figures indicates that this response is quite well balanced i.e. both for and against DCO's.

Income to the site will fall dramatically due to fewer visitors to the site.

Car Park income – donations via car park machines during normal weekdays

Table 14. Determine car park donations – Year on Year comparisons				
Donations via car parks	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
	£14,369	£13,352	£13,365	£13,334

40. Donations to the charitable activities of the site have stayed remarkably consistent over the last 4 full years that car park charges have been in place. The first year is slightly higher which is not unexpected with possible confusion as to when charges/donation period apply.

Car Park Income – Charges for parking at weekends and Bank Holidays

Table 15. Car Park Income - Charges				
Car parks	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Charges Gross	£79,122	£76,727	£66,718	£65,534

41. There is a reduction of around £11,000 (14%) in car park takings from 13/14 – 14/15. However, DCO's were only in force for 4 of the 12 months of 14/15.
42. It should also be noted that 2012/13 and 13/14 reflects a remarkable run of clement weather at weekends and bank holidays when car park charges apply. The weather in subsequent years has been far less favourable during the charging periods. Weather is therefore likely to be the greatest influence on income generated by car park charges
43. Finally, income for 15/16 when compared to 14/15 remains remarkably consistent despite DCO's existing for the whole of the former and only 4 months of the latter

Café Income

44. Income details from the café are currently being sought as part of the normal financial reporting process. Once collated that detailed information will be included in the lease renewal report (Non Public) later in 2016.
45. Headline figures indicate stable or uplifted café income following the introduction of DCO's. A decrease in income is noted from June 2015 to March 2016. This decrease is currently thought to be due to the poor run of weather during the holiday periods and at weekends since that date. Other external factors are being investigated.

Table 16. Determine general donation incomes				
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Donations	£835	£1045	£865	£1640

46. Table 16 indicates that, as with donations via the car park machines, income has stayed comparable year on year. At the 4 months stage 2016 is already a record year (calendar year).

Conclusions

47. This report seeks to provide members with an update on dog related issues since the introduction of DCO's at Burnham Beeches.
48. The issues discussed in this report will benefit from analysis of a larger database before conclusions are drawn.
49. At the September 2014 Committee meeting Members requested, in addition to this 'update report', that the Superintendent provide them with a full review in January 2017.
50. Officers are generally encouraged by the outcome of this early data set and the apparent change in dog related behaviours it indicates.
51. Monitoring will continue over the coming months and the extended data base will be further analysed to produce the January 2017 report and to draw conclusions where that is possible.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Dog Control Order Map.

Background Papers:

- Report to the EFCC dated September 2014.
- Report to the EFCC dated November 2014

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