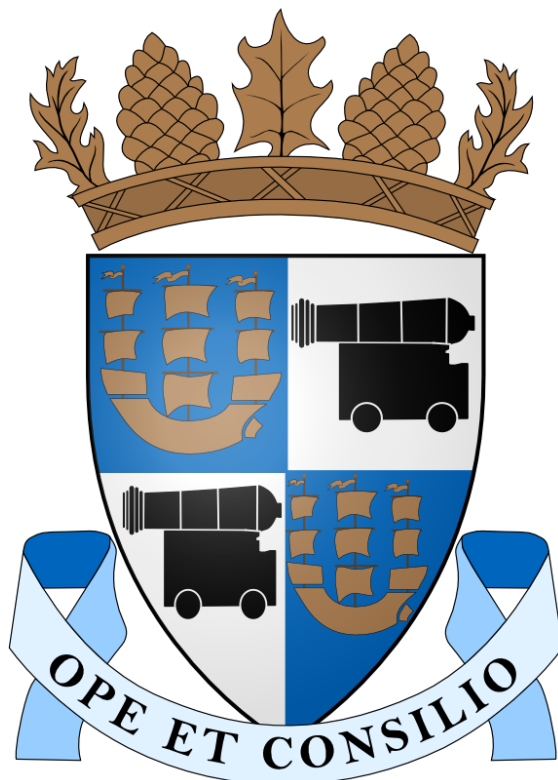


DRAFT



Portobello Community Council

Dogs Consultation DRAFT

April - May 2014

DRAFT

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Summary

This report summarises the results of the recent consultation run by Portobello Community Council regarding dogs on Portobello Beach. It will be discussed at the 26 May 2014 meeting of the community council, and any actions decided then.

- Majority of all respondents (online, email, and in person) prefer the status quo to the beach zoning options outlined. A variety of reasons are cited, chiefly that they would be unworkable or unenforceable, they wouldn't be effective in tackling the problem and would be an unreasonable restraint on the majority of dog owners and dog walkers who would feel they were being punished for the actions of the irresponsible minority.
- Majority of all respondents are in favour of all dogs being on leads on the Prom.
- Amongst respondents who live within the Portobello Community Council area, there is also support for the status quo to remain - 44% in favour and 40% against. Of the zoning options, there is a slight preference for Option 1 which proposes a zone where dogs should be kept on leads on the beach during the summer months.
- There is strong support for an all dogs on leads policy on the Prom amongst local dwellers. (52% in favour and 34% against).
- There is an issue - felt by dog owners and non-dog owners alike - in relation to the control of dogs and dog fouling. Many people mentioned 'irresponsible dog owners' and a need for measures to target this group in a bid to get them to change their behaviour.
- Suggestions for improving the situation included: more effective enforcement of existing laws, greater visibility of wardens, education and training for dog owners, more dog poo bins and free dog poo bags.

Background

Portobello is a community which welcomes dogs and we are fortunate that so many dog owners and dog walkers choose to live here and frequent our parks, green spaces and the beach with their pets.

Dogs - and particularly the control of dogs and dog fouling - have been a relatively frequent talking point in Portobello over the years. The most recent discussions were sparked by a post on Facebook on January 16, 2013 which prompted a lengthy discussion on the issues and whether there could be designated dog zones or dog free parks¹ where people who were wary of dogs could enjoy the outdoors without any canine concerns.

That discussion prompted an Ask Porty survey which was published on www.askporty.co.uk on 22 January, 2013 and publicised via [Porty Online](#), [Talk Porty](#) and related Facebook groups. It sought to get a flavour of public opinion around whether there is a problem with dogs roaming freely in Portobello and to what extent there is an issue with dog fouling. The survey also sought to gather ideas for solutions to any problems identified.

At the same time, the Evening News picked up on the Facebook discussion and ran a story about a “ban” on dogs on the beach² on 28 January, 2013 and mentioned the Ask Porty survey. Further media coverage of the issue followed, including a discussion on BBC Scotland’s morning radio show which featured Councillor Maureen Child.

The issue has continued to be a source of debate within the community and references to further discussion and media comment can be found in Appendix 1 to this report.

The new Portobello Community Council was formed in November 2013 following the elections in October and we were contacted on February 18, 2014 by letter³ suggesting that dog zones should be created in Portobello to cater for those who are less appreciative of the presence of dogs.

¹ https://www.facebook.com/groups/108170479257024/permalink/411620095578726/?stream_ref=21

² <http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/bid-to-ban-dogs-from-portobello-beach-1-2762457>

³ http://www.portobellocc.org/Minutes/2014/Meeting%20Papers%20240214/Letter_DogsPortobelloBeach.pdf

What we did

The intention in launching the consultation was to gather a flavour of views on the issue of dogs on the beach and Prom. Some proposed dog zoning options were included for people to rate and respondents were asked whether they thought dogs should be kept on leads on the Prom. There were two fields for respondents to add their comments and suggestions⁴.

The online survey was published on Monday, 7 April and publicised via the community council website, Facebook page, Twitter and an email mail-out to 300 recipients. It was also picked up and publicised further by Porty Online, Talk Porty, the Evening News and a number of other media outlets.

There were a number of threads on Porty People (a Portobello based Facebook group) and a great deal of discussion in public and at April's community council meeting.

Face-to-face sessions were also conducted by community councillors, one at ScotMid on Saturday, 12 April and on the Prom on the same day. Portobello Community Council also received a number of direct emails from members of the public and some completed survey forms from visitors to the Beach House.

The consultation closed on Friday, 2 May with over 600 responses recorded.

⁴ Online survey link: <http://www.portobelloc.org/Consultations/DogZones/>

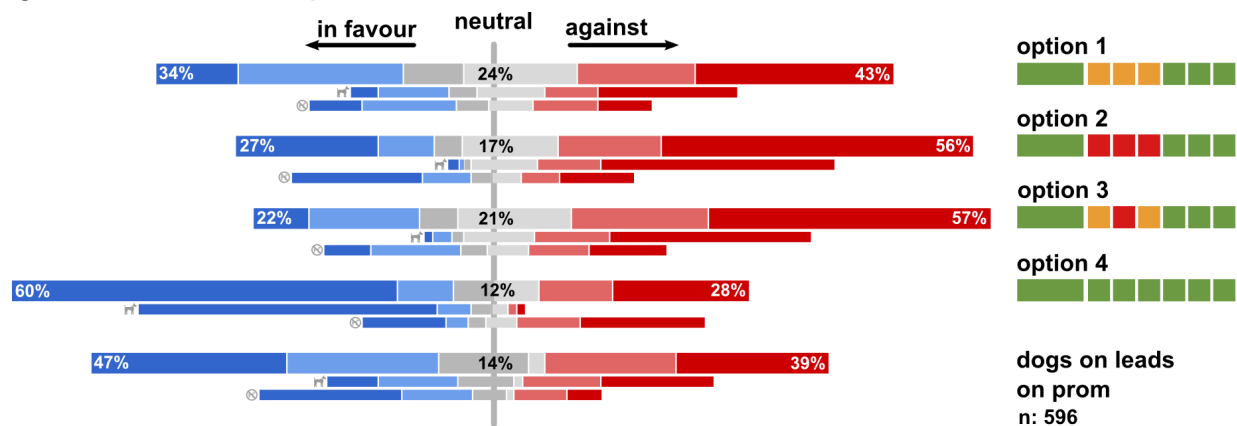
The responses in headline numbers

The following graphs show the responses for each option, they are centered on the neutral responses to indicate the strength of feeling. Under each are smaller bars showing the breakdown of responses of those who own a dog compared to those who do not.

Strongly in favour; **In favour**; **neither for nor against**; **no answer**; **against**; **strongly against**

Online

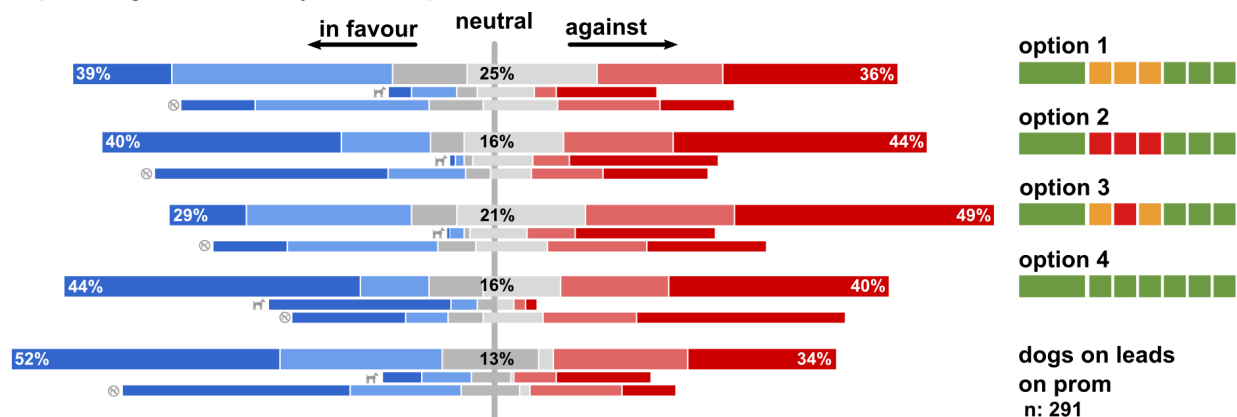
The overall results are shown below. Leaving the status quo received more support than implementing any changes. However, the results between dog and non-dog owners show significant difference in position.



Larger: <http://goo.gl/D1A9s3>

Online – local

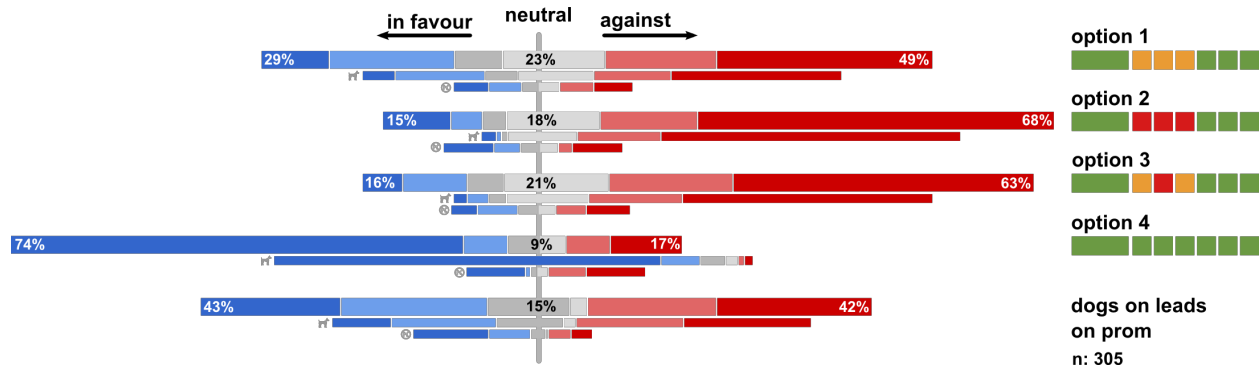
The online-consultation received approximately half of its response from people who live outwith the Portobello Community Council area. The local response has more non dog owners responding than the citywide response:



Larger: <http://goo.gl/R0vGB9>

Online - elsewhere

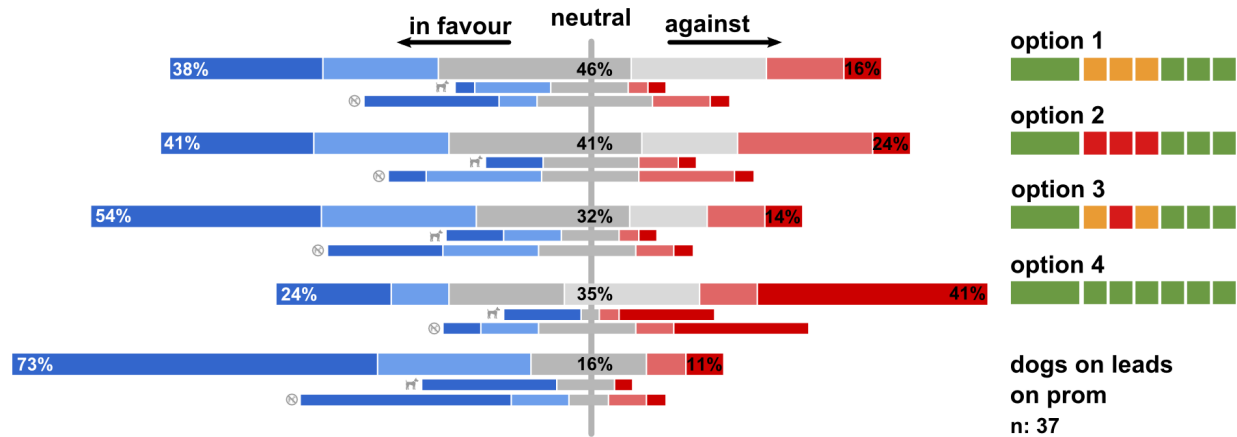
Responses from outwith the Portobello Community Council area are dominated by those who own a dog.



Larger: <http://goo.gl/gWYuVE>

Prom

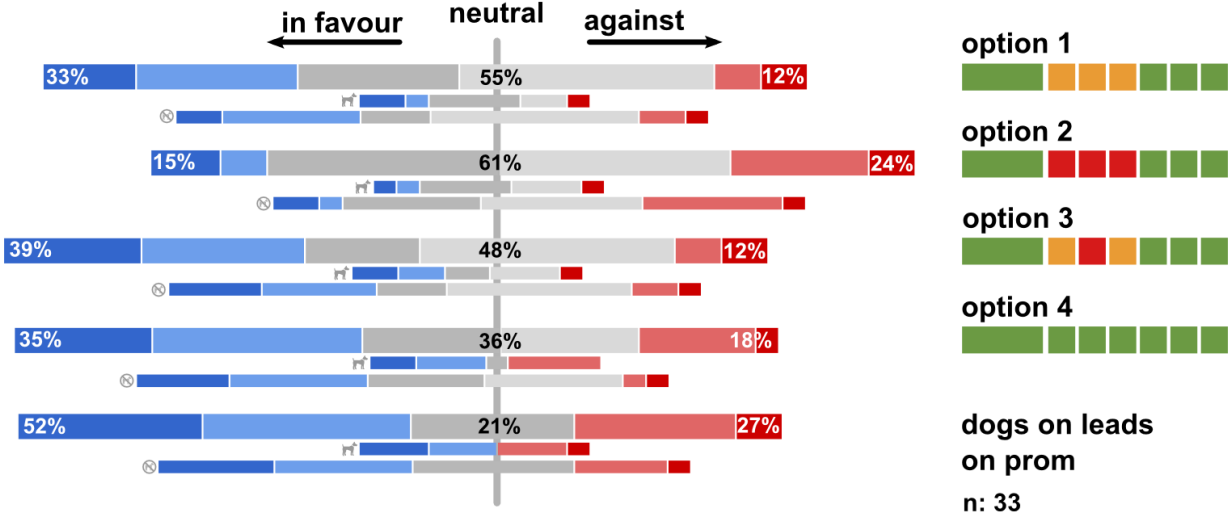
The results from in-person consultation on Portobello Promenade and in the Beach House show greater support for dog restrictions.



Larger: <http://goo.gl/g5gFRn>

Scotmid

The results from in-person consultation in Scotmid show some level of support for dog restrictions, but less for full exclusion of dogs from a section of the beach (option 2).



Larger: <http://goo.gl/BM845T>

Email

A total of eight responses were received by email: seven of these were very strongly in favour of restricting dogs, while the other supported the status quo.

The survey responses in terms of comments

Reasons for being against the idea of dog free zones

358 people who responded to the survey said they would prefer the status quo to remain. Of those who added comments the reasons given are grouped and listed below (all comments listed in Appendix 3).

Unfair on dog owners

There was a feeling that zoning was an unreasonable 'punishment' or restriction on the majority when it is the minority who are the problem. The most common reference was to 'irresponsible dog owners'. Many were concerned that the minority of dog owners who don't control their dogs and who don't clean up after them are the ones causing the problem. There is also concern that it places an unfair restriction on dogs and dog owners.

Ineffective and Unworkable

There is concern that the zones would be ineffective or ignored, unworkable or unenforceable and also confusing. There is a worry that having zones may be divisive for the community, with people trying to police different areas and some not sticking to "the rules", there is a feeling that it goes against community spirit and is not inclusive.

Increase problem in unzoned areas

The zones do not address the problem and may even make it worse. There is concern that confining dogs to smaller areas may increase dog litter and bad canine behaviour, also unfair on people living beside these zones.

Unfair on Dogs

It is not fair on dogs that enjoy the run of the beach, swimming in the sea, running in the sand etc. There is also a belief that dogs need to run around the beach in order to exercise and having them on leads or in zones would prevent this from happening.

"Most dog owners are responsible people and exercise their dogs with care. This proposal seems like an over reaction".

Reasons for supporting the idea of a dog free zone

161 respondents indicated they were in favour of change by saying they were either against or strongly against the status quo. Comments were grouped into the following themes (all comments are available - see Appendix 3)

Behaviour of Dogs

There is clearly a feeling that dogs running freely are not meeting the expectations of many in terms of the level of control they expect. Some dogs are perceived as unpredictable, move quickly and have an agenda that is not compatible with the comfort of other beach users. Some respondents cite incidences of dogs urinating on towels and beach bags. Licking, jumping up and stealing food are also mentioned in relation to this. It is recognised throughout the comments that this is not all dogs, however it is still a problem.

Dog poo /Hygiene

People are concerned about dog faeces and urine on the sand. Many find this abhorrent and unacceptable. Dogs using the sand, as a toilet is not a pleasant thought for many, especially in the summer months when people are bare footed on the beach.

Safety

There is a worry about safety on the beach with particular mention to children and young families. This can be seen in the comments above that relate to behaviour and dog hygiene. People would appreciate knowing that there was an area of the beach that would feel safe and relaxed where you could be confident there was no dog dirt or risk of dogs invading your space.

Plenty of space

With 2 miles of beach at Portobello, people believe that there should be room for everyone to enjoy the beach and room for zoning to be accommodated. The beach from Pipe Street to Seafield is mentioned as an area that could be encouraged as an area for dog walking.

Works Elsewhere

Other areas in the UK and Europe are mentioned as successfully implementing dog free zones so that everyone can use the beach in a relaxed manner.

“A great idea & although I understand people's concerns... Surely this solution provides the best of both worlds. I am very strongly in favour of a dog free zone”.

Alongside the questions about dog free zones, people were asked -

Should All Dog be on Leads on the Prom?

All comments are listed in Appendix 3, with the main themes identified as follows:-

Comments from those in favour of all dogs on leads on the Prom

Better Control

There was a feeling from respondents that there needed to be better control of dogs on the prom. The promenade is seen as a busy place with scooters, bikes, the elderly etc. and people believe that it would be beneficial to have dogs on leads. This would allow better control of their whereabouts and to stop them approaching people unnecessarily including children and the elderly.

Safety

The issue of safety is important to people and there is concern that dogs off leads are unpredictable and may stray far from their owners. Alongside this there is concern about how busy the prom can be especially in summer months and the having dogs on leads would be safer for the dogs also.

Less dog poo

People who agree that dogs should be on leads when on the Prom also state that this might help reduce dog dirt on the Prom. There is a feeling that dog owners are not always aware of where their dog is or what they are doing and so miss opportunities to pick up their dog's litter. If dogs are on leads then this may help to address the problem.

Alongside these reasons people recognised that the Promenade is an asset for Portobello and should be enhanced and promoted as much as possible. People believe that there should be more wardens working in Portobello targeting irresponsible dog owners and dog walkers. While people feel that dogs should be on leads there is a concern about long leads causing accidents and injuries. The area from Pipe Street to Seafield road was again mentioned as an area to promote for dog walkers and an area where dogs could be off leads. Some respondents stated that this idea could be seasonal with dogs on leads during the summer months only.

Comments from those who stated they were not in favour of dogs on leads on the Prom

Owner's responsibility

There is a feeling that although some dogs might require leads not all dogs require them all the time. It is up to the responsible dog owners to have their dogs alongside them and put them on a lead when required.

Not Necessary

Respondents stated that it wasn't necessary that dogs should be on leads at all times, they believe there isn't a problem on the Prom and that the status quo was fine. Also not all dogs should be penalised for the fault of a few.

Focus Elsewhere

Some respondents stated that the focus shouldn't be on dogs at all and if there are problems on the promenade it is more to do with cyclists going too fast, litter and general irresponsible behaviour.

Others stated that it was good to see dogs roaming free on the Prom. Some suggested that there should be more wardens on duty targeting irresponsible dog owners. Again there is concern around long dog leads being a risk and causing accidents and a concern that it would be unenforceable and may increase bad feeling in the community.

Comments from those who were neutral on the idea of dogs on leads on the Prom

Owners' responsibility

Again the feeling that not all dogs should be on leads all the time but responsible owners would know what dogs should be on leads and act accordingly.

Focus elsewhere

Respondents felt there was a need to target irresponsible dog owners. Also commented on focusing on cyclists on prom. Long leads were cited as a risk and the need for more wardens recommended.

Appendix 1 - Dogs issue online and in the media

TalkPorty

<http://forum.talkporty.org/viewtopic.php?t=4136&p=75944>

<http://forum.talkporty.org/viewtopic.php?t=5874&p=96476>

<http://forum.talkporty.org/viewtopic.php?t=4616&p=81906>

Porty People on Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/groups/108170479257024/permalink/411620095578726/?stream_ref=21

https://www.facebook.com/groups/108170479257024/permalink/600398596700874/?stream_ref=21

https://www.facebook.com/groups/108170479257024/permalink/615889865151747/?stream_ref=21

https://www.facebook.com/groups/108170479257024/permalink/604775362929864/?stream_ref=21

https://www.facebook.com/groups/108170479257024/permalink/598130863594314/?stream_ref=21

Ask Porty survey

<http://porty.org.uk/dog-fouling-results/>

Media

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/snp-launches-dangerous-dogs-consultation-1-3248332>

<http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/bid-to-ban-dogs-from-portobello-beach-1-2762457>

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/claire-gardner-let-s-call-a-halt-to-beach-dog-mess-1-3003149>

<http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/call-for-more-wardens-to-beat-dog-mess-nuisance-1-2764185>

Appendix 2 - Dog Zones Consultation Poster

Dog zones on Porty Beach?



responsible

on leads

no dogs



Appendix 3 - All online responses and comments (anonymised)

These can be found at: <http://goo.gl/sdweFo> with a more readable record of comments at: <http://goo.gl/BYl4Qa>