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Date: July 25 2016
Officer:
Unit:
Ref:
Page: 1 of 2

Dear resident,

RE: Dogs on Leads Signage in Barnwood Arboretum Local Nature Reserve

You will be aware that the City Council has been trying to control dogs in the arboretum in the interests of wildlife management and the welfare of the stock that graze it. To this end we have enacted a piece of legislation called a Dog Control Order (DCO). This is nothing unusual, indeed the City Council has 4 Dog Control Orders and these were introduced back in 2007.

They are enforced by officers of the City Council, PCSOs and Police Officers and are in relation to:

- Dog fouling (failing to clean up after a dog has fouled on a highway or public open space)
- Walking off a lead on all public highways
- Directed to be put on a lead by an officer (Council Officers have the discretion to decide when dogs should be on a lead, even if it is in relation to an area where dogs can usually be unleashed)
- Dogs in designated public open spaces (e.g. play areas).

Earlier signage politely requested (rather than legally required) dogs to be on leads. However, this did not have the required impact as dogs were still being let off their leads and at times were worrying stock.

To take matters further therefore, at the end of June using the discretion granted to officers under one of the DCOs, the City Council affixed a sign to the fence at Barnwood Arboretum directing dog walkers to keep their dogs on leads whilst in the arboretum, as per the DCO relating to open spaces, or be subject to a fine of up to £1,000.

Following the signage being erected, we hoped for voluntary compliance from dog walkers in respect of the DCO, as we know that most dog walkers are responsible owners. We had planned that we would at some point enforce the order with a high profile campaign and press release. City Council officers would have visited the arboretum and potentially issued an £80 FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice, or on-the-spot fine) but only to dog walkers who were directed by officers, but still refused to put their dogs back on a lead.

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Unfortunately, before we could do any of this, the sign was taken down by persons unknown, and at this point many local residents got in touch to express either their concerns or their support for our approach.

Those opposed to the restriction have told us that they are concerned that the council have not followed proper procedures to introduce the order. They have said that the matter ought to be debated at a public meeting so that the arguments in favour of the order can be subjected to public scrutiny and they have questioned the cost of implementing the order and whether this should be a city council priority. They have asked the City Council to allow dogs to be off the lead but under control and only required to be on a lead when there is livestock in the arboretum. We have also had complaints that the warning notice was threatening and that livestock in the arboretum is not conducive to good tree management.

People who support the order have said to us that dogs allowed to roam off the lead will risk disturbing nesting birds. They have also questioned whether all dog owners can properly control their pet if it is off the lead and potentially out of sight. They have pointed out that part of the management plan for the arboretum requires the use of cattle and sheep as a natural way to control vegetation and as a positive alternative to mechanical clearance. They say that loose dogs can be a hazard when in the proximity of cattle and sheep. They have told us that there have been occasions where loose dogs have got into neighbouring gardens causing injury to other animals. They have also questioned whether local schools and playgroups might prefer to use the arboretum if dogs were required to be kept on leads. They have asked that Barnwood Park and balancing pond should be retained as areas where dog owners can exercise their pets off the lead

We have listened to both sides and wish to stress that we are NOT banning dogs from the arboretum but would like to ask for everyone's support in protecting the livestock and fauna in the arboretum by complying with the DCO directing all dogs to be on leads.

It is, therefore, our intention to erect signage again requiring all dogs to be on leads in the arboretum. We will do this on 1st September 2016. The arboretum is there for everyone to enjoy, and we need to act responsibly with regard to animals living or grazing in the arboretum. Please be aware that dogs may still access the rest of Barnwood Park and be off the lead; the arboretum is after all a small part of the park.

We hope this letter explains our position and the reasons we took the actions we did. We want to always get it right first time, and we realise we should have promoted this idea, and communicated it, before we took the actions we did. We were anxious to act before the cattle came on-site this year, hence the haste in trying to get things done.

If you have any further queries, please contact environment@gloucester.gov.uk and we will be happy to help. A copy of the Dog Control Order can be inspected [here](#).

Yours faithfully,

Sally Middleton
Neighbourhood Manager