

Dog friendly Dollar: Doodoos and don'ts...

We love our dogs in Dollar. There are probably lots of ways to make the town even more dog friendly which we will explore in a future article. But first, there is a more pressing issue we need to talk about.



Sadly, there is a small number of irresponsible owners who let their own dog down and give everybody else's a bad name too by failing to pick up and properly dispose of what, in a family newsletter, we will refer to as "doodoo". These individuals may be the manky minority, but their irresponsible actions affect everybody. It may sound trivial but dog fouling is no joke. As well as the unpleasantness of cleaning mess off shoes, pram wheels, mobility scooters and shoppers, dog faeces is one of the most common carriers of whipworms, hookworms, roundworms, tapeworms, toxocariasis and salmonellosis. These harmful bacteria and parasites can also get into the water supply and be transmitted to farm animals and wildlife. No wonder failure to pick up after your dog is a criminal offence with a fixed penalty of £80.

So far, so disgusting. However, the good news is that communities are fighting back! There are some brilliantly wacky ways being tried - from little flags with "caustic" messages stuck in the deposit, to offering a lottery ticket for every bag handed in, to industrial sized "poover" machines designed to suck it up. In Texas, doggie DNA samples are taken to trace the doo-doo back to its owner. In Madrid, volunteers were enlisted to look out for irresponsible owners, who then had the doo-doo returned to them as "lost property". Hydburn council equipped its wardens with night vision goggles to hand out on-the-spot fines and in the Malvern Hills they have devised a street lamp powered by depositing the doo-doo into an anaerobic digester which produces methane to fuel the light and fertiliser. Apparently 10 bags will power the light for two hours!

My personal favourite came from Todmorden, where West Yorkshire Waterways brilliantly illustrated the most perplexing doo-doo question of all – WHY, OH WHY go to the bother of bagging the doo-doo only to throw it into a tree??



As well as the wonderful wacky ideas, there were a few which have proven to be simple, practical and very effective, which we could easily put into practice in Dollar, as follows:

- Making it easy to do the right thing! The Ochil Youths Community Improvement team have come up with the great idea of re-using plastic drinks bottles as doodoo bag holders to attach to dog waste bins. We will be working with the OYCI team to extend this to Dollar.
- “Doodoo detectives” - volunteers who check their streets regularly and spray any doodoo found with coloured chalk spray – this helps people to avoid stepping in it, and also sends a message to the irresponsible owner that we see what they are doing, and we don’t like it. The Trust have acquired a small supply of spray chalk cans so if anyone would like to volunteer to co-ordinate a street patrol (even just on your own street), email us at dollar.cdt@gmail.com
- One of our Facebook followers alerted us to the village of Wimblington, in Cambridge who have come up with an online interactive map using Googlemaps. They marked all the dog waste bins on their map (so you always know where the nearest bin is) and anyone who spots any doodoo deposits can report their sighting to a co-ordinator who will mark it on the map – in red if it is still there, and in green once it has been cleared up. Very quickly this builds up a picture of when and where the “hotspots” are. This allows further efforts to be targetted in those areas, which might range from putting additional bins in place, giving out a leaflet and free bag to all dog owners in the street to identifying the best time for a council official to attend and issue spot fines.

Wimblington’s system works so well that it quickly went viral and they have now produced a practical toolkit for other areas who would like to give it a go. The Trust have acquired a copy of the toolkit and we have been given a dedicated doodoowatch hashtag to use if we decide to put this into practice – all we would need to get going is a couple of co-ordinators to receive sightings and mark them on the online map. We have put more details on our website at www.dollarcdt.wordpress.com so if anyone is interested in kicking this off please email dollar.cdt@gmail.com.

We live in a beautiful town and we all want to have parks, streets and waterways that are clean and safe for everybody to enjoy. Let’s get moving, clean up our streets and make sure nobody can give our dogs a bad name.