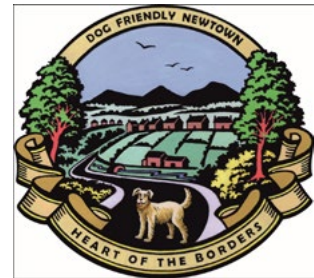


Dog Friendly Newtown case study



Introduction to the group

Dog Friendly Newtown (DFN) was started by Newtown St Boswells and Eildon Community Council after dog fouling was highlighted as one of the top litter complaints for the community. In addition, it was felt, as only one out of ten dog owners do not pick up after their dog, that it was a manageable issue to tackle. One of the main objectives is to reduce dog fouling in the village by encouraging responsible and enjoyable dog ownership.

Veronica, leader of the group, originally got in touch with Keep Scotland Beautiful in winter 2015, to hire dog costumes for their launch event. This was when she was introduced to the Litter Pick Plus toolkit, which went on to help shape the development of her dog fouling campaigns. DFN has been very successful in taking action and campaigning to promote behaviour change in the village, to prevent further dog fouling.

Taking Action

As a new initiative, it was highlighted that one of the key elements to success would be to plan activities in detail to ensure success. Moreover, the group began to network to seek support within the community. Veronica reached out to the local authority, which agreed to assist the group to pilot 'Green Dog Walkers' within the Borders. In addition, she made contact with Keep Scotland Beautiful, who agreed to attend their opening event to promote Litter Pick Plus and to support the development of DFN using the Litter Pick Plus toolkit.

DFN launched in April 2016 with an open event for the local community. This coincided with a Clean Up Scotland general litter pick in the village, to build momentum around a clean and tidy village.

Keep Scotland Beautiful, local dog related businesses, such as a puppy training school, and a local vet all held stalls at the event, offering goody bags and reduced price microchipping. As an introduction to a potentially off-putting subject, DFN felt it was essential to add other activities to attract people and get their interest.

Alongside the fun activities, the group began to seek additional volunteers for the group, and to better understand local people's concerns about dog fouling through questionnaires. Through these activities, DFN began to build a solid example of, and basis for future action, as outlined in the Litter Pick Plus toolkit, "Taking Action" section.

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Communication

As Newtown St Boswells is a relatively small village, when they first started out, Veronica simply spoke to the people she saw with a dog. This kept it informal and friendly, but as the interest in the group progressed, DFN utilised community council noticeboards and organised a press release for the launch event. Following a suggestion in Litter Pick Plus to ensure that all communication is tailored to local issues and tastes, the group also ran a competition for children to design their own posters about dog fouling to further raise awareness.

DFN has also delivered several engaging presentations, sharing the learnings and top tips from the group. These have been carried out locally, and on a national scale, speaking to over 150 people at the It's Your Neighbourhood seminar. By linking in with wider initiatives associated with Litter Pick Plus, DFN has become an example for those wishing to tackle dog fouling across Scotland, and has inspired action as far north as Aberdeenshire.

Campaigning

One of the key Litter Pick Plus successes of the group is the development and delivery of their own nudge activity. Background information on nudges is available within the "campaigning" section of the Litter Pick Plus toolkit, with suggestions on different activities to try, and guidance on how to structure the monitoring and evaluation of these.

DFN's nudge activity is 'Poo Patrol'. Not only does this reduce the amount of dog fouls in the village, it specifically promotes behaviour change by raising awareness of the issue and showing dog fouling offenders that it is unacceptable within the village.

Poo Patrol is a small group of volunteers who check the streets for any dog fouling. Any poos found get a 'ring of shame' chalked around them to increase their visibility to pedestrians and to offending dog owners. The poo is then picked up after 24 hours and disposed of, with the frequency recorded for each street. Poo Patrol amazingly saw dog fouling drop in the village by over 60%, during the first four months.

The group has continued to develop their dog fouling campaign, and aims to further prevent dog fouls by promoting responsible dog ownership by targeting young people. DFN Juniors is open to all young people in the village. A range of educational and fun activities are offered, including walks, dog classes and visits to local pet rescues. All of the young people are further encouraged to volunteer within their local community to further develop Newtown St Boswells as a clean and welcoming environment to all.

The group is a perfect example of prevention being better than cure. By engaging with the local community through a range of means, they are creating a sustainable campaign in their village.

Recruiting and maintaining volunteers for Poo Patrol has not been an easy task. Veronica explains:

“ Poo isn't exactly an exciting subject, and often people feel it's too dirty to get involved, or they're too squeamish. When someone doesn't want to get involved because they think that it's too dirty, I don't argue with them. Instead I'd say 'That's fine, but how else can you help? Would you be happy to get involved as a buddy for a Poo Patroller, or on general litter picks, or by putting up posters?' If it's a parent's concern for a child's cleanliness, I encourage them to see the cleanliness of the streets and village as an extension of this. I always try to give them something to do so everyone can be involved in some way.

Often there seems to be a bit of a shift later down the line as they get more accustomed to litter and dog fouling. In some circumstances, they will then start doing more as it seems less gross. For example, we've had someone starting to pick up when it's winter and the poop is frozen. Keeping people involved in a way relevant to them is the best way to reach new and unengaged people. ”

Veronica's final thoughts and top tips for litter prevention are:

“ People can't see litter; they're either completely unconscious of it, or they do see it but they don't see it as a problem. DFN and the general litter picks done by the community council are a way of raising awareness and saying that it isn't acceptable here.

Litter is often seen as a losing battle, and who wants to get engaged with that? When somewhere is really heavily littered, it can seem too hard to tackle. Another example is really graffitied flats, which completely improve after a little investment as people start to feel there is more value to them and that they are worth taking care of.

I think we need to do the same to prevent litter. The aim is to have one absolutely pristine area, such as a children's playpark, and be really fussy about how it looks as an example. The hope is that the anti-littering message expands beyond that as people begin to see how good an area can be. This way, we're not fighting a losing battle, but starting out at a win. ”