



National
Trust



Dogs Welcome -National Trust VSG

Bit of background

This is very high level -please do contact me for detail/chat 😊

dogswelcome@nationaltrust.org.uk

NT manages over 500 places in 3 nations/6 regions
Invested in thinking about/testing for visitors with/avoiding dogs, still new area for us
Sharing some of what we've learned to stimulate conversation today- thank you!

Ken and Kelley asked if we could share to start a conversation as so many of us doing similar work

Understanding visitor expectations: Insights from the National Trust's 2023 Audience Insight Survey

Engaging with visitors before they arrive: Setting the right expectations

Communicating the Countryside Code effectively without being overly prescriptive

Working with corporate partners to support responsible dog ownership

EST. 1971 Forthglade®

NATURAL PET FOOD FROM DEVON



Have been working together for 5 years to

Support our visitors- helping people feel **more confident when visiting with their dog**, improve the pre visit **information, welcome & orientation** and **visitor facilities**.

Highlighting the best spots for people to go in advance of their visit, welcome them warmly when they arrive, and ensure they enjoy their visit while positively connecting with the natural world around them

Think about **visitors who want to avoid dogs** too

Mitigate effects of **dogs on nature** at our places

Support our teams

Support our farmers

Dedicated small team developing strategy, guidance, advice on all things *visitors with dogs*, experience design, interp, engagement, investment

Dogs Welcome -National Trust

Amazing corporate partner Forthglade
Have changed positioning and perception of NT
over last 5 years

5 big strategic areas for 2025-6 (mix of project aims and national strategy)

Supporting our People

Inspiring Others- Engagement, Growing Support, Learning

Ending Unequal Access-Consistency

Restore Nature

Securing Funding/ Developing Partnerships Past 2026

Focus 2025-6 sharing what we've learned,
**emotional connection between people and
their dogs in nature, consistency**

**Across Countryside, coast, PFE visitor attractions,
holidays across our national estate**

Increasing (appropriate) **access and consistency** for visitors with dogs to our **gardens** remains a
priority piece of work across the organisation

What are we managing?

(based on 2025 Handbook Pawprint ratings)

137 places are 2 Pawprint places (was 126)

59 places are 3 Pawprint places (risen from 50, was 30 back when we started)

Most countryside is 1 pawprint, lots of coast is 2

Based on component and offer- ie how different a visit feels for visitors with/without dogs





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Understanding visitor expectations- insight

Headlines

Large proportion of the Member and Non-Member base have a dog, so it is important to have a clear strategy for this group

Around 60% of owners are taking their dogs all/most of the time

Dog owners don't want access all areas for their dog and neither do non-owners!

Outside spaces are the key areas- access where possible

Mixed responses to café/ house and shop. Compromise solutions (eg dog/free areas, dog components like fields) seems sensible

Programming and experience wanted

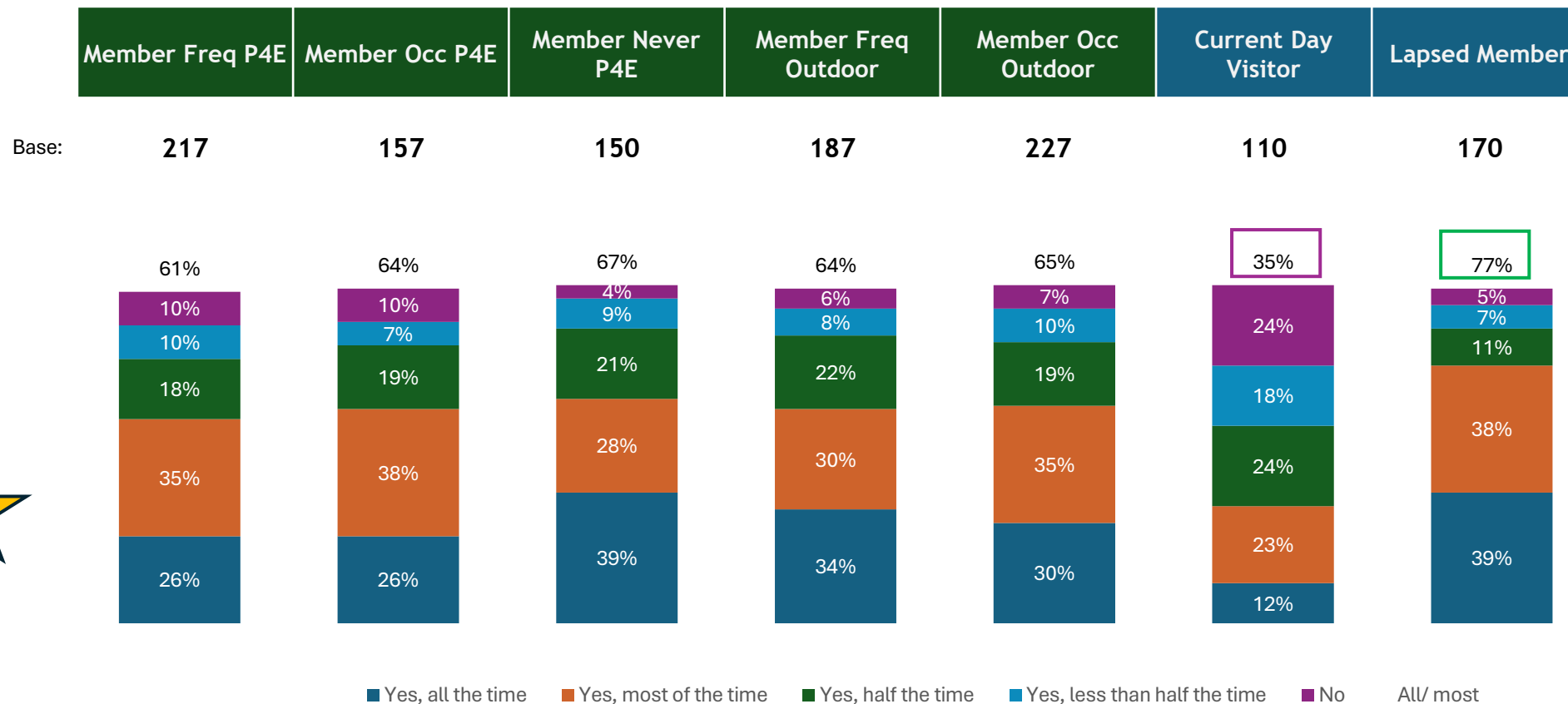




Taking Your Dog to the NT-dog owners



Around 60% of owners are taking their dogs all/ most of the time
Notable differences - Current Day Visitors are less likely to take their dog, Lapsed Members & Member Never P4E more likely * perception
For the family groups with dogs taking dogs is 62% Young, 55% teen



Q. Where Should Dogs Be Allowed?



Outside spaces are the key areas. Access to be allowed where possible. Mixed responses to café/ house and shop. Compromise solutions (eg dog areas) seems sensible

Green 50%+ of dog owners think this	Member Freq P4E	Member Occ P4E	Member Never P4E	Member Freq Outdoor	Member Occ Outdoor	Current Day Visitor	Lapsed Member	Lapsed Day Visitor
Base:	217	157	150	187	227	110	170	104
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gardens	75	71	72	75	70	77	65	75
Parkland	71	64	64	72	67	79	60	68
Land, where you don't have to pay for entry	53	39	45	58	39	76	29	64
Café	42	39	46	45	40	31	32	33
Houses	29	27	33	30	26	13	33	20
Shop	30	27	32	34	27	25	27	25



- QDOG6. Which parts of National Trust sites should dogs be allowed into? : Base: Those who have a dog

Acting on this insight- getting us in the right place internally

Integrating with all of the other guidance across the organisation

Assistance Dogs Guidance updated

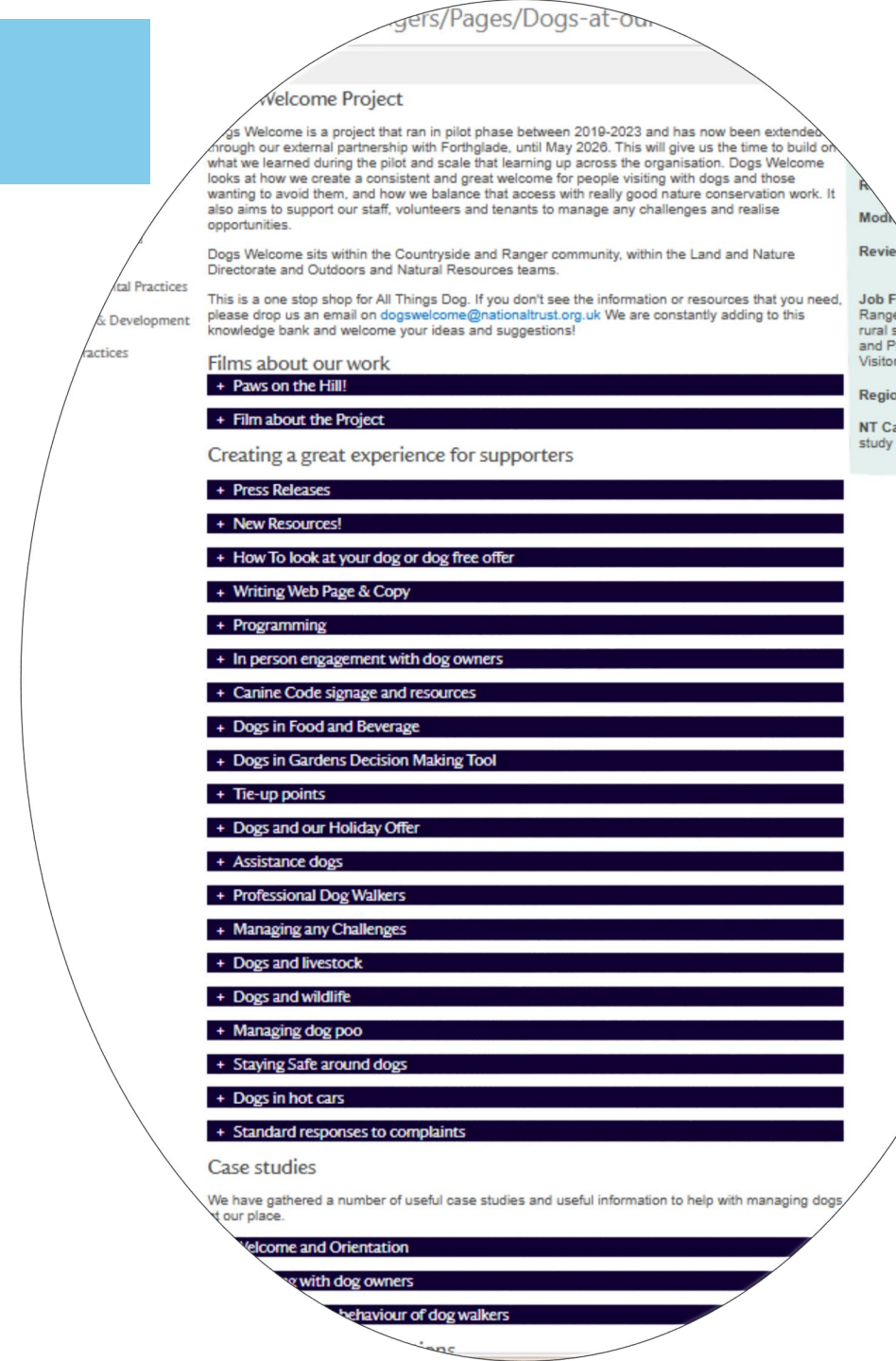
Guidance around XL 'Bully' breeds updated and specific campsites guidance and support

Food and Beverage guidance and training has been updated with a new section in the 'Manage Café' guidance around welcoming visitors with dogs and how to think through the visitor offer/experience.

[Dogs in F&B guidance](#)

Guidance around **signage, messaging and dogs/livestock** has also been updated and both of these **training** areas have been rolled out across the organisation, with more than 150 people from 8 job families attending webinars.

Garden access Decision Making Tool and guidance pack



The Canine Code

A **Canine Code** has been developed for F&B and can be displayed in our cafes where dogs are welcome to help make sure everyone can enjoy their day:

Take the lead

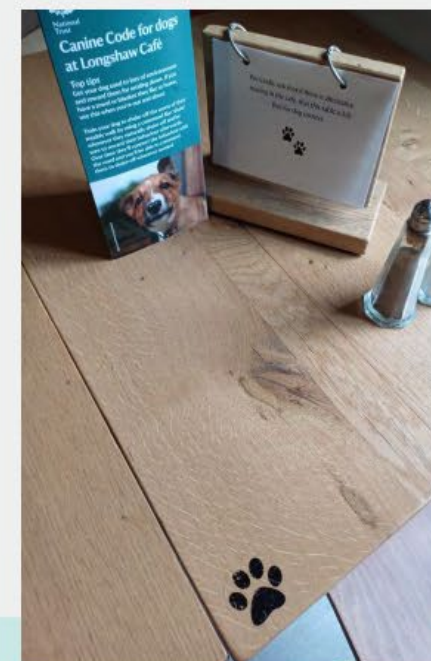
- Keep your dog close to you and on a short lead at our cafes and tearooms. This is to make sure they don't trip you or another visitor up.

Paws for though

- Are you in the right area? Lots of our cafes and tearooms welcome dogs inside, sometimes you might only be allowed in one area or outside. Keep a look out for signs telling you where you are welcome. Help us to maintain our high levels of food hygiene by keeping your dog away from food service counters and always keep paws on the floor.

Be on the ball

- While lots of us love dogs, some of us don't. That's why it's important to make sure your dog doesn't go up to other people. If your dog is getting distressed or barking, we will suggest alternative seating.



Top tips

Get your dog used to lots of different environments and reward them for 'settling' down. It helps to have a towel or blanket that you use for them to settle on at home that you can then use out and about. This might mean more cups of tea and pieces of cake for you, just for training purposes of course...

You can train your dog to shake-off the worst of their muddy walk. Start by using a command word e.g. 'shake', whenever they naturally shake-off, give them praise and reward the behaviour. Over time they will connect the behaviour with the word and you'll be able to get them to shake off before you come inside or get back in your car.

Food Safety & Health & Safety

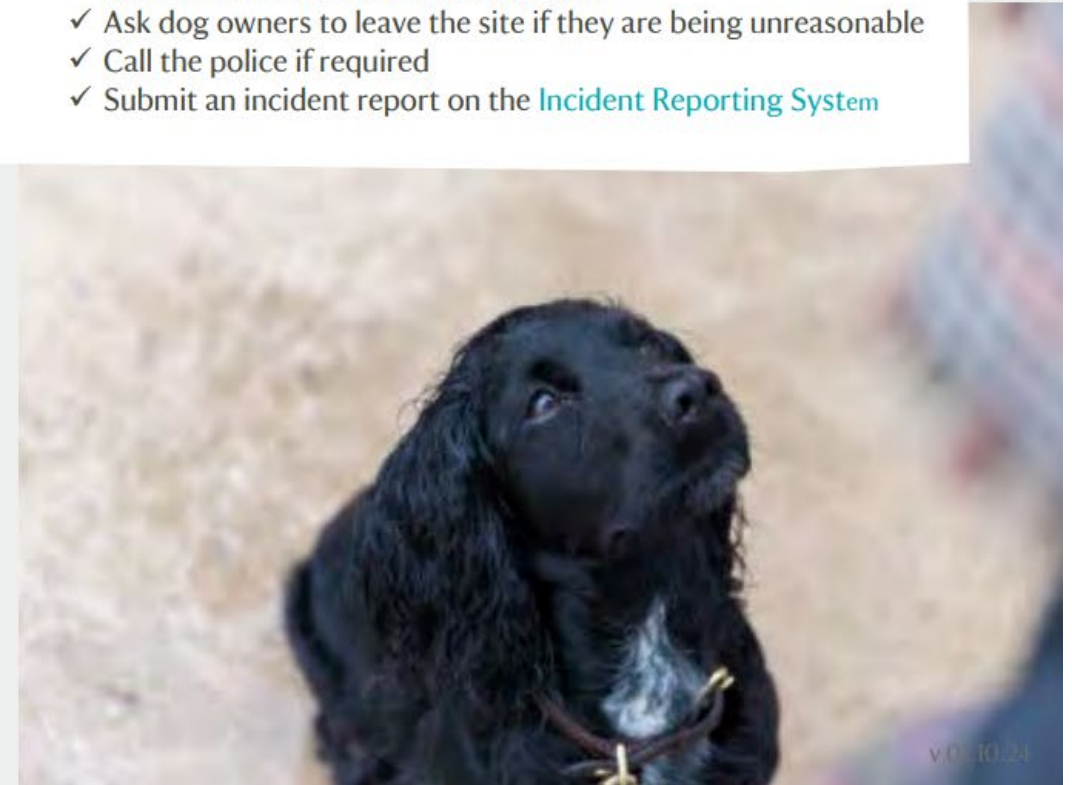
Dog related incidents

These can be trips, slips and falls, nips, bites or dog-on-dog incidents. The number is low, but these incidents can be serious. The criminal and civil legal situation of a dog bite in the UK depends on circumstances, including the severity of the attack, prior behaviour of the dog, and where the incident occurred.

- Under criminal law, a dog can be considered out of control if it injures someone or makes someone worried that it might injure them, or if it attacks someone's animal, or the owner of an animal thinks they could be injured if they tried to stop your dog attacking their animal.
- Under civil law, if a dog causes injury to a person due to the owner's negligence, including knowing that the dog had dangerous tendencies, the victim may be able to claim compensation for their injuries, medical costs, and any other associated damages. The dog owner may have pet or public liability insurance to cover any compensation claims.

In practical terms, and depending on the severity of the incident and reasonable behaviour of the people involved, the following actions may apply:

- ✓ Ensure there is no further risk of injury
- ✓ Provide first aid
- ✓ Gather information for an incident report including contact details of those involved and witnesses
- ✓ Ask dog owners to leave the site if they are being unreasonable
- ✓ Call the police if required
- ✓ Submit an incident report on the [Incident Reporting System](#)



Integrating it with VE- are we doing wht we think we are?

Visitors with dogs

What do our visitors with dogs want to do?

- Explore the garden in a way that suits them
- Access and navigate the areas permitted
- Are you getting feedback from visitors who want to avoid dogs?

What is the visitor with a dog seeing?

- How can they interact with the space?
- What impression are we giving?
- How do we compare to our competitors?

What is the visitor with a dog thinking / feeling?

- How welcome do they feel?
- How easy is it for them to do what they want to in this space?
- What's the experience like for people with access needs, families etc?

What are the cold spots?

- What are the biggest pain points for visitors with dogs?

What are the hot spots?

- What could we / should we make more of for visitors with dogs?

Setting the Expectation

Web- Plan your Visit filter, dog articles and access articles

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/dog-friendly/visiting-national-trust-places-with-your-dog>

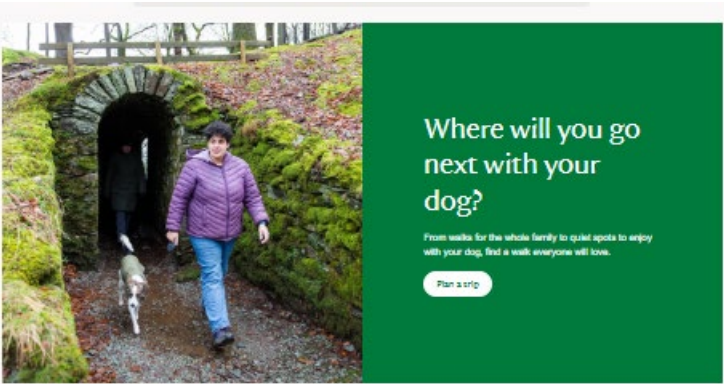
Socials- e.g. Sprockerbailey, Hidcote, Formby

Specific welcome & orientation on arrival

Ready made itineraries, walks, things not to miss

Guided and social walks (nature and responsible responsible dog walking as repeater messages)

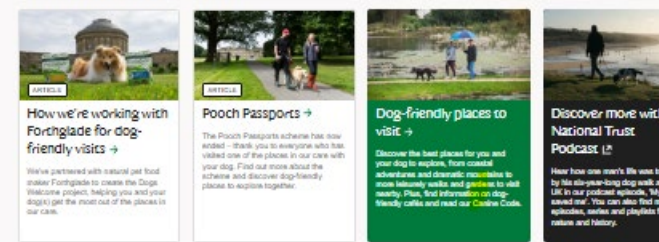
Reasons to return (programme)



Our partners



You might also be interested in



The Canine Code

We want you and your dog(s) to have a stress-free day when you visit us. We also want to protect farm animals and precious wildlife habitats, so we'll ensure that everyone can enjoy the countryside, whether they're visiting with a dog or not.

During your visit you can help by following the Canine Code:

1 Keep them close

Using a short lead helps to keep your dog(s) from disturbing ground-nesting birds and farm animals. It's essential to use a short lead around sheep. But if cattle approach you, it's best to let your dog off the lead, and call them back when it's safe to do so.

2 Pick up the poo

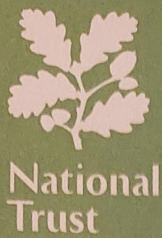
Please always clear up after your dog(s). If you can't find a bin nearby, take the poo bags home with you.

3 Watch the signs

Keep an eye on local signs and notices whenever you're walking. They'll tell you if a beach allows dogs all year round, seasonally or if it's a dog-free beach for instance. They'll also let you know if a path has been diverted, or if you're in an area where dogs can run off lead.

4 Stay on the ball

Remember that not everyone is confident around dogs. Some people may be nervous or fear them. If you're visiting with your dog(s), you can help by making sure they don't run up to other people, especially children.



Pooch Passport



Here's a space for you to attach a photo of your dog

This passport belongs to:

Don's

In partnership with

1851-1971
Forthglade
NATURAL PET FOOD FROM DEVON

Stamps

NT Staff use only:
Completed date - prize collected

07 09 14



Canine Code

Following the Canine Code helps you and your dog to have a fun, stress-free day.

Keep them close

Using a short lead helps to keep your dog from disturbing ground-nesting birds and farm animals. It's essential to use a short lead around sheep. But if cattle approach you, it's best to let your dog off the lead, and call them back when it's safe to do so.

Watch the signs

Keep an eye on local signs and notices wherever you're walking. They'll tell you if a beach has a dog-ban, for instance, or if a path has been diverted, or if you're in an area where dogs can run off-lead.

Please pick up the poo

Please always clear up after your dog. If you can't find a bin nearby, take the poo bags home with you.

Stay on the ball

Remember that not everyone loves dogs, and some people fear them. So make sure your dog doesn't run up to other people, especially children.



Using dynamic signage & Tone of Voice

**National Trust**

Cattle at Cobham Wood & Mausoleum

Conservation grazing on this site is managed all year by a herd of Highland cattle.

The cattle maintain the grassland and shrubby vegetation for wildflowers, invertebrates, mammals and birds.

If you do come across the cattle, please give them plenty of space. They are now fitted with GPS collars so just click on the QR code to track where they are.

If you encounter any problems, please call 07XXX XXXXXX

or email xxxxxx@nationaltrust.org.uk





Take care

Keep your distance

- Please don't feed or approach the cattle
- Please keep your dog on a short lead or by your side
- If cattle approach let your dog off the lead

Thank you

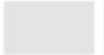


Paws on the path

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Dogs on leads

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Dogs welcome under effective control

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What have we learned?

Still learning

Opportunity for engaging is huge

Changing expectations and external marketplace

No silver bullet- whole property and also regional planning

Integrating in to what is being done already-this can't be standalone work

Setting the expectation and anticipating the needs of the visitor is key – increasing access and programming, making the visit easier

If we get it right it's a 10+yr relationship

Have to invest in this- confidence of our people and change management done well if we are changing access

Have to use good evidence-based decision making and be able to explain the why

We've concentrated on consistency, message, finding out what works and now countryside and gardens next focus

We are doing similar work- how to we get cross sectoral messaging and say the same things?



Top tips to help walk your dog on the lead

the canine code



Spring is a wonderful time to explore nature with your dog. But with new life appearing all around, it's important to take care and try not to disturb the natural world. Keeping your dog on a short lead through signposted areas will help give young birds, animals and plants the start they need. It will also enable other visitors who may not be as comfortable with dogs to enjoy their walk too.

Our partners at Forthglade have a few top tips to help walks on the lead start on the right foot – and paw.

1. Begin with the right tools



Use a comfortable lead and collar that doesn't tighten when your dog pulls.

A front-fastening harness or headcollar can help dogs learn to walk on the lead, making for a more enjoyable walk.

2. Start the walk with a relaxed lead



It takes two to pull. Try not to start off the walk with your dog out in front, at the end of a short, taut lead, as this will just encourage your dog to pull right from the get-go.

Instead, try beginning the walk with your dog at your side (but be consistent with your choice of side) and the lead just loose enough to have no tension in it when they are standing next to you.

3. Walk forward with purpose



Next, start walking confidently forward. Lead training is all about getting your dog used to walking calmly next to you, so they recognise this is the behaviour you'd like whenever you put their lead on.

When your dog is at your side, you walk. If they creep forward and start to pull, stop, and encourage them back to your side with a tasty treat. Swiftly praise, and then walk purposefully forwards again. Repeat.

4. When things aren't going well

Here are a few tips that might help:

- If your dog has too much energy to focus on learning, find a safe, enclosed place to burn off some of their energy, then start training.
- Try pulling up on the lead rather than backwards, this enables you to better communicate with your dog.

Dogs pick up on our emotions so if you're feeling tense, your dog probably is too, and this won't help their training. Take a few minutes to stop, stroke and fuss over your dog to relieve the tension.



5. Make the most of this time

Walking your dog on the lead gives you both time to enjoy the outdoors together and deepen your bond.

Scatter their favourite treats on the path for a fun enrichment activity or enjoy doing your favourite tricks together, as both will boost your levels of oxytocin, the 'love hormone'.

