

P-06-1527 Review dog walking restrictions on Welsh beaches and issue guidance to relevant bodies

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 16 Mehefin 2025
Petitions Committee | 16 June 2025

Reference: SR25/11480-2

Introduction

Petition Number: P-06-1527

Petition title: Review dog walking restrictions on Welsh beaches and issue guidance to relevant bodies

Text of petition: In Scotland and Northern Ireland dogs are banned from beaches from 1 June – 15 Sept (incl). In England, such as Cornwall, dog bans cover the shorter period 15 May – 30th September for Blue Flag beaches and the school holiday period of 1 July – 31st August for other beaches, but additionally allow out of hours dog access between 6pm and 10am. In not so sunny, rain and windswept Wales the banned period is 1 May – 30th September or even longer (with NO out of hours' time exceptions) and this applies for some general beaches, for green coast awards and for Blue Flag beaches. This is even 2 weeks before the commencement of the official bathing season on 15 May under England and Wales Bathing Water Regulations 2013.



There is NO presumption that Blue Flags should cover the entirety of a beach or that their season should be fixed 15 May – 30 September (or even from 1 May!) or to exclude out of hours access. Keep Wales Tidy (who classify Blue Flag beaches in Wales) say that it is up to the applicant body to decide how long the Blue Flag season will be within the timeframe of the Bathing Water season and other considerations.

Responsible dog owners pick up and help educate and police others. They recognise the value of excluding dogs on busy beaches in the summer. But they are fed up of being excluded from deserted beaches for 5 months of the year for no good reason whatsoever. Local Authorities have scarce resources and cannot afford to police dog exclusions from beaches unnecessarily. A better supported, shorter closed period to dog walking would reduce burdens upon them. A review of the timing of dogs on beaches is in keeping with the recent (November 2024) Bathing Water Regulations 2013 consultation. To aid flexibility Governments in England and Wales have supported a removal of regulation 4 (fixed bathing season) from the regulations to guidance.

We, responsible dog owners of Wales, call on the Senedd to recognise the value of dogs – socially, to the economy of Wales, to our tourism and to the health and welfare of dog owners. Also, the merits of walking dogs on expansive beaches as opposed to muddy fields, paths or parks. We ask the Senedd to debate the matter and to support the Welsh Government in issuing guidance (as appropriate) to Welsh Local Authorities (LA), NRW and Keep Wales Tidy that the default dog ban period on Welsh beaches should follow that generally of Cornwall, being 1 July – 31 August and with additional 6pm – 10am out of hours access, except where Local Authorities make the case for longer exclusion. Where a LA calls for a longer exclusion, it should take into account the availability of nearby beach walking opportunity and social and economic impacts.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilyys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.

1. Background

Currently, there are restrictions to dogs accessing some beaches in Wales between 1 May and 30 September. The petition calls for guidance to be issued to local authorities to reduce the length of the summer restrictions in line with other local authorities outside of Wales, and for out of hours access to restricted beaches - similar to the approach used by [Cornwall Council](#) - between the hours of 6pm-10am.

The petition received [361 signatures](#), and 60% of those signatures came from within the Swansea area. Using Swansea as an example, it is worth noting that restrictions do not apply to guide dogs, and as [this map](#) shows, a number of beaches are listed as “dog friendly” at all times of the year.

[Natural Resources Wales](#) lists dog, bird, and other animal faeces as one on the top five contributors to bathing water pollution due to their high levels of bacteria.

1.1. Powers to implement restrictions

Local authorities have powers under the [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#) (the Act) to apply restrictions through the use of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). They are required to review these every three years, either to renew or abolish the order. [Guidance on PSPOs](#) (published by the Local Government Association) sets out that PSPOs are a tool used by local authorities to help tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB), and ensure that public places remain safe.

To be able to use a PSPO, [certain criteria must be met](#). For example, in order to impose a restriction, the ASB must have a detrimental effect on the quality of local life, it must be persistent in nature, it must be unreasonable, and it must justify the restriction being imposed.

With reference to controlling the presence of dogs, the PSPO guidance above highlights that owners have a duty of care to exercise them, and that local authorities should consider how to accommodate this need elsewhere. Local authorities are encouraged to publish lists of alternative sites for dog walkers to use without restrictions, and also to consult dog law and welfare experts prior to seeking a PSPO. The impact of displacing dog owners into nearby regions or neighbouring authorities should also be considered to avoid unintended consequences. It's worth noting that under the Act there are [statutory consultation requirements](#) that must be followed prior to making a PSPO.

2. Welsh Government action

In a letter to the Chair dated 12 May 2025, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs Huw Irranca-Davies MS, sets out that local authorities are responsible for controlling dog access to beaches throughout the year, and that these restrictions are often in place to prevent a health risk.

He states:

Whilst I sympathise with the sentiments expressed in the petition in relation to responsible dog owners, there are no plans to introduce further guidance. Local Authorities already have the necessary powers to amend local restrictions and, as noted above, they are best placed to decide on any potential changes, should they consider it necessary.

The petitioner has provided a response to the letter and a copy is included in your papers for today's meeting.

3. Welsh Parliament action

This issue does not appear to have been raised in the Senedd previously.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.