

Report from Church Mead Management Committee

We are very concerned about the frequency and anti social impact of dog waste being left on Church Mead.

Dog owners/walkers are reminded via the community website, the Parish News and social media of their responsibility to clear up after their dogs. Weatherproof signage at each entrance to the Mead makes clear this is a legal requirement.

Bins for dog waste bags are regularly emptied by our contractor and we are providing an additional bin.

Unfortunately we all hear and read derogatory comments from residents about the incidence of dog waste being found, and of its unpleasant and offensive results such as very young children having their shoes and clothing covered in excrement. Members of the cricket club routinely have to remove dog waste prior to matches and practices.

Many people have witnessed dogs running unsupervised around the Mead especially when their owners are distracted by phones or engaged in conversation. Some irresponsible owners have been seen regularly releasing their dogs at night and therefore not caring where on the Mead these animals might be defecating.

The risk of toxocariasis is particularly, but not exclusively, a serious health hazard to children.

It has been reported and some of us have observed that, on some occasions, adults and children have been made to feel uncomfortable and even frightened by over zealous or uncontrolled dogs off the lead.

Church Mead is a recreation ground for everyone to enjoy and is not, as some people appear to believe, primarily a dog exercise area. Non residents also come to the Mead to exercise their dogs. It is a pity that some inconsiderate and thoughtless individuals are not prepared to conform to the rules.

Above all this is a health and safety issue. Regrettably we believe that stricter measures about dogs on the Mead need to be considered.

The summer months and lighter evenings will inevitably attract more people to the Mead, including children, the cricket club, and families enjoying a picnic.

We understand that Rode PC has completely banned dogs from their recreation ground to deal with the problem of dog waste. I have been in contact with their chairman who confirmed this is the case and that it is successful.

This would not be our preference in addressing the problem here but should not be ruled out in the future. Dogs are already banned from the children's play area. The location of Church Mead and its five entrances and its footpaths make it a well used thoroughfare for walking to and from all parts of NSP.

We ask the PC at least to consider that dogs must at all times be on a lead when on the Mead so that it is as safe an environment as possible for all residents to enjoy.

A 'dogs on leads' policy is common in many parks and in public spaces. Its clear and unambiguous message may actually help responsible dog owners, who are in the majority, and others to challenge those thoughtless individuals who choose not to conform. The weight of public opinion can be the most effective way of influencing behaviour.

We manage Church Mead on behalf of the PC and, in spite of our best efforts, are faced with this on going problem. We need the support of the PC in reaching a decision on how best to deal with it in the interests of all residents by ensuring that the Mead is a safe place for everyone.

We are willing to work with the PC on any matters such as consultations with the village and on implementing any restrictions which may be introduced.

It is apparent that the status quo for dogs on the Mead is unsustainable unless there is a change in behaviour on the part of some dog walkers, and we ask the PC to address our concerns as a matter of urgency.

Jan Scarrow

Chair, Church Mead Management Committee