

somewhat counterintuitive as often more vulnerable and frail visitors to the park would prefer to visit the park earlier in the morning when the park is less busy. The proposed Dogs on Leads at all times area has been designed to include the majority of park attractions such as the car park, the playground, the rose garden and the model gardens that older and more vulnerable park users would like to visit.

The proposed 'on lead' area is 21.9 Hectares out of a total 122 Hectares or 18% of the entire park (22.5% of accessible open park and woodland).

The creation of an area in the core of the park where vulnerable park users can be confident that they will not encounter free running dogs will render the park more inclusive and welcoming for these visitors.

By the same argument there does not seem to be a strong rationale to require dogs to be on leads once they are under effective control between 11am and 1 hour before closing in other areas in the park and it is proposed that these areas would become off lead areas at all times. This will effectively create some very sizable areas within the park where dog owners can exercise their dogs off lead but under effective control at any time of the day which it is believed will suit a great many responsible dog owners that the previous timed arrangement did not fully accommodate.

'Off lead but under effective control at all times' areas:

West of the rose garden to south of the avenue:	24 Ha
West of the Par 3/Pitch and Putt north of the avenue	17 Ha
North of Naniken including the dog park	28 Ha
East of park including the chestnut meadow	8.5 Ha

Total off lead areas ` 77.5 Hectares

(These figures exclude the golf course, all-weather, works depot, tennis courts, farm etc. which will remain out of bounds for dogs. Dogs on leads are welcome within the allotment scheme.)

While thankfully serious incidents of conflict between dogs and vulnerable park visitors are rare, issues around dogs and vulnerable users are regularly raised with the Parks Service. It is more than disappointing to think such users might avoid visiting the park due to a fear of an unwelcome encounter with free running dogs. It is felt that this is a reasonable change to the control of dogs in the park but will greatly enhance the park in terms of accessibility, inclusivity and being more age-friendly.

The next steps is to hold a consultation in the park with dog owners and other park users. After which if there is a reasonable level of buy-in, signage will be erected on the footpaths at the various entry points to the core area advising patrons; 'You are now entering/leaving the on/off lead area'.

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