

To: John Hesketh, Parish Clerk.

15 Stuarts Way

Botus Fleming Parish Councillors

Hatt

Monday 17th July 2017

Dear Mr Hesketh and the Parish Councillors.

Further to my request at the last Parish Council Meeting, 30th of June 2017, in section 88 Public Participation, I requested that the Council might consider the use of dog walking in the playing field area at Hatt.

I ask the Parish Council to consider this matter.

Whilst we have recently used the playing field with great success at the Big Event, the recreation area is rarely used which is a great shame. The area is clearly defined by a playing field area with football posts and a children's play area (regularly cut grass), and in the far end more rural wild 'Meadow' which could easily be sectioned off and would be a wonderful area for dog recreation.

Whilst I understand dog fouling is an issue, I would like to remind Councillors that the current ruling of NO DOGS has been generally well adhered to. With that in mind I would like to think and hope that if an area is opened up to dog walkers to walk their dogs, we would continue that diligence and only walk dogs in the designated areas and always clear up dog mess.

My suggestion would be that owners would walk down in the stone area where cars park and at the end of that area just walk along the edge of the playing field, dogs would be kept on leads until you reach the opening that leads to the meadow. It would need to be gated so that it is secure for dogs and that the playing field is kept strictly dog free. Waste poo bins would need to be fitted and emptied on a regular basis.

I know that as an active member of the community there are a number of us who would regularly monitor the area for the minority of dog owners who don't always pick up after their dog. (Unfortunately, it is that minority that causes the problems for dog waste left on public areas.)

There are a number of initiatives to help prevent people (dog owners) from being irresponsible:

1. Installing a poo bin.
2. Securing the area.
3. Possibly having free poo bags for people to use so there is NO excuse!
4. Involving the local school and informing them of the importance of picking up after your dog.
5. Some communities put cones over dog mess as a highlighter to the owner that they are being irresponsible. Or spray painting dog mess is also another initiative effectively to shame the owner.

6. Continuing publicity in parish publications and Facebook to highlight campaigns to clean up after your dog.

It is clear that there is not an easy one size fits all answer.

Having a space for dogs to play and keeping that area clean, involves time and effort. I would ask the Parish Council is to consider the fact that banning dogs from a Recreation Ground might seem like a good idea BUT it alienates a large section of our community. It discriminates against many of us who are dog owners. I walked in the playing field and meadow area today (without the dog!). It is a beautiful space and I wonder how many people have even been into the Meadow area. It has to be so rarely used and we could enjoy it so much more by making it a public dog walking area.

At the Parish Meeting a lady spoke of her despair because of her and her husband's health problems. She is unable to walk far to exercise her dogs. This is a perfect area and she sounded like a very diligent and responsible dog owner. I would ask that you consider her situation.

I have spoken to a number of dog owners in the village asking their views regarding the recreation field as an area to walk. Some of their comments.....

1. It would be a safe place to exercise their dogs.
2. It would be an alternative to what most of us use and call the turf field, which is owned by someone and managed to produce turf. The managers of that area are very kind to let us use this space.
3. Another owner has a fairly elderly dog and climbing stiles into and out of fields and pathways can be tricky and restricts ones walking options. (This is also a problem for elderly dog OWNERS!)
4. It would ease the pressure on farmer's field during farming activities, and this includes fields and areas that are sometimes used unofficially.
5. All of the dog owners I spoke to thought it was a great idea and would welcome this recreation space for their pets.

PLEASE NOTE, a number of people, Dave and me included, have offered to become part of a monitor team, to regularly (weekly) patrol and keep the area clean. It should not be a publicly advertised team, as this would only encourage irresponsible owners to NOT pick up after their dogs.

I hope that you will give my request serious consideration if only on a trial basis.

Playing Fields are a really great asset to our Village. By including dogs and their owners to use this space it will be seen that all of the Parish can make better use of a beautiful space. A beautiful space that is currently little used.....

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

Becky Escott.