

“To request a report detailing Cork County Council’s current policy on dog fouling. To include:

- (i) the facilities Cork County Council provides to support the responsible management of dog waste**
- (ii) the practical and financial supports Cork County Council currently offers to assist communities in keeping streets free of dog waste**
- (iii) the public awareness measures undertaken by Cork County Council highlighting the health risks associated with dog waste**
- (iv) The number of on-the-spot fines issued for dog fouling in 2014.”**

The reason I asked for a report on Council policy with regard to dog waste management because this is an issue that effects every community, every outdoor amenity in the county and one that a solitary warden is not going to eliminate. In Passage West, a survey done amongst the local community indicated the anti-social problem of greatest concern was abandoned dog waste. And although the County Council got €1m of funding to upgrade the old railway line such that it is now one of the most popular walking routes in the country, it didn’t have a single dog waste receptacle of any kind until the Tidy Towns group was awarded a grant to install two which empties itself.

I know this is an issue that the Environment SPC was working on before. I also know increased awareness of the need for better dog waste management was part of the Council’s Environmental Awareness Strategy 2010 – 2015. But these efforts seems to have gone nowhere.

An effective programme of dog waste management involves a multi-faceted approach with emphasis on public education and increasing awareness. Other councils around the country are making inroads into tackling this anti-social problem.

Clare County Council erected mobile programmable audio devices on the promenades of two of its most popular beaches that encourage dog owners to clean up after their pets. Almost immediately there was a 50% reduction in dog fouling in both locations.

These audio devices have also been used by Fingal County Council. They were erected on lampposts along the sea front and resulted in an 82% reduction in dog fouling. The trial run was so successful that the other Dublin Councils are also going to try the audio devices.

The four Dublin councils have also recently signed up to the Green Dog Walkers Programme. Wicklow County Council, Meath County Council, Kilkenny County Council are committed to this programme too. The Green Dog Walkers initiative encourages dog owners to sign up to a pledge whereby they agree to wear a green armband when walking their dog, clean up after their dog and be happy to carry an extra dog waste bag for those dog walkers who may have forgotten to bring one.

Roscommon County Council is trying clean advertising to raise awareness of the need to clean up dog waste. Clean advertising involves stencils with an anti-dog fouling message which is sprayed onto the footpath and which lasts for only a few weeks.

Other more exciting initiatives include that in Mexico City, where parks have been equipped with special boxes where people can throw away their dog poop. Free Wi-Fi is

offered to all park users and the higher the weight of poop in the box, the more minutes of free Wi-Fi available to everyone in the park.

In Bristol, UK they have gone for the shock factor. Their new posters feature toddlers picking up dog poop, smearing it all over themselves, and even eating it.

Keep Britain Tidy is working on a new campaign with 23 County and Borough Councils which has seen a reduction of 46% in the levels of dog fouling. The campaign features 'We're watching you' posters which glow in the dark at night.

Other councils in the UK have tried spraying abandoned dog waste a bright colour.

In West Yorkshire, British Waterways decorated a tree with dozens of bags of poo-filled plastic bags, to highlight the problem of owners picking the waste up - only to fling it into the foliage. A 70% drop in the amount of mess found on the streets was reported.

Plain clothes officers, surveillance vans and wardens with night vision goggles were used by Hydburn Council, to enable the handing-out of £75 on-the-spot fines to irresponsible owners.

In Gwent, more than 2,000 fixed penalty notices were issued after a private firm was employed.

There are lots of initiatives, lots of bright ideas. Irresponsible pet waste management is a scourge in our communities. It is time the Council backed communities in helping them to deal with it.