

Council candidate wants enforcement on dog ASBOs



Callum Laidlaw is the Scottish Conservative and Unionist candidate for Portobello Craigmillar and this week he has called for more Dog Control Notices. This follows a report that across Scotland the number of patients attending hospitals after serious dog attacks has risen by 80% in 10 years.

The 2011 Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act aimed to address the failings of the breed specific Dangerous Dogs Act with the ability for council officials to issue Dog Control Notices (DCNs) to owners of problem pets. Failure to comply can lead to them being forced to keep their pet on a lead at all times, have it neutered, attend special training courses or face a fine of up to £1,000.

While the act came into force in 2011, Mr Laidlaw discovered that City of Edinburgh Council officials have issued an average of less than 10 DCNs a year, which he argues does not reflect the seriousness of the issue of uncontrolled and aggressive dogs on the city's streets, parks and beaches. Mr Laidlaw says he would like to see much greater enforcement to ensure the safety of children and smaller dogs when larger breeds are exercised off-lead, and the ability for neighbours to flag to the Council if they feel threatened. Furthermore, he would like to see the Notices applied to professional dog walkers if they feel to adequately control their charges.

Mr Laidlaw believes there is a need for greater training of Environmental Wardens on how and when to issue the notices, and what advice they can give to owners struggling with difficult dogs, as well as making it easier for concerned

residents to anonymously report their concerns and request a visit from an official. A particular issue for many people is dog-on-dog aggression, especially for owners of smaller breeds that can be easily injured by unruly large dogs off lead, an issue that rarely concerns the police.

Mr Laidlaw said: "As the owner of two small dogs one of my frequent concerns is the presence of unruly or aggressive dogs that are not under their owner's control. Even in play, a big boisterous dog can harm smaller breeds, children or the infirm. Many residents have echoed my concerns, particularly with regard to popular recreational areas like Portobello beach or Figgate Park. The issuing of more Dog Control Notices would make people take heed of the legal requirement to control their dogs at all times and would see hard to handle dogs kept on leads or subject to enforced training to improve their behaviour."

Miles Briggs, Lothians MSP, supports the endeavour, saying "Edinburgh is a city of dog lovers and it's great to see so many places being more dog friendly but the recent statistics on dog attacks are worrying. Callum Laidlaw is right to raise concerns that City of Edinburgh council is not doing enough to enforce the Control of Dogs Act (Scotland) through the issuing of DCNs and the necessary follow-up."