

## Responsible dog owners and L'Ancrese Common

Concerns were raised by two members of the public that some dog owners were compromising the ability of the general public to enjoy the common by behaving irresponsibly. Together we constructed a simple survey to determine if the three issues raised were shared as concerns by the wider public in the north of the Island. The issues related to aggressive or threatening dogs, uncollected dog faeces and holes dug by dogs.

Surveys were placed in numerous shops, garden centres and veterinary clinics in the north of the Island for the month of April 2016. Two hundred and twenty three members of the public completed the survey and the numbers of affirmatives to each question are recorded in the table below.

<b>a) Have you, your family or your dog ever been threatened by other dogs?</b>	<b>b) Have you noticed uncollected dog faeces?</b>	<b>c) Have you noticed large holes in the grass?</b>	<b>Total number of respondents</b>
<b>86</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>39%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>78%</b>	

The main concern raised by members of the public regarding dog activities on L'Ancrese Common was uncollected dog faeces. 94% of respondents noticed uncollected dog faeces. 78% of respondents noticed large holes dug by dogs and 39% of respondents, their family or their dog had been threatened by other dogs on the Common.

### Conclusions

L'Ancrese Common is a microcosm that provides an insight to the behaviour of dog owners across the Island. For most dogs places like L'Ancrese Common, cliff and coastal paths and beaches are the only places that they are exercised freely. This may be because The Control of Dogs Ordinance, 1992 requires dogs to remain on a lead and under close supervision on playing fields many of which are associated with public parks. The same regulation requires that faeces deposited by a dog in a public place are removed immediately by the person in charge of the dog at the time. Failure to pick up after your dog could result in a fixed penalty fine of £100. It is clear that this regulation is not a sufficient to deter irresponsible dog owners to pick up after their dog. Owners must keep their dogs in sight at all times and watch out what they're up to, for this reason no one should attempt to exercise more than 5 dogs at any one time.

Over three quarters of respondents noticed large holes on L'Ancrese Common many of which were located on open areas where people walk. Most holes demonstrated evidence which suggested they were expanded through the activity of dogs and all presented hazards to horses and the public especially if they were partially sighted or walking in low light conditions. It was apparent during the survey that measures were being taken by the Vale Commons Council to fill in some of the holes in an area used for cross-country runs but this needs to be expanded across the whole common then monitored and maintained going forward.

It is because many owners take the opportunity to allow their dogs to run free on L'Ancrese Common that the dogs have the opportunity to threaten other common users and dogs. Owners are responsible for the actions of their dog in a public place whether it is on or off a lead. Owners, who cannot guarantee that their dog will not threaten people, other dogs, livestock or horses and riders should keep their dog on a lead, possibly muzzled and under close supervision at all times. A public place like L'Ancrese Common is not a suitable area to undertake early behavioural modification for problem/aggressive dogs. Training and behavioural modification should be undertaken on enclosed private land until significant progress has been made and the dog is not likely to prove a hazard to other users of the common their dogs, livestock and horses.