**Are you a forward thinking Council…do you want to reduce dog fouling in your area but not incur excessive costs?**

If you do…read on…but first a little recap about us. Our sole aim is to change the behaviour of Irresponsible Dog Owners (IDOs). We are not a ‘business’ – we do not generate any income. We are not a charity, or registered not-for-profit. We have no financial streams into the organisation. It’s simply run off the ‘side of a desk’ when time allows.

So what’s been happening. What have we learnt or achieved so far?

Well we have a learnt a lot, that’s for sure. Looking at this problem (if you visited from another planet) you would think…easily identifiable problem with equally easy solutions to stop and prevent it. But it’s not.

So how do we solve this problem? I find it useful to go through all the obvious solutions first, where possible ‘trial’ them and then see if its scalable nationwide.

So the most obvious solutions working downwards:

**Educate the Irresponsible Dog Owners (IDOs).**

Doesn’t need much discussion this point does it. Its quite straightforward. Most (if not all) IDOs realise the antisocial effects that dog fouling creates. There have been many initiatives to educate those offenders. All have failed. Why? Well the 2014 study by Lancaster University found that 3% of IDO’s refused to change their behaviour and 8% are pretty much “I might pick up…or I might not if the situation allows”.

**More Dog Wardens, More Fines**

Penal deterrents work. This has been proven with wearing seatbelts, texting while driving etc. However, currently the system of monitoring dog fouling is managed by local councils, many of whom are cash-strapped right now and all of whom differ in their approach to tackle the problem. Furthermore, most dog fouling tends to occur out of sight making this deterrent difficult to enforce. (However, we believe that identifying and fining IDOs must have a big part to play in stopping the problem.)

**Power From the People!**

Now this is a conundrum. Initially this was what we (Dogfoul.org) had thought would be the solution to the problem. It was/is evident that people get very emotional and outraged by the actions of the IDOs (just do a search on Facebook for Dog Poo). So you would automatically think that people affected by dog fouling (again simply look at the rants on a Facebook post) would also want to help prevent it..but that is not the case. (However, we do believe strongly that ultimately social media pressure will be part of our overall solution.)

So why is that (we need to do a survey as to why!)? My initial thoughts are that:

1) Being involved in preventing dog fouling conjures up images of groups of people out collecting dog mess on a Sunday morning…this isn’t appealing to most people!

2) Most people feel that this should be tackled by the local authority.

3) “I don’t even own a dog” or “I clear up after mine so why should I be doing this..”

4) Residents generally feel let down by the impact of dog wardens, the very low number of prosecutions, the inactivity/presence/deterent of ‘boots-on-the-ground’. Ho often do you see a dog warden that is out specifically walking an area, wearing a ‘dog fouling warden type’ hi-vis jacket (Studies show that the mere presence of a deterrent in the form of a cut out cardboard policemen in a supermarket discourages stealing…the same would likely to be true in this scenario..more on this later!).

**Other methods:**

Well there are many but here are two of the best of the rest...

DNA of Poo samples – trialled, works, but expensive to implement and…well there are a million reasons as to why this would be difficult to make work.

No Dog walking in this area! Just ban dogs from certain areas. In a small historic town in Italy I actually saw residents having to carry their dogs out of the town to areas where they could pee and poop.

Residents Spraying Dog Mess with Paint – Yep this does work (typically a reduction of between 30-50%). But there are countless examples of this type of intervention (we did our own too!) that ultimately fail because this requires the dedication of local residents to continually monitor and police the area. When you remove the deterrent…the fouling returns. So although this intervention fails on its own, it does highlight that IDOs do change their behaviour when a tangible deterrent/threat is in place….hmmmm

**Signage.** We have tried many different ways to mobilise local residents either as part of a social media threat and/or as part of a boots-on-the-ground initiative and our most recent initiative involved placing small signage on a local walk that had a dog fouling problem. The signage was aimed at encouraging local residents to help prevent dog fouling in their area by becoming involved in our social media campaigns (see previous post at [**https://www.facebook.com/dogfoul.org**](https://www.facebook.com/dogfoul.org?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZXiTVMbgFMFJCPktVG5JOjrNj4oYuf8fHYxVHj6s8rFQmaBytbxWItUOEswFJoHTZNlhZeQiuIKqphqZCcg7o9PBWit96ws5h9gQ11K5iEU_QGMjv25vFe7qpHDsHWk49MsfX62uqghd4tw2XSfPs7IKbrJhkY0GY1K_zsowMplj4tnyWdwKhq7whDg3pyosrXIb0t41XGORh2vhTVC938pn1pcc1avgKg7hlkfWIOPPJHx_UiRPLjO8c70KRotefU&__tn__=-UK-R) ). However, this did not have the desired effect of encouraging residents to become engaged via social media…however the amount of dog fouling along that route reduced considerably and the all weather signs are still in place!

It seems that the small, all weather signs were changing the behaviour of the IDOs using that route. Although we were already aware that all forms of anti dog fouling signs have a positive effect (we had carried out previous surveys/signage campaigns of our own that showed a considerable impact on fouling) on fouling levels, it has made us believe that a coordinated, nationwide initiative that’s works in partnership with local authorities could be the way forward).

The main problem of solving this problem boils down to cost. To solve this there needs to be a cost effective solution that doesn’t solely rely on manpower (boots-on-the-ground) policing areas, spraying poo etc (although there is a place for this ultimately). A European Directive acronym best describes this… BATNEEC 'the best available technology not entailing excessive costs’. And we believe that the best way to initially address the UK wide problem of dog fouling is to use signage in a coordinated way. Let me explain the aims, previous successes and the pitfalls associated with this.

50% reduction in dog fouling

Firstly there have been numerous initiatives that involve signage to prevent dog fouling and they all work to an extent. From a local neighborhood initiative, to a coordinated campaign managed by a national charity. The results of intervention by placing signage saying ‘No Fouling’ “Clean Up After Your Dog” “We are Looking Out for Dog Foulers” etc all help to reduce fouling…they have an impact and they change the behaviour of the IDO. This is because signage (remember the cardboard policemen in supermarkets!) makes the IDOs feel like they may be being watched and as a result they change their behaviour.

*Here are some examples of numerous poster campaigns…*

The NFU for Scotland trialled a poster campaign and found a 50% decrease in dog fouling offences on farmland. [https://www.nfus.org.uk/.../nfus-poster-campaign-halves...](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nfus.org.uk%2Fnews%2Fnews%2Fnfus-poster-campaign-halves-dog-fouling-farmland%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR3VEnpYYO0TE9MMqzJPxfuYIpQF884Slv_FwBaDFYtwaBH-KNsXURdRuKY&h=AT3MplprBCZI4iZn3iQ1ZKdEoXr5CbhccrF7eVAZ7oXlHgTTDLzvou2uP8aT6nlLrGjE2l9lLGVeGekW-W9emoMOY0UFbgsgISPak5viPWRO-5o1SE-gZk035tMLUaE1gg&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT07OtEiwgMlXiWg4AXGWZHsIpNsZMdEUepF1JCgMNIR7Frwz3wpwL6ulJqFg1NpuyTpOhp9bGYd-4_fCbxo1HeHpwS-1ufa75xxTyqUgxSFR9XyIMhuvIXIj44_vah_A-Ziohrkg4dboCNm4IkaA-B3DA0KP8bPiE3ulDYKSALeDaDuFB9wfGvnXyUFX0BSTIGttgVBlTkPzMT9LkQwotXuMECo89PouTd5d0JR5xCdiDfNUHYizcoc8sUEQTOhB4HnGxSJOPiZ)

However…Keep Britain Tidy also ran a poster campaign too. They too found an overall reduction of 46% (see page 20 at [https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/.../Keeping%20an%20eye...](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.keepbritaintidy.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fresource%2FKeeping%2520an%2520eye%2520on%2520it_Final%2520report.pdf%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR0x3uI8F3nMe_tsnIYDuunx15XTjPQQJHcfGLMfsWzv0CNfjYi8piZ6KpQ&h=AT3bRSacQtHu66JRQwF7Ud-AIJdaQYOuABaOKfGFzm1_lVw1r3dMXBSe2ukAohs5Z3Bha2Me8xQT0NvZHTe3_bqiLklAGBbGxKuEV7oLtX4iCCejl6xesiOVKwkBVQDyWg&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT07OtEiwgMlXiWg4AXGWZHsIpNsZMdEUepF1JCgMNIR7Frwz3wpwL6ulJqFg1NpuyTpOhp9bGYd-4_fCbxo1HeHpwS-1ufa75xxTyqUgxSFR9XyIMhuvIXIj44_vah_A-Ziohrkg4dboCNm4IkaA-B3DA0KP8bPiE3ulDYKSALeDaDuFB9wfGvnXyUFX0BSTIGttgVBlTkPzMT9LkQwotXuMECo89PouTd5d0JR5xCdiDfNUHYizcoc8sUEQTOhB4HnGxSJOPiZ) )

And here are some more!!. [https://barcproject.wixsite.com/.../anti-dog-fouling...](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fbarcproject.wixsite.com%2Fbarcproject%2Fanti-dog-fouling-campaigns-%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR0RUkjfNnr_1pCEsXT4bvL-g2EwxwfuZOIf5HsVOuDChT_3w8eqJFgOmBs&h=AT0VmENhAzko2reCINsnKNIhsgpPo-sFSspaG9FPlXTjjKXlOB6ZKnXOKbzqxplkie1db6rOOa_WwOw1W0fZObnToi1MbUJPqHs28XgkxlN0VkQH2jRkaSsjp9D8_jN4Ag&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT07OtEiwgMlXiWg4AXGWZHsIpNsZMdEUepF1JCgMNIR7Frwz3wpwL6ulJqFg1NpuyTpOhp9bGYd-4_fCbxo1HeHpwS-1ufa75xxTyqUgxSFR9XyIMhuvIXIj44_vah_A-Ziohrkg4dboCNm4IkaA-B3DA0KP8bPiE3ulDYKSALeDaDuFB9wfGvnXyUFX0BSTIGttgVBlTkPzMT9LkQwotXuMECo89PouTd5d0JR5xCdiDfNUHYizcoc8sUEQTOhB4HnGxSJOPiZ)

See where this is going? This is part of the problem of the current signage campaigns. They are all singular to that organisation, campaign, neighborhood, house. There is no continuity or consistency. Everybody ‘gets’ the cut-out carboard policeman because they can instantly identify what it represents. Essentially it’s a poster campaign in the shape of a policeman…but that piece of cardboard is instantly identifiable as a perceived threat/deterrent to would-be shoplifters.

So we believe that signage/posters offer the BATNEEC and has the potential to create some traction nationally…a signage that is instantly recogniseable and identifiable no matter if you are in London or Lerwick. And we believe that if we can roll out ‘Dogfoul.org’ signage (signage wording not yet finalized!) across the UK AND ultimately combine that with social media and boots-on-the-ground (remember the poo spraying)… we can also create a similar effect as the cardboard policeman.

**However. In order to make this work we must work closely with local authorities since they own and manage the parks, play areas etc. As such we welcome ‘Forward Thinking’ Local Authorities who want to tackle dog fouling; whilst not incurring excessive cost; reducing the number of complaints about dog fouling and ultimately reducing the strain and burden on their environmental health department….to contact us!**