

Holme Dog Consultation - Frequently Asked Questions

Why do you need to review dog visits at Holme?

The beaches at Holme are internationally important for their breeding and overwintering assemblage of birds. This includes breeding populations of ringed plover, little tern and oystercatcher, all species of conservation concern in the UK. In the autumn up to 50,000 knot use the area for feeding and resting.

Dog walking is a popular activity at Holme. In surveys undertaken by NWT 43% of visitors did so to walk their dogs on the beach. Dog ownership has increased in recent years, with 33% of households owning a dog in 2021, an increase of 10% from the previous year, so it is reasonable to expect an increase in dog use of the site in the future.

What are the conflicts between dogs and wildlife at Holme?

- Direct mortality to wintering or breeding birds – e.g. trampling of nests, predation of young birds/eggs.
- Disturbance to breeding birds leading to reduced breeding success/productivity.
- Disturbance to wintering/birds on migration meaning less chance for them to feed.

Are dogs welcome at Holme?

Yes, they are. Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the le Strange Estate welcome responsible dog visits to the beach at Holme. We recognise the benefits that dog ownership can bring people such as companionship and a reason to get out and exercise. At Holme we have seen a marked increase in dog visits and we need to ensure a balance between recreational use of the site and protecting the important wildlife that makes a home here.

What are the proposals?

We are proposing that dogs are kept on a short lead whilst on the beach from March - August. This means that dogs and their owners can still enjoy the amazing environment of the area without causing disturbance to the breeding birds for which it is so important.

At other times we are asking that dogs are kept under close control – in practice that means within 10 metres of their owner and to recall to their owner when asked. It is really important that dogs are not allowed to run into roosting or feeding flocks of birds during the cold, short days of winter.

At one location we are proposing a small dog free area to ensure the maximum chance for birds to succeed in breeding and surviving the cold winter months. It is one of the best areas for breeding and roosting birds and is therefore the most sensitive. This part of the beach is also a no-through route, so this small exclusion area shouldn't impact on people's enjoyment of the rest of the beach.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust don't own most of the beach – how can this be done?

The majority of the beach at Holme is owned by the le Strange Estate and Norfolk Wildlife Trust work with them to manage the beach for wildlife and people. We have consulted closely with them and they are supportive of our proposals.

Why can't dogs just be under control?

We know that 'under control' means different things to different people, and that dogs can behave differently in the exciting environment of the beach. By asking for dogs to be on a short lead this removes any confusion and ensures the desired outcome of the restriction is met i.e. that ground nesting birds are protected.

What are the next steps, after the consultation?

After the consultation closes, we will take time to analyse the results and take on board people's points of view. The outcome of the consultation will then be made public later in the year, with a view to any changes being implemented soon after.