



Newsletter

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.

Spring 2012

STIRLING LINEAR PARK - A PARK FOR ALL

The Adelaide Hills Council is seeking public comment on draft Guiding Principles for Dog Access on Council Reserves and accompanying Examples of Dog Access in Council Reserves including Stirling Linear Park.

It is important to understand that this is a deliberate attempt to overturn the existing rules relating to Stirling Linear Park and the Deanery in Bridgewater.

The Example of Dog Access for Stirling Linear Park would make an area in Stirling Park 'dogs off-leash and under effective control'. The main path through Stirling Park, known as the Stirling Park Track, would form the western side of this off-leash area.

It is essential that dog access along the Stirling Park Track should continue to be on-leash for the following reasons:

- It is the main access route through Stirling Park, and is used by parents with pushers, young children and older people.
- It adjoins a revegetation area which is home to endangered Southern Brown Bandicoots. Stirling Park is also frequented by kangaroos, koalas and a diversity of birdlife.
- 'Effective control' inevitably means that a minority of dogs will not be under any control in the park.

The draft Guiding Principles do not adequately cover the circumstances in the proposed off-leash area in Stirling Linear Park. You can respond to this by completing the survey about the Guiding Principles available from the Adelaide Hills Council website: www.ahc.sa.gov.au before 24 September.

You can also email the Mayor and all Councillors to express your views by going to:

ahccouncillors@ahc.sa.gov.au

For a more comprehensive explanation of the deficiencies in the draft Guiding Principles see page 2.

Annual General Meeting

When: Tuesday 20 November 2012, 6.30pm

Where: Woorabinda Environment Centre

Speaker: Jasmin Packer on her research into the association of bandicoots with blackberries

All welcome. Barbeque facilities will be available after the meeting (please bring your own meat, salad and drinks).

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DOG ACCESS ON COUNCIL RESERVES

Introduction

The Adelaide Hills Council resolved on 14 August to seek public comment on:

- draft Guiding Principles for Dog Access on Council Reserves
- Examples of Dog Access in Council Reserves including Stirling Linear Park.

These documents are contained in a report prepared by the Animal Management Plan Advisory Group (AMPAG) which was appointed by Council to provide advice regarding dog access on Council land. Copies of the two documents forming part of the AMPAG report are attached.

The draft Guiding Principles are discussed under two headings: Safe Communities and Biodiversity.

The Examples of Dog Access were initially released as Recommendations for Dog Access but were changed from recommendations to examples shortly before the 14 August Council meeting.

Review of the Examples of Dog Access has highlighted that there are deficiencies in the content of the draft Guiding Principles. The detailed situations, applications and rationales in this document do not cover the circumstances existing in the off leash area in the Example of Dog Access in Stirling Linear Park. These deficiencies need to be addressed through the public comment process and are highlighted in discussion of the Example of Dog Access - Stirling Linear Park and the draft Guiding Principles below.

Example of Dog Access – Stirling Linear Park

The *Example of Dog Access – Stirling Linear Park* delineates an area in Stirling Park (described as the Branch Road Loop) as ‘dogs off leash and under effective control’. The main path through Stirling Park, known as the Stirling Park Track, forms the western side of this example off leash area. The Stirling Park Track is the only route through this part of the Park which leads to Woorabinda Lake.

The importance of the Stirling Park Track is highlighted in the report which states that,

‘There is limited access in and out of the remainder of the park which will make delineation of the off leash area straightforward.’

This limited access in and out of the remainder of the park reinforces the importance of the Stirling Park Track as the main thoroughfare through Stirling Park.

The Stirling Park Track is frequently used by members of the local community, including parents with young children and older people, who do not have access to an alternate route.

It is essential that dog access along Stirling Park Track should continue to be on leash for the safety of other park users.

The Stirling Park Track is on the western side of the Example of Dog Access area. On the other side of the Stirling Park Track is an extensive revegetation area which is home to endangered Southern Brown Bandicoots. Both the example area and the adjoining revegetation area are frequented by kangaroos and koalas which move between Stirling Park and Woorabinda. The revegetation area has also been shown in surveys to have a diversity of birdlife.

There is no physical boundary between the Example of Dog Access area and the adjoining revegetation area: and the only boundary is a line on a map. This means that protection of wildlife would depend on dogs being under a sufficiently high level of control to ensure that they do not stray into areas which are not physically separated from the designated off leash area. Protection relies on people and dogs all doing the right thing – we know from current practices that this is unrealistic. Many dogs will give chase and not respond to call if, for example, they see a kangaroo. If the area becomes designated as off leash, it is likely that many more dogs will use it than at present or in the past, increasing the risk of this sort of occurrence.

It is essential that dog access along Stirling Park Track should continue to be on leash for the protection of the Park’s wildlife.

Draft Guiding Principles - Safe Communities

The Safe Communities section of the draft Guiding Principles states that,

‘In some areas where there is significant activity or there are vulnerable users, Council must restrict dog access to ensure the safety of all.’

In accordance with the intent of this statement, it would be reasonable to expect that dogs should be on leash on main public access paths which are used by a cross-section of the community and where there are only limited alternative routes.

Six dog access 'situations' are set out in the supporting Safe Communities matrix and the supporting glossary. None of the situations adequately equates to the example area in Stirling Park. This is shown in the following two situations that most closely relate to the example area.

The 'bitumen or concrete paths' situation provides for 'dogs on leash on paths' with the rationale that 'these paths are commonly shared by a variety of users.' This is a parallel situation to that existing on the Stirling Park Track. The Guiding Principles need to be amended so that the relevant situation reads: 'bitumen, concrete or other main access paths' to cover the Stirling Park Track and other similar non bitumen or non concrete main access paths.

The other relevant situation, 'large numbers of users in a confined area or vulnerable users' provides for 'dogs on leash, possibly dogs prohibited' with the rationale 'public safety in crowds or around vulnerable park users'. This would appear to cover the situation which would exist on the Stirling Park Track if it becomes part of an off leash area. However, the glossary states under 'vulnerable park users' that 'This term is used where Council has **approved** the use of portions of a reserve for regular use by pre-school children, elderly or disabled users.' The Guiding Principles need to be amended to remove the need for Council approval of the use of such areas by pre-school children, elderly or disabled users when these areas are regularly used pathways which vulnerable park users, like other members of the community, need to use.

Draft Guiding Principles - Biodiversity

The *Draft Guiding Principles - Biodiversity* must include the principle that: 'Where higher biodiversity areas exist adjacent to lower biodiversity and no physical barrier exists between the two areas, then the higher biodiversity area **MUST** prevail.' A line on a map is **NOT** a physical barrier to dogs. Protection relies on people and dogs all doing the right thing - we know from current practices that this is unrealistic.

In the Example of Dog Access it is stated that much of Stirling Park is of low and moderate biodiversity. In fact, the biodiversity precincts map of Stirling Park shows that the Example area, apart from a small section, and the adjoining revegetation area are both designated as being of moderate biodiversity value. Most of the area in Stirling Park designated as low biodiversity is remote from the Example area, meaning that it is not relevant when

considering the biodiversity values of the Example area and adjoining revegetation areas.

The Example area and the adjoining revegetation areas are both designated as being of moderate biodiversity value. The revegetation area is clearly of higher biodiversity significance than the Example area as it is home to endangered Southern Brown Bandicoots and a diversity of birdlife. This warrants its protection from off leash dogs.

The whole area is classified and listed under the Local Government Community Land Register for 'Conservation'. The area is also classified 'Public Purpose - Conservation' under Council's Development Plan.

Moderate biodiversity areas such as the revegetation area contain vulnerable wildlife which needs protection. The draft Guiding Principles give **NO** protection to moderate biodiversity areas which are not differentiated from low biodiversity areas.

The Draft Guiding Principles - Biodiversity need to be amended to give the level of protection to medium biodiversity areas afforded by dogs being on leash. This is an appropriate level of protection between the levels of 'no dogs' in high biodiversity areas and 'dogs off leash' in low biodiversity areas that are remote from higher biodiversity areas.

Draft Guiding Principles - Definitions

The Draft Guiding Principles are weakened by some of the definitions set out in the document. For example:

'Effective control' inevitably means that a minority of dogs will not be under any control in the park.

'Close proximity' means 'within calling distance'. Many dogs, when they see a kangaroo, give chase and do not respond to calls.

'vulnerable users' which suggests that Council only regards pre school children, the elderly or disabled users as vulnerable if Council has approved portion of a reserve for their regular use. These people are still vulnerable whether the area is approved or not. For example, a child home day care provider regularly walks toddlers in Stirling Park. With dogs off leash in the area they will not be part of a safe community and they are denied equity of access to the area.

Animal Management Plan Advisory Group – Examples of Dog Access - Stirling Linear Park

Comprising Woorabinda Reserve, Hender Reserve, Stirling Park and Madurta Reserve

Note: Application can be made to Council to have dogs excluded from minor paths in high biodiversity areas.

	Current Access	Recommended Access
Woorabinda Reserve	Dogs on leash on path at all times	Dogs on leash on path at all times
Hender Reserve	Dogs on leash on path at all times	Dogs on leash on path at all times
Stirling Park	Dogs on leash on path at all times	For Branch Road Loop (see attached map) dogs off leash under effective control. For remainder of park dogs on leash on path at all times
Madurta Reserve	Dogs on leash on path at all times	Dogs on leash on path at all times

Rationale

In coming to this position the Advisory Group has used the Guiding Principles to inform its decision, in particular Dog Access - the principles of Biodiversity and Community Safety.

Much of Stirling Linear Park contains high biodiversity areas. Council has a responsibility to ensure that these areas are preserved (Biodiversity Principle) and adequate recreation opportunities are available (Community Safety Principle). There is community interest to ensure that these responsibilities are met.

The Advisory Group is seeking to strike a balance for dog access in Stirling Linear Park and has determined that a portion of Stirling Park that forms a loop from Branch Rd to the unmade portion of Branch Rd is suitable as a dog off leash area. This portion of Stirling Park is of low and moderate biodiversity value. This area is also well separated (by a watercourse) from the high Biodiversity value area of Woorabinda. There is limited access in and out of the remainder of the park which will make delineation of the off leash area straightforward.

The Advisory Group recognises the work done by volunteers in the

park. The Branch Road loop has been identified as having the least impact on biodiversity in Stirling Linear Park.

Recommendation

1. That dogs be allowed to be exercised off leash and under effective control in that portion of Stirling Park shown on the attached map that generally follows the trail from the northern Branch Road entrance to Stirling Park to the southern Branch Road entrance including the grassed area immediately south of the bridge over the creek on the trail that leads to Woorabinda Lake.
2. That a review of the dog access arrangements in Stirling Linear Park be undertaken within 12 months of Council resolution. Such a review should include but not be limited to:
 - a. Compliance
 - b. Community acceptance
 - c. Environmental Impact
 - d. Linkages with Adelaide Hills trails strategy

Proposed Dog Off Leash Area – Stirling Park – Branch Road Loop



Guiding Principles for Dog Access on Council Reserves (Draft)

(Resolved by Council 1 August 2012)

Preamble

Councils are required by the Dog & Cat Management Act to prepare plans of management relating to dogs and cats. A plan of management must include provisions for parks where dogs may be exercised off leash, kept under control by physical restraint or prohibited in sections of parks.

Since Council endorsed its first animal management plan in 2006 there has been community debate surrounding dog access on reserves. As the current animal management plan is due for review, these Guiding Principles are being developed to assist Council and the community in determining dog access on reserves.

These principles are discussed under two headings: safe communities and biodiversity which Council has determined, in consultation with community stakeholders, are the major factors that will determine what dog access is appropriate on particular reserves. Council needs to manage land under its care and control, to provide for a balance of activities that meet the needs of the communities that use its land.

In striking that balance for all users of Council land, Council must be aware of factors that may be impacted by (or impact) dog access on its land. Council is also aware of the nuisance and damage that can occur when dogs are not properly managed.

The Guiding Principles will be used to try to reduce such nuisance and damage. Council acknowledges (through observation and feedback from the community) that a small number of people are reluctant to comply with their dog management responsibilities. In an attempt to manage this non-compliance Council undertakes regular patrols and will fine any persons not acting as a responsible dog owner. Dog management officers will take every opportunity to encourage effective control of dogs.

Safe Communities

Council has a responsibility to ensure the safety of all users of its parks and reserves.

Council recognises that dogs and their owners benefit from the exercise, social interaction and stimulation that is obtained when dogs are exercised off leash. Council is committed to ensure that all dog owners have access to off leash areas with at least one off leash area in each township.

Park users should be able to use open spaces on council land without encountering dogs that are not under effective control. In some areas where there is significant activity or there are vulnerable users, Council must restrict dog access to ensure the safety of all.

In managing dog access on reserves Council is keen to have park users voluntarily comply with any controls that are put in place. The combination of voluntary compliance and park users taking the responsibility for their reserves should re-establish some of the social interaction that has diminished in recent times.

Where voluntary compliance isn't achieved, irresponsible park users can be fined under Council's By-laws or the Dog & Cat Management Act. Penalties of up to \$750.00 may apply.

A significant concern with dog access is that dog owners pick up after their dogs. This situation has improved significantly in recent years and Council is seeking further improvement mainly through voluntary compliance and community pressure.

While councils can implement regulations and enforcement regimes it is the responsibility of all park users to ensure that their activities do not adversely impact upon other users of the park. We expect that all park users will be considerate of others in their vicinity and behave in a way that maintains a harmonious environment.

Situation (Where)	Application (What)	Rationale (Why)
Playgrounds	Dogs prohibited from all playgrounds	In accordance with By-law No 5 - Dogs
Council buildings	Dogs prohibited	Dogs should not be inside offices, libraries etc.
Oval and sporting fields	Dogs on leash where organised sport is being played – dogs off leash at other times	In accordance with By-law No 5 - Dogs
Fairs/markets	Dogs on leash in areas where fairs and markets are underway	High volume pedestrian traffic, food preparation and eating areas, control by physical restraint required
Bitumen or concrete paths	Dogs on leash on paths	These paths are commonly shared by a variety of users
Large number of users in a confined area or vulnerable users.	Dogs on leash, possibly dogs prohibited.	Public safety in crowds or around vulnerable park users.

Biodiversity

Council has undertaken an independent survey of biodiversity on Council land to determine whether that biodiversity is of high, medium or low biodiversity value. The tool used to measure the levels of biodiversity is The Bush Condition Monitoring Method.

Studies show that flora and fauna can be impacted by people. They are also impacted by dogs and other animals that are not under effective control. This is particularly relevant in the high value biodiversity areas on Council land.

Situation (Where)	Application (What)	Rationale (Why)
High biodiversity areas under Heritage Agreement	Dogs prohibited	These areas are protected by State Heritage Agreements for the conservation of their biodiversity
High value biodiversity areas where there are no paths or trails	Dogs prohibited	Reserves that score over 64.5 using Bush Condition Monitoring Method
High value biodiversity areas with formal paths or trails	Dogs on leash on paths only	Reserves that score over 64.5 using Bush Condition Monitoring Method
Minor paths through high value biodiversity areas	Dogs prohibited	Users may apply to Council to have dogs prohibited from individual trails. Public consultation required before approval
Low & medium biodiversity value areas	Dogs may be allowed off leash under effective control	Depending on safety factors (see Safe Communities)
Woorabinda Lake and Bushland Park Lake	Dogs prohibited in the water within the lake	High biodiversity areas with birds nesting around the edges being disturbed by dogs entering and leaving the water

Glossary

Effective Control

Effective control of a dog can be applied in two ways.

1. By physical restraint – where a person capable of controlling the dog does so by means of a leash not more than 2 metres long.
2. In an off leash area the person controls the dog by voice command where the dog remains in close proximity and within sight of the person effecting control at all times.

Close proximity

When exercising voice control command of a dog, close proximity means within calling distance.

Vulnerable Park Users

This term is used where Council has approved the use of portions of a reserve for regular use by pre-school children, elderly or disabled users.

Path

A path is a footway through a reserve that is acknowledged and approved by Council (to be formalised in Council's trail strategy).

Minor Paths

A Minor Path is a footway through a reserve that is less than 600mm wide with a natural surface only.

Biodiversity Value

High biodiversity value is where Council deems flora and fauna to be of high value generally scoring 64.5 or above using the Bush Condition Monitoring Method or similar.

Moderate biodiversity value is where Council deems flora and fauna to be of medium value generally scoring between 55.0 and 64.25 using the Bush Condition Monitoring Method or similar.

Low biodiversity Value is where Council deems flora and fauna to be of low value generally scoring below 54.75 using the Bush Condition Monitoring Method or similar.

Large Number of Users in Defined Areas

This term is used to define areas on reserves that may have unusually large numbers due to events, fairs or similar. This term would also apply to areas where multiple uses are underway where it may be unsafe for dogs to be off leash or present.

SUNDAY WORKING BEES 2012		
Date	Location	Meeting Place
September 16	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
October 21	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
November 18	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
December 16	Stirling Park	Branch Road
Time: 9 am – 11 am		
THURSDAY WORKING BEES 2012		
Date	Location	Meeting Place
Second Thursday in each month	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
Time: 9 am – 11 am		

Recent working bees

In summary, since our last working bee report in the Summer 2012 Newsletter, our Sunday working bees have continued on our long term strategy of working outwards from areas of good bush and have concentrated on:

- Woorabinda - starting at the northern end of the good bush between the lake and the railway line, working south and then south east of the lake through as much of the good bush areas as possible, removing a variety of recent woody weed regrowth.
- Madurta - broom, Watsonia and other weeds at the SW corner of the good bush.
- Stirling Park - mainly gorse regrowth in remnants of bush.

Our recent Thursday working bees have

concentrated on removing gorse from the area between the Woorabinda boardwalk and Woorabinda Drive.

For the remainder of the year we will continue the work outlined above in Woorabinda, renewing our efforts to reduce the spread of Watsonia into the good bush in Woorabinda and Madurta and doing further work on gorse regrowth in remnant bush in Stirling Park.

The Working Bee reminder notices continue to be sent out by email to the 'regulars'. If you are considering joining us, please email Bob James: bojames@chariot.net.au (Sundays) or Jane Schoettgen: jschoett@bigpond.net.au (Thursdays) and you will be included on the list of working bee reminder notices.

Community Grant

FSLP recently received a further State Natural Resources Program Community Grant of \$5,000 for 'Watsonia Control in Stirling Linear Park'. This follows receipt of a grant of the same amount for similar work in each of the last three years. The grant will be again be supplemented by an amount from the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Public Fund, this year \$500.

As in previous years specialist contractors will be employed to continue work in the remains of the large Watsonia infestation in the area of good

bush between the Woorabinda Lake and the railway line. The contractors will start with follow-up work on Watsonia regrowth and then move into a wider area of Woorabinda.

**Friends of Stirling Linear Park
Committee 2011-12**

Kathy Bowman	8370 9177
Merilyn Browne	8339 6839
Brian Donaghy	8339 2033
Marilyn Forward	8339 3162
Phillip Hicks	8339 3156
Bob James	8339 1903
David Ragless	8339 1038
Lorri Ragless	8339 1038
Jane Schoettgen	8339 7245
Alistair McHenry (Advisor)	8339 5114
Russell Seaman (Advisor)	8398 0626

Web address: <http://users.esc.net.au/~slp/>

Affiliations

The Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. is a member of Friends of Parks Inc. We are also a registered Landcare Group and a member of both Greening Australia and Trees for Life.



Disclaimer: Contributors' views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the editor, the committee or the general membership of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. **Contributors to this issue** include Philip Hicks, Brian Donaghy, Kathy Bowman and Merilyn Browne.

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Membership application/renewal

I/we would like to join/renew membership of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. (strike out words not applicable)

\$.....membership fee is enclosed.

\$.....donation is included. (Donations of \$2.00 or more are tax-deductible. A separate receipt will be issued.)

Membership fee for both individuals and family:
1 year.....\$10.00
5 years.....\$40.00

Name.....

Address.....

.....**Phone**.....

Email address for sending Newsletter.....

Please return to: Kathy Bowman, Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc., 2 Bogaduck Road, Aldgate 5154