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Key

(1) numbered locations on the Hampstead Heath map in the **Hampstead Heath Diary** published by the Corporation of London

[1A] locations suggested as worth exploring for naturism potential

HHMC Hampstead Heath Management Committee, part of the Corporation of London committee structure

HHCC an official user groups committee serviced by the Corporation, which feeds comments into the HHMC

BN the national organisation British Naturism

NAG the national Naturist Action Group campaigning body

1. Executive summary

- (a) the current position, 2 years after Michael started his petition and Campaign, was reviewed
- (b) it was agreed that the Men's Pond changing area is an unsuitable location for expansion
- (c) eight possible locations for a formally accepted naturist sunbathing area were identified
- (d) it is recommended that women be encouraged to join the Campaign and also seek permission for naturism in the Women's Pond compound
- (e) various suggestions were made on how to get more naturists actively involved and for moving the Campaign forward
- (f) there is an issue about lack of naturist facilities in the Greater London area, but this is a separate matter from the current Hampstead Heath Campaign
- (g) a list of suggested Action Points *para.41 - para.55* is given at the end

2. The update

1. This Report has been compiled from notes made after a site meeting at Hampstead Heath held on 11 February 2010. Present were Michael Peacock, Hampstead Heath user and naturist campaigner, Chris Lamb an active member of *British Naturism*, John Paine a management board member of the *Naturist Action Group*, Mike O'Neill, an active naturist with many years of experience. Also present and filming (by consent) was Leon Dean.
2. The meeting had been requested by John so that he could familiarise himself on behalf of

the *Naturist Action Group* (NAG) with the location and meet with Michael. Chris from *British Naturism* (BN) and Mike, a naturist for many years, had been invited as interested persons. Leon Dean had asked Michael if he could film the discussion as part of a film that he is making about naturist facilities.

3. On the day the weather was overcast and cold. We saw very few members of the public using the Heath, and no swimmers. This Report indicates a number of issues explored in the 2 hour 15 minute meeting. All four participants contributed capably, and Michael and Chris learnt exactly what the interest of NAG is in this matter.
4. It was recognised that, even with its limitations, this was the only public facility in the whole of London, population 7.5million, for naturism. Commercial provision in a few confined premises existed within Greater London, and on the periphery outside the M25 ring some commercial and a few Member Club naturist facilities had existed for years. Comparisons with the public attitude towards naturism, and facilities provided, in European cities and countries were made.

3. The Heath

5. The Heath is 791 acres (320 hectares) in size. There are a series of Ponds on the eastern edge of the Heath. This Report makes recommendations with respect of just two, each used for single-sex swimming. The only area where naturism is formally allowed is in a screened-off section of the Changing Room at the Men's Pond (17) - listed as *The Highgate Men's Bathing Pond* - on the official map. This is a concrete base, measuring just 12 x 8 metres with changing benches around the edge of the floor, and is totally inadequate for the number of naturist users. Swimming costumes have to be worn when moving from the changing room to enter the Pond. There is no grassy area within the Pond compound. It is a facility exclusively used by men.
6. Of the various Heath locations, considered on the site visit this is the only existing enclosed and screened area for official naturism. All the locations listed below [] as worth exploring for possible new naturist options are in open heathland, with the exception of [1C].
7. Outside of the Men's Pond (17) is a sloping mown-grass area between the Pond and the nearby residential Millfield Lane. This grassy area [1A] has well-used official hard-surface footpaths running alongside it. On occasion it is used informally as an overflow sunbathing area for the Changing Room at the Men's Pond. The grassy bank is predominantly used by men and, on rare occasions, by some individuals for naked sunbathing.
8. This is the only site with proximity to swimming water (for men) that was considered during the visit when new proposals were formulated. However it was suggested that women naturists may also wish to consider seeking approval for naturism in the Ladies Pond (14) as location [1C] see *para. 14* below. The suggested area [2] see *para. 17* below, is adjacent to this.
9. Michael recommended the sloping mown-grass area [1A] as an ideal site for naturists who felt that the desire to sunbathe naked with access to swimming facilities are fundamentally linked. Of all the areas considered in the Report this was likely to be most favoured by previous supporters of the Petition. It needs to be recognised that this area is adjacent to a well-used public entrance from Millfield Lane.
10. There are two well-used formal pathways adjacent to this area [1A] and Mike suggested that unobtrusive notices could be displayed indicating that naked people may be seen. This concept would be similar to the Portsmouth City Council notices at Eastney Beach. It was noted that the Heath has no notices on it whatsoever, other than formal notice boards at various entrances. It was thought that to suggest signage would incur opposition from Heath users who want to retain the unspoilt open heathland aspect of the Heath. They might well argue that installation of such advisory notices would be the 'thin end of the wedge' opening up the possibility of other notices appearing in the unspoilt vista.

11. Mike suggested that from the grassy bank **[1A]** a new pathway could be created to the male toilets and Men's Pond (17) through the shrubbery behind the changing area. This would then provide male access to the water, for cooling off, and the toilets. It was noted, however, that such a proposal might draw opposition from naturalists who would not want the existing shrubs and habitat changed.
12. The work involved would also have to be resourced by the Hampstead Heath management team whose budgets are already tightly stretched. Michael suggested that a separate access would only be relevant if the original petition proposals had been accepted. There is also an issue about lack of disabled access, including into the toilets. Both the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and the Hampstead Heath Management Committee have indicated that they might look at this.
13. Just to the north of this grassy area **[1A]** and the Men's Pond (17) is a heathland grassy bank running down to the Model Boating Pond (16). This Pond is well used by people with small boats. Michael suggests that higher up the bank, further away from the Pond and backed by shrubs would be an ideal area for naturists **[1B]**. It is currently of mixed use for sunbathing by the public and is also occasionally used for casual naturism.
14. Unlike at the Men's Pond in the separate Women's Pond (14) - officially known as *The Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond* - several hundred yards away, naturism is not permitted. It is a facility exclusively used by women. We were reliably informed that topless sunbathing is not challenged on the grassy bank within the Pond compound **[1C]**. To date it is thought that there has been no action from women naturists to seek formal approval for naturist sunbathing to take place here. It is recommended that women users should be sounded out on potential support for a proposal to seek this.
15. Michael recommends that this area **[1C]** in addition to area **[1A]** and **[1B]** should be favoured as a Combined Proposal – rather than three separate proposals. His personal view is that of all the areas and proposals this is the most desirable option. It combines naturists having close access to swimming facilities and a mixed naturism area not far from either of the official single-sex bathing areas.
16. One of the biggest arguments about any proposal would be the likelihood of 'lewd behaviour'. Michael felt that of all the areas being considered the Combined Proposal would be the most likely to counter the opposition. This Combined Proposal was not considered during an earlier site visit conducted by Chris and Michael – and is the culmination of thought and feedback from supporters of the previous petition.
17. Facing the Women's Pond (14) is the long grass heathland, which rises up to trees and shrubs and South Meadow some distance away. It has unmade footpaths running through it. A lower part of this area **[2]** had previously been suggested by Chris to Michael as another possible location for naturist use. It is used by dog walkers and others using the informal footpaths running through it.
18. Just to the north of this is the Stock Pond (13) and facing it is another sloping heathland grass area which Chris had previously suggested is worth consideration as **[3]**. It also has informal footpaths running through it.
19. North of the Stock Pond (13) is Cohen's Fields, more heathland grass with trees and shrubs, which is a less well-used part of the Heath. Another possibility suggested by Michael is past the Goodison Fountain, on the lower slopes close to the boundary hedge dividing the two Cohen's Fields. This could be possible naturism location **[4]**.
20. Just before the dividing hedge, in the southern Cohen's Field, Michael suggested another location **[5]**. Immediately south-east of this in Cohen's Field, bordering Athlone House Gardens, are some mature trees. Chris suggested that the trees would offer a degree of shade on hot days, thus making this location **[6]** a better option.

21. Mike suggested that any naturist sunbathing area would be better adjacent to water which allowed naked swimming for cooling off. It was noted that areas [4] [5] and [6] are about 5 minutes walk from the Ladies Pond (14) and 10 minutes from the Men's Pond (17). Chris felt that this would be fine for anyone who just wants to sunbathe, or dress to go for a swim after finishing sunbathing, but may be too far for those who feel they must be close to water while sunbathing naked.

4. Official consideration of proposals

22. Michael was congratulated on the amount of energy and work that he had put into the Campaign over the past two years. Two petitions (one online) had resulted in well over 1,000 signatures (including Peter Tatchell & Julian Clary) seeking an increased area for naturism at The Men's Pond (17). When presented into the formal City of London committee structure this well-written proposal and request had subsequently drawn considerable opposition from other swimmers and Heath user groups. The request had been turned down, notwithstanding the Hampstead Heath Management Committee have accepted a point made by Alderman Simon Walsh that there was obviously a strong feeling that more could be done for naturists. The Chairman Michael Wellbank stated at the HHMC February 2010 meeting that if BN submit a proposal for a clothing optional area on the Heath that it would be considered.

23. It is noteworthy that, in a subsequent BBC Radio London interview, Michael Wellbank went much further and confirmed that other open spaces managed by the Corporation may need to be considered. The door had been left open when BN presented a letter, dated November 2009, to the Hampstead Heath Management Committee. Michael acknowledged the invaluable support of BN and now NAG. In his view the involvement of both naturist organisations would be crucial to the effectiveness of any future campaigning for open space naturism in our capital city of 7.5 million people.

24. Michael had wanted a revised BN proposal to be presented to the next Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee meeting on July 12th. He was concerned that any delay would miss the opportunity for a decision by the Hampstead Heath Management Committee during 2010, thus jeopardising the chance of an approved naturist area being available for 2011.

25. It was encouraging to note that some people on the official bodies had indicated that they would be prepared to see further proposals. However, both BN and NAG felt that any new proposals would need to be thoroughly researched. This would include recognition of historical information and precedents, concerns about allied community issues (another part of the Heath is a known gay 'cruising' area) and any other factors which could raise prejudices. Chris and BN had already done some research and it was agreed that more would be needed.

26. Chris drew attention to the Heath Bye-laws and regulations, in particular the clauses on not offending public decency. Any new naturist campaign initiative would need to be drawn up with these in mind, so that any arguments against a new proposal mounted by others could be countered. Chris stated that BN does want to present a well-researched proposal for the Hampstead Heath Management Committee to consider, and take a decision on it, this year. The suggested timetable was for a well-researched proposal to be presented to the November 2010 meeting of the HHCC. Such a timetable would possibly enable an approved naturist area, if it were not rejected through opposition from other Heath users, to be available in summer 2011.

27. John suggested that for any chance of success then any new proposal to the official committee mechanisms would need to indicate a large measure of support from many naturists for that proposal. The onus would be on its proposers to demonstrate the level of support. In addition, and Chris agreed, that before getting to the first committee round, of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, a proposal would need to be discussed, in a networking way, with the groups which are in membership of the HHCC.

28. It was agreed that any further consideration of, or a revised proposal for, the unsuitable

Men's Pond (17) was not likely to succeed. Future strategy should instead look seriously at developing a proposal for some of the other locations suggested in this Report.

5. Gathering support

29. John suggested Michael needed additional persons and bodies to help with the work necessary to achieve support from other HHCC groups for any new proposal. A key factor would be to enlist the active support of female naturists prepared to be publically associated with the Campaign. In particular it was felt that there was a need to have some women in the core 'action' group.
30. John was not local, living in Oxford, and his many other commitments did not allow him to focus his energies on this project. NAG had very little cash resource but many useful contacts and provides a platform for campaigning on naturist issues. NAG would be able to provide to this Campaign advice and support, and could promote the Campaign widely to other naturists. NAG would support the work already being done by BN. Mike also had limited time to contribute, but a wealth of experience in naturism and its issues.
31. Chris indicated that BN was willing to continue to work with local naturists and develop new initiatives for the Campaign. As a national body with a naturist membership it did have more resources than NAG. BN could continue to provide its expertise and status in support of the Campaign.
32. It was recognised that more people needed to be identified as active supporters for the Campaign. John suggested that BN explore whether its London SIG could be a way of gathering more London naturists to the cause. He also suggested consideration be given to the possibility of convening an open meeting of naturists for the Campaign and advertising it widely in naturist circles. NAG could certainly use its contacts to get publicity for the Campaign in the naturist media, as it had done recently in support of other campaigns.
33. Michael already had a number of contacts and email addresses from the Petition. He agreed to draw up a list from it of useful people it may be possible to email. The aim would be to update them about the Campaign and seek their active involvement in the next stage. Chris agreed to explore with Malcolm Boura, BN's voluntary Research & Liaison Officer, how BN could assist with a mass email. It was suggested that Michael also speak to other naturist users at the Men's Pond (17) area, to update them on the Campaign and seek their active support.
34. John suggested that Michael could also consider organising a series of dates for a group naturist session. Chris suggested that these could be on one of the quieter areas **[1B]** opposite the Model Boating Pond (16) and, for women naturists only **[1C]** within the Ladies Pond(14), as the most desirable locations. These locations would be least likely to fuel the argument that 'inappropriate/lewd behaviour' could occur. Such a strategy, timing may need to be agreed, would perhaps identify supporters and 'test the water' on public attitudes. Michael had reservations about this idea.
35. Michael had been very successful indeed in generating media interest in the Campaign. Michael commented that previous media coverage had been quite positive. It would be good if Leon was successful in getting a documentary film commissioned on the Campaign, as this would heighten public awareness about the issues of naturism in the UK. It would also be an advantage if anyone involved with the proposals and the core support group were not camera shy and willing to be featured in future media coverage. This would be helpful when any new proposals were ready to be promoted, but those proposals would, as mentioned above, need to be thoroughly prepared.
36. John suggested that both BN and NAG continue to promote the Campaign and update other naturists through naturist media channels. Meanwhile, it was felt by Chris and John that to seek further general media interest at this particular stage might not be helpful for the Campaign.

6. A wider issue

37. As mention in para. 3. above there is a dearth of naturist facilities in London. Comparisons with other European cities clearly demonstrate that London is less well served than other capital cities. John suggested that this is an issue which needs to be raised in naturist circles, to identify whether other naturists feel strongly enough to want to generate a wider public campaign. It is known that Simon Lee, the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, is conscious that this naturist campaign specific to Hampstead Heath is unique. He feels that perhaps naturists should also consider other park locations in the London area. Sue Ireland, director of Open Spaces for the Corporation of London, has indicated an open mind on the matter and has provided relevant Corporation documents when requested by NAG.
38. It was agreed that to develop a discussion on the lack of adequate naturist facilities in Greater London would need to be a separate matter from the present Hampstead Heath Campaign. The energies of those involved in the current Campaign need to be focussed on attracting more active support from naturists and developing new proposals in respect of the Heath. John suggested that raising the Greater London issue as a separate matter in the naturist media might be something which NAG could consider doing.
39. The *London Evening Standard* ran an article 'Londoners Love Getting Naked' by Jasmine Gardner published on 12 April 2010 which had covered a number of naked activities, and mentioned BN in relation to naturism (www.thisislondon.co.uk/lifestyle/article-23823524-londoners-love-getting-naked.do). The use of the naked body in advertising is more prevalent nowadays; mass naturist events like the London WNBR cause little adverse comment, but much amusement to tourists.
40. John felt that, whilst being mindful of certain negative views expressed by some vocal minorities, naturists do not capitalise enough on the changing public attitudes. Mike suggested, and all agreed, that the secretiveness of naturists about their hobby and life-style beliefs is a significant hindrance. Chris reminded us that some naturists have good reasons for not being too public with work colleagues and friends about their naturist activity. It was recognised that there is also the need to encourage more naturist women to be a little more open and public about their naturism, so that it is not perceived to be just something indulged in by older men.

7. Suggested Action Points

41. women naturists may also wish to consider seeking approval for naturism in the Ladies Pond (14). *para.8 para.14*
42. notices could be displayed indicating that naked people may be seen. *Para.10*
43. a new pathway could be created to the male toilets and Men's Pond (17) through the shrubbery behind the changing area. *para.11*
44. area [1C] in addition to area [1A] and [1B] should be favoured as a Combined Proposal – rather than three separate proposals. *para.15*
45. consideration be given to exploring additional areas [2] *para.17* [3] *para.18* [4] *para.19* [5] and [6] *para.20*
46. any new proposal to the Hampstead Heath Management Committee would need to be thoroughly researched *para.25* and support gained for it from more naturists and also other Heath users *para.27*
47. support from a larger number of naturists, particularly women naturists should be sought for the Campaign and any new proposals *para.27* NAG would be able to assist with promoting this need to naturists *para.30 para.32*

48. BN was willing to continue to develop new proposals with the existing Campaign group and local naturists *para.31*
49. BN to explore whether naturists in its London SIG could be asked to be involved, NAG to explore setting up an open meeting of interested naturists *para.32*. Michael to create an email list of people from the Petition signatures, BN to assist with a mass emailing *para.33*
50. Michael to speak to naturist users at the Men's Pond (17) area to update them and seek their active support *para.33*
51. The idea of a series of dates for 'group naturist sessions' be explored *para.34*
52. both BN and NAG should draw the attention of other naturists to the Campaign, but general media coverage at this stage may not be helpful *para.36*
53. NAG to explore how to develop a wider discussion within the naturist community about naturist areas being created in other parks in Greater London *para.37 para.38*
54. The energies of those involved with the existing Campaign need to be focussed on that and not the wider Greater London issue *para.38*
55. naturists should be encouraged, where possible, to be more open to family, friends and work colleagues, about their involvement in naturism *para.40*

This Report finalised by *John Paine* 29 July 2010

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