



The London Question

<http://naturistactiongroup.org>

Notes from the meeting held on **Sunday 25 March 2012** at McGlynn's Free House, Whidborne Street, LONDON WC1H 8ET.

1. Welcome and purpose of meeting

John Paine introduced himself as the NAG Project Leader and thanked people for attending on such a lovely sunny day. There were 10 people present, with apologies received from several others. BN was holding its Eastern Region AGM today and some of The London Question supporters were there.

NAG is a totally volunteer organisation and since March 2010 has been involved in a number of activities. These include promoting petitions on naturist issues, supporting naturist groups such as Eastney Beach Naturists (including raising issues at the AGM of landowner company QinetiQ), The London WNBR. NAG has developed a number of projects, which included the publication of a leaflet *You and the Law*, gathering evidence of how police deal with naturists (The ACPO project), and the lack of naturist facilities in London (The London Question). NAG had also assisted naturists in Bristol and in Cheltenham, who wanted to develop naturist activities at those cities.

NAG is the independent naturist UK group campaigning for naturism, and has international equivalents in France, Spain, USA and Germany. In addition NAG writes for H&E Naturist magazine, and Naturist Life magazine, both reporting on its work and articles based on topics of interests to naturists.

The intention of the meeting today was to give an update on The London Question and to consider options on possible actions in 2012. Various papers were given out to participants.

2. Update report on 2011 work

The London Question had developed from campaigning work done by naturists at Hampstead Heath in 2008/09. They had petitioned the City of London for extra space for naturists to be developed in the Men's Changing enclosure at one of the bathing ponds. BN provided help to the group but this action was not successful. A meeting was held on Hampstead Heath in May 2010 with representatives of NAG, BN, and the Hampstead Heath Naturist Campaign. Out of this agreement was reached that the focus should instead be on getting naturism accepted in the heath land. NAG wrote a Report with an analysis of the situation and recommendations for joint action. As the City of London had objected to the focus being solely on Hampstead Heath it was agreed that BN and the Hampstead Heath Naturist Campaign continue a dialogue with the City of London, whilst NAG develop The London Question to explore other London options.

The London Question was then launched in October 2010. London meetings were held in February, March and November 2011, and 50 naturists had supported the initiative. They had also suggested 18 possible open space locations for naturist activity and had helped check some of these out. NAG volunteers had visited Munich, at their own expense, in September 2011 on a mission to discover what opportunities for naturism, including the famous *Englischer Garten*, existed there. It was felt that this could provide examples to quote to London authorities. The visit had been very successful and three Reports from the Mission to Munich were available on the NAG website.

3. Further suggestions of locations to explore

More sites to check out had been suggested in 2012 and the total is now 27 locations (see Table 1). NAG volunteers had checked 12 sites so far and it was becoming clear that the public use of London's parks with different activities was heavy. This made it difficult to find a sufficient space where naturism may take place without causing offence to some members of the public. As a result a preliminary list of criteria had been drawn up and was circulated (the April 2012 version **OPEN SPACES criteria** is on the NAG website). The intention was to check out more sites during the next few months.

4. Public attitudes towards naturism

The latest public survey by BN indicated that public acceptance was at a similar level to 10 years ago. However, access to public facilities was now more difficult, with some management companies reneging on current contracts with naturist swims. Various prejudiced officials are a big problem, particularly in areas open to the public. Some recent high profile court cases had indicated this. There is a dichotomy in society where 'naked calendars' and open display of female bodies (particularly in magazines) is accepted, whilst public naturism, and sometimes art exhibitions of nudes, is increasingly regarded as distasteful. The latest attempt by H&E Naturist Magazine to be openly available again through newsagents was to be applauded.

Whilst children quite happily play naked there has been a growth, by both campaigners and politicians, to bring in 'child protection' measures prohibiting sight of the naked body. In what may be similarities in opinions expressed by the religious moral right, suggesting that the naked body is shameful, there are those campaigning to stop children having Internet access to harmful and pornographic images. Sections of the media are supportive of such groups. Malcolm Boura reported that the workload of BN on these issues had grown enormously over the past year. Different official reports have been produced suggesting that moral dangers needed to be addressed by suppressive official action and seized upon by supportive Government ministers. A good deal of discussion is taking place on the possibility of draconian restrictions on Internet access, which could well lead to naked images of and by naturists being outlawed.

An attempt to influence public attitudes by a '*prudification* of society' is occurring and naturists need to fight back. The Christian Naturists group is working on this, but high profile people are also needed to demonstrate that naturism is wholesome and acceptable. Bernard Jenkin and Mike Hancock are believed to be the only MPs who have indicated support for local naturists, Helen Mirren and various film stars have been reported as liking the naked life-style. It was felt that naturists should be encouraged to talk to friends when these issues are raised, ask them to reflect on the issues involved, and on their own attitudes to naked bodies.

5. Possible outdoor action at London sites

Work would continue on checking the list of sites already mentioned (see Table 2), and naturists would be encouraged to suggest others. As naturism had been accepted for years at the Men's Pond on Hampstead Heath it was hoped to get a few women naturists together, to seek support for some naturism in the female only Women's Pond there. NAG gave information on Park Bylaws which apply in Hyde Park and, separately, at Hampstead Heath. In addition police were happy to use Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 against naturists, and often ignored the Sexual Offences Act 2003 which stated that being naked was not illegal – if one did not intend to cause alarm and distress. The NAG leaflet **You And The Law** gave useful advice for naturists who may be confronted by police officers and public officials.

The meeting endorsed the suggestion that NAG should co-ordinate a small group of naturists, of both sexes, to hold a peaceful demonstration-cum-protest on Hampstead Heath. A similar activity proposed for Hyde Park on a separate date was also endorsed. Should these events prove successful then they could be used to promote new discussions with the separate Park management bodies. John would work out how to get two small groups of naturist volunteers together for specific locations and dates.

6. Other London naturist activities in 2012

It was thought that the London WNBR was likely to take place on Saturday 9 June. However, the Royal Parks Management would not allow the start and finish to be in Hyde Park this year. This meant that the organising collective was working on alternative plans. A number of the London WNBR supporters had made various suggestions for pre-events or after-events, at various locations but not all on the day of the ride. NAG was still exploring the possibility of a skinny dip in the Serpentine as a spontaneous activity after the ride, but the London WNBR organising collective was unhappy at the prospect.

Separately NAG was to hold discussions with the new management of The Serpentine about holding a regular naturist swim there. Duncan Heenan was leading on that project. WNBR supporters wanted explore, separately, both Brockwell Baths and the Parliament Hill Fields Lido for naturist events.

7. Indoor naturist facilities in London

There are only two genuine commercial naturist indoor facilities in London, Rio's Naturist Spa on Kentish Town Road, and Elixir Health Club on Alexandra Palace Gate Road. There are also a few commercial Gay saunas, whilst several other previous London commercial naturist saunas had closed. Currently there are no naturist swims in London but it was reported that BN would shortly announce that a regular naturist swim would be held in a central

London leisure centre. Andrew Welch, BN Commercial Manager, had had difficulty in finding a willing centre management to have talks with, and it had taken 2 years to reach this point. BN would announce details when the contract was confirmed.

It was suggested that NAG explore the possibility of naturist swims in two Leisure Centres in Hackney: *The Kings Hall* and *The Britannia*. *The London Fields Lido* was also mentioned, but high-rise flats overlook it. BN had offered to support any BN affiliated Club that wanted to discuss organising a naturist swim with a leisure centre management body.

The Single Outdoors Club (SOC) holds a naturist meal for their members in a London pub function room in Kentish Town. This occurs in January, and is becoming a successful SOC annual event. There are two naturist Bed and Breakfasts in the London area: at Chingford (east London and with some facilities), and near to Heathrow. Attendees were directed towards the *Naturist Accommodation UK* on naco.org.uk for similar facilities.

9. Other matters

The Nirvana Spa at Wokingham was mentioned as a possible addition to the naturist facilities and Clubs within a reasonable distance of London. However it operated an annual membership fee system and what naturist opportunities were available was unknown. The website is www.nirvanaspa.co.uk

A voluntary collection raised £25 for NAG funds. There was no room hire charge, thanks to the landlord Gerry Dolan.

The meeting finished at 5.10pm.

Table 1: Open Spaces Master List (revised 08/04/2012)

	Location	Comments	Further Action
1.	Alexandra Park, Haringey	Down the hill from Palace towards Hornsey checked out 22 March 2012	NO
2.	Crouch Hill, Haringey	A small seclude piece of land checked out 22 March 2012	NO
3.	Crystal Palace Park	No local group materialised, which had been promised in February 2011	No action
4.	Finsbury Park, Haringey	Checked 1 December 2011	NO
5.	Hampstead Heath	Ongoing work as a major project	DAY of ACTION early summer 2012
6.	Hyde Park (1) close to Serpentine, near carriageway	Ongoing work as a major project	DAY of ACTION after WNBR summer 2012
7.	Regent's Park in Camden	Between golf/tennis area and Zoo. Preliminary check made November 2011	Further check late spring 2012
8.	Richmond Park	Reported in HEN in 2010. The naturists involved declined to assist with the LQ	No action
9.	Spring Hill at Stamford Hill in Hackney/Haringey	Suggested 1 December 2011	Check out spring 2012
10.	The Serpentine Lido	Preliminary checks made summer 2011. A proposed 'skinny dip' linked to 2011 WNBR did not proceed.	This project to be explored further by Duncan
11.	Southwark Park, Bermondsey	Checked out in August 2010, well used, no suitable space for naturism	NO
12.	Tottenham Wild Marsh (Lee Valley Regional Park), Haringey	Banbury Reservoir near Northumberland Park (with a car park by lock) checked out 22 March 2012.	YES
13.	Trent Park in Enfield (near University)	Suggested March 2011. Current feedback indicates it is a doubtful option	Leave to local naturists to explore further
14.	Victoria Park, Hackney	Checked out November 2011	NO
15.	The Welsh Harp reservoir, Brent	Currently used by female naturist, a planned site visit cancelled October 2011	Site visit to be arranged in spring 2012
16.	West Heath, North End Way, Haringey	Checked out 22 March 2012	NO
17.	West Reservoir near "The Castle", Haringey	Owned by Thames Water. Checked 22 March 2012	NO

	Location	Comments	Further Action
18.	Wimbledon Common	Casual report in HEN	No action
19.	Ham Common Twickenham	Casual use by naturists reported; suggested (by email) March 2012	Check out in 2012?
20.	Olympic Park, Tower Hamlets	Suggested (by email) March 2012	
21.	Tottenham Wild Marsh (Lee Valley Regional Park), Haringey.	By Lockwood Reservoir checked out 22 March 2012	YES
22.	Coldfall Wood, off Creighton Road, Haringey		
23.	Bruce Castle Museum, Tottenham, London Borough of Haringey	Behind the museum.	Check out 2012
24.	Middlesex Filter Works, Lea Bridge		Check out 2012
25.	Walthamstow Marshes at Copper Mill Bridge		Check out 2012
26.	Hyde Park (2), south of police station		
27.	Women's Pond, Hampstead Heath	Ask female naturists to explore this with users there.	

Table 2: Possible Sites for LQ Action, 2012 (Revised 24/03/2012)

	Location	Comments	Further Action
1.	Alexandra Park, Haringey	Down hill from the Palace towards Hornsey. Checked March 2012	NO
2.	Crouch Hill, Haringey	A small seclude piece of land. Checked March 2012	NO
3.	Crystal Palace Park	No local group materialised, which had been promised in February 2011	No further action to be taken
4.	Finsbury Park, Haringey	Checked December 2011	NO
5.	Hampstead Heath	Ongoing work as a major project.	DAY of ACTION early summer 2012
6.	Hyde Park	Ongoing work as a major project.	DAY of ACTION after WNBR summer 2012
7.	Regent's Park in Camden	Between golf/tennis area and Zoo. Preliminary check made in November 2011	Further check late spring 2012
8.	Richmond Park	Reported in HEN in 2010. The naturists involved declined to assist with the LQ	No action
9.	Spring Hill at Stamford Hill, borders of Hackney/Haringey	Suggested December 2011	Check out spring 2012
10.	The Serpentine Lido	Preliminary checks made summer 2011. A proposed 'skinny dip' linked to 2011 WNBR did not proceed	This project to be explored further by Duncan Heenan
11.	Southwark Park, Bermondsey	Checked in August 2010, well used by the public, not suitable for naturism	NO
12.	Tottenham Wild Marsh (Lee Valley Regional Park), Haringey	Banbury Reservoir near Northumberland Park (with a car park by lock). Checked March 2012	YES
13.	Trent Park in Enfield (near University)	Suggested March 2011. Current feedback indicates it is a doubtful option	Leave to local naturists to explore further
14.	Victoria Park in Hackney	Checked out November 2011	NO
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18.	Wimbledon Common	Casual report in HEN	No action
19.	Ham Common, Twickenham	Casual use by naturists reported. Suggested (by email) in March 2012	Check out in 2012?
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21.	Tottenham Wild Marsh (Lee Valley Regional Park), Haringey	By Lockwood Reservoir. Checked March 2012	YES