

# Naturism

## A British Naturism Briefing Paper - Malcolm Boura - September 2009

This briefing is intended to explain to the lay person what is meant by "naturism" (also called "nudism"), how and where it is practised and what is the legal status of those who participate.

### What

Naturism is everyday activities without the encumbrance of clothing. If the activity would be unremarkable clothed then without clothes it is naturism.

### Belief

For many naturists nudity is a matter of convenience and comfort but for some it is a matter of belief.

### Who

Naturism is for everyone, irrespective of creed, colour, shape, age, gender, sexual orientation, or marital status. Some racial and religious groups are under represented but otherwise participation is remarkably uniform across socio-economic and age groups. The exception is the mid teens to late twenties age group who are under represented. There are well over a million people who describe themselves as being a naturist and about ten times that number who are naturists to at least some extent.

We are not ashamed to say that we are naturists. Naturism is not a sexual activity, nor is it perverted, disgusting or ludicrous, but we do sometimes encounter outrageous prejudice so many naturists keep their dress preference secret.

The British are becoming less reserved as they shrug off the Victorian legacy. Most other Europeans are much less prudish.

### Where

Naturism is all around you. Most naturism takes place in the home and garden.

There are over a hundred naturist clubs ranging from a patch of grass to tens of acres with permanent residents, thousands of members and extensive facilities.

There are over a hundred pools with naturist swimming. Most are local authority owned but some are school, commercial or private. They range from simple lane swimming rectangles and a handful of swimmers up to the largest leisure pool complexes and many hundreds of participants.

There are hundreds of beaches commonly used by naturists but only about a dozen have any official status. The better beaches have thousands of users on a good day. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of UK people enjoy naturist holidays and/or skinny dipping on holiday abroad.

Many clubs have holiday accommodation and several cater specifically for the naturist holidaymaker. There is a large number of B&Bs. Much of the holiday business comes from overseas and if more facilities were available then more would come to enjoy this beautiful country.

### Economics

Naturists have a significant impact but most feel obliged to holiday abroad where provision and the welcome is better. The Buff Pound is a thriving export industry.

Within the UK naturists make a useful contribution to the income of many leisure centres. The annual Alton Towers naturists weekend fills the hotel. Cruise liners are increasing in popularity and there are regular bookings for

some of the world's largest.

More naturist beaches and other facilities means more money for local economies. The impact of the Buff Pound is relatively small but it is far from negligible and it could easily be much greater.

### Children and young people

There are large numbers of naturist families including some living in the residential clubs. YBN, Young British Naturists, is a recent initiative to cater for the 16 to 30 age group and it is growing rapidly. YBN represents the UK at the International Naturist Federation (INF) youth events.

### Newcomers

Many newcomers approach their first naturist event with a great deal of trepidation. Adults almost invariably find that the embarrassment goes with the clothes and they are at ease within minutes. It really is astonishingly quick. Younger children just take their clothes off and think nothing of it. Teenagers are more reserved about their own nudity but have little problem with the nudity of others.

### Sex

Naturism is merely another dress code. A bikini is an invitation to imagine what it is hiding and a glimpsed cleavage can set hearts fluttering. Natural nudity is much less titillating.

### Mutual toleration

We do not insist that everyone should be a naturist but we do expect similar toleration to be returned.

### Health and sport

Naturism has many health and well-being benefits, some of them very significant. Naturists participate in a wide variety of sports and compete both nationally and internationally.

### Discrimination and prejudice

Naturists sometimes meet with appalling prejudice and the legal protection is inadequate. Prejudice is not as common as many people assume and it is becoming less. If you are unfamiliar with naturism then please learn something about us before making judgements.

### Legal

In England and Wales nudity is not as such illegal. Unfortunately many people, including many police officers, do not know that which can lead to difficulties. British Naturism works hard lobbying for improvements in the law relating to nudity. The archaic Victorian nudity offences and the enabling power for byelaws to regulate swim suits have been repealed but some problems remain. In Scotland the law is much more restrictive.

### Further information

There are briefing sheets covering many of the above topics in considerably more detail, complete with references. They are available from the web site [www.british-naturism.org.uk](http://www.british-naturism.org.uk) or please contact the office.