

# Fraisthorpe Beach - East Riding of Yorkshire Council

A British Naturism Briefing Paper - Malcolm Boura - May 2007

This is a remote beach on the East Yorkshire Coast. There is a tradition of naturist use going back at least 40 and probably 60 years. Indeed it was a designated naturist beach for many years under the predecessor local authority.

In more recent times there have been periods when the council has appeared to accept naturist use and periods when they have attempted to prevent it. Naturism at suitable locations is not illegal<sup>1</sup> and Fraisthorpe Beach is one of the most suitable places in the country. Moreover the nearest designated beaches are in East Anglia, the far side of Wales or on one of the Scottish islands. None are less than four hours drive from Fraisthorpe.

Naturists use the more remote beaches because they are then less likely to cause offence and they are less likely to be harassed. Doggers<sup>2</sup> and others wanting to indulge in illegal activity choose the more remote beaches because they are less likely to get caught. They also know that at Fraisthorpe in particular naturists will be reluctant to report them due to the probable reaction by the council and police.

There has been a considerable growth at all public places of dogging and other illegal sexual or sex related activity. When this becomes a problem the reaction of some councils is to attempt an indiscriminate ban on use of that area by other identifiable groups. Naturism in suitable places is not a criminal offence so the bans can only be enforced by what can be described as a campaign of harassment. At Fraisthorpe that has included using the police<sup>3</sup> helicopter to bellow at naturists, using it to land officers on the beach so that officers can "talk to" the beach users and going along the beach collecting names and addresses. As far as we know there has been no real attempt to actually catch the criminals.

The result has been to drive away many of the more socially responsible beach users and the criminal activity has continued or become worse.

Defra has issued unequivocal advice on the management of coastal activities<sup>4</sup> but either East Riding of Yorkshire

Council does not know of it or they have decided that naturists do not have any rights and so they can ignore it.

British Naturism has attempted to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the council but has been rebuffed. The council has consistently failed to address the real issue, consistently failed to consult with the appropriate national organisation and consistently failed to cure the problems.

Things had been relatively quiet at Fraisthorpe for a few years but then in March 2007 British Naturism received the email reproduced overleaf.

We are attempting to establish what has really happened but we know from past experience that that is likely to be tortuous. All that we know from the press reports is that a woman walking on the beach was approached by a naked man. We utterly condemn such behaviour and would very much like to be able to cooperate with the council and police in catching such people but at present that is not possible.

The logic behind the intended council action is seriously flawed as illustrated by a rather flippant comparison. Pick pockets are attracted by people wearing clothes so clothes should be banned from the town centre. That is of course ludicrous but is the proposed council action regarding naturist use of Fraisthorpe Beach really that much more sensible and acceptable?

We have considerable expertise concerning these issues and whilst we can not promise to solve all the problems we are confident that with the right measures the situation could be considerably improved. Unfortunately there is now so little trust between naturists and the council that it will be difficult to make quick progress.

If you have any contact with council or police, good or bad, concerning naturism then please let us know immediately. Copies of letters and emails or notes of conversations are invaluable. We will send copies to Fraisthorpe United Naturists unless you ask us not to. We would like to be able to make use of the letters so please also indicate how anonymous you wish to be: completely, BN, FUN, naturist press, web site, textile media. It is a sad reflection of the prejudice we face that we even have to ask that question.

1 Home Affairs Committee report commenting on an amendment to the Sexual Offences Bill 2003. "In our view, it is neither appropriate nor desirable to criminalise legitimate activities, such as naturism. We therefore welcome the removal of the 'recklessness' element from the offence of exposure". Numerous other similar statements.

2 People participating in or watching public place sexual activity.

3 Several constabularies have told us that naturism at suitable beaches is not an offence. Parliament has also made its intentions clear. See Parliament Briefing Note.

4 "Managing Coastal Activities: A Guide for Local Authorities"; Defra.

There is strong advice to consult with bodies representing users because they often know more about the issues than the council does. Some councils ignore it where naturism is concerned so this document has been amended so that British Naturism is explicitly listed.

**From:** [Ian.Cook@eastriding.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.Cook@eastriding.gov.uk)  
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**Cc:** [Andrew.Winter@eastriding.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Winter@eastriding.gov.uk) ;  
[Ian.Rayner@eastriding.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.Rayner@eastriding.gov.uk)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 14, 2007 5:14 PM  
**Subject:** ref. Beaches with in the control of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Dear Secretary

We have for some time now, sought to challenge the beliefs of some of your members, insomuch that the area known as Fraisthorpe, **is NOT a designated Naturism Beach** and never was, we will shortly be putting up new signs to reflect this status and we will be looking to enforce this status, along with acts of indecency that have been reported in the area.

It is envisage that we shall be writing further, to the editor of the Naturism Magazine, in which we hope to advise all readers of the publication of the Councils stance on this issue.

Please see attached - Draft copy notice

Ian Cook  
Asst Tourism Manager  
Tel 01482 395132  
Mobile 07768542835

#### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

**THIS BEACH IS NOT A DESIGNATED NATURIST BEACH. ANY PERSON COMMITTING AN ACT OF INDECENCY WILL BE LIABLE TO PROSECUTION**

#### Comments:

1. This was the first communication with British Naturism on this issue for some years
2. Such a pretentious, arrogant, condescending, scrappy email of pseudo legal rubbish is insulting
3. The grammatical errors make it difficult to comment on some of it. Indeed in places it states the opposite of what was probably intended
4. There is no attempt to provide any justification for the decision
5. Fraisthorpe Beach was a designated naturist beach for many years under the predecessor authority
6. There is no magazine "*Naturism Magazine*"
7. There is no offence of "*committing an act of indecency*". They may mean "*Outraging Public Decency*" but the threshold for conviction is high. It is the usual charge for public place sexual activity but it is not applicable to naturism.
8. Naturism is not indecent
9. We believe that the notice is deliberately vague and misleading
10. Naturism under suitable circumstances is not illegal so any ban is a purely civil matter
11. The attempted ban will not cure the problem and it is likely to make it worse
12. A press release was made at about the same time as the email was written so there was no opportunity for us to make any representations to pre-empt it or to ask for corrections
13. Councillors were quoted in press reports making remarks that are offensive. They made statements that were by implication derogatory to naturist families and they made statements which were misleading.
14. We know from press reports that the council intends the ban to apply to the entire East Riding coast which is flagrant disregard for the intentions of parliament.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Parliament Briefing Note.