



Dear OM members,

This article, which is signed by myself as well as the Squire of the Morris Ring and the President of the Morris Federation, is just to let you know that we feel we have a duty to bring to the attention of our membership that we seem to be increasingly in a climate where the perception of facepaint is under scrutiny, and I'm sure some people are aware of issues that have come up this year. If your team uses face paint, please have a read and if you want to chat about it, feel free to email me at chair@open-morris.org.

Jen x

Facepaint Revisited

Firstly, we would like to say a massive thank you to all those sides who have taken serious consideration of how they might look to the wider community and have made alterations to their face make up when they dance out.

It has been fantastic to see all the wonderful colours and patterns – there are some amazing artists out there.

The intelligent amongst you will work out that there is a 'but' coming.

But, the JMO committee is, unfortunately, still receiving and settling complaints.

Our guidance asks for you to consider the impact of your make up on a reasonable observer but do bear in mind that such observers may have faced racism in every walk of life for all their life and may not be willing to give you the benefit of the doubt or brave enough to approach you to determine if you really are racist or not.

WE know you are not. Someone who has faced intolerance from various quarters may be less certain of our motives.

So, can the JMO committee suggest you consider the following questions when looking at your make up.

Firstly, do I have to cover my entire face?

The best way to avoid any complaints or misunderstandings is to do only partial make up.

If, as many teams do, you wish to adopt full face make up, then consider these three questions.

- Are the colours chosen sufficiently light / different to black that this is obvious even in poor light or from a distance.
- Does the pattern chosen show sufficiently that there are other colours than black involved whatever angle the photograph is taken from.
- If the weather is wet or the wearer gets hot and sweaty will it remain obvious that there is a pattern or several colours.

This might seem excessive caution and considerations but recent events have shown that these are the questions that councils, festival organisers, event organisers and newspapers will be asking. And if they don't like the answers they come up with they will not be asking your team to perform.

It is also the case that they will be scouring your websites so it may be prudent to avoid photos of your past make up choices in public areas that are visible to people beyond your own membership.

All of this is not meant to be heavy handed, but aimed at preserving the positive view of morris – both among the public and event organisers.

As we started by saying, there are an amazing range of colours and patterns out there. Let's make sure that we stick with this in order to delight all observers.

Thank you

Emma, Jen, Pauline