

## To Motorsport UK Clubs, Committee Members, our Members

Dear Colleagues,

Firstly, I would like to thank our motorsport community for its incredible response to the challenges we are facing. From across the country, from our clubs, officials and competitors, venues, teams and engineering firms there is a solidarity to face the crisis and work together to find solutions. We thank all of the medical teams across the UK for working tirelessly to keep us safe, and in particular the huge number from our own community who are in the front line of this battle.

These are unprecedented times for everyone, and as we are all painfully aware, the changes we are facing are very considerable. The speed of change is striking, and it has required all of us to reset our perspectives on a daily basis.

The announcement we made on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March to suspend UK motorsport activities seemed to come quickly and suddenly. As the government moved into a new phase of the fight against the virus, so the reference points for all sport, and indeed all social activity shifted with immediate effect. The insistence that we all avoid unnecessary social contact and travel meant that a sport such as ours was caught by this sweeping requirement.

Of course, we could have argued that some activities in the broader spectrum of motorsport could navigate such a requirement, but that would simply have ignored the much larger agenda to protect everyone in society. And our members. The community that makes motorsport feasible is complex and diverse, but united in a shared passion. For everyone, the halting of activity, especially as the season was just about to take off, is extremely difficult to come to terms with even when we see the larger picture. But many in our community are themselves vulnerable and may have felt compelled by passion and duty to continue even though it may have been unwise to do so.

In any event, a couple of days later and the stark picture in other countries, including our close European neighbours, has many people asking why government not been more restrictive and acted sooner.

As well as the risk of transmission in social situations, motorsport has the potential to be dangerous and incur injuries. The wonderful members of the emergency services that do so much for motorsport, overwhelmingly do so in their own free time, and as such do not place any compromise on the health or other services. However, these are not normal times. Health services around the world are at breaking point and we all know that our own NHS is now facing the same surge in cases that mean every available resource has to be brought to bear. A week later it seems impossible to think that motorsport would add to that burden in any way.

We have postponed the season until the end of April, but that is in the context of a rapidly evolving understanding of the scale and impact of the virus. It is being suggested that our lives will be changed for many weeks if not months, and we need to plan for that eventuality.

Motorsport UK reacted quickly, and within two days we had in place the IT systems and working processes to allow us to vacate Motorsport UK House and set up a network of home-based offices. We are working with the community to provide support and guidance and planning for the future.

We see five areas on which we should concentrate:

1. **Protecting people's health:** We are focused on working collaboratively with our members, officials, volunteers, clubs, venues as well as our suppliers in facing the challenges ahead together, but first and foremost we need to prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees, members and wider stakeholders
2. **Helping the vulnerable:** The motorsport community is extraordinary in both inventiveness and collaborative support. The top priority is to protect the vulnerable and do all we can to mitigate this impact in society. It is no surprise to know that we have an age profile across all of our licence holders (officials, marshals, competitors) that is skewed older – and in some areas distinctly so. Through our clubs we are as a community reaching out to older members and helping those that need it
3. **Playing a broader role:** The government has asked for volunteers. The country will be under pressure for some time, and our community is exceptionally well equipped to take on roles that help society to function. We are well organised and used to dealing with high pressured situations. The clubs from across the board are looking at how they can help. Government has asked sports NGB's: *In the first instance we are looking in particular for DBS cleared staff, people with driving licenses and medically qualified staff.* We urgently need to identify those groups and individuals that can help with the resourcing of the battle
4. **Financial health:** There are some 40,000 people working in motorsport in the UK, and predominantly they are self-employed or work for small organisations. And that is over and above our 15,000 officials and marshals. The suspension of all motorsport has an immediate and detrimental effect on these people, and it is great that government has acted swiftly to begin to provide support in this area. At the same time the burden has firmly fallen on the clubs, championship organisers and the owners of fixed venues. There is a recognition in government that sport is a massive contributor to the social and economic health of the country and needs to be helped in this crisis. This link provides all the details of the current approach, and we are working with the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) to make sure that we fight the corner for motorsport in all its different facets:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>
5. **Planning for the future:** Motorsport is resilient. Interruptions from war and disease have always been followed by a remarkable renaissance, with the community and industry re-establishing the footings and allowing the passion of the sport to flow again. We hope that this will be a brief interlude, but we must plan for a longer-term break. This is the time when we address the future challenges that the sport is inevitably going to face, from the environment to changing lifestyles. What form and format should motorsport develop to appeal to new audiences and to retain our valued members? That may all seem a long way away, but Motorsport UK will be working to resolve the answers to these questions

In the meantime, innovations and opportunities arise, and a perfect example is the launch of the Official F1 Virtual Grand Prix to replace the cancelled races. If ever there was a moment when the digital version

of motorsport could accelerate into the mainstream it must be now. We are in detailed discussions with a provider to set up a UK based competition that will focus directly on our motorsport community.

And finally, a few words on how 2020 was progressing before it was put on hold. In fact, the trajectory that had begun in 2019 was continuing into the first quarter, with a buoyant renewal of licences and a full and exciting calendar of events planned for the summer. But for now, that will have to wait.

I know that with our strong community we will all play our part in beating the virus, and make sure that motorsport returns in good health and with a sustainable future. Please take care of yourselves and your families and be safe.

**HUGH CHAMBERS**

CEO, Motorsport UK