

Chairman's Report to the June 2020 General Meeting of SAMSC

You don't need me to tell you that we are living through some very difficult times. You are reading this message from me because you are involved with or at least interested in motorsport; this is the one thing that we all have in common. But our shared interest in motorsport is just a part of us. Beyond this, I know that everyone who is in any way connected with SAMSC is dealing with a whole range of issues and situations that are individual and personal to them. The Coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on all aspects of our lives, not just our passion for motorsport. It is against that background that the June meeting of the Association will go ahead. We will discuss a range of matters as usual but for this meeting (and perhaps some into the future) our debate will be in the context of something beyond our control.

Over the last three months, during various phases of lockdown, I have tried to keep up a flow of communication from SAMSC and at the same time, encourage clubs to maintain at least the same level of engagement with their members. I know that some of you have done so and commend you for that. I owe a special word of appreciation to the marshal training team who have developed and are in process of delivering a programme of innovative, even ground breaking, online training modules. I also want to commend Motorsport UK for the regular flow of communication from them. With no permits being issued, some of the Colnbrook staff have been furloughed but at the same time, others have been working harder than ever, albeit from home. I am aware of at least three main streams of work. Firstly, a support package to help clubs through the period of no activity. Secondly, work on a development programme for the future, informed by a number of stakeholder surveys. And thirdly, work on what is required to get the sport back going again.

It was this latter topic that provoked the most response to my request for agenda items for this meeting and I make no apology for giving everyone a heads up that it will probably take up a significant portion of the time allocated. In order to make best use of that time however, I want to make clear what I think we should, and more importantly, should not, discuss in any detail.

Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, we must be guided by the legislation and guidance issued by the UK Government, and for most SAMSC activity, the Scottish Government. For example, as I write this two weeks ahead of our meeting, travel is only allowed for specific reasons and attending a motorsport event is not one of them. I do know that there is direct and ongoing engagement between Motorsport UK and the UK Government Dept of Culture, Media & Sport. I do not intend to allow any prolonged discussion around this; I am of the view that there are more than enough people giving 'advice' to Nicola Sturgeon and Boris Johnston without me adding mine either personally or on behalf of SAMSC.

At the same time, you should already be aware that Motorsport UK had published a framework for sport resumption that is available for you all to see. In developing this through a number of iterations, they engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to gather views. Please make sure you have read and absorbed this framework, available on the Motorsport UK website, if you want to partake fully in the meeting discussions. There is further work now underway to add some additional discipline specific detail to this framework and I will try to share the most up to date progress with you at our meeting but as I am sure you will understand, this is inevitably very much live work in progress.

It is against the background of these two workstreams that Motorsport UK have reopened the permit application process on the assumption, albeit as yet not the certainty, that events can begin again from the beginning of July.

However, even though permits may be available, I know from responses I have seen, and conversations I have had, that not everyone is in favour of an early return to competitive motorsport. There are many valid and understandable reasons for this. Unanswered questions include the need to avoid any unnecessary impact on the health services, will there be enough volunteer officials and marshals, how severe is the residual economic situation facing competitors and quite simply, will motorsport be as much fun with enforced social distancing. I acknowledge these views but would make the point that it is for each club and for individual members of those clubs to make their own decision about running and/or attending events but it is the role of the Governing Body and Regional Association to provide as much support and guidance to those clubs, competitors and volunteers that do want to return.

With those three clear caveats, I would like us to have an open and positive discussion about the resumption of club motorsport. I would very much like this to focus on a practical grass roots level based on the guidance already issued by Motorsport UK and any further updates to this that might come out in the next couple of weeks. You are best placed to know your venues and your cohort of competitors and volunteers. How do you see it working?

As if the subject matter was not enough of a diversion, we will be meeting in an unfamiliar 'virtual' world rather than the comfort of the Stirling Court Hotel. Over the past few weeks, I know that this has become almost routine for many of us whether for formal club or championship committee meetings, online quiz nights or just family get togethers. I know that for some people, it is uncomfortable and not something they are keen on. I know that others face technical challenges because of the equipment they have access to or their broadband limitations. I understand all of this and will take it into account as I chair the meeting.

I am keen to get back to our face to face meetings as soon as possible. I know from previous feedback that clubs value highly both the interactive discussion withing the meeting itself and the networking opportunity offered by the coffee break as well as before and after the formalities. But at the same time, what I will say at this stage, is that a number of SAMSC clubs have been calling for some time to be able to 'attend' our meetings without the need for long and difficult travelling. I know of clubs that are planning to be involved in this June 2020 meeting that have not been able to do so recently. It is thus my intention to review very carefully how well the meeting goes and consider our options for future meetings perhaps being a blend of personal attendance and online presence.

Well that's enough of a ramble for now. I may update this Chairman's report if more information comes to light that I think you need to know before the meeting.

Until then, stay safe.

Pete Weall

Chair Scottish Association of Motor Sports Clubs