



Dear Culture, Welsh Language and Communication Committee,

RE: Inquiry into the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on culture, creative industries, heritage, communications, and sport

Introduction & Background

The Welsh Association of Motor Clubs (WAMC) has since 1957 represented motor clubs in Wales and those across the UK with a vested interest in Welsh 4-wheeled-Motorsport. We currently have around 90 member clubs with a total of around 5,000 individuals connected to those clubs. All clubs have a vested interest in motorsport in Wales, either running or taking part in events, worth over £1million a year to the economy alone¹, supporting around fourteen motorsport preparation companies, plus around a dozen other motorsport supporting companies such as part suppliers, printing companies, Rally Schools etc plus the 2 specific motorsport Venues (Pembrey Motorsport Centre and Anglesey Circuit).

During 2019, around 100 motorsport events ran permitted by Motorsport UK, plus several non-motorsport events, such as touring assemblies, who work with Motorsport UK Officials to ensure events do not clash and 'over-run' local areas. The majority of Motorsport in Wales takes place in remote rural locations, such as the forests, air fields and military training areas, with a Rally Headquarters based in a more populated town, usually located in Mid and North Wales, where competitors return between stages and start and finish the event. Although this varies on the event and the type of events, many grassroots event take place in one location, with bigger events needing more infrastructure.

It should be noted that this response does not include comments in relation to Wales Rally GB, which is a major event in and of itself, we are more concerned about grassroots and national events, most of which are run totally by volunteers and often attract less than 1,000-1,500 people in comparison to the tens of thousands for Wales Rally GB.

We also are not making comments on commercial motorsport activities, such as track days, business, etc.

The WAMC usually meets with member clubs 3 times a year to discuss matters, to update on the several successful championships we run, but also to listen to the concerns of clubs and feed those back to our governing body, we also regularly encourage clubs to attend the annual police meeting in both south and north Wales to maintain police relationships, as well as hosting our own all-Wales police meeting to address concerns and understand complaints they receive

¹ Rally4Wales Economic Impact Assessment of 3 Multi-Venue Loose Surface Stage Event during 2018 saw a total of £982,000 brought into the local economy. Anyone who lived within 30miles of the event was excluded in that calculation as per Sport Wales Guidance. There are 6 events of this type in Wales during 2019, plus a further 6 Multi-Venue Tarmac Stage Events. There are also dozens of other grassroots events, which attract competitors from all over the country, but no data is available for those events.

from the public. We also hold a specific meeting for the three main types of events: Road Navigation events, Forestry Events and Tarmac events, to understand their concerns.

What has been the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the sector?

All Motorsport stopped on the 17th March, when the governing body pulled all permits up to the end of April initially, then to the end of June. This saw at least 30 events cancelled in that period alone, many of which have been cancelled to next year.

From July to the end of the year there was at least 29 scheduled events to take place, with those in July and beginning of August already cancelled, with the remaining hold out to see what happens over coming reviews, events generally cancel 4-6 weeks prior to the event.

The grassroots events may take place later in the year, but overall, we expect around $\frac{3}{4}$ of the motorsport calendar in Wales will be cancelled.

However, there are some clubs looking at Rally Time Trials, Sprints and Hill climb events, which do not require 2-people in the car, with the hope that these events can run. For those that can run in venues which can ban spectators (i.e. circuits and enclosed military land), these will likely take place relatively quickly.

There are 2,360 Competitive License Holders, 652 Licensed Marshals and 250 Officials in Wales, many of which will have dedicated their time volunteering on the many motorsport events which take place in Wales. Officials will have dedicated considerable amounts of their time planning for events that have been or will be cancelled as the pandemic progresses.

How effectively has the support provided by the Welsh Government, the UK Government and arms-length bodies addressed the sector's needs?

There has been little-to-no support for motorsport events in Wales, whilst many clubs are set up as a limited company or similar legal entities, they have no employees, and no premises, so don't qualify for any grants. Loan for most clubs would not be a viable option, with the majority of money for clubs coming in from membership at the beginning of the year, with little income throughout the rest of the year, except from events, which are not run for profit but the enjoyment of the sport.

A small number of events who had to cancel at the last minute, will have spent a considerable amount of money (likely several thousand pounds), which will have had to be pulled from reserves, or claim through the Motorsport UK Club Continuity Funding. We are not aware of any other sources of financial support to most of our clubs.

What will the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19 be on the sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?

- Closure of Motorsport Business
- Competitors finding other hobbies and moving away from motorsport
- Reduction of public support for events, especially if they are seen to make the wrong decisions regarding running events.
- Motor Clubs losing members through ill-health or moving away from the sport and not renewing membership.

Most clubs in Wales have an awards ceremony of some kind, usually combined with an annual dinner, that usually takes place in the quitter season, although Motorsport can and does take place 12 months of the year. With the number of cancelled events both at grassroot and clubman level, some clubs will have cancelled their championship for 2020, meaning they will not be buying or will reduce the number of awards they will buy and ultimately may not have their annual dinner, supporting pubs and restaurants throughout January and February.

Ultimately, we could see a reduction in the number of events across Wales, which will see a reduction in the number of people coming to Wales and experiencing all we have to offer and spending their money locally. Many of the national events, which run over 2 days see hotels, B&B's and campsites in the local area all be booked up, as well as local restaurants and takeaways being used for evening meals. During 2020 there was around a dozen 2day events planned.

What lessons can be learnt from how the Welsh Government, the UK Government, arms-length bodies and the sector have dealt with Covid-19?

Motorsport reacted well, although the lack of guidance on what constitutes a 'mass gathering' cause some contention in the beginning and is a worry for those thinking of running over the coming weeks, most events run with around 500 to 1,500 people in attendance, however unlike a festival, the majority of these will be in smaller clusters.

For instance most competitors get in the car at the service area, and don't get out again until they get back to the service area, most service crews remain within the service area, spectators attend designated spectator locations, and marshals are spread throughout the event, usually no more 3-5 per location.

For Grass route events, they are more likely to take place in a single venue, but with a much smaller field and attract a much smaller audience, most likely around a total of 100 people, but still spread out over a considerable space.

The main lesson from our point of view is the importance of government working together, the difference between Welsh and English regulations, means we could see events start back in England before Wales, and welsh competitors not able to take part, or breaking Welsh law as it stands to 'Stay Local' at this time to attend.

Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Ymchwiliad i'r achosion o COVID-19 ac effaith y feirws ar ddiwylliant, y diwydiannau creadigol, treftadaeth,
cyfathrebu a chwaraeon / Inquiry into the COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on culture, creative industries,
heritage, communications and sport

CWLC COV53

Ymateb gan Cymdeithas Clybiau Modur Cymru / Response from The Welsh Association of Motors Clubs

How might the sector evolve after Covid-19, and how can the Welsh Government support such innovation to deal with future challenges?

Motorsport has been with us for over 100years, and we very much hope it will be with us for well over another 100. Over that time, we have seen great innovations come from motorsport, and continually look to make the sport better. COVID19 has helped us spend some time looking at the sport and thinking about how the sport could be delivered differently, utilising more technology, where mobile signal permits.

We have also seen clubs become more digital, with a number hosting club nights over video conference, and hosting virtual events over Facebook live, such as quiz's and treasure hunts, something a number of clubs will continue to look to do in the future. .

Kind Regards,

Daniel Harper
General Secretary
Welsh Association of Motor Clubs