

## **P-05-1028 Relax the excessive restrictions to allow motor sport rallies to take place in Wales, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 06.10.20**

I think the main source of frustration that prompted the petition is that many other sports and pastimes are finding methods to re-engage back into the Welsh community – but motorsport in general has been virtually eliminated as a sport that people can be involved in. Welsh competitors are entering rallies in England and competing there where localised lockdowns don't apply.

We currently have a situation where rally events running in England are running as safely as possible, with the sport of rallying in particular having adapted new methods of running events to ensure minimal human contact.

Previously, the time keeping processes on rallies meant that competitor and marshals interacted, with time cards (used to keep track of event timing) being transferred by hand at different time controls.

The sport has eliminated that contact overnight since the pandemic began. Now, events use full electronic timing and results, and protocols have changed to allow competitors to remain in the vehicle, with marshals and timekeepers only present at time controls to help issues for safety reasons.

Please consider the following aspects of the current situation for a sport like rallying in Wales:

The sport takes place in solely rural areas. Events in England that have run since March have made them non-spectator – plus a limit on the number of people allowed to attend the event with each competing crew. This helps minimise the numbers of people present.

The Service Area (where the cars remain between competing on the special stages) are socially distanced – and mechanics and team personnel all wear masks. Social distancing is observed and a COVID-19 compliance officer monitors this at all times with regular inspections through the day, along with a briefing for all crews on the morning of the event.

The electronic timing and results processes mean that opportunities for direct contact have been removed.

Pre-event administrative checks (traditionally a face to face part of the process) are now all delivered electronically and confirmed before the event – again, reducing the need for people to congregate in an area. The event notice board is now electronic via an app or website – meaning (again), opportunities for people to congregate have been eradicated.

Pre-event car checks are now 'self-certified' – with a technical form completed prior to the event and socially distanced 'spot checks' by approved Motorsport UK authorised vehicle scrutineers completed at random on the day of the event to ensure compliance with the technical regulations.

Facilities for hand washing and hand sanitising are provided at each event for everyone to use.

It's hard to see how this can be better organised or safer in it's approach. The risk of transfer is managed and mitigated using this process. I compare this to something close to me that happened at the weekend. Wrexham AFC played a home game behind closed doors in the National League, but provided a live stream for fans to follow online. (Rallying would be doing the same for

spectators on events if they could run in Wales). However the public house attached to the ground, 'The Turf' sold tickets for fans to watch the game within the pub for the duration. There is absolutely no way that this was less than the 30 people as advertised – all within a close proximity of each other in a condensed area.

But.....this is safe – as it was allowed to happen. Did anyone police it? No. Are they selling tickets again for future live screening? Yes. Are we seriously suggesting that a congregation of people from anywhere within Wrexham is fine – but a professionally managed event in a rural area away from the populace is 'too high risk?'. Really?

Compare to a test rally event that is trying to be planned for late in 2020 here in North Wales, north of Llyn Brenig on private forestry land. An event that would be strictly organised, enforced and self policed to ensure compliance in a remote area. There is no evidence to suggest that holding a rally in a confined outdoor location (the current proposals for test events are based within private forests with limited competitor numbers) causes a higher risk. An event held in a private forest in August in Cumbria was run to these proposals above along with track and trace processes implemented for all crews. No cases of COVID were linked to the event, nor was the track and trace follow up procedure required.

Whilst I fully recognise that there are challenges in Wales with local lockdowns, the principle of just putting a blanket ban on all kinds of recreational activity like this is grossly disproportionate to the levels of risk. If we are to learn to live with this virus as is being suggested – the sport can do no more than put these procedures in place in order to minimise the risk and the spread of transfer. It's easy to argue that I expose myself to more risk handling fresh fruit and vegetables in the supermarket than I would by competing on a car rally run to the above rules. I genuinely believe the level of risk is higher in the supermarket.

For clarity, what we are hopeful off in the short term is the opportunity to run closed to the public, smaller form, one day rallies run to the above protocols. These would be events held entirely within one venue (be that tarmac or forestry) where access can be strictly policed, regulated and monitored by the sport's governance body, Motorsport UK who have supported this principle. However, the only way to make such an event financially viable is to relax the restrictive number of a maximum of 30 people attending in total. If an exemption can be made for the National League, Welsh Premier League – I see no reason why a superbly organised sport like motorsport cannot be considered in this vein.

I thank you for the opportunity to hear my thoughts. As the Managing Director of Rally4Wales Contracts Limited, I run the company that repairs forest roads after rally use on the NRW estate. My role as founder and MD is entirely voluntary along with my co-directors. We have a full time female Ops Manager, plus all our sub-contractors are civil engineering companies based in rural Denbighshire, Llanwrst and Brecon. Those businesses, like ours, are struggling to survive financially, even with the financial support received on a grant basis from Welsh Government which we are thankful of.

The biggest frustration is that planning ahead for 2021 is nigh on impossible and there is a real risk that a business like R4W will fold. Events hopeful of running in February-May seem powerless to try and progress their event with so much uncertainty in place. Whilst we appreciate that it is a real challenge for Welsh Government to manage the pandemic – we also recognise that as an 'amateur' sport – we are one of the most highly regulated and professional sports when it comes to managing events. The risk assessments, method statements and safety principles that are in place for Wales

Rally GB (at World Rally Championship level) are replicated exactly on all small events in Wales – meaning safety is always of the highest priority for crews, organisers, volunteers and spectators.

We desperately need an opportunity to run small scale events in a safe and controlled environment to try and support the motorsport industry in Wales – be that small race events at Pembrey, rally events held entirely within the Epynt Ranges, or events in public or private forestry land that are non-spectator and professionally run to the above guidelines. Without any hope of this changing in the short to medium term future, there will be countless businesses that suffer the consequences and will not survive beyond the COVID restrictions regardless.

Diolch,