

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

My report is written well ahead of the next meeting. We have tried to set a standard of getting papers circulated to you a couple of weeks before the SAMSC meeting although it seems there is always a flurry of e-mails in the days leading up to, and even on the day of, each meeting. So as usual, I am writing this full of good intentions but, as is often the case, I will still need to add loads to my verbal update on the 17th.

The 2020 season is, for many of us, well under way. While Race and Speed competitive events are still in hibernation, many clubs have already run their first Autotest and Navigational Rally events of the new year. I am keen to hear from clubs how the new Clubman Licence process is working. The stage rally scene has also woken up both on tarmac and, by the time of our meeting, in forests. I am looking forward to attending events all around Scotland across all disciplines, including my first every visit to Golspie where I will be Motorsport UK Steward for the September Sprint.

Thinking about this event brings me back to the thorny topic of event dates. Even when these are carefully thought through and agreed, as is the case with the Scottish Speed events, last minute issues come up and the September Sprint date has moved by one week even since my agreeing to be Steward due to an issue with the venue. This remains a particular problem for stage rallies where, despite all the good intentions flowing from the meeting held last year about rationalising the number and spread of events, I am aware of at least four new and additional stage rallies being planned in 2020. Across all disciplines, there remains significant congestion across many weekends throughout the year and it remains to be seen if the volunteer resource is able to cope. Also, as mentioned in my AGM report, it may be that the level of competitor interest is finite and adding events will lead to entries being spread even more thinly.

I have been drawn into discussions with a number of clubs about this issue and in some cases have been specifically asked to intervene as Association Chair. People have suggested that the Association led annual dates meeting should be reintroduced and from this, a starting point fixture list be published after which, any additional or revised dates can only be added with approval from the Association. At the same time others have told me that they cannot set dates in stone until 'A N Other' sets their date, usually for some major event or championship and often this A N Other involves Motorsport UK. I am keen to lead a meaningful discussion on this topic although I fear it will resolve nothing.

On another matter, albeit kicked off by the previous one, I want to come back to the topic of Social Media use by clubs, their officials and wider membership. I raised the matter more than two years ago when, in my report to the September 2017 meeting, I wrote:

"Something already having an impact on all our lives, again whether we like it or not, is social media. I know that not everyone embraces the murky world of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc but most of those that do will have realised that it can be a force for both good and bad. These channels of communication are used to great effect by many SACC clubs and indeed by the Association itself but we need to take care."

Then again for the November 2017 meeting:

"I could also write again about social media but I fear I would be wasting my time. No sooner had I made the point about this at the last SACC meeting did we hear about the MSA National Court case involving a photograph of Facebook. I don't want to comment on the case other than to make the point once again that Social media is an undoubted force for good in so many ways but it is also something over which none of us have enough control to stop it being turned against us. Please be careful."

Since then, there has been at least one other case that I have read about at National Court involving social media. Move forward to 2020 and I have seen recent evidence of social media posts that are potentially damaging to our sport. I am not saying that there is no right to share views, even criticism nor a right to reply to such but it must always be truthful, polite and accurate. It is one thing to add posts to a thread being run on a club or championship page but in some cases, posts are being added to personal pages where individuals have themselves posted about events or championships only to be 'trolled' about what they have said.

I don't want to get into more specifics; simply to urge all the SAMSC member clubs to bring to the attention of all their members the [Motorsport UK Social Media Policy and Guidance](#). It is not for me to copy and paste all of this document but one phrase that I think is relevant is that *"what you regard as 'banter' may be seen as hurtful or embarrassing by a wider audience"*. I would like to urge all SAMSC clubs to add it as an item for discussion at their next committee meeting and, if appropriate, to share that discussion with their members.

The Regional Association continues to be one of the primary communication channels between clubs and the governing body. We do this mainly through our involvement in Regional Committee. Indeed, the programme of SAMSC quarterly meetings have historically been scheduled to follow on from the meetings of this group. However, for 2020, Regional Committee will meet only twice, in April & August such that feedback through this route may be diminished. We will watch this situation carefully and consider what, if any, impact this might have on our Association meetings.

But this is not the only channel of communication and as I mentioned in my AGM report, we have representatives from Scotland on many of the committee bodies that work to run both competitive disciplines and the various aspects of the volunteer resource. I know that all of these representatives would be delighted to hear from clubs, or club members, if there is any point they want to raise with the team at Colnbrook (or soon to be Bicester).

I'm sure there was more I wanted to write about but that will do for now.

Pete Weall

Chair Scottish Association of Motor Sports Clubs