



PRESS RELEASE

First motor sport events cancelled as campaign grows to overturn new DEFRA regulations

The Motor Sports Association (MSA) has received notification of the first cancellations of motor sport events as a direct result of legislation imposed by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

DEFRA's decision to stop subsidies to farmers who allow part of their land to be used, even temporarily, for any form of motor sport has threatened to destroy more than 40% of 4-wheeled grassroots motor sport in the UK as well as 4,000 off-road motor cycle meetings.

The first events to fall victim to the legislation include sporting trials, autograss racing and 4x4 events that had been due to take place on rural farm land, but there are fears that these are just the tip of the iceberg.

The media campaign to overturn the legislation is gathering momentum and reflects the serious nature of the threat posed by DEFRA's actions.

Auto Express magazine estimates that nearly 50,000 competitors and officials will be directly hit by the new ruling, with as many as 250,000 spectators, families and service crews also affected. "There will be a knock-on effect on garages, local B&Bs and other rural businesses," 4x4 event organiser Chris Tomley told the magazine.

Motorsport News has started its own campaign to save Britain's grassroots motor sport. It urges everyone to sign up to its petition at www.petitiononline.com/som, and quotes trials multi-champion Julian Fack: "As we see it, this could be the death of sporting trials. This is devastating news."

Elsewhere in the paper, MSA Chief Executive Colin Hilton has written: "This is a fundamental threat to motor sport and we need everyone to join the campaign. The time for taking it on the chin is over; we now have to fight for our sport." The full text of his article can be found on the MSA website, www.msauk.org, in the News section, as can previous press releases.

Editor's notes:

The Single Payment Scheme (SPS) replaces the Common Agricultural Policy and now pays farmers for the land they own, not what they produce. The European Directive on agricultural subsidies does not prohibit motor sports on land eligible for SPS. However, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has taken the decision, without consultation, to stop these payments to UK landowners if agricultural land is used, even temporarily, for motor sport.

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