

Colnbrook, Thursday 19 February 2015

**An open letter from the MSA Chief Executive regarding spectator safety on UK stage rallies**

This weekend marks the second anniversary of the tragic death of a spectator on the Snowman Rally, and of course on the Jim Clark Rally in 2014 three more spectators lost their lives in equally tragic circumstances.

As a result the Scottish Government, following an emergency debate in the Scottish Parliament, commissioned a major review of safety on stage rallies. This Scottish Government Motorsport Event Safety Review published its final report in January, and the MSA has since gone on record confirming its commitment to the implementation of the report's recommendations, not only in Scotland but throughout the UK.

Clearly, there is going to be a period of transition while everyone concerned works as hard as possible to introduce the recommended changes. In the interim, I need to remind all spectators of the fact that they are ultimately responsible for their own personal safety.

I say this because despite these well-publicised tragedies, and despite the sport being well aware of the changes being brought about by the Scottish Review, I am astonished and dismayed that an irresponsible minority – and I stress minority – of spectators continue to display a wanton disregard for their own personal well-being.

This was brought home to me when viewing YouTube clips of last weekend's Wydean Forest Rally, and also from the truly shocking photograph from the same rally in yesterday's *Motorsport News* (18 February, page 34) of a 'spectator' lying flat on the ground on the edge of the forest track, apparently taking a photograph extremely close to a competing vehicle.

This behaviour not only shows a complete disregard for personal safety but in addition places other spectators, officials and competing crews in danger. It also undermines the considerable efforts of the dedicated rally organisers, officials and marshals, who do all they can to ensure that events run as safely as possible.

The MSA is currently working on a daily basis with all other stakeholders in rallying, particularly the Forestry Commission, and I can confirm from discussions within the last few days that unless these few idiotic spectators concerned change their attitude immediately and behave responsibly, there will be no future for stage rallying in the UK. I am not talking about next year, or the year after; I am talking about right now. Even in the meantime, this sort of behaviour will mean that stages are cancelled and rallies disrupted or even stopped.

Please, for the sake of rallying in the UK, can all spectators take full responsibility not only for ensuring their own personal safety but also the future of the sport we all love.

Yours in motor sport,



Rob Jones  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**