

Closed Roads (England)

Process for application to MSA for organising permit prior to application to Highways Agency for a motor race order



Primary legislation providing the framework for closed road motor sport was passed in the 2015 Deregulation Act. The MSA has since worked closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) on the secondary legislation required to make this framework available to event organisers. This secondary legislation; The Road Traffic Act 1988 (Motor Racing) (England) Regulations 2017, has now become law in England. It is hoped that Scotland and Wales will introduce their own secondary legislation in due course.

The commencement order names the MSA and its sister governing body for two-wheeled UK motor sport, the Auto-Cycle Union (ACU) as the two authorising bodies for closed road motor sport events in England from 10th April 2017.

The MSA will only accept applications for organising permits for closed road motor sport events from MSA registered motor clubs. An administration fee of £500 is payable on application for the processing of a closed road organising permit. If the application is successful, the normal organising permit fees will still apply. Where a promoter utilises the services of a club for the running of a motor sport event, the club is advised to pass the MSA costs and any further administrative costs on to the promoter.

It is important to note that there are two stages to obtaining the necessary permissions to run a motor sport event on a closed public road:

1. MSA will issue a specific 'closed road' organising permit when satisfied that a proposed event will be run in accordance with the *MSA Yearbook* subject to
 - (a) the applicant intends to promote the proposed event,
 - (b) the applicant has the necessary financial and other resources to make appropriate arrangements for the event,
 - (c) the applicant has arranged or will arrange appropriate insurance cover in connection with the event, in accordance with guidance issued by the motor sport governing body, and
 - (d) the application includes all necessary details of the safety and other arrangements proposed for the event.

2. The Highways Agency will process applications for a motor race order once a 'closed road' organising permit has been issued by the MSA. The application must be made to the highway authority for the area in which the event is to take place (and, where the event is to take place in the area of more than one highway authority, separate applications must be made under this section to each authority). The application must be made not less than 6 months before the event.

All Kart, Race & Speed events will also require a track licence issued by the MSA. Please refer to the MSA procedure for 'Track Licencing'.

Definition:

A motor race order is required to run a motor sport event on the public highway. A highway is defined as a road including footpaths and verges; bridleways, footpaths and carriageways which are open to the public.

The motor race order is issued by the Highways Agency and is subject to permission being granted by the MSA to apply for the order.

Planning an event

A representative of the MSA registered motor club should contact the relevant MSA Sporting Executive for an initial discussion regarding the event and venue. The following aspects of the planning stage, as detailed below, must have already been assessed and form part of the discussion.

The realistic timeframe for the lead up to an event is up to 6 months for an MSA and 6 months for the issue of a motor race order by the Highways Agency.

Initial Assessment:

In preparing any proposed public highway based course consideration has to be given to managing the risk to which competitors, officials, spectators and any others may be exposed. These are not the only matters to be considered for while the financial cost of a vehicle impacting a permanent barrier at a permanent venue is a known and acceptable cost. For a vehicle to impact a building or other structure can be extremely expensive, particularly if the building/structure is of a historic nature.

It is an inherent risk within motor sport events that competing vehicles may inadvertently depart the course be it through driver error, mechanical failure or some other reason. Although incidents are more frequent at turns, a vehicle can go off course anywhere so the immediate environs of a proposed course must be reviewed and consideration given to what the outcome will be of a vehicle departing the course. In carrying out such a review there are many things to be considered, type of competition and vehicle, likely speed of vehicles, likely trajectory of vehicles, the perceived likelihood of a vehicle leaving the proposed course at any specific point, the effect of gradient, the likely angle of impact, the likely consequence etc. Once this has been done, consideration can be given to what measures can be used to manage this situation.

The basic requirements for a competition course are the same for both permanent and temporary courses but the management of the inherent risks may be different.

Landowners, residents & commercial operators:

In considering any potential course thought needs to be given to the needs of those occupying roadside properties be they residential or commercial, including farmland, churches, funeral services, care homes, etc. Not all such occupiers will be agreeable to not being able to access or exit their property for periods of time. Assuming agreement of all concerned is obtained thought has to be given to the possibility of access arrangements being needed for access by emergency services such as fire engines, ambulances and police vehicles/personnel. In general the fewer the number of roadside premises that have access to the proposed course the easier it is. Early PR visits to residents on the proposed route are one of the most essential tasks to be carried out.

The acceptability of closing sections of public highway will, amongst other factors, be influenced by the disruption such closure will be caused to local services including refuse collections, bus services, community support, etc. The emergency services must be consulted with to determine the avoidance of primary routes.

Closer to the event, the road closures need to be advertised in the local press and in accordance with the Highways Agency requirements for roadside advertising of the closure.

Spectator Management:

Your competition may attract spectators and such is likely to be the case irrespective of whether the event is publicised to the public. Thought thus needs to be given to how this situation is managed. The property to either side of the proposed course is likely to be in private or commercial ownership. Persuading a home owner not to spectate from the front garden may be a challenge as will dissuading the erection of some sort of viewing structure. Never underestimate how spectators will walk considerable distances over fields etc. to reach what they regard as the ideal viewing spot.

Event facilities:

Whatever the event there will be a need for a competitors paddock. Much will depend on the type of competition, the number cars, the type of cars, parking for trailers, etc. and there needs to be some working room. You need to provide access, not only to and from the paddock area, but also within it. For some types of event a grassed surface may be acceptable. A sealed surface of tarmac or concrete will be welcomed by competitors. A loose gravel surface tends to migrate and hot tyres, particularly slicks and performance tyres pick up aggregate which can damage tyres and will need to be cleaned off before further use. The area need not be truly level; a modest gradient can be accommodated but think about the need for competitors to lift cars on jacks. Whatever the surface you need to consider what happens in adverse weather conditions.

Accommodation is needed for scrutineering. For some events it can be acceptable for scrutineers going to the cars rather than cars going to a central point. Scrutineers will still need a reasonable facility to work from. Meeting organisers need suitable facilities for such as operating signing on, controlling track activity, timekeeping, for Stewards' enquiries to be held etc.

Marshalling:

The requirement for marshal posts remain the same as for fixed venues; visibility from post to post, visibility for drivers, adequate protection for marshals, equipment as per discipline requirements, etc.

Emergency arrangements:

The emergency services need to be contacted and plans made as to how they will access an emergency during road closure times. This is in addition to the emergency arrangements specific to the event.

Event specific requirements

Speed events (Speed Hill Climbs and Sprints)

An MSA track licence will also be required.

The requirements of (E)2.2.3 are clear in requiring that normally the roadway shall have a width of 3.5m or more. There is a little discretion, particularly on straights but less so in curves and turns where consideration has to be given to how much roadway vehicles need to negotiate such features.

There is no minimum length for either sprint or hill climb courses. Competitors will be looking for a course that offers an enjoyable and interesting challenge and also offers reasonable value for money. There are a number of established courses that are shorter but generally in order to provide competitors with a reasonable event experience, a course length exceeding 750m is a good target to aim for.

Road surface and profile require careful consideration. The surface needs to be in good repair with a minimal number of local repairs. If carried out to a good standard using materials that match the characteristics of the road surface then local repairs are generally acceptable. Utility services both cross and run along beneath public roadways. There are times when the utility companies need to access such services, usually by trenching to expose the service and then reinstating. Such may be very satisfactory and acceptable. Experience is also that this may not be the case and such as settlement has occurred resulting in there being a dip across the surface of what was a trench or other unevenness. Manhole covers, drainage grates and the like can be an issue and much depends on the location of such ironworks. If they are at the edge of the road on a straight and unlikely to be crossed by a car then they are likely to be acceptable. If in turns in areas where they will be traversed they need to be checked carefully. The cover or grating needs to be in the same plane as the surrounding surface and to be positively secured by a locking mechanism; screwed fastenings or stitch welded. Relying on them to be secured solely by the weight of the cover or grating is not acceptable. There are techniques available to apply resin bonded material to such as iron covers to give a reasonably comparable level of grip to the surrounding surface.

Public highway is generally constructed with 'crown camber' which is where the road at the centre line is higher than it is at the edges. The cross profile may be a gentle curve and the height difference centre to edge modest. Cross camber is a particularly important in turns and curves. In competition, drivers generally, on approach to a turn are on the outside of the turn then crossing to be on the inside of the turn at the apex then letting the car run back out to the outside edge. Doing this creates negative camber as the car loads up to the outside as it is turned in, positive camber at the apex and then again negative camber in the exit. A modest amount of cross camber can be accepted. The longitudinal profile is to be carefully considered, any change of gradient, up or down, needs to be sympathetic. Significant crests can lead to cars becoming airborne, a situation that is unlikely to be acceptable.

Where road surfaces have been machine laid they are generally reasonably consistent. Hand laid construction roadway surfaces may rise and fall, ripple, and the cross camber continually vary. If there is significant variation of surface profile this can lead to vehicle instability and may give vehicle ground clearance issues. Typically purpose built or competition prepared cars used in sprints and speed hill climbs may have only 40mm ground clearance. This is also a factor to be considered if there are 'cats eyes' as these can be slippery and generally protrude above the surface by around 25/30mm.

Pavement kerbs, if of modest height may well be acceptable, high kerbs are less likely to be acceptable for they generally give an increased risk of inverting a car, breaking a vehicle wheel or deranging suspension.

In proposing such as start line location, remember this has to be reasonably level with space to accept the timekeeper's accommodation and equipment. The start needs to be accessible from the paddock area or if the paddock is located at the finish end of the course there needs to be a suitable collection area. Remember that wherever a holding area may be, it is likely consideration will be needed in respect of turning cars round. In locating the finish line consideration needs to be given to likely vehicle speeds and provision of an adequate length of road so that the vehicle can be safely decelerated to a suitable speed to enter the paddock or holding area.

In considering the management of the risk of impact the basic principle of where impact is anticipated to be most likely at an angle of more than 30° then an energy absorption barrier is appropriate. Such may be tyre barriers, closed cell foam barriers or large straw bales such as 'Hesston' or round bales. If round bales are used they are to be stood on end.

Where the proposed course is in a rural environment, there may be earth banks to the sides. If of reasonable height and either vertical or very steep then such is likely to be acceptable. Avoid situations where the banking is of such a slope that there is clearly possibility of a car running up the slope and being launched over the top or inverted.

If a potential stretch of road is identified consider the direction in which the course will run. With some courses they are significantly improved if run in one direction rather than the other.

Race events

An MSA track licence will also be required.

The MSA has long required a minimum width of 9m [(E)2.2.3] and this is a minimum for a temporary race circuit. Most modern street circuits are at least 10m and the start straight wider, usually 12m. It is not just a case of having a road width that enables overtaking. Account needs to be taken of a car spinning and ending up broadside. There are generally limited opportunities for a car to be pulled off circuit in such circumstances as mechanical breakdown. The road width needs to be such that there is reasonable expectation that cars can get past the stranded vehicle.

There is no minimum length set down for a circuit but realistically in order to accommodate a suitable length, start straight and appropriate run into the first turn, plus a reasonable lap time, and then at least 1,500m is needed.

As a general principle with any street circuit barriers are run at track edge. Suitable barriers may be linked pre-cast barrier units with a 1,000mm high vertical face trackside or 3 line Armco installed in suitable ground sockets. It is highly likely that such barrier will be required both sides of the track for its entire length and that the barrier will need to incorporate suitable debris fence to a height of 2,500mm above track level plus a 45° overhang 200mm long. Thus it is wise to anticipate that the amount of barrier and debris fence required will be twice the length of the proposed circuit plus a small contingency to cater for access overlaps, escape lanes etc.

The philosophy of street circuits is that with barriers at track edge, any impact is likely to be at a shallow angle with a good chance that cars will slide along barriers and a reduced chance of cars making sharp angle impacts. In city environments there are usually a number of square turns. At such features the ongoing roadway is usually set up as an escape road.

The start/finish straight needs to accommodate the proposed number of starters with a sensible distance from the start line to the first turn. The nature of the first turn determines what is a sensible distance. Some start straights are wholly or partly a very gentle curve. Whether truly straight or a slight curve the start straight is likely to require a distance of approximately 300m or more between last turn and first turn.

Although pit garages are not essential, a pit lane is required and such can be a challenge for any street circuit. Normal facilities of a control tower, timekeeping facilities, scrutineering facilities, a medical centre, a suitable paddock area etc. are all required.

In terms of road surface, cross camber, longitudinal profile, the presence of manhole covers, gratings, etc. the information above under 'speed events' applies. It is unlikely that the presence of traditional cats' eyes will be acceptable. The presence of low height surface mounted units may be acceptable in certain conditions. Such as pedestrian crossings, white lining, surface lettering, metal studs etc. All need consideration. Removal or relocation of any item of street furniture is always a challenge.

An additional challenge with street circuits is having a means for removing stranded cars from the track without the benefit of verges and refuges for drivers. Some street circuits have run down one side of a dual carriageway, turned through such as a roundabout and returned along the opposing carriageway. In similar fashion the roadway may be wide enough for the track to run up one side and return on the other side. In both cases separation barriers are needed and a single barrier is not sufficient. Two parallel barriers will be needed so that an impact one side does not adversely affect the other side. Such an arrangement also gives the possibility for drivers of stranded vehicles to take refuge.

Kart events

An MSA track licence will also be required.

Kart race circuits are inherently compact. Circuits are generally approximately 900 -1200m in length. There may be one or possibly two straights of approximately 120m with the rest having shape in order to provide competitor interest and challenge. There is little challenge in a kart circuit where the kart can be driven at full throttle for the entire lap. The minimum width for a kart track is 6m. The same considerations are required in respect of road surfaces, noting that typically karts have only approximately 12mm ground clearance. Most commonly temporary kart circuits are laid out with linked plastic box barrier at the track edge.

Stage Rallying

The ethos of stage rallying is take it as it is so the condition of road surfaces, the presence of manhole covers, drains etc. is less sensitive. The standard conditions for the setting up of stages as set out with MSA Regulations apply. Stages tend to be in rural locations, somewhat spread out so that controlling access of personnel is likely to be a challenge.

Applying for MSA 'closed road' organising permit

Once you have identified a section of public highway which is considered to be viable please forward an event dossier to the MSA along with your organising permit application. Please note that where a track licence is also required, a separate venue dossier should be sent. The email address at the MSA is closedroads@msauk.org. The dossier will include:

- Description of the proposed event including classes of vehicle, size of event, invited clubs, etc.
- Details of all occupants adjoining your proposed course and a summary of responses from the community and commercial parties
- An Ordnance Survey map 1:25,000 of the area which will identify highways and public rights of way
- A scale map showing key features of the course such as the start line, location of officials' facilities, marshal posts, location of rescue and recovery vehicles, finish line, paddock / service area, etc. Indicate the presence of pavement kerbs, items of street furniture and other significant features.
- A Google earth image of the location
- Sequential images of the course taken at 50m intervals plus in car video footage (if feasible)
- Details of the course length, the maximum and minimum course width, available length of slow zones after finish lines. Measure or estimate the height difference of any cross camber, be it edge to edge or crown camber.
- Information regarding the site – SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or subject to any other Environmental Designations
- Arrangements for managing spectators
- Provide a map showing what diversions will be needed to facilitate road closure.
- A draft safety plan for the event
- A draft incident management plan for the event
- A draft risk assessment for the event
- Details of the following third parties:
 - a. The highway authority for each area in which the event is to take place of which is otherwise likely to be significantly affected by the event
 - b. The local authority to each such area plus details of county or district councils, parish councils, London borough councils, county borough councils (as appropriate)
 - c. The police authority for each such area

Having considered the information supplied the MSA will advise whether it is considered the proposal is worth pursuing further. The MSA will then enter into a consultation period with all interested parties as listed in the Deregulation Act 2015. The MSA will also be required to establish that the organising club intends to promote the proposed event, has adequate financial and other resources to make appropriate arrangements for the event, that insurance cover will be in place and that the safety arrangements for the event are adequate. This period of consultation may take up to six months to complete.

Granting of MSA 'closed road' organising permit

The MSA will grant an organising permit on the condition that all of the above criteria are met and that the consultation process has a satisfactory outcome.

The organising permit issued by the MSA will specify the following information as a minimum:

- confirmation that the permit forms permission to apply for a motor race order
- any route to be followed in the course of the event
- arrangements for the approval by the motor sport governing body of drivers participating in the event
- arrangements for the approval by the motor sport governing body of vehicles to be used in the course of the event
- arrangements made or to be made for insurance in connection with the event
- confirmation of any MSA track licence relevant to the event
- conditions that the MSA thinks should be included in any motor race order made in relation to the event

in addition to all of the information currently included in an MSA organising permit.

Applying for a motor race order

An application for a motor race order can be made by a person acting on behalf of an organisation who wishes to promote an event of the public highway and who has an organising permit issued by the MSA or ACU. Applications must be made to the local Highways Agency.