



MFU

Motorsport Facilities Unit

Survey of Motorsports Venue Loss

May 1993

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Introduction

1.1 Background on the Survey.

This Report has been compiled by the MFU following a meeting with Lord Strathclyde, Under Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, in January 1993. The purpose of the Report is to illustrate how the current Planning Regulations, and the various land designations of agencies within the Department of the Environment, have adversely effected motorsport as organised by clubs affiliated to the ACU and/or the RACMSA.

The information within this report has been compiled from the MFU's own files, with additional cases having been forwarded directly by the clubs concerned. As such, it does not purport to be a definitive survey and, as in any sport that is organised by hard working voluntary club members, it relies heavily on the information that was made available to them by the respective government agency.

1.2 Glossary of Terms

Most of the information contained in this survey has been taken from the documentation or reports received from clubs and so should be self-explanatory, However, the following definitions should assist in the clarification of terms in everyday use within the sport.

RACMSA - The RAC Motorsports Association is the governing body of car sport in the U.K. For the purposes of this survey, RACMSA has been used as a generic term where a number of its affiliated clubs have organised events at the same venue.

ACU - The Auto-Cycle Union is the governing body of motorcycle sport in the U.K. For the purposes of this survey, ACU has been used a generic term where a number of its affiliated clubs have organised events at the same venue.

History of Use:

It is important to recognise that where, for example, the "history of use" is stated as 30 years (or, whatever) this does not imply that the venue has been used intensely. Nor, does it imply that the venue has been used for 14 days per year: the maximum allowed under the GDO Regulations. Rather, it refers to the annual running of an event, or events, which have seen the venue used for a very small number of days, i.e. less than six, in any one year.

1.3 THE BACKGROUND TO EACH CATEGORY OF VENUE LOSS.

i) Refused planning applications

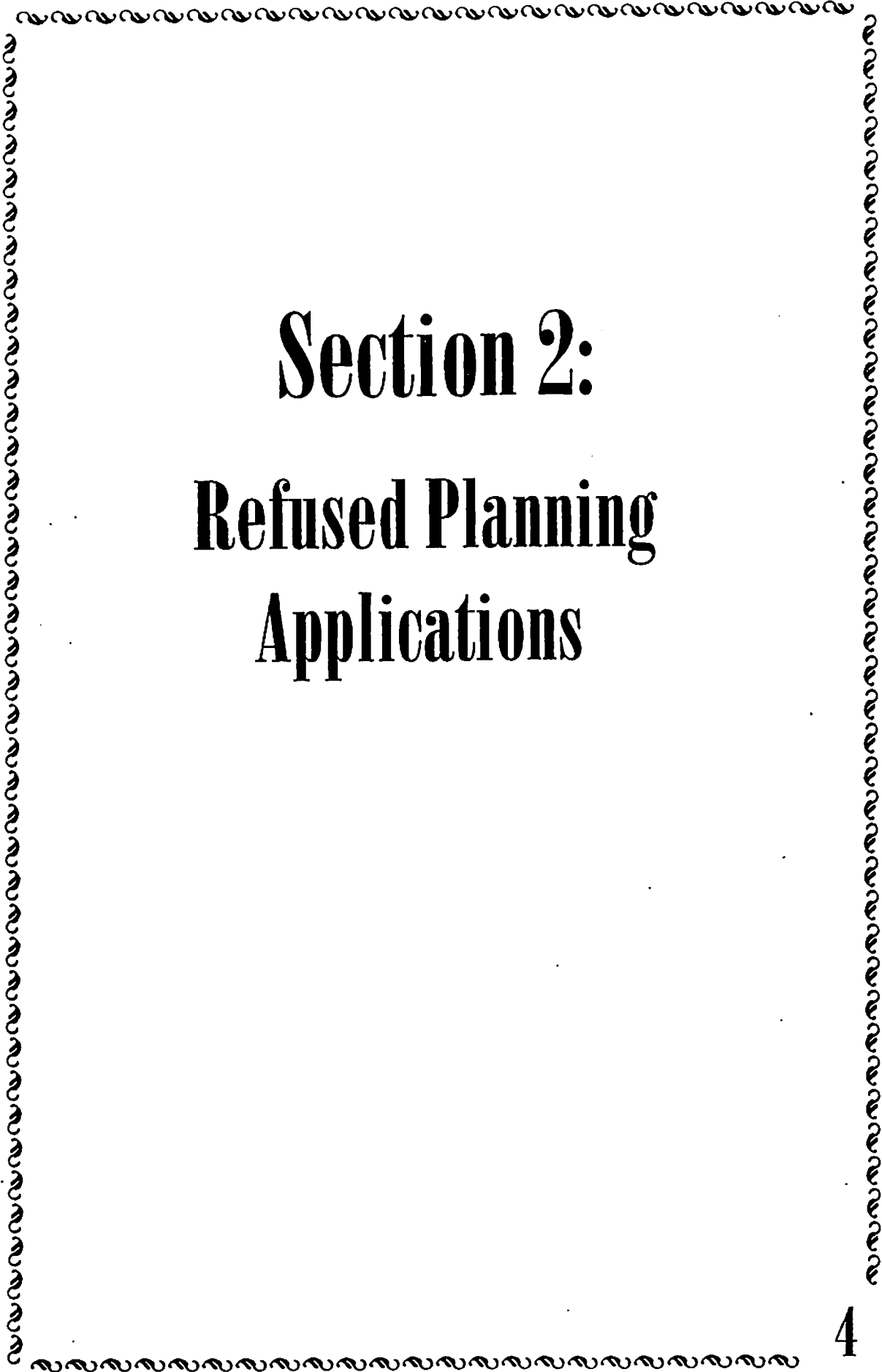
This refers to cases where either a landowner, or a club through a landowner, has applied for planning permission for a venue to be used for either competition, training, or practice, or any combination of these uses. All the applications had the support of the relevant governing body; many had the support of the appropriate Regional Sports Council; others enjoyed the support of English Nature, or other "environmental" agencies, as means of controlling existing problems caused by informal use on the site in question, or on adjacent sites.

ii). Venues lost through various land designations

Whilst failed planning applications are of considerable concern to the MFU, it is especially imperative to address the failure of the planning system to cater for the needs of motorsport given the number of long established venues being effected by land designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Once a SSSI has been designated the club and landowner must seek planning permission if the continued use of the venue is to be allowed. As the results of section i) of this survey clearly illustrate, however, clubs are most unlikely to have any confidence in obtaining such permission. Consequently, clubs will continue to lose their access to established sites and be forced to over-use other less appropriate ones.

iii) Proposed venues thwarted by local opposition.

This final category is, perhaps, the most frustrating. Despite the fact that these proposed venues have the support of, for example, local authority departments, the Sports Council, the governing bodies, and other agencies, the weight of public opinion, and the pressure this places upon local authority officers, results in the project failing to even reach the planning application stage.



Section 2:
Refused Planning
Applications

Name of Site	Applicant	Use	Planning Authority	Year & Decision
Chequered Flag Off-Road Arena Hillingdon Middlesex	Hillingdon Youth and Community Education Service	Off-Road Motor- cycle Trail Park. If approved, would have run to ACU Training Trust Standards.	London Borough of Hillingdon	1991 REFUSED. "Additional" noise on top of existing noise from M25 and Heathrow.
Delph Farm Beck Row Common Beck Row Nr Mildenhall Suffolk	Farmer/Land- owner	Convert existing barn into an indoor karting venue.	Forest Hill District Council	1991 REFUSED. Noise and traffic generation, and its impact upon the rural character of local amenities.
Suffolk Moto Parc Red House Farm Bucklesham Ipswich IP10 0BP	Farmer/Land- owner	Motocross Practice and Training. Endorsed by ACU Training Trust.	Suffolk Coastal District Council	1990 REFUSED. Owner had construc- ted admin block prior to Planning Permission. Council served Article 4 Notice, Lost appeal despite support of the ACU Training Trust and the Sports Council (Eastern Region).
Motozone Hayes Wood Red Hall Lane Audley Stoke on Trent	Farmer/Land- owner	Motocross Practice and Training. Endorsed by ACU Training Trust, and Cheshire Centre ACU	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	1991 PROVISIONAL CONSENT. Full permission will depend on whether the operator can comply with the local authority's request for lower noise levels.
Warren Bank Farm Culham Abingdon Oxfordshire	Farmer/Land owner	Motocross Practice Training & events. Endorsed by ACU Training Trust, and South Mids Centre ACU. Also enjoyed the support of English Nature, the Sports Council, and local special needs groups.	South Oxford District Council	1992 REFUSED. The application (for less days than allow- ed under the GDO) was turned down due to location in Green Belt.

Name of Site	Applicant	Use	Planning Authority	Year & Decision
Chesterhill Farm Swarland Morpeth	Farmer/Land- owner	N.E. Centre ACU, Motocross used for years	Alnwick District Council	1988 REFUSED. Noise objections by local residents
Cleeton Court Cleeton St. Mary Cleasbury Mortimer Nr Kidderminster	Farmer/Land- owner	Motocross Practice and Training	South Shropshire District Council	1988 REFUSED Noise and traffic generation.
Underhill Farm Carlton Bank Cleveland	Farmer/Land- owner	ACU Motocross events, and Practice	North Yorks County Council	Compulsory Purchase Order
Echt Scotland	Landowner	RACMSA Hill Climb Venue	Gordon District Council	1991 REFUSED Noise.
Langbaugh Motorsports Middlesborough Cleveland	Local Authority and Development Corporation.	ACU Motocross RACMSA Karts ACU Road Race	Langbaugh on Tees Borough Council	1993 CLOSED due to changed local political situation.
Burtonwood Airfield Warrington	Landowner/ Club	RACMSA Sprint Venue (Chester MC)	Warrington Development Corporation	Year ? REFUSED and developed as Industrial Estate.



Section 3:

Venues lost through various land designations

Name of Site	Use	Year and Reason for Loss
Underhill Farm Carlton Hill North Yorkshire	ACU Motocross, Trials, Enduro. <i>History of Use: 30 Years</i>	1993 North Yorkshire County Council Compulsory Purchase Order Section 89 (5) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended).
Goblin Combe Nr Bristol Avon	ACU Motorcycle Trials RACMSA Car Trials (Bristol MC & LCC) <i>History of Use: 50 Years</i>	1985 became an AONB via Countryside Commission and Avon County Council.
The Perch Shipham Gorge Cheddar Somerset	ACU Trials <i>History of Use: 40 Years</i>	1990/91 English Nature declared a SSSI (English Nature would not discuss the matter).
Nyland Hill Nr Cheddar Somerset	ACU Trials <i>History of Use: 40 Years</i>	1988 MAFF declared a ESA.
Batcombe Farm Draycott Nr Cheddar Somerset	ACU Trials <i>History of Use: 35 Years</i>	Pre 1983. Land became a nature reserve. Events continued on a limited basis until last event in 1983.
Cheddar Wood Shipham Gorge Cheddar Somerset	ACU Trials <i>History of Use: 35 Years</i>	1981 Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation. Club met with the Trust. Reached an agreement wherein events could continue if most sensitive areas were avoided.
Milton Hill Wells Somerset	ACU Trials <i>History of Use: 40 Years</i>	Pre 1986 Somerset County Council declared a conservation area.
Lynch Combe Westbury Sub Mendip Nr Wells Somerset	ACU Trials <i>History of Use: 3 Years</i>	1993 Land within Set Aside Scheme. Farmer worried that grant support from MAFF would be lost.

Name of Site	Use	Year and Reason for Loss
Scar Pasture Skirthornes Nr Threshfield Pennine Dales	ACU Trials <i>History of Use: 40 Years</i>	1993 Land within ESA.
Hutton Conyers Nr Ripon Yorkshire	ACU Trials ACU Motocross RACMSA Car Trials <i>History of Use: 35 Years</i>	1992 English Heritage
Staincroft Nr Pickering East Yorks	ACU Enduro <i>History of Use: One event</i>	1992 English Nature SSSI.
Long Valley Nr Aldershot	RACMSA 4WD Events	1993 Hart District Council and National Rivers Authority, Fleet Pond Society.
Peter's Pit Maidstone Kent	ACU Trials RACMSA 4WD Events <i>History of Use: prior to W.W.II.</i>	1992 English Nature SSSI.
Bovington North Dorset	RACMSA 4WD Events <i>History of Use: 20 Years</i>	1991 English Nature SSSI.
Bovington South Dorset	RACMSA 4WD Events <i>History of Use: 20 Years</i>	1991 National Rivers Authority
Thorns Cross Nr Exeter	RACMSA 4WD Events <i>History of Use: 8 Years</i>	1991 Local Authority Objections.



Section 4:

Proposed Venues Thwarted by Local Opposition

Name	Use	Planning Authority
Clipstone Forest Nr Mansfield (N.C.B.)	Motocross Practice and Training (ACU Training Trust and East Midland Centre ACU endorsed)	Nottinghamshire County Council
Thorn Turn Houghton Regis Nr Dunstable Beds (S, Beds Dist. Council)	Off-Road Motorcycle Centre	South Bedfordshire District Council
Cann Road Open Space Stratford London E15 (Newham Leisure Services)	Off-Road Motorcycle Centre (ACU Training Trust endorsed)	London Borough of Newham
Hill Farm Putley Nr Ledbury	Motocross Practice and Training (ACU Training Trust endorsed)	Malvern Hills District Council
Wilsons Lane, Rowley Green Longford Coventry (Probation Services Dept.)	Off-Road Motorcycle Trail Park	Coventry
Bell Green Goods Yard Coventry (NACRO & Safer Cities Project)	Off-Road Motorcycle Trail Park	Coventry
Bletchley Milton Keynes (Recreation Unit of MKDC)	Off-Road Motorcycle Training Centre	Milton Keynes Development Corporation
North Tyneside North Shields	Off-Road Motorcycle Trail Park	North Tyneside Council
Ranskill Nottinghamshire (Area Youth & Community Dept.)	Off-Road Motorcycle Centre	Nottinghamshire County Council
Peacock Centre Wakefield Yorks (W. Yorks Probation Centre)	Off-Road Motorcycle Trail Park	Wakefield Council



Section 5:

Conclusion and Proposals

5. Conclusions and Proposals

5.1 The Current Planning System - does it work for Motorsport?

Although it is not impossible for a planning application for a motorsport venue to be successful (the MFU does have a record of a very small number of successful applications on file) this survey clearly illustrates that the current planning system clearly prioritizes conservation and penalises sport and recreation. This is despite the guidelines issued by the Sports Council, and the Department of the Environment, that plainly make it possible to provide for motorsport should the local authority wish to do so. However, given the current system, unless forced into it by a particular land classification, the whole process is extremely costly, time consuming, and a positive result is highly unlikely.

This situation is unsatisfactory from both the planner's, and the sport's point of view. With this in mind, the MFU, on behalf of the ACU and the RACMSA, would like to propose that the Department of the Environment consider the adoption of the following proposals.

5.2 The Way Ahead ?

- i) In theory, Planning Policy Guidelines 17 (P.P.G. 17) should have been a positive document for planners to refer to and assist in the provision of venues for motorsport. However, in practice, it lacks clear guidelines which result in local planning authorities turning down applications without being able to identify suitable alternatives.
- ii) The governing bodies of motorsport have, in many parts of the country, established an excellent working relationship with such bodies as English Nature and the Forestry Commission, and have established that events can continue within such areas. This should be recognised within the planning system.
- iii) Many planning applications are refused on the grounds of noise. However, the governing bodies are conducting an ongoing programme of noise reduction. This has resulted in a 60% lowering of levels over the past ten years. The governing bodies have also liaised with the Noise Council to produce Codes of Practice which, if adopted by the Department of the Environment, would provide clear guidelines for planners with the resultant benefits for all concerned. The Code is awaiting final clearance from the D.o.E., and should be implemented immediately.
- iv) Both the ACU and the RACMSA are the governing bodies of their respective branches of motorsport in the U.K.. As such , they are responsible bodies recognised by the Sports Council, the Central Council for Physical Recreation, the Police etc. and this should also be noted within the planning system. Both governing bodies already have internal systems in place that ensure the sport is strictly controlled.

Many of these procedures restrict the number of events that can be run on the same day in the same area, while others control the number of times a venue can be used. These procedures obviously echo those within the planning system in relation to permitted development and, therefore, could easily be adopted within a "Code of Practice".

v) Not every planning application will automatically meet with the approval of the appropriate governing body. This will be particularly true where a venue already exists nearby, or where there is little demand for the proposed type of venue. The application is also unlikely to be endorsed by a governing body if little benefit will accrue to its members, i.e. if it is a corporate hospitality venue with no capacity for competition events.

vi) The ACU's Training Trust has advised and authorised several well managed off-road motorcycle centres that are managed and funded by local authorities. The majority of these are not for sporting events, but are providing a positive response to the problems caused by informal, uncontrolled riding by people who lack places to ride recreationally.

vii) Given the result of this survey, and the points made above, if the planning system is to positively contribute to the future well-being of motorsport the Department of the Environment must take steps to ensure a dialogue commences between all concerned.

viii) The governing bodies of motorsport, and their affiliated clubs, have clearly demonstrated their determination to ensure that the sport is organised with due awareness of the environment. However, for this programme of initiatives to be fully effective, local planning authorities must consult with, and consider the needs of, the responsible organising clubs. It is only through such a partnership that motorsport will continue to provide legitimate recreation for its participants and the facilities that can be enjoyed by the community as a whole.

David Kersey
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May 1993