



## **The ACU Coronavirus Operational Plan**

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### **Introduction**

The ACU Board of Directors have been working in close collaboration to provide a co-ordinated response to the current coronavirus crisis.

The impact of this crisis is unprecedented and will have wide-reaching ramifications for motorcycle sport and all of its participants. Our over-riding priority is to safeguard the future of the sport in a safe and responsible manner, representing the interests of all our members, while protecting the security and stability of motorcycle sport as an organisation.

During the initial suspension period our main concern has been to protect the health and well-being of everyone involved in our sport, while taking a socially responsible position to comply with all lockdown restrictions imposed by the government. We recognise that this has had a significant impact on individual livelihoods and businesses that rely on events for their main source of income. We are working collectively on behalf of riders, coaches, organisers, clubs and officials to develop our contingency plans for the resumption of training, practice and competition activity at the earliest opportunity, in line with whatever government restrictions remain in place.

In order to deal with the short, medium- and long-term implications of this crisis, we have produced this operational plan to provide an overview of how we intend to manage the process at each stage.

This is split into three distinct phases; Response, Resumption and Recovery, to summarise how the ACU aims to meet the challenges presented by the pandemic as the situation continues to evolve.

We appreciate that it may take some time after the initial lockdown restrictions are lifted before full competition activity may begin again. While it is not possible to predict specific timescales for when these different stages can be implemented, we want to be ready to start training, practicing and racing as soon as it is safe to do so.

With considerable uncertainty as to how long this crisis will last, future planning for events remains extremely challenging. A large number of ideas have been discussed and put forward over the past five weeks by the Board, and Sport Committees. However, social distancing restrictions that are likely to remain in place post-lockdown will limit our opportunities to run a 'normal' calendar of events, even when sport is able to resume.

Flexibility will be the key, with a gradual return to action, which will inevitably be low key and small scale to begin with, as it remains unclear when larger gatherings will be permitted, but, Government's current planning assumption, subject to the five test and the current guidelines are being kept to, bigger events may be possible after 4 July. Our focus will therefore be on getting activity up and running at local level initially, building up to national level, within any limits on capacity or travel and fully compliant with all social distancing measures.

## **Phase I – Response**

The ACU started to closely monitor the outbreak in early March, when the first UK cases became known, with impact assessments initially limited to overseas competition according to the proximity of identified individuals who had contracted coronavirus. Within two weeks it was clear that the UK would be moving swiftly from the containment phase into a suppression phase in April / May, which triggered contingency planning at national level in preparation for a potential period of managed activity and / or suspension.

### **Timeline Summary**

- The government launched its Coronavirus Action Plan on 3 March. At this stage large scale public gatherings at sporting events were still permitted and deemed to be low risk.
- The World Health Organisation declared the outbreak an international pandemic on 11 March 2020 meetings; at this point other sporting events were still continuing as normal.
- By Monday 16 March it was clear that even running smaller scale events behind closed doors would not be possible, as the government strategy moved into its suppression phase.
- On Tuesday 17 March, following an ACU Board meeting, it was agreed to suspend all permits for competition and training activity until 30 April.
- The government announced the national lockdown restrictions on Monday 23 March, and the ACU Head office was closed with immediate effect.
- A further statement was issued on Monday 23 March cancelling all permit events in April and May.
- From 1 April, over half of ACU employees were put on furlough leave until further notice, in line with the provisions of the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.
- The government extended the initial lockdown period from 16 April through to 7 May 2020 inclusive.
- Consultation throughout this period has been ongoing to co-ordinate our response to this crisis.

### **Major Impacts**

- A significant loss of income for the ACU from membership, registrations, and insurance during the suspension period.
- Members have been unable to ride during the lockdown, which will necessitate a phased resumption of activity before members can compete and qualify for championships.

### **Key areas for Consideration**

- Social distancing will be a fundamental consideration for the resumption of training and competition activity. This will be dependent on government restrictions that remain in place.
- Training and Practice is a safe, individual non-contact sport and provides a naturally social distanced activity, so in theory it should be easier than competition to manage restrictions effectively.

- The ACU will need to work closely with clubs/venues to establish regulated and controlled environments that will enable training and competition to recommence as soon as it is permitted.
- A phased approach to the resumption of activity is likely, which will need to be managed in stages to allow people to practice, before competition can restart.
- If travel restrictions remain in place, any training, practice or competition activity may have to be within limited distances initially, potentially building up to regional level in due course.
- The event calendar will have to be flexible, based on a phased resumption of sport, including the need to control or limit the number of fixtures and competitions.
- Officials and Steward will need to be considered carefully, to ensure that their safety is not compromised, in compliance with social distancing measures.
- Any organisers, officials and participants who fall into the 'at risk' category, whether through age or health issues, must still be shielded in the short to medium term.

### **Measures to facilitate resumption**

A number of measures are under consideration that will help to facilitate the resumption of training, practice and competition activity, dependent upon any future social distancing restrictions and potential limitations on public gatherings. These measures will enable the ACU and affiliated clubs/venues to control and regulate competition environments within set capacity limits, if necessary.

- Limits to the number of competitors on site at any one time. Exact numbers would depend on government advice and other restrictions that remain in place.
- To allow adequate provision for social distancing between competitors.
- Strict limits at events on the number of people per bike allowed to attend on a 2:1 ratio;(one extra parent, guardian or career will be allowed to attend to support U16 rider)
- No spectators to be allowed to attend competitions to control capacity, including friends or family, unless they qualify as the one person permitted in addition to the rider.
- Changes in processes to ensure that all competitors, officials and operational personnel remain the required social distance apart through all phases of competition.
- Utilisation of technology where required to minimise unnecessary physical interaction with officials on the day.
- All government and public health COVID-19 restrictions to be clearly displayed on site.
- Site maps, including a layout of the venue, arenas, warm up areas, parking and toilets will be made available to competitors in advance and on-site.
- All on-site facilities to be managed within social distancing parameters and fully compliant with all public health, safety and hygiene regulations, including provision of hand sanitation.
- Parking and toilets would need to meet minimum regulatory spacing conditions.
- Catering facilities, on-site cafes and restaurants to be closed or operate as takeaway only.

- No overnight camping in short to medium term, to comply with likely restrictions.
- Any officials or participants who fall into the 'extremely at risk' categories would continue to be shielded and not permitted to attend competition events for the foreseeable future.
- Larger spectator shows or events would not be scheduled in the short to medium term until the government indicates it is safe for these to return.

## **Phase II – Resumption**

The ACU has developed various contingency options for the resumption of training, practice and competition activity, once the lockdown restrictions have been eased. These will be in accordance with government guidelines and only implemented when it is deemed safe and appropriate to do so. Careful consideration will need to be given to the welfare as well as the health and safety of our members and all participants. There will need to be a gradual and phased approach when the sport restarts, taking into account all social distancing, travel and hygiene requirements. This is intended to help provide a guide to our members as to what type of activity is likely to be permitted as lockdown restrictions are eased, as well as provide a clear structure for the resumption of events.

**Training/Practice:** We are keen to get people back racing as soon as possible, not just in preparation for the resumption of sport, but also for the proven benefits it has for mental health and physical well-being. Conditions of this phase will rely upon government restrictions on non-essential travel being relaxed to allow people to train/practice. As with the Response phase, we would still recommend that members only ride where it is safe to do so and within their personal capabilities, to avoid taking unnecessary risks.

Once clubs are able to re-commence activity, there will be potential to restart some limited activity including training and practice.

**Racing.** It may take a number of weeks before competitive activity can resume. While it is not possible to specify exactly when this restart date will be, there are likely to be a number of restrictions and social distancing measures still in place (as outlined above). However, with the right controls implemented, our clubs/venues can provide the safe and regulated environments that enable competitive activity to begin as soon as government gives the green light to proceed. At this stage we would envisage that events will resume at local level only initially, building up to national activity, to minimise unnecessary travel across the country. Clubs will need some time to adapt in order to accommodate new regulatory restrictions, which may include some restructuring to the format of events, such as limits to the number of people on site, the number of competitors allowed to participate. Attendance at events will be primarily restricted to riders, officials and club personnel at this stage, with a strict ratio for additional support. No spectators will be in attendance in the short to medium term, so larger events will not be possible while these restrictions remain in place.

Technology will need to be utilised wherever possible to facilitate online entry and more advance checking processes and provision of information between clubs and competitors, in order to minimise contact on the day. Venues will need to complete risk assessments and verify that they can adhere to all additional health and safety regulations.

Officials and Clubs will be issued with additional guidance with regards to scoring and results protocols.

The final phase will see the competition calendar restored, as much as possible, but this will very much be dependent on what restrictions remain in place with regards to the number of competitors permitted and whether championships, even in a stripped back basic format, are going to be feasible within social distancing parameters. In the short to medium term, it is unlikely that sports will be permitted to host larger scale events, due to the numbers of spectators and competitors normally in attendance.

Due to the road race, drag, sprint and hill climb parts of our sport being held on predominately on established fixed circuits / courses, the controls and methodology for resuming these events will be a joint co-operation between organisers and circuit/track/course owners/operators.

#### 2020 Major Fixtures

Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus outbreak it will no longer be possible to reschedule and complete the vast majority of competitions due to take place during the summer season.

Inevitably, the loss of competition opportunities during the suspension period has had a significant impact on qualification for the rest of the summer season.

The ACU Board of Directors have been working on alternative options with the various sport committees for a full resumption of the sport and have reviewed major off-road fixtures for 2020 to determine how we can best provide a clear competition structure for members. The central consideration during these discussions has been to ensure that competition pathways are provided for all riders, at all levels, but that these plans are likely to change and evolve as the situation progresses over coming weeks and months

With considerable uncertainty as to how long this current crisis will last, future planning for competitions remains extremely challenging. Many ideas have been discussed and put forward over the past few weeks by the Board, Sport Committees and Clubs. However, social distancing measures that are likely to remain in place post-lockdown will limit our opportunities to run a 'normal' calendar of events, even when the sport is able to resume. As the government strategy and wider societal impact becomes clearer, ACU Directors will continue to review and evolve our competition structure and programme, within the limitations imposed. We remain committed to taking a flexible approach to ensure that opportunities are provided for all riders, at all levels, between the resumption of competition and the end of the year.

#### **Phase III – Recovery**

The ambition has to be to get the sport back on track at the earliest opportunity, although again it is difficult to be prescriptive at this stage as to exactly when that will be. Certainly, our main objective would be to start the new calendar year on 1 January 2021 as normal, proceeding through to the culmination of our winter season.

However, we are mindful that many of the social distancing restrictions may remain in place until a vaccine for the virus is found, in which case we will need to adjust to a 'new normal' for the foreseeable future. There is a clear risk that there could be a second or third wave of the virus over the next 12 months, which would necessitate a further lockdown period. It is vital therefore that we retain a high degree of flexibility within our plans in order to adapt to changing circumstances over the weeks and months ahead.

There is unlikely to be a quick fix or a 'flick of the switch' moment that enables normal competition and qualifying for championships to return to the same operational model that applied before the

outbreak. We will therefore work closely with all of groups to determine how we can best support a phased return to action and remain in regular communication throughout in order to respond to events as they happen.

The financial impact of this crisis will be significant for everyone involved in the sport, but for the ACU specifically we are likely to experience a significant impact on our reserves, with a seven-figure loss forecast for 2020. This is based on a worst-case scenario, but we are mindful that it will take a number of months, and potentially not until the end of 2021, before we get back to a breakeven position.

Membership, registrations and insurance have understandably already taken a substantial hit and it is going to take a while before numbers recover to pre-crisis levels. Even then, taking into account the wider socio-economic impact, the motorcycle sport sector as a whole is likely to have a reduced number of participants due to financial uncertainty. Our first priority is to ensure that the organisation and the sport remains viable and sustainable long term.

It will no doubt take some time for our sport to fully recover, even when activity is able to resume, but the ACU Board is committed to critically assessing all costs and operational overheads to ensure that all aspects of the organisation remain efficient, effective and affordable.

Likewise, we will do whatever we can to ensure that our clubs, organisers, coaches and officials can get their income streams back to sustainable levels as soon as possible. It may well be a long journey ahead, and with no specific timetable it is difficult to calculate what will be required at this stage or predict when revenues may return to the levels seen before the pandemic. We need to ensure that we have sufficient resources in place to manage what is likely to be a gradual return to normality, but will do whatever we can to practically support all of our stakeholders during the recovery period.

### **Summary Response**

- Suspension of all permit events until Government's Step Three. Step Three is due to begin from 4th July but this is under constant review.
- Regular updates to guidelines and advice for members, in line with government restrictions
- Detailed contingency planning for the resumption of training and competition activity
- Review fixtures calendar and produce revised schedules for resumption of activity
- Define the social distancing measures that will be required for training and competitions
- Survey organisers and officials to understand who will be ready and available for resumption
- Intention to re-establish a full competition calendar for 2021
- Training and education programmes restored
- Critically assess all costs and operational overheads to get back to break-even level in 2021
- Membership and registration recovered to pre-pandemic levels by end of next year