motorsport UK

ROAD RALLY 2027 TECHNICAL REGULATION CHANGES

Motorsport UK Rallies Team / October 2026



Road Rally 2027 Technical Regulation Changes

A Guide for Competitors and Officials

Introduction

A number of amendments to the National Competition Rules (NCR) affecting Road Rally vehicles take effect on 1 January 2027.

The amendments follow consideration by the Road Rally Working Group to the Motorsport UK Rallies Committee, made up of representatives of the Road Rally community, and feedback from public consultation.

This guide summarises the principal changes, explains their practical application where helpful, and identifies other changes that competitors and officials should be aware of.

Competitors remain responsible for ensuring their vehicles comply with the applicable regulations. Eligibility checks continue to be undertaken in accordance with established NCR procedures, proportionate to the circumstances of the event.

The new regulations are shown in red text in the following pages.

This document is for **information only** and has no regulatory power. It should be read alongside the applicable NCR, particularly the changes to Chapter 13 Appendix 15 included in Chapter 22 Appendix 13 of Version 5 of the 2026 NCR.

Separation of Road and Historic Road Technical Regulations

Ch. 13 App. 15 Parts A and B

To provide clarity to competitors in both disciplines, the technical requirements for Historic Road Rally Cars have been reorganised into a standalone Part B, with Road Rally requirements in Part A.

This removes the need for Waivers of engine restrictions (number of cylinders, number of carburettor chokes, multiple cam shafts) in Historic Road Rallies, and makes it clear which regulations apply to each specific discipline.

Roll Over Protection Systems

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 2.7

We have seen a worrying number of vehicles with poor quality Roll Over Protection Systems (ROPS) fitted participating in Road Rallies.

Whether through poor design (e.g. 'dash saver' style cages which have been outlawed from Stage Rallies for many years, mounting plates too small), poor installation (poor quality welding, fixing bolts missing) or poor maintenance (corrosion or damage to the roll cage and its mounting points) there is a small but concerning minority of vehicles competing in events with ROPS that introduce additional risk.

The use of the word 'should' means that Scrutineers may exercise discretion in applying the new Art. 2.7, but competitors must ensure that their vehicles are presented to an acceptable standard. Ch. 7 App. 3 allows for several different designs of ROPS, including half-cages, meaning that full Stage Rally preparation is not necessary, but the way in which they must be installed is clear.

There is no change to the existing regulation concerning the cutting of trim, including the rear seat.

Considering crews may not wear helmets on road rallies, the padding referred to should be soft – the FIA-type fitted to Stage Rally cars is not fit for this purpose on Road Rallies.

Engines - General

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 3.2 – 3.5

Engine regulations have been reorganised and updated, with separate provisions covering single- and multi-cam engines, a prohibition on the use of rotary engines, and updated regulations governing what may be done when installing a different engine than that which was originally fitted.

Engine Displacement

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 3.1.b

It is a fact that there are a small but very potent number of front-running vehicles using large-capacity engines in road rallies.

Limiting engine displacement, and therefore maximum torque possible in naturally aspirated engines, will reduce the rate at which vehicles can accelerate.

This was effectively achieved in the Welsh Association of Motor Clubs Road Rally Championship for several years, with regulations which at the time stated:

"The engines capacity must not be larger than was fitted to that make and model of vehicle by the manufacturer. Cylinder bores may be up to 60 thousandths of an inch oversize. The engine stroke must remain as standard to that engine block."

These three lines limited popular vehicles such as Ford Escorts and Vauxhall Astras to 2000cc, give or take the overbore allowance which brought the maximum allowed for a C20XE engine to 2074cc and a Pinto engine to 2056cc. It is possibly not a coincidence that cars have got faster and more expensive since they were deleted from that Championship's regulations.

The amended NCR regulation effectively allows competitors to re-bore their block one more time than the old WAMC rule permitted.

It is encouraging to note how quickly the community has embraced this change. From looking at entry lists in the second half of 2026, it would appear that most of the known large-capacity engines have already been replaced…

Engine Block Material

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 3.1.c

Similar to 3.1.b. above, many of those large-capacity vehicles are achieving this by using aftermarket alloy blocks, particularly in Ford Pinto and Vauxhall Family II applications which originally were produced with cast iron blocks.

It is still possible to obtain original cylinder blocks for these engines, so the use of specialist aftermarket replacements costing far in excess of even the most expensive original items is purely in the interest of reducing weight and increasing displacement beyond that which the original blocks can sustain. There is no place for this level of development in Road Rallies.

Engine Sealing

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 3.1.d

The wording in Chapter 7, as referred to in the new-for-2027 regulation, has formed part of the NCR and previously General Regulations of Motorsport UK, and the Motor Sports Association before it.

This is not a new regulation. Event and Championship organisers have long had the right to request any component of any vehicle be checked, either at an event or sealed to be checked after the event at a convenient time and place.

If competitors wish, they can have their engines checked and sealed when they are being built. For this purpose, competitors may find it helpful to provide suitable sealing points, for example through drilled fasteners on the cylinder head and sump pan that permit the use of locking wire. Competitors at the recent Cilwendeg Rally were

reminded that they were able to have their vehicles checked by a Scrutineer over the winter, a service they have always made available.

Other methods, such as paint marking or security seals may be suitable, depending on the installation and purpose of the check. Competitors requiring advice should consult a Motorsport UK Eligibility Scrutineer.

Twin-Cam Engine Transplants

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 3.4.c

In the simplest possible terms, we are trying to find a balance between allowing competitors to make relatively cost-effective engine transplants in older vehicles, and those who see this as a route to obtaining more power with large-displacement modern twin-cam engines, often resulting in higher-revving and noisier engines – particularly induction noise under load, which is not detectable using a static 2.0m noise test.

By making it absolutely explicit that it is not permitted to use rare and expensive inlet manifolds, which are often paired with a larger throttle body, this 'loophole' (which in reality was never actually allowed) is firmly closed.

Gear Selection

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 3.8

Road car transmission technology has developed to the point that some automatic transmission systems, particularly those fitted to modern hot hatchbacks, are capable of very fast gearchanges. To prevent their retro-fitting and use in vehicles which were not fitted with such a system as standard equipment, this regulation has been updated.

The update to the 'gear lever' part of this regulation is to make it impossible for competitors to use aftermarket gear shifters with automatic transmissions, or substitute automatic gearboxes where either a manual or standard automatic gearbox was fitted. For example, we are aware that systems exist to add a sequential-style gear lever to VAG group DSG transmissions. There is also the very popular ZF 8HP transmission

system, which is in use in Stage Rallies in the USA. There is clearly no place for this level of technology in Road Rallying.

The use of Satchshift and other aftermarket gearchange levers and linkages is still permitted in manual transmission vehicles, as is the use of spacers or blocks to change the position of the gear lever.

The only prohibition regarding manual transmission gearchange systems is on SQS or Shiftmatic style systems, which provide quasi-sequential control of an otherwise traditional manual transmission using solenoids.

Wheel Arch External Profile

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 4.1

The change to this regulation has had two major influences. The first is the need highlighted to us by our scrutineers to make it explicit that the external wheel arch profile of any vehicle cannot be modified in any way, shape or form.

Whether that be by fitting a larger arch or trim, mounting the front wings wider on the chassis, or even rolling the lip, it has never been permitted to alter wheel arches. Despite this, many competitors still do one or more of the above, in order to fit wider wheels or even wider track suspension / axles. This is most likely because it is difficult for Scrutineers or fellow competitors to prove non-compliance.

The second is that as the regulation was previously written ("Wheels and tyre sizes are free but must fit within the standard unmodified wheel arch") it was not clear what was meant by "wheel arch". Did it include the inner metal part which can sometimes catch, especially when using gravel tyres? Did it include the inner wheel well, which is often changed on older vehicles? Does replacing corroded parts constitute 'modification' to the wheel arch? Did it include any debris shielding or guards?

The amended regulation is completely clear and unambiguous, and competitors should expect to be refused to pass scrutineering if they do not comply with it.

Wheel Width

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 4.2 / 4.3

The use of wider wheels than standard is intended to provide competitors more grip, allowing higher cornering speeds and later braking. That this is not sustainable on open public roads should go without saying.

Art. 4.2, providing a clear list of what is permitted, will enable scrutineers to easily check that vehicles are compliant.

4.3 ensures that competitors cannot circumvent the width restriction by using a larger-diameter wheel than was originally fitted.

Considering many competitors deemed it necessary to modify their outer wheel arch profiles in order to fit wider wheels, the above restrictions should make it easier for them to comply with Art. 4.1.

Auxiliary Lamps

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 5.6

This amendment is partly a grammatical clarification, and partly a restriction.

The advantage that a 24V lighting system offers compared to 12V are clear. At least one manufacturer offers such a system for sale. Excessively bright lights are known to disturb residents and pose a safety risk to marshals and fellow road users if competitors do not extinguish them in good time when approaching controls or other motorists.

Reversing Lights

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 5.9

It has become increasingly common for competitors to fit additional, large and sometimes very bright reversing lights to their vehicles.

In many cases, it is not possible to install such lights in a way that they automatically extinguish when the vehicle is travelling forwards.

Taking the above facts into account, we are aware of a small but disturbing number of occasions where a competitor accidentally leaves their extremely bright LED reversing lights illuminated when travelling forwards, causing severe distraction to fellow competitors and other motorists.

If a vehicle already has reversing lights, there is no reason – in terms of compliance with the law – for the owner to add more. The use of aftermarket LED bulbs or lights is clearly intended to offer a performance advantage, which – when the potential downside of this modification is considered – is not something which a responsible ASN can permit.

Should a competitor be observed with their reversing lights illuminated when travelling forwards, this should be reported to event organisers and a penalty applied.

Safety Equipment

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 6.7

The majority of the items in this list are either already mandatory – in the NCR, or in modern road rally event regulations – or carried by many competitors anyway out of common sense. The detailed reasoning for each item need not be explained here. These all represent an inexpensive way to improve crew safety.

Navigation Rallies ought not necessarily be subject to the same regulations as Road and Targa events, as their formats and the sort of competition involved can be very different, however incidents can still happen, so these items are strongly recommended.

Sunstrips (Effective Immediately)

Ch. 13 App. 15 Art. 6.9

To make it easier for competitors to compete in Targa and Road Rallies with the minimum amount of changes between disciplines, it is now permitted to fit a sunstrip to road rally cars. These must be no more than 100mm at the centre point, be of a single background colour (white, black or body colour), and display (using either white, black or body colour text) details of a charity, an ASN-recognised good cause, or the name of a Motorsport UK recognised motor club.

Other text is expressly prohibited.

Motorsport UK
Bicester Motion
OX27 8FY

T: +44 (0) 1753 765000
E: hello@motorsportuk.org
W: motorsportuk.org

Motorsport UK Association Limited, trading as Motorsport UK
Registered Office: See main address
Registered Number: 1344829 England

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Sporting Regulation Changes

In addition to the above Technical regulation changes, the following Sporting regulations have been amended or added for 2027:

App. 3 Art. 11 -	Removal of Endurance Road Rally as an event type.
App. 3 Art. 11.1.i -	Increasing the severity of penalty for a competitor found to be using an in-car camera on Road Rallies.
App. 3 Art. 11.1.k -	Limiting where and how organisers may deploy arrows on competitive sections.
App. 3 Art. 11.1.l -	Formally prohibiting competitive sections passing through buildings.
App. 5 Art. 3.1.e -	Preventing the use of route checks on non-competitive sections shorter than 10 miles.
App. 5 Art. 6.5 -	Updating and clarifying the regulations concerning damage, and how it is reported and penalised.
App. 5 Arts. 6.7 – 6.12 -	Enabling the use of notional penalties.