


Revolution Special Edition

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An important message to our members

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UK



Motorsport UK Chair, **David Richards CBE**, expresses Motorsport UK's position in regard to the global governance of the sport

Dear Licence Holders, Clubs, Officials and Volunteers,

As your Chair, I've always believed, along with the Board and employees of Motorsport UK, that we are answerable to you in respect of all our actions. After all, our task is to serve the best interests of motorsport in this country and represent you, our members. In my role as a member of the World Motor Sport Council I'm also accountable to the full FIA membership worldwide and this letter has equal relevance to them.

For some time now I've had concerns about the erosion of accountability and good governance within the FIA. As you may have seen in the press, an issue has recently emerged that has compelled me to take a stand and needs an explanation.

First of all, let me turn the clock back to a little over three years ago when we, alongside the Royal Automobile Club, supported Mohammed Ben Sulayem in his bid to become the next President of the FIA. Many of you were possibly surprised that we didn't support the British candidate, Graham Stoker, but the Board met with both candidate teams and was convinced by the well thought out plans that Mohammed's campaign team presented, which very much aligned with our own views of the way the FIA should transform itself.

The key messages in their presentation were:

- A hands-off President who would be non-executive and delegate the day-to-day running of the FIA to a professional executive team
- The appointment of an empowered and capable CEO to run the FIA to professional standards
- Full transparency of actions and the highest standards of sporting governance

I'm afraid that over the last three years there has been a distinct failure to meet these promises. In fact, the situation has progressively worsened with media reports confirming that numerous senior members of the FIA and volunteer officials have either been fired or have resigned under an opaque cloud. Furthermore, the scope of the Audit and Ethics Committees has been severely limited and now lacks autonomy from the authority of the President, while our UK representative, who challenged certain matters, was summarily removed along with the Chair of the Audit Committee. Various techniques have also been deployed with the effect of limiting the proper function of the World Motor Sport Council, primarily the use of e-voting which removes the

opportunity for much needed discussion and debate on key subjects.

This has become increasingly worrying and the final straw for me, three weeks ago, was being asked to sign a new confidentiality agreement that I regarded as a 'gagging order'. At the time of my appointment to the World Motor Sport Council in 2021 I signed a confidentiality agreement and in fact was already bound by Article 4 of the FIA Code of Ethics. I remain committed to my confidentiality obligations under this existing agreement and Article 4, which remain in effect. However, the new confidentiality agreement went far further than this and, at a week's notice, I was told that if I didn't sign it, I would be barred from the next World Motor Sport Council meeting.

The key clauses I objected to were:

- Everything was now considered confidential, without any qualification, preventing me from necessarily sharing what I considered to be relevant information
- The FIA, at its own discretion, could decide if anyone breached the terms of the new confidentiality agreement with no process or frame of reference
- There was an immediate fine of €50,000 for any breach and a threat of undisclosed damages

The construction of this new confidentiality agreement does not comply with the Statutes of the FIA and contradicts the promise of transparent governance we had voted for. I therefore asked that we debate the matter at the World Motor Sport Council, which was just days away, rather than having it forced upon us as a condition of attendance.

My request, along with those of a few other Members who shared our views, was denied and we were barred from attending the meeting. This was in total breach of the FIA statutes that require all elected members be given full access to meetings. I should point out that I kept the Board of Motorsport UK fully informed throughout to ensure that I had their complete support.

Our Motorsport UK lawyers, along with our French Legal Counsel, have challenged the FIA on their actions by setting out a clear set of questions that the FIA leadership needs to answer. It is very disappointing to report that we have still not received an answer to these or the fundamental question I raised: where in the FIA Statutes does it provide for an elected member to be barred from a meeting?

I remain open to signing an appropriately revised confidentiality agreement, if that's thought necessary, but only when we've addressed the key question of what constitutes confidential information and, importantly, who decides on breaches and the implementation of penalties and under what procedure. I believe I have a fundamental duty to keep you, our members, fully informed and the way the proposed new confidentiality agreement is structured would prevent me from doing this.

I acknowledge that over the past three years the media does seem to have gained sensitive information from within the FIA, including matters that the President should reasonably have expected to be kept confidential. However, these were in respect of reports to both the Audit and Ethics Committees and notably not the World Motor Sport Council, where we rarely discuss matters that should not be openly shared with our own Members and Clubs as well as the broader FIA community. After all, that's the very nature of transparent governance that we voted for. No-one, least of all myself, would dispute the fact that certain matters must be treated as confidential and sensitive for external release. However, we should not allow that basic truth to be misused in order to create a blanket gagging order on volunteer representatives on the various crucial Councils and Committees, this is not how a member-owned and driven organisation should behave.

I should also make mention of Robert Reid, who was elected as the FIA Deputy President for Sport, and the promise that he would be empowered to work with the FIA Executive team

to drive the sport forward. I think he has done an excellent job in this regard and made a positive impact worldwide. Increasingly, actions have been taken which have undermined the proper functioning of Robert's elected role; this includes being denied access to materials, banned from meetings and even attending World Championship events. Again, this is not what we voted for.

So, what happens next?

Integrity is a core value of Motorsport UK and one that is central to who we are. Our Board and Executive Team will always operate in an open and transparent manner so that our members trust and respect our voice. We are fully aligned with Sport England and UK Sport's Code for Governance which sets out gold-standard levels of transparency, accountability and integrity in sports governance. It's therefore beholden on us to demand the same values of our governing body, the FIA. These actions by the FIA are in breach of their own Statutes. As a result, we have informed the FIA that unless they address the issues we've raised, we will be engaging in further legal action.

In a year when the President will either be re-elected or a new one appointed, it is more important than ever to remind the FIA of their responsibilities and continue to hold them to account on behalf of the sport and their members worldwide, and that's what I intend to do.

Kind regards

David Richards, and the Board of Motorsport UK





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