

ANALYSIS OF THE REPLIES TO THE COMPETITORS' OPINION SURVEY

Of the 54 crews entered, 27 completed a Competitors' Opinion Survey sheet, either handed in after the Prizegiving or returned later by email or post. A further five crews sent short emails with their comments - all complementary. We also received some dozen or more emails from competitors sending their best wishes and congratulations to the officials and especially to the marshals and set-up teams.

A 50% return rate of the Opinion survey is much greater than ever before, and the universal feeling is that the rally was a great success and enjoyed by all. Just one crew (a high seed who finished way down) replied in a very negative manner to every single question on the form.

1. What did you think of the Selectifs? (e.g. too easy, too long, too slow, too rough)

The vast majority of answers were "Brill", "Excellent", "Very good", etc.

A few crews thought the roads too rough in places or rougher than expected, but several qualified their comment by saying that they realised the effect that the continuous heavy rain would have had.

The one dissenter stated that there was "not enough variation" (come and help us find other venues, PLEASE!), "open areas problematical" (nobody else mentioned this), and objected to the lack of marshals (true, but see later).

Tape blown away and fallen barriers were mentioned by some, but most accepted that these were out of our control on such a windy day.

Nobody objected to our clearing to the side (for safety) those barriers which simply could not stand up in the storm.

2. What did you think of the different methods of recording Code Boards?

A few crews didn't like the X method, and a few didn't like the list method, but only two crews objected strongly ("too complicated") to our attempts to find new ways of recording code board information such that it could be marked accurately. Using the traditional method of recording codes, the Results Team would have had to individually check nearly TWENTY THOUSAND random letters and numbers.

The only common complaint was that the penalty of 10 minutes for mis-recording a code board on the Night Leg was too high, and 1 minute was suggested by several. As we all know, code boards serve two purposes - (1) to slow cars down and (2) to ensure they have taken the correct route. On Selectifs the former function is predominant, especially on fast narrow sections where manoeuvres are not possible, and before Finish stop-astride lines. On the Night Leg their primary function is to ensure that competitors follow the required route. With just a one minute penalty for missing a code board, on the tighter sections where they knew they would lose time, many competitors would "shortcut" loops and accept that penalty - and also pass at speed along roads not P.R.ed. It's been a ten minute penalty for years, and, sorry, but it won't be reduced. How difficult is it to record just 4 alphabetic characters at a codeboard whose location is printed on your issued map?

Several crews admitted that on the Night Leg they did not spend time filling in the Timecard at the time of reaching the code boards, but instead scribbled the four letters down on a piece of paper and completed the Timecard when they reached a Non-Competitive Section. Ingenious, but easily fixed - if we use this system again we'll establish one or two Secret Checks and the marshals will sign against those codes filled in (we did this on the first ever Welsh Enduro, and caught out one well-known crew drove home straight away in high dudgeon).

Two crews raised the question of dyslexic competitors, and a fuller reply to this can be found in "The Last Word". In short, code boards are an essential part of Endurance Rallying; competitors can readily choose from a large variety of other forms of motor sport which do not involve recording letters and numbers.

Our negative-minded crew replied "Too complex - arranged to catch people out - why?". Simply not true, YOU try marking TWENTY THOUSAND random letters and numbers accurately, my friend.

3. What did you think of the Night Leg navigation sections? (e.g. too difficult, boring, too short)

All but that one grumpy crew liked the Night Leg, no other dissenting voices, but as always a few people wanted it longer or harder or with more Time Controls. The grumpy one objected to the Quiet Zones and thought the Night Leg was "spoilt by the code boards".

Several mentioned the ambiguity of the status of portions of route marked "Non-Competitive", but the Rally Regulations clearly stated that these complied with the MSA's definition of Transport Sections. However, point taken, thanks. Two crews reported that the non-competitive sections were too tight.

One crew said that the "NO" boards were well placed and that they'd seen quite a few of them.

Another competitor complained that the Night Leg lateness penalties were too severe at 1 minute per minute late; they weren't - it was 20 seconds penalty per minute late.

Two people stated that all the DSOs stopped them, and said that at the Briefing competitors were told that they would have to stop only if a DSO waved them down. In fact, the briefing was accurate; you didn't see the other DSOs who were policing Quiet Zones, etc. Come speeding through a Quiet Zone with spotlights blazing and a hidden DSO would have materialised out of the shadows and sent you straight home! The DSOs within Quiet Zones did not routinely stop cars because that in itself would have created disturbance for the residents, but the DSOs at the Give Way junctions did stop everyone (as is normal practice on Welsh night road rallies).

4. What did you think of Walters and the other sites as venues for Endurance Rallying?

Everyone liked the Walters Motorsport Complex (in spite of the replies to Q1 above). The short Selectifs up through Rheola Forest were the favourites of two crews.

One crew thought SELAR was "a waste of time" and obviously hadn't read Bulletin 2 which explained that we were forced to use a much shortened test because the intended stupendous route was - for the second year running - waterlogged.

5. What did you think of the paperwork, e.g. regulations, roadbook, maps, etc.?

"Very good", "Excellent" and similar comments were universal - except from THAT one again.

Many commented that the tulips and descriptions were good, and that the Night Leg maps were clear and straightforward.

Our one grumpy respondent stated that the tulip diagrams were inaccurate (*words fail us, considering the amount of work we put in to getting distances and diagrams spot on*) and even complained about the roadbook's pages being printed on both sides.

6. Any comments on other matters, e.g. marshalling, Results Service, meals, etc?

A typical reply was "Wonderful marshals, cheery despite the hideous weather - THANK YOU."

Three competitors asked that all chicanes be marshalled as some (mid-field) competitors were cutting them, and one said the barriers should be more sturdy for the same reason; one writer pointed the finger at a specific repeat miscreant. *Where would we get all the extra marshals from?*

Several commented on the high quality of the food, the efficiency of the recovery crews and the invaluable repair service provided by the Banhams.

7. What basic changes should we make to the rally? (including Tyre Regulations)

A few respondents left this question unanswered; the majority of those who did answer said "NONE" or "STOP THE RAIN" or similar. Clearly nobody wanted any basic changes.

Two crews said that Silverstone tyres should not be permitted; one thought that the Lombard and Enduro Championship control tyres should be the same.

One raised the subject of Night Section code board penalties (already covered in Q2 above). One crew said "No 4x4s".

One person wanted better parking facilities for his tow car and trailer, but unfortunately there is no secure hard standing anywhere nearby. Next year it CAN'T rain like that yet again.

8. Would you recommend this rally (unchanged) to other competitors? Yes / No

Every single reply was YES, except THAT crew who underlined both YES and NO (did that mean they were undecided or did it mean that they would recommend the Welsh Enduro to some but not to others?)

Would you enter again next year? Yes / No Every reply was YES.

If no, why not?

Left blank by everyone.

**9. Any other comments?
(please continue on the reverse)**

The few that did add extra comments mostly elaborated on their replies to earlier questions and no new issues were raised.

One praised the rally-supplied food but thought little of a pasty bought from the bar.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The work of the organisers was much appreciated, and the competitors' special thanks go to the marshals and the set-up crews who laboured in atrocious weather conditions to keep the rally running. The recovery crews, the Technical Assistance team and the catering team were all praised.
2. The rally in its current form should remain uncharged, but additional venues would be appreciated.
3. There was no significant or widespread objection to the novel methods of recording and checking the codes.
4. The 10 minute penalty for recording a code incorrectly on the Night Leg will not be reduced because it ensures competitors follow the defined route, although next year if a different system is used then a lesser penalty for getting one character wrong would be considered.
5. Checking that the competitors have recorded the codes on the Night Leg needs tightening up, e.g. by Secret Checks specifically for that purpose.
6. The status of the non-competitive sections within the Night Leg require clarification, possibly refined as Transport sections to match the MSA regulations, and with a new control identifier at the end of such sections, e.g. "TCxx (T)".
7. On the Night Leg, those DSOs where competitors HAD to stop need to be more clearly identified (*although not a single competitor drove past a DSO in error*).
8. More Test Observers are required on the Selectifs to police the manoeuvres and report cheating.

Where do we get these extra marshals? Do we insist on each competing crew bringing a marshalling crew as on all the Welsh night road rallies? Comments and suggestions by email to Hywel Thomas please.