

## Press Information

For immediate release

### **ANOTHER CLOSE SEASON IN PROSPECT IN THE 2016 SRC**

The Arnold Clark Jury's Inn Snowman Rally is once again set to host round 1 of the 2016 Scottish Rally Championship. The Inverness based event has attracted a healthy line up of 121 cars, ranging from modern R5 machines to classic Ford Escorts.

Last year's champion and winner of the Snowman Jock Armstrong in his Subaru Impreza is seeded as car #1 for the opening round. He and co-driver Paula Swinscoe are under no illusions that a second title will be a walk in the park.

Jock, who grabbed two wins in 2015, said: "Mike Faulkner is always knocking on the door. There are also a few northern boys such as Donnie MacDonald and Shaun Sinclair who is turning up in good machinery and of course Bruce McCombie was always consistent last year."

Just behind in the starting order and in the 2015 title race, Mike Faulkner and Peter Foy return to the Scottish Rally Championship in their Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX, and are ready to go out and "give 100%" in pursuit of that maiden SRC title.

"Winning the championship and every rally we do is what motivates us and is what drives both myself and Peter to give 100% but how realistic that aim is we will have to wait and see.

Jock will obviously start as favourite and we expect Shaun to be right up there with his new car. But there will be a dozen drivers out there capable of putting a top 3 together which is what makes the SRC a great challenge."

Making his competitive return after the tragedy on the Mull Rally, John MacCrone is back in the SRC equipped with an ultra-competitive Ford Fiesta R5. For the Snowman the former Junior SRC champion will be partnered by Rhianon Gelsomino, who first met John back in 2012 when they were rivals in the WRC Academy. The aim for MacCrone is a big push for the 2016 SRC title before potentially moving on to the British Rally Championship in 2017 after he has learnt the car.

Top local driver Donnie MacDonald comes into 2016 in hot form, after a podium finish on the season closing Speyside Stages last year. Armed with the same Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX he used last year and once again partnered by Andrew Falconer, Donnie is aiming high for 2016, with his eyes on a podium finish on his home event and in the championship table when the curtains close on the season on September 10.

Shaun Sinclair is an exciting prospect for 2016, as he has replaced his Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX with a Subaru Impreza WRC S9, which he debuted on last year's Mull Rally.



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Having finished seventh on the Snowman last year, the new 2003 Impreza should help him finish higher in 2016.

Shaun said: “We plan to commit to the championship and a good result [on the Snowman] will help us with that decision.

“I have done one gravel rally in the car in Northern Ireland and the left hand drive is the hardest thing to master so far. I have a new co-driver this year also in Stephen O’Hanlan who adds a bit of Irish flair. Hopefully I can get a run in the car before the start.”

Bruce McCombie was in the thick of the 2015 SRC title race, leading the championship for much of the mid-season. Partnered by Michael Coutts once more for the 2016 season, Bruce has his eyes on the Scottish Rally Championship title that he missed out on last year, despite scoring points on every round in 2015.

“We are aiming to be in the title fight, it gave us a boost last year being in that fight with so much support from local businesses and enthusiasts. But you never know what upgrades or new cars our competitors have got.

I entered my first Snowman Rally back in 1997, and over the years you learn it’s a complete lottery. To succeed you need good speed and plenty of luck!”

Stonehaven’s Barry Groundwater is back in his Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X for another season in the SRC. Barry had a slightly disappointing 2015 compared to previous years as he adapted to the latest evolution of Lancer, but he is in good shape for the Snowman, fresh from doing the Cambrian Rally in Wales earlier this month. Groundwater is again partnered by Neil Shanks for 2016.

After missing the last two rounds of the 2015 season, Andrew Gallacher and Jane Nicol are back in the SRC in their unique Ford AG Fiesta. The car which is essentially a Mitsubishi Evo with a Fiesta body shell achieved some eye catching results last year, most notably a second place finish on the Border Counties. Andrew will be looking to better his eighth place finish from the 2015 Snowman Rally.

For a second year Mark McCulloch and Michael Hendry are wading into battle with their Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX. The Dumfries driver took four solid top 10 finishes in 2015 including a sixth place on the Snowman, so could be a dark horse for a strong result on the season opener and indeed in the championship table.

Duns duo Garry Pearson and Robbie Mitchell have entered the 2016 Scottish Rally Championship season with huge intrigue. Like John MacCrone, Pearson will be behind the wheel of a Ford Fiesta R5 and is also looking at learning the car in the SRC before



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potentially moving to the BRC.

Garry said: “For us [the SRC] is a great way to learn the R5 and in my previous experience the Scottish Rally Championship offers some of the best stages in the UK to do this on. We have to be realistic. Mileage in the car is key for the Snowman. A top 10 would be nice which we would aim to build on.”

That concludes the top 10 seeded entries. Next we will look at the new Challengers Cup and Group N contenders.

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### Ends

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