

nedmondson@henleystandard.co.uk

Steam rally banned from putting up sign

ORGANISERS of Woodcote Rally have been forced to remove an advertising banner due to a threat of legal action.

West Berkshire Council threatened to prosecute them for placing signs on the roundabout junction of the A4/A430 before last year's event.

The council said the sign, which was on private land, was for a "commercial event" and "deemed consent could not exist".

As the council could not remove the sign, it threatened to obscure it and removed a number of smaller signs that rally supporters had placed along the road.

This year, the landowner has decided not to allow the banner to go up due to the threat of action.

Organisers are concerned that this could affect attendance at the rally on Saturday and Sunday, July 10 and 11.

Spokesman Andy Crockett said: "I would like to stress that the Woodcote Rally is organised by the Woodcote

Charitable Association. This is not a commercial event and all of the proceeds from the rally are donated to local charities.

"All members of the association and the Woodcote Rally committee are volunteers who give up many hours of their own time in order to make this event happen."

Rally director Martin Allwright said: "This petty bureaucracy is another sign of the increasing red tape faced by volunteer organisations who try to raise large amounts of money for charity.

"These obstacles can put volunteers off from getting involved and could even challenge the future of such major events. Where does this fit in with David Cameron's 'Big Society'?"

Since the rally, a festival of steam and vintage engines, was first held in 1964, it has raised more than £344,000 for charities and good causes.

For more information, visit www.woodcoterally.org.uk