

NEWS RELEASE

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BLIND PASSION! LAND SPEED WORLD RECORD HOLDERS GO HEAD TO HEAD

Blind speed demons Mike Newman (world record holder in a car) and Billy 'The Whizz' Baxter (world record holder on a motorbike) will be going head to head for the first time as they battle it out for winning place in a banger car race. National visual impairment charity Action for Blind People have organised for the two friendly rivals to get together in aid of World Sight Day.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

Where: Arena-Essex Raceway, Thurrock, Essex

What: Banger car race between Mike Newman and Billy Baxter plus VIP vs VIP Double Decker Challenge - Visually Impaired People (VIP) race against a team of Very Important People (celebrities blindfolded) in a double decker bus.

When: Thursday 13th October 2005, 10am to 12pm – VIP Double Decker Challenge and 2pm to 3pm – Mike Newman vs Billy Baxter

Who: Billy Baxter, Mike Newman, Lord Charles Brocket (I'm a celebrity, get me out of here!, presenter on Top 10 cars and ITV's Bad Lads Army), Amanda Stretton (Motor racer and Channel 5's Dream Machine presenter), Neil Cole (XFM DJ), Steven Walpole (Celebrity Chef featuring on new ITV series 'Transformed').

'Every 5 seconds one person in our world goes blind and a child goes blind every minute.'¹

¹ Vision 2020, The Right to Sight www.vision2020.org

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World Sight Day focuses on the issues of global blindness and Action for Blind People are committed to supporting this special day. The event will give a brief insight into the challenges faced by visually impaired people and explore how these challenges can be overcome. It will also be a celebration of the successes of so many blind and partially sighted people.

Mike Newman, says: 'When I was asked to race the Whizz, I jumped at the chance; it will be an honour to race against the fastest man on two wheels. The statistic that every 5 seconds one person in our world goes blind and a child every minute is truly shocking and I am dedicated to promoting World Sight Day and what it aims to achieve.'

Billy Baxter, says: 'I admire Mike's determination and ambitious nature and it will be a pleasure to race against him. I fully support Action in helping to draw attention to the issues of world blindness. As Ambassador for British Wireless for the Blind Fund I have true admiration for the work that blind charities do in supporting visually impaired people. Given the opportunity blind people can achieve anything.'

Action for Blind People enable over 20,000 visually impaired people, across the UK every year, overcome challenges by supporting them through work, housing, leisure and support.

Stephen Remington, Chief Executive at Action for Blind People, said: 'Thank you to everyone who has been able to make this fun event happen. World Sight Day is supported by organisations around the world who are all working in partnership to

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eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020. It is very important for Action for Blind People to help raise awareness of the issues of international blindness.'

Ends

For further information please contact Debbie Flatley, Press Office on 020 7635 4921 or debbie_f@afbp.org

Notes for Editors

- 1) Action works to inspire change and create opportunities to enable blind and partially sighted people to have equal voice and equal choice and to live a full and valuable life. For further information visit www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk or contact our free phone national helpline 0800 915 4666.
- 2) World Sight Day is coordinated by the International Agency for the prevention of Blindness as part of the Vision 2020: Right to Sight Campaign. For further information on World Sight Day visit www.v2020.org/world_sight_day/index.asp
- 3) Billy, 41, smashed the Blind Solo World Land Speed Record recording a top-speed of 164.8mph on a motorcycle in 2003. The former Royal Horse Artillery Staff Sergeant lost his sight through a rare virus contracted while serving in Bosnia in 1997. Billy is an ambassador for the British Wireless for the Blind Fund www.blind.org.uk who provide specially adapted and designed radio sets for the blind and partially sighted in need.
- 4) Mike Newman is planning on thundering back into the record books as the first blind person to drive solo at a speed above 200mph. For more information, please contact: - John Galloway, 0845 458 6611 / 07971 161 621 john@speedofsight.co.uk or visit the 'Speed of Sight' website: <http://www.speedofsight.co.uk/>

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