Complaints about garages, vehicles and service have risen sharply, says The Motor Ombudsman

Published: April 23, 2024

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Online version:

https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/complaints-about-garages-vehicles-and-service-have-risen-sharply-says-the-motor-ombudsman/



The Motor Ombudsman has found that that complaints have soared in the last few months… Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) reports…

The independent Motor Ombudsman said more than 1,600 cases were logged in three months, the most ever and a 35% rise over Q1 last year.

It also took some 24,000 telephone calls about garages and that was a 56% rise over the same period last year.

The analysts say heightened cost of living with tighter margins and the realisation that the Ombudsman's services are free are likely contributors to the rise for an Alternative Dispute Resolution.

Mechanics failings to sort out technical issues with components breaking and even unauthorised work being done were highlighted.

Delays in sourcing replacement parts, workshops without the tools to do jobs and the use of non-genuine parts instead of hard to get genuine components were also among complaints.

Modern vehicles' complexity is also thought to explain that 37% of issues covered the drivetrain while 27% were about poor customer service and repairs.

Software updates caused more problems and infotaiment screens failing and wiring looms setting off alarms were all noted.

One in three settled for a free of charge repair, a quarter had compensation and a full refund was given in about a fifth of cases, with the average payment by a garage being £4,308.

Nearly half the disputes involved diesel car owners and slightly less were petrol engine problems but hybrids and electrical models accounted for 6% or less.

Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director of The Motor Ombudsman, said, "Routine and ad hoc maintenance is a vital part of running a car, and when something goes wrong, this can be a source of frustration and inconvenience for motorists, whilst they may also incur added expense if their vehicle is off the road for a prolonged period.

Coupled with an economic backdrop where consumers are facing added strains on their

finances, this has resulted in even greater demand by consumers for our-free-of-charge dispute resolution service to pursue remedies for the issues they have encountered.”

He added that the complaints were likely to rise for the rest of the year.