DVLA Consultation Response – could it mean a classic vehicle MoT comeback?

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Dave Moss investigates the facts around the recent hype…

In May 2024, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and Department for Transport (DfT) launched a “call for evidence”, seeking views in nine specific areas about policies which

currently govern registration and licensing of historic, classic and converted or modified vehicles, including so called reconstructed classics, and vehicles converted from internal combustion to electric power.

The call for evidence closed in July 2024, with 1,371 responses received for 46 quite detailed questions. 1,162 came from individual respondents, and 129 from organisations of one kind or another.

The very first question, which asked: What do you consider to be a historic or classic vehicle? gained 1,115 responses, the highest number in the survey. Very close behind in second place were 1,083 responses to question 3.4, in the 'Historic and classic vehicles section', raising a perennially emotive subject, which many owners of older vehicles probably – maybe even hopefully – thought had finally been put to bed some years ago. This question asked…"Should there be a new type of safety check in place which takes into account the age of a historic or classic vehicle? If so, please provide evidence and reasons to support your views.

This is a topic almost guaranteed to divide opinion, which has been eternally controversial in the classic vehicle movement since "ten year testing" was first introduced back in 1960. The number stating their views clearly indicates that strong feelings remain amongst respondents described by the DVLA as having "a wide variety of experience and expertise", including views from the full spectrum of interested parties, from individuals, to vehicle owners' clubs and their governing bodies, to vehicle restorers – and even manufacturers.

Should old vehicles be officially tested or inspected at intervals? Well…

- 36% (394) felt that there is no need for a new type of safety check.
  However, those feeling that way were outnumbered – though not by a large margin – by those believing that some sort of a check IS necessary. What was lacking was any real consensus on what form such checks might take:

- 18% (196) said yes, the same as or similar to current MOT test;

- 10% (109) said yes, a basic check for roadworthiness;
- 8% said yes, an MoT-style test, appropriate to age of vehicle, for example, with no need for an emissions check;
- 5% said yes, ad-hoc inspection when vehicle is used on the road, or following major restoration.

  Other comments in favour of testing included…

- Yes, An age and status-related 'sympathetic' style MOT would be useful, particularly for classic cars that are driven fairly regularly;
- Yes, There should be some form of safety check to ensure vehicle is safe;
- Yes, A one-off safety check following major restoration or repair work would be appropriate.

  The consultation scales have thus been tipped by just over 50% towards acceptance for the reintroduction of some form of test. The DVLA has thus gone on record as saying: "The majority of comments suggest that perhaps a new type of check is needed".

  The key word here is "perhaps", These responses after all indicate the views of a hardly representative population sample, comprising little more than 1000 people – and without a major consensus, showing differing views on possible ways forward. It follows that interpreting this finding as empowering the DVLA/DoT to initiate regulations ruling that all currently MoT exempt classics will be required to return to annual MoT testing as currently established, is, at present, rather premature.

  Yet, old or new, vehicle safety is of paramount importance, and with many if not all respondents likely to be members of the classic car fraternity it some way or other, this outcome must be regarded as ramping up the possibility of a return to some form of testing at a future point.

  What happens next on this ever contentious issue – and the many other wide-ranging aspects covered in the consultation – is still to be decided. In thanking those who participated, the DVLA has said these findings, part of its only formal response so far, a so-called 'high level' summary report, simply indicates only the responses received. These will

now undergo further detailed analysis and consideration, with a view to formulating proposals for potential change, which will presumably be published – probably alongside yet another consultation – in due course. No timescale for any of this has either been announced – or suggested.

You can read the full 16 page DVLA and DoT response to the consultation here:

response-summary-report#next-steps

Note: The full title of the response document as issued is:

“Response summary report: call for evidence to gather views and evidence about the policies that govern the registration of rebuilt, kit-built, kit converted, radically altered, reconstructed classics and vehicles converted to electric.”