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Five years of The Motor Ombudsman

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Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director of The Motor Ombudsman.

The Motor Ombudsman celebrates its first five years as Ombudsman for the automotive sector...

- The 1st of November 2016 marked the first time that the automotive sector had ever had its own Ombudsman, and that motorists had access to an entirely free-of-charge, fully impartial and in-house dispute resolution service from beginning to end
- The primary role of The Motor Ombudsman is to improve standards in the motor industry, and to help resolve motoring-related complaints between consumers and businesses
- Since launch, The Motor Ombudsman has handled more than 250,000 enquiries and worked on over 25,000 cases across its four CTSI-approved Motor Industry Codes of Practice



The Motor Ombudsman tells us:

Today (1st November 2021) marks five years since The Motor Ombudsman became the very first Ombudsman for the automotive sector, with the primary role of improving work and service standards in the motor industry, and helping motorists and businesses resolve disputes at any stage of the customer purchase and vehicle ownership journey.

Formed shortly after the introduction of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Regulations and the Consumer Rights Act in 2015, a period which saw consumers becoming increasingly aware of their legal entitlements, The Motor Ombudsman changed the face of dispute resolution in the automotive sector. This was the first time that consumers were able to access a completely free-of-charge, impartial and entirely in-house dispute resolution and ombudsman service dedicated to the automotive sector.

Since launch, The Motor Ombudsman's four long-established Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)-approved Motor Industry Codes of Practice, which provide comprehensive guidelines for businesses on areas spanning vehicle sales to extended warranties and service and repair, have played an integral role in determining the outcomes of more than 25,000 cases. Amongst the most common Code breaches seen within disputes submitted by consumers to The Motor Ombudsman throughout the last five years have resulted from:

- The standard of work carried out during the repair or maintenance of a customer's vehicle (Service and Repair Code);
- A retailer not ensuring that the vehicle supplied to the consumer was of a high-quality standard at the point of sale (Vehicle Sales Code);
- Issues with a manufacturer new car warranty (New Car Code);
- A business not providing accurate advice and information to customers at the time of purchase of a policy (Vehicle Warranty Products Code).



With the increasing demand for The Motor Ombudsman's service, the entire organisation has also evolved since its inception to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of consumers and its UK-wide accredited business network. With full-year annual enquiries from motorists more than doubling (from nearly 39,000 in 2017 to over 87,000 in 2021), and the yearly caseload being worked on increasing three-fold (from around 2,200 in 2017 to almost 7,300 in 2021), The Motor Ombudsman has, similarly, tripled the size of its team during the last five years, and grown the scope of its dispute resolution service through the introduction of mediation and an expanded early resolution stage. This is to allow disputes to be concluded more quickly outside of The Motor Ombudsman's adjudication case management process.

Furthermore, since 2016, The Motor Ombudsman has invested significantly in its back-office IT infrastructure to make it easier for businesses and consumers to make contact and to provide information to its dispute resolution team. In parallel, The Motor Ombudsman's ever-popular website (TheMotorOmbudsman.org), which sports a new refreshed look from today, has also been continually enhanced during the last five years, with the addition of further resources and greater user functionality. This has included the launch of a COVID-19 Business Support Hub to bring guidance and government announcements together on to a single portal, and the unveiling of a Knowledge Base, which offers short Q&As on topics ranging from vehicle ownership to dispute resolution, articles which have collectively seen more than 640,000 views. Thirdly, The Motor Ombudsman's Garage Finder, which lists the profiles of all businesses across the UK that are accredited to its Service and Repair, and Vehicle Sales Codes, has also been upgraded, recording 1.7 million user searches since 2016.



Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director of The Motor Ombudsman, said:

“The last five years has seen our organisation grow and develop in tandem with both the ever-increasing demands placed on our dispute resolution service, and the fast-changing automotive landscape. Looking back, I am extremely proud to see just how much we have achieved collectively, and how many consumers and businesses we have assisted through our dispute resolution process. On this important milestone for The Motor Ombudsman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication, and I look forward to continuing to enjoy further success together with the team.”

Bill added: “As we now turn our attention to the next five years, we will be focusing on further improving the consumer perception of the automotive sector by helping businesses identify opportunities to increase their service standards, as well as assisting businesses and consumers to resolve any complaints through the use of The Motor Ombudsman’s fair and impartial dispute resolution service.”

About The Motor Ombudsman

Founded on 01 November 2016, The Motor Ombudsman is the fully impartial Ombudsman dedicated solely to the automotive sector, and self-regulates the UK’s motor industry through its comprehensive Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)-approved Codes of Practice. Thousands of businesses, including vehicle manufacturers, warranty product providers, franchised dealers and independent garages, are accredited to one or more of the Codes, which drive even higher standards of work and service, and give consumers added protection, peace of mind and trust during the vehicle purchase and ownership experience.