The Motor Ombudsman celebrates a decade as the Ombudsman for the automotive sector

Published: November 6, 2026

Author:

Online version:

https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/the-motor-ombudsman-celebrates-a-decade-as-the-ombudsman-for-the-automotive-sector/



The Motor Ombudsman tells us...

- The Motor Ombudsman marks 10 years as the dedicated Ombudsman for the automotive sector, serving as an authoritative independent and impartial dispute resolution body and a

driver of even higher standards across the sector

- The organisation has witnessed significant evolution and growth against a fast-changing automotive landscape over the last decade, and today employs more than 80 people across its London and Liverpool locations
- This year, The Motor Ombudsman is expected to process in excess of 300,000 consumer contacts and 50,000 cases, compared to around 20,000 and 1,000 respectively in 2016 London, November 2026 The Motor Ombudsman is celebrating a decade of service as the Ombudsman for the automotive sector. Its launch on 1st November 2016 marked a pivotal milestone for the motor industry, as this was the first time that it had its own dedicated Ombudsman, with two principal responsibilities. These were namely to help resolve disputes between motorists and accredited businesses through independent and impartial Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) at no cost to customers, and to drive even higher standards in the sector via its suite of four Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)-approved Motor Industry Codes of Practice covering the entire customer vehicle purchase and ownership experience.

The last 10 years have brought significant change and growth for The Motor Ombudsman, against the backdrop of increased consumer awareness as an authority in dispute resolution for the industry, coupled with a rapidly evolving automotive sector. New technologies, the rising popularity of electric and hybrid vehicles, political and legislative developments, the pandemic, changing consumer buying behaviour and the increased complexity of vehicles, have all contributed to reshaping the landscape since 2016.

This has called for The Motor Ombudsman to continually invest, adapt and expand to ensure that its resource and capabilities have kept pace with this dynamic environment. From what began as a team of around 12 people handling approximately 20,000 contacts and 1,000 cases in its debut year, the organisation has since expanded to its highest ever total headcount of more than 80 staff members across its London headquarters and a new Liverpool hub. Annual records will once again be broken in 2026, as the organisation is set to respond to in excess of 300,000 contacts and process more than 55,000 cases by year-end – a notable jump driven by key factors, such as mounting cost-of-living pressures, and

Artificial Intelligence (AI) directing consumers to The Motor Ombudsman for assistance.

Bill Fennell (pictured below), Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director at The Motor Ombudsman, said: “As demand for our services has grown exponentially – more than we could have ever predicted when we launched, we have remained focused on recruiting talented and experienced people and giving them the training and support needed to deliver a consistently high-quality service – demonstrated by our coveted Investors in People Gold accreditation.

At the same time, spending heavily on our back-office infrastructure, digital capabilities and online visibility has been crucial to increasing capacity, improving efficiency, and to ensuring we can respond effectively to the changing needs of consumers and businesses. Together, these investments have underpinned our growth over the past decade and remain vital to our success as an Ombudsman going forward.”



Bill Fennell.

Furthermore, since 2016, The Motor Ombudsman has extended both the scope and coverage of its Codes of Practice – which remain the most comprehensive of their kind, and unrivalled in the motor industry. Today, they are adhered to by more than 7,500 independent and franchise vehicle retailers and repairers 'doing the right thing' across the country, spanning Jersey to the Shetland Isles. This is in addition to a record 17 vehicle warranty providers representing more than 70% of the sector's major businesses, and 50 vehicle manufacturers which includes many of the market's newest entrants, further reinforcing the importance placed in being aligned to this benchmark of best practice from the very start of their journey in the UK.

In addition, according to The Motor Ombudsman's latest brand awareness survey, more than 80% of consumers would today feel more confident using a business that is adhering to

its Codes, as it offers the all-important peace of mind that they will have the ability to call on The Motor Ombudsman should a complaint arise that cannot be concluded in the first instance prior to third party intervention.

However, despite The Motor Ombudsman fast becoming the 'go-to' destination for resolving motoring disputes, around half of consumers who contact the organisation cannot be assisted by the body due to a business not being accredited. This is the result of the current regime making it voluntary to sign up to an ADR body, and this gap is particularly noticeable in the used car market, where complaints remain one of the most prominent sources of consumer contacts and disputes seen by The Motor Ombudsman on an annual basis.

Bill Fennell commented: "Every motorist should have access to free, independent and impartial dispute resolution when something goes wrong, regardless of who they have chosen to use. Under the current system, too many consumers are left without a clear route to redress simply because the business involved is not accredited to an approved scheme. Making ADR mandatory across the automotive sector would close this gap, strengthen consumer confidence and create a level playing field in which all businesses are held to the same high standards."

"As we look to the next decade, we will continue to press the case for meaningful reform and work closely with industry, government and regulatory stakeholders to widen access to effective ADR. No consumer should be denied the opportunity to put things right, or risk losing out financially if there is a means to help them."

On the occasion of its anniversary, The Motor Ombudsman has published an Insight Report on the trends seen within disputes relating to the purchase of used cars by consumers during the last three years, which is available to download at: www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org/TMO-10.

View The Motor Ombudsman's 'Decade of Highlights' video here.