

*In the last Federation News of 2022, I alluded to the hope of a form of Christmas present from DVLA – and somewhat to my surprise they did indeed provide one! For the first 2023 edition of Federation News we were just able to squeeze in a statement to the effect that DVLA had announced two initiatives with regard to vehicle registration policy. I had hoped that in this edition I would be able to report progress on each of them but unfortunately that is not the case as there has been very little discernible progress and at least some of what has been made is not helpful.*

I will expand on the above a little later but it might be useful initially to add some detail to the previous necessarily short announcement. DVLA informed us of two separate vehicle registration policy exercises which they would carry out. The first of these was a 'clarification of existing policy' whilst the second was a total review of policy for the future. These two operations are considered to be separate and independent in the sense that a policy point clarified in the first exercise might be completely revised in the second. The clarification exercise is an entirely DVLA internal exercise, although they have sought input from one or two clubs on particular issues, whilst the second will in due course lead to a full public consultation.

The clarification exercise results from the many complaints that DVLA received from the Federation and others that over the last few years they have changed long-standing practices and apparently reneged on existing agreements without warning or explanation. In some instances, these changes have been communicated directly to the Federation, and in some cases we have been left to find out from member clubs. In outline some of the issues involved are –

- Refusal to register cars with recently constructed but period typical bodies in apparent contradiction of agreement previously reached with Vehicle Policy.
- Dating certificates from an existing manufacturer rejected for having a 'digital' signature despite them having been accepted for many years.
- Refusal to register vehicles originally supplied in CKD form because an exact build date in the destination country is not available. Some progress was made on this last year but has stalled.

- Non-acceptance of build date stamped directly on vehicle.
- Non-acceptance of model year information encoded within VIN
- Original chassis number marking. There are many variations and facets to this issue, it can arise with chassis numbers originally stamped onto a plate or to numbers stamped onto a component liable to corrosion and/or damage.
- Refusal to accept that a historic vehicle is most unlikely to be able to obtain an IVA and that as a result the allocation of a Q registration to such a vehicle renders it incapable of registration in the UK.
- Contrary to long-standing practice that like-for-like repairs to a vehicle were not considered to affect its identity or status it now appears that any repair to a chassis or monocoque will be regarded as a modification and the vehicle will no longer be considered as historic
- Making holes in a monocoque is also considered to be a modification with the same consequences.
- No information sourced from the internet is permissible as vehicle dating evidence. The long-standing agreement was that Wikipedia was not an acceptable source of information but other online sources could be considered if an endorsement and explanation was supplied by the relevant specialist club.

DVLA claim that vehicle registration policy is the same for vehicles of all ages. If that is the case, we consider the rulings regarding repairs to chassis or monocoques should apply equally to repaired accident damaged modern vehicles but that they clearly don't. Similarly, the decision to regard the making of holes in a monocoque as a modification should apply to modern vehicle but there is no evidence that it does.

At the present time the Federation does not profess to understand the reasoning or motivation behind these changes and our requests to DVLA for further insight have not borne much fruit. Thus, we await the formal 'clarification' with great interest. At the time of writing no formal reports or conclusions from the clarification exercise have been provided by DVLA but we know from various sources that some of these points have been addressed. In a few cases positive progress has been

made but in others DVLA have confirmed their current unhelpful position. It is our understanding that as a result of the latter one justifiably aggrieved owner of two affected historic vehicles has initiated legal action.

It should be noted that members of the Historic Vehicles User Group have repeatedly requested from DVLA sight of the much referenced 'Policy' on which all their decision making is allegedly based. It is felt that knowledge and understanding of the origin of the sometimes apparently inconsistent conclusions reached by DVLA might be to everybody's mutual advantage. However to date it has not been disclosed and this is creating some doubt as to its status and structure.

The second part of the announcement was more encouraging and the verbal introduction by DVLA of the total registration policy review was very positive and acknowledged that the existing policy was old and may not in all cases still be fit for purpose. At the announcement in December it was claimed that internally work had already started on the review and this would be shared with the User Group when ready. Since then, we have heard no more but I remain cautiously optimistic of the outcome whilst recognising that the process will not be quick. The bigger problem is that we have to live with the not necessarily satisfactory outcome of the current policy clarifications until the review is complete and enacted.

So, yes, we did receive a 'Christmas present' but it is yet to be seen what is within the pretty packaging!

