

Government backs the aftermarket on data access

Minister reaffirms need for independents to see the same data as manufacturers

THE UK'S coalition government is in support of the aftermarket over its issues with access to manufacturer data according to a Department for Transport minister.

At the SMMT Connected event, held to highlight the impact connected and autonomous cars will have on both the UK's roads and industries, Robert Goodwill MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the DfT, highlighted that there were a number of areas where data access needed to be open.

When asked by Aftermarket Editor Phil Curry as to how the government would act toward manufacturers restricting data, he replied: "As a basic principle in terms of early legislation, I think it is important that we don't create monopolies for the manufacturers, as much as they'd like to have that situation and that means negotiating access to data and software, much like with engine management systems. I go to my local garage to get my car serviced and they can do so because they are able to plug their computer in to service my car. That is important for consumers and for the market, and it is something that we will work through.

"We do want to give people the reward for innovation and the technology that they develop, but we also want to ensure that we have a vibrant aftermarket for servicing and maintenance. With any technology that consumers buy, there needs to be a genuine market in aftersales for them."

When then questioned about the government's current position on eCall, the minister quipped: "I would like to be able to get a decent mobile phone signal in the area that I live first! I think that needs to be sorted before we can discuss further."

While the political landscape may change on May 7th, the news suggests that there is parliamentary support in the department that will benefit the UK aftermarket no matter what outcome arises. The discussion sparked debate throughout the day with manufacturers and solicitors being questioned on the right of access and data protection.

Connected future

The event started with SMMT Chief Executive Mike Hawes delivering an overview of the industry at present and where it is expected to go. The results come from a report by



SPEAKERS: The event brought together experts from the automotive industry

KPMG which has found that these new vehicles will deliver a £51 billion boost to the UK economy and reduce serious road traffic accidents by more than 25,000 a year by 2030.

He commented: "Connected and autonomous cars will transform our roads and the way our society functions for generations to come, dramatically reducing accidents and helping to deliver more than £50 billion to our economy. The KPMG report clearly shows the UK automotive industry is leading the way in developing the cars of the future and that it will act as a catalyst for wider economic benefits that will create more than 300,000 jobs by 2030. The UK must grasp the opportunities ahead and ensure it is continually at the forefront of pushing through these next breakthrough technologies."

The KPMG report highlights the sectors that will benefit from connected and autonomous vehicle technology. Under Service provision it comments: "Connectivity already allows for the provision of services to the driver in-car. We expect a regulatory model to develop whereby consumers can elect to share their data when they choose, which will allow for improved service from a range of service providers such as vehicle maintenance, advertising, infotainment streaming and retailers".

Important privacy

John Leech, Head of Automotive at KPMG in the UK, said: "Our study has established that the UK is well-positioned to capitalise on the development and production of connected and autonomous cars. Not only will these developments help vehicle manufacturers and their suppliers, but they will bolster jobs, trade and productivity across

the economy. Connected and autonomous vehicles will promote social inclusion, reduce pollution and save lives. This represents an important opportunity for the economy but one that requires continued focus and commitment from government and business."

Discussion also focused on data privacy. Kirsten Whitfield, Director at Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co, highlighted that with new EU laws coming in, the data relating to vehicle performance and diagnostics could be classed as personal, meaning manufacturers will need permission to gather it.

She said: "The data that is being gathered is increasing and what is also increasing is how it is being analysed and used. All of this is regulated in the UK by our Data Protection Act but at the moment in the UK a lot can be done without getting consent. With new regulations going through the EU you must get consent. There will also be new rules around analytics and profiling which will also need consent. Personal data is data relating to a living individual which tells you something about the individual. When the new regulations come in that will expand up to the information about the individual. Information about how a car is performing could be seen in this way which again means you will need consent."

The event saw speakers from vehicle manufacturers, research groups and technology companies presenting on how connected and autonomous vehicles would benefit UK markets and how the country was leading in this sector. Manufacturers highlighted their work on connectivity and what it would mean to consumers.

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SUPPORT: Minister Robert Goodwill said independents need equal data access