

31st August 2016

Louise Ellman MP
Chair of the Transport Committee
House of Commons
2nd Floor
14 Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NB



Griffin House
Osborne Road
Luton LU1 3YT
Telephone 01582 721122
Fax 01582 427400
www.vauxhall.co.uk

Dear Ms Ellman,

RE: Zafira B oral evidence

Further to our oral evidence session on 19th July, we undertook to provide some further clarification to the Committee. This letter addresses the additional information that we committed to provide, as well as adding some further clarification.

Safety standards

1. We were asked specifically about lobbying for more stringent EU Directives for safety standards and offer a number of examples.

1.1 In the case of Pedestrian Safety (EU Directive 2003/102/EC), we directly worked to lobby against a specific passive safety requirement as the sector had a more stringent solution involving brake assist systems. These help to avoid accidents or mitigate the accident severity and this improved safety system was subsequently adopted by the Commission.

1.2 Where possible, we work to introduce better safety technologies in advance of any formal legislative requirements. For example, from 31st March 2018 there will be a requirement for all new types of car to be fitted with E Call, an emergency onboard call facility, which alerts the emergency services when the vehicle has been in an accident. Since 2015, Vauxhall OnStar, which provides E Call capability among other useful services, has been available across our entire car range and is planned to be standard on all Vauxhall car models within the next 6 months.

1.3 We are continuously working with our trade body, the SMMT, on ways to improve our process and procedures for safety recalls. Vauxhall led the establishment of an independent recall database to enable customers to check whether their vehicle is subject to a recall or not. Not only did we proactively engage with other Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to establish buy-in for such a research tool, we also piloted the new system which will move to an automated system shortly. The website portal can be located on the Motor Codes website, which provides the independent overview to add to the credibility of the data.

1.4 Our priorities with new legislation/regulation is to ensure we consider all implications of proposed legislation and where appropriate propose other options that may achieve a better solution for customers.

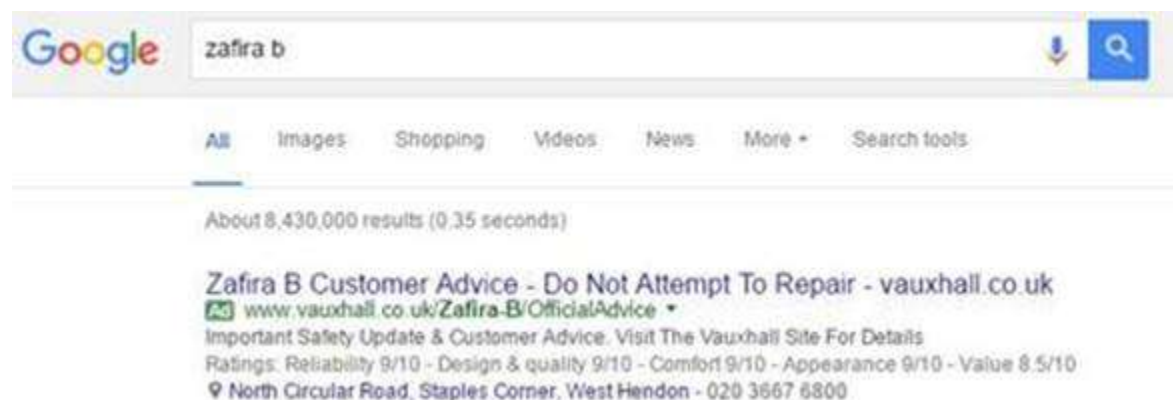
Vehicle repair information sharing

2. We have taken a number of steps to communicate with vehicle repairers, from retailers, independent garages and individual mechanics to ensure that resistors are replaced and not repaired.

2.1 As part of the rework procedure of the first recall commenced at the end of 2015 we have added a highly visible warning sticker on the blower motor housing clearly reminding repairers to replace and never to repair the resistor.

2.2 All of our repair guides are publically available to any repair organisation via <https://www.gme-infotech.com>

2.3 We have used digital media to convey the message that a resistor should never be repaired and always replaced. Through Pay Per Click specifically, we have targeted the search words that a customer may use when seeking information as to what they should do if the Heating and Ventilation system in their Zafira B is not functioning correctly and also with regards to the relevant recall information. An example is shown below:



2.4 Subsequent to the Committee evidence session, we have written to the Director of the Retail Motor Industry Federation requesting a meeting to discuss the most effective and efficient way of engaging with independent repair garages. We want to understand what the best format is for sharing with them the public information sources which they can use to help support their knowledge of repair practices with Vauxhall vehicles.

Notification of defect to other OEMs.

3. You asked what action we had taken to inform other OEMs of the issue we had encountered with the resistor as this is manufactured by a common industry supplier. Having consulted our engineering colleagues in Germany, we can confirm that as soon as we were aware of the manipulations of the resistor, we informed our supplier.

3.1 We have no direct insight as to whether other manufacturers have the same, or similar, parts in their Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning (HVAC) system. Having alerted our HVAC system supplier of the problem, we rely on them to reach out to their other customers if they consider another vehicle may be impacted.

3.2 In addition, the DVSA website records safety recalls in relation to components and parts as well as vehicle recalls. Furthermore, information pertaining to the Zafira B recall was also placed on the European “Rapid Exchange of Information System” (RAPEX) which facilitates alerting consumers as well as the rapid exchange of information between national authorities of 31 countries and the European Commission on dangerous non-food products found on the market.

Lessons learnt

4. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we are seeking to address lessons learnt from the Zafira B investigations.

4.1 We have made our process to investigate cases of fire more robust by ensuring that in cases of vehicle fire where a customer’s insurer has agreed to a joint forensic inspection of a vehicle, this is conducted and a detailed report shared with our Engineering team.

4.2 We have reinforced our process for investigating fire cases by ensuring that if there are cases of vehicle fire with a consistent pattern of fire damage but where the root cause cannot be readily determined, we engage with third parties to find and test alternate hypothesis.

4.3 Earlier awareness of the number of Zafira B fire cases would have helped us identify a pattern earlier. As there is no requirement for an insurance company to notify the manufacturer of a vehicle fire, we are working with the SMMT to engage with the Association of British Insurers in gaining access to insurance claims due to vehicle fire. This data would complement other data sources for early detection of safety issues.

4.4 We welcome the suggestion made by Gareth Llewellyn in the DVSA evidence session to capture those vehicles which have yet to complete a safety recall. We fully support the suggestions for safety recall checks when applying for vehicle excise duty, as well as including recall information at the MOT. We will engage with government on ways in which such changes can be implemented and whether the automotive industry can help with implementation and information sharing.

Electronic Climate Control (ECC) vehicles

5. We have sought further information, via the Committee clerk, into the ECC vehicle fire that Iain Stewart MP referred to during the oral evidence session and we await confirmation of the vehicle details. As highlighted at the session, we are aware of a fire in an ECC vehicle but after a forensic investigation we concluded that the fire had an alternate root cause and was not HVAC related.

Additional points of clarification

6. Many media reports following the Transport Select Committee evidence session have focused on the suggestion that Vauxhall was aware of a safety issue with the Zafira B HVAC system as early as 2009. It is important to restate that Vauxhall first began investigating cases of fire in Zafira B models that demonstrated a very distinctive pattern in 2014. These investigations continued into 2015 but we were not aware of the magnitude of the issue or root cause until late 2015. With what we now know about the distinctive nature of these fires we have reviewed our reporting system and we suspect that the earliest case with this distinctive pattern was in 2009. However we were not able to investigate this early case and our assumption that this may have been the first case is only possible in retrospect based on the recorded description of the fire pattern.

I hope that this further clarification has been useful, if you have further questions then please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Hope', written over a horizontal line.

Peter Hope

Customer Experience Director