



Thatcham Research MET engineer replaces an ADAS box

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Thatcham Research calls for new thinking and approaches to halt spiralling cost of repair

- *Repair storm brewing around increasing costs and complexity*
- *Vehicle manufacturers urged to engage with repair industry, to bring costs under control as average repair bills spiral by 32% over the last three years*
- *Advanced Driver Assistance Systems are impacting windscreen replacement, potentially increasing costs by 123% for certain new models – and affecting no-claims bonuses*

- *Bodyshop of the Future programme to bring insurers, repairers and carmakers together to address challenges*

Thatcham Research is today delivering a call to action for vehicle manufacturers to urgently engage with the repair industry to halt spiralling costs. With the average repair bill rising by nearly 32% in the last three years to £1,678^[1], concerns are mounting around core repair challenges encompassing ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems), new materials and a lack of skills.

Coping with ADAS calibration

Peter Shaw, Thatcham Research CEO will address automotive industry leaders at the Thatcham Research Repair Focus event June 6, highlighting the issue of escalating repair costs as ADAS technologies become more prevalent in the UK car parc.

According to Shaw, “The average repair bill has risen by 32% over the last three years. This has been driven by the reparability of parts such as headlamps, increasing complexity of vehicle materials and technology and the rising cost of spare parts, influenced to some extent by currency fluctuations. Vehicle manufacturers must bring these costs under control.

“The cost for windscreen mounted ADAS calibration spans from £0 to £700 – across car manufacturers and often across similar sensors and technology. This is unacceptable. Unless urgently addressed, these costs will challenge the current model of a no-claims bonus being unaffected by a windscreen repair or replacement.”

The average cost to replace a windscreen increases significantly with the fitment of ADAS technologies such as Autonomous Emergency Braking. For example, a windscreen replacement for a Ford Focus with ADAS can increase by 123%^[2], when estimated calibration costs are factored in. Costs for a VW Golf can increase by 78%. Thatcham Research estimates that there are over two million cars on the roads today with standard-fit AEB systems (equating to 5%^[3] of the UK car parc), and with the systems set to be more prevalent over coming years, this issue will only continue to grow.

Lifting the bonnet on intrusive repairs

The increase in different material specification in new cars was another Repair Focus hot topic. Thomas Hudd, Operations Manager at the Thatcham Research Repair Technology Centre said, “The rising use of a mix of new materials in modern cars is leading to more intrusive repairs. This means that where we were once able to partially replace a panel, we now need to replace it in its entirety. This is especially true of aluminium panels, which are challenging the repair industry as it is stiffer and harder to reshape than steel.”

The Top 5 Repair Challenges

- 1. ADAS systems:** maintenance, repair, costs, time and resource required for calibration
- 2. Complexity:** new skills for Vehicle Damage Assessors and engineer assessors, as multiple material types, as well as ADAS and hybrid powertrains, become a regular feature of volume production vehicle construction
- 3. Paint and panels:** new technologies such as textured paint, or crystal finishes, and refinish on multiple materials. Panel repair is increasing in cost and complexity too – as a result of pricing anomalies, missing repair data, intrusive repair methods and lack of correct stock
- 4. Headlamps:** LED and LED Matrix, Laser and soon OLED lighting continue to gain prominence, but often cost considerably more than a bulb headlamp and some may be impossible to repair rather than replace
- 5. Electrified PowerTrains:** diagnosis of electrified powertrains and electrical architecture. The diverse range of technologies and tools required are not acceptable investments to expect of a bodyshop

Bodyshop of the Future

All of this complexity creates a further challenge for UK bodyshops today – attracting high calibre individuals, with the right skillsets, who see the repair industry as a career destination.

“There is still much to be done to ensure that the right people choose a career in this industry,” comments Dean Lander, head of repair sector services

at Thattham Research. “Repairers need a new set of skills to meet the demands of the Bodyshop of the Future. Technical expertise in diagnostics and calibration has become as vital as expertise in repairing and refinishing the physical hardware of a car. We must portray a fresh image to recruit the right people and help them to develop these new skills for bodyshops, as well as developing leadership skills to aid long term retention. This is a key focus of Thattham’s new Leadership and management foundation programme, delivered in partnership with BSG, which is launching today at Repair Focus.”

To learn more about the Thattham Research Bodyshop of the Future programme, please visit: www.thatcham.org

[1] ABI Motor Insurance Statistics, Q3 2016

[2] Based on Thattham Research data

[3] Based on Thattham Research data

Thattham Research is the independent voice of automotive safety & repair, advising motorists, insurers and vehicle manufacturers to help reduce accident frequency, severity and costs and to realise the vision of ‘Safer cars, fewer crashes’.

As well as its world leading crash and track research, Thattham Research tests and accredits crash repair parts, vehicle repair technicians, and a number of other products and services within the collision repair industry for insurers, motor manufacturers, equipment manufacturers and suppliers.

A founder member of the international Research Council for Automobile Repairs (RCAR), Thattham Research has also been a member of the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) since 2004.

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