



# HCVA SPRINGS INTO ACTION

A year since the group's inception, incoming CEO Garry Wilson explains how this champion of the classic car industry is progressing

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“Before joining, I had hoped to throttle back and work just two days a week. In fact, I haven’t stopped – it’s been seven days a week and flat-out. But I’m not complaining, I’m loving it.” On sitting down with Garry Wilson, the first CEO of the Historic & Classic Vehicles Alliance, his energy is immediately obvious. And this motivation seems to be just the tip of an iceberg that is moving the classic industry agenda forward at a remarkable pace, as Wilson explains: “By the spring I’d like to be 50% through our three-year target, which would be a year into the launch, in terms of membership and actions we want to put in place. And we’re on track.”

Wilson joined the HCVA as CEO in September 2021, four months after the organisation’s launch. Over the course of his 35-year career, Wilson has worked for Land Rover in engineering, manufacturing and programme management, then in a global leadership role at parts supplier Delphi, as well as contributing to projects such as the Advanced Propulsion Centre, and Driving the Electric Revolution and its industrialisation centre.

As explained in May 2021’s *C&SC*, the HCVA serves as the industry’s collective corporate interest, liaising with government, enthusiasts and other organisations to break through bureaucracy, clarify legislation and to encourage common standards. In becoming a body for trade, with the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs looking after owners’ organisations, the HCVA’s creation means the whole industry is now represented. It’s already encouraging progress for the industry’s agenda, as Wilson explains: “Because we represent the industry, all £18billion-worth of it, there’s a lot more vested interest to make things happen.”

Indeed, during the past year the HCVA has been working up impressive momentum. Having made appearances at several shows during the course of 2021 – including the Goodwood Revival, Salon Privé, the NEC Classic Motor Show and the launch of the new Brooklands arm of the Heritage Skills Academy (HSA) – the organisation already has around 100 trade and industry members under its wing. Wilson is keen to point out that these are vetted members: “Firstly, you have to apply to join us here, at which point you’re circulated around our board



The HCVA has made appearances at many high-profile classic car events throughout 2021

and advisory group. Most are known and great, but we also do checks, such as on Companies House, and ask for two referees.” There’s an initiative for youth engagement, too, including free membership for the under 21s, and the HCVA’s social media activities now have a young lead. Wilson tells us there will be an announcement on membership benefits for younger enthusiasts soon.

In touch, then, with the established industry and with more than a nod to the future, the HCVA is already pushing for action. Seeking clarity over DVLA

on behalf of the car clubs) with representatives of the DVLA.

“That’s been really positive,” says Wilson. “We’ve had a couple of meetings with the DVLA, with another one taking place in January, and it’s gaining momentum.” The first meeting was in October 2021 and, with nine DVLA officials including senior managers from the policy team, registrations, and the kits and rebuilds departments, the group began with clarifying the existing processes. In the second formal user group meeting, held this January, detailed suggestions were returned on the DVLA’s requirements, beginning a process of change.

It may not sound like much now, but this is the material groundwork for simplifying and hastening the registration process, while also bolstering the security of vehicle information. Of course there are frustrations on both sides, Wilson admits. On one, there are people with documentation who are knocked back, while on the other there’s huge pressure to process things accurately: “We have to recognise that they are under pressure. We’re being firm, but also fair and supportive.”

**“A significant challenge facing the classic vehicle world today is the perceived high impact on the environment of these vehicles”**

processes and planning to simplify them in the future, one of its most promising projects of 2021 has been the formation of the Historic & Classic Vehicle User Group, which has brought together key membership groups (the Royal Automobile Club, the FBHVC and The Association of Old Vehicle Clubs in Northern Ireland each

Meanwhile, the HCVA has been addressing many other areas of the industry. The environmental question mark that surrounds our hobby is one that has an increasing importance and visibility from outside the classic world. The advisory and working group for this particular area, one of many that aim to “get things done”, says Wilson, is currently being micro-managed by the CEO. “A significant challenge facing the classic vehicle world today is the perceived high impact on the environment of these vehicles,” he explains. “COP26 and recent articles in the press have heightened these concerns, but it must be reiterated: you are not killing the planet by driving a classic!”

There is already a carbon-offset programme in full swing, something that is becoming increasingly prevalent within the industry, and the HCVA has partnered with NET-HERO to pursue this important element of the agenda. However, echoing its stance on other matters, the HCVA is also directed towards providing the industry with the information, guidance and resources to facilitate more intelligent solutions.

“This year we’re already active on our programme to put some data behind our environmental activity,” says Wilson, “and putting some classics through the WLTP cycle, just to see the outcome. Of course they will fail, especially on the cold-start cycle, but it’s important to know and understand the results.” This particular advisory group also intends to show more clearly than previously possible the costs and true CO<sub>2</sub> timelines of conversions versus leaving a car original, currently believed to be decades. This programme is not just talking in environmental terms, but also for provenance and safety. Some basic advice on this topic already exists on the website ([hcva.co.uk](http://hcva.co.uk)).

There’s been a keen eye on the legal environment, too, where, for example, the HCVA offered a strong response to the Department for Transport (DfT) consultation on the ‘Future of transport regulatory review: modernising vehicle standards’ in September. The HCVA requested three things: an exclusion for historic and classic vehicles from the new rules; safeguards against future changes affecting classics that may result from the precedent; and a complete rethink of the ban on tampering.



Wilson is an enthusiast, here piloting one of his MG Metro 6R4s at Castle Combe for Rallyday in 2014

## HCVA UPDATE

Wilson points out that there has been progress here, too: “We were pleased that in Parliament, on 4 November, transport minister Trudy Harrison said, ‘Officials have been instructed to ensure that proposals do not prevent activities such as restoration, repairs or legitimate improvements to classic cars, or do any damage to the motorsport businesses involved in these activities.’”

Conversations are also being held with the Department for International Trade (DIT) about the documentation required for importing classics into the UK. With a considerable number of small- to medium-sized enterprises now part of the HCVA, it’s an issue that Wilson knows is important for members: “We used to be able to bring in three vehicles up to a value of £100,000 with minimal documentation and without a big bond put in place. For bigger companies that’s not an issue, but a number of players have been in touch with us, who are often global experts in their field, saying they can’t do it.” The HCVA view is that there is serious money to be lost here for the UK economy

**‘The HCVA has successfully secured seats at important tables and laid the groundwork for real progress in 2022’**

when specialists can’t deliver for customers, as Wilson explains: “Multiply those lost opportunities across the industry and that’s several millions. We then go to the DIT and say that if we change it to how it used to be, that’s going to be a multi-million-pound upside to the UK economy. By offering them an opportunity, you have a conversation and they have a reason to issue a change.”

Building on the collective efforts of the industry’s myriad players, the HCVA has spent a successful first year securing seats at important tables and laying the groundwork for real progress this year. More meetings with Government officials are set, further member initiatives planned, and ambitions are for the future of classic motoring to be clarified on behalf of the industry and enthusiasts alike.

*Thanks to Whitwebbs Museum of Transport (020 8367 1898; whitwebbsmuseum.co.uk)*



Paul Griffin, here with his 1954 Connaught ALSR and 1959 Cooper, contributes legal expertise to the HCVA

## THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTICITY

The HCVA is also lining up the challenge of authenticating classics, one of the industry’s longest-lived difficulties. As CEO Wilson puts it: “Inevitably, someone out there will take advantage, especially when values are going through the roof. People are importing cars and bringing cars out of sheds to sell, which we obviously support, though sadly some are exaggerating what they have and others simply falsify histories.” The HCVA has installed Paul Griffin, a former partner in a law firm and now an author and historic racing driver, at the head of its legislation and government policy advisory and working group to tackle such matters.

The industry has already responded, with certification from the likes of the Fédération Internationale des Véhicules Anciens (FIVA) and Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile (FIA), as well as those issued by owners’ clubs. The Ferrari Classiche Certificate of Authenticity has set a particularly high standard for many years, while new programmes are still appearing, such as Pagani’s Puro scheme launched in December. But while there are various certifications, there are challenges in establishing a coherent basis on which to pursue regulation that could protect the wider enthusiast collective. “None of these has become the standard,” says Griffin. “At the HCVA we’ve been taking the best parts, considering

the weights of these different approaches, and looking to establish something that draws on the available expertise.” It is, he stresses, very much a work in progress, but his view for the future is nothing if not optimistic: “I would like to think that the legal landscape will change in the next five years. My own feeling is that there’s been very little written about this in the past, which is one of the things which motivated my own book.” Griffin hopes that *The Past and the Spurious: The Case of Legitimacy in Historic Racing Cars* will stir meaningful interest in the subject.

The HCVA has discussed with the DVLA ideas on how to ease the authentication process with marque experts, and plans are in motion for the HCVA to become the classic industry’s answer to the TrustATrader platform. Expected soon is the launch of insurance policies designed to protect owners from the financial fall-out possible when buying classics with valuable provenance.

Like many HCVA members, however, Griffin’s contributions are more than just of intellectual value from his past career. As an active member of the historic racing scene with a 1954 Connaught ALSR and two 1950s Coopers, his is just another in a collective passion for classic cars within the organisation: “One of the things that’s been heartening as we’ve moved on is that there’s a common interest of so many organisations.”



Griffin piloting his Cooper-Climax T49 through Goodwood’s famous Chicane in 2019

JOHN RETTER