

BUYING IN PERSON IS BACK IN FASHION

Although online sales are continuing to perform strongly, say experts, dealers and auctioneers



Buyers are returning to showrooms in England, but online sales aren't nosediving, says the Classic & Sports Car Centre in North Yorkshire.

Experts, dealers and auctioneers say that buyers are coming back to view and buy cars in person – but that the trend in England has not yet recovered to levels seen in 2019.

Specialists like Pendine Historic Cars at Bicester Heritage in Oxfordshire, say customer visits in person are almost equal with that of people buying online.

Manager, Jonny Shears, said: 'It is very much an even split. Past clients of ours, more often than not, will make a purchase sight unseen as they trust our expertise and judgement and we know their exact requirements.'

'New clients approaching us for the first time will generally come and view the cars before making a final decision.'

Classic and Sports Car Centre in North Yorkshire reported a similar ratio of footfall in the garage and online in the months since the last Covid-19 restrictions were lifted in July.

CEO, James Szkiller, said: 'Naturally, with the re-opening of the showroom we are seeing many more visitors, and more

sales in the showroom. We are still selling many vehicles per month at distance through walk-round and road-test videos, combined with close-up photographs.'

'Prior to Covid-19, almost half our business was unseen, and during lockdowns we saw consistent sales at the usual level – but all unseen, due to the circumstances. I would say it is back to pre-Covid levels, with a healthy balance of in-showroom and over-the-phone sales, he said.'

Classic Cars contributor and former *Top Gear* presenter

Quentin Willson said that viewing in-person was reserved for the older collector whose needs were specific; neither casual buyers nor serious collectors had, in his opinion, been affected by the pandemic.

He said: 'The strength – and acceptance – of the virtual sales during the pandemic showed just how resilient the market actually was and business didn't even pause for breath.'

'I can see that continuing, but that older enthusiasts will still prefer buying in person.'

'TRENDS HAVEN'T HURT THE MARKET MUCH'

'We have seen recently how the classic car market is driven by enthusiasts – and their preferences are brought to the fore here. With the differing Covid-19 access rules in Scotland and Wales, I would be very interested to see how dealers are faring currently in those parts of the UK. Whatever the situation

there may be, the changing pre-and post-pandemic trend of buying classics online in England certainly hasn't hurt the market much – in fact, it only commends its fortitude.'

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