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YOU AND YOURS – MOTABILITY CHANGES 05.02.03

WAITE

Well the biggest seller of second hand cars in the world is the charity Motability, which provides vehicles for disabled people, who use part of their disability living allowance benefit to lease a car or a van for three years at a cost of around £39 a week. At the end of the three years the cars go back to Motability to be sold on. But due to those big falls in second hand prices Motability hasn't been making as much as expected over the past few years. So following many months of consultations with users Motability's announcing a number of changes aimed at benefiting its clients.

The charity's director Noel Muddiman joins us. Noel some of these changes Motability are making are directly related to what we've been talking about - problems of the second hand car market. What's the problem from your point of view?

MUDDIMAN

Well two of the changes John follow that line. What we have done, we've listened to our customers over the months and I certainly would take exception with Carol's assertion that only traditionalist fools buy new cars, we buy lots of new cars for disabled people because they require the reliability that a new vehicle gives them but we do have to adapt a number of our vehicles and we have found a number of our customers would like to purchase those cars at the end of their three year lease period, to save them really the expense and the hassle of changing those adaptations at the end of the lease period. And so giving that opportunity to purchase the cars is one of the new initiatives that we've introduced on to the scheme, with effect from the 1st February, and alongside that our Motability operations, who run the contractual side of the business for us, are also putting together a more competitive hire purchase option, which will enable disabled people to retain those cars, should they wish to do so.

WAITE

Another of the criticisms of Motability Noel has been the mileage restriction of 12,000 miles a year, that it's too tight, particularly for people living in rural areas, so what changes, if any, are you making in that area?

MUDDIMAN

Well that's fair comment John, particularly for people in constituencies in Scotland, in rural areas of Wales 12,000 miles has been too tight for them and so we have increased the mileage from 12,000 to 15,000 miles a year on all new leases taken out with effect from this month. And for those people who currently have a vehicle on the scheme we're increasing their mileage from 36,000 miles over the three year period to 38,000 miles - so everybody will benefit from that.

WAITE

And just finally I mean many disabled people, and we've heard some on the programme in times past, have complained that when they have a Motability car they're forced, at the moment, to get even minor scratches repaired by making an insurance claim which forces up the overall premiums

paid by disabled people, makes this group seem very high risk, what changes are you making to this very thorny issue of what constitutes wear and tear?

MUDDIMAN

Well we've certainly taken a far more restrained view, if you like, over fair wear and tear guidelines as they affect people who have travel whilst using their wheelchairs or with other mobility aids which they have to get into their vehicles and quite clearly you can't help making small scratches or scuffs on to your boot or your sill areas where you have to get that chair or other mobility aid in and out of the car and so we've relaxed the rules on that and in future they will not be subject to an insurance claim and they will just be within our fair wear and tear guidelines.

WAITE

Thank you very much indeed Noel Muddiman.