

PRESS RELEASE: CAR DEALER LIVE 2026

UK used-car dealers adapt to a new stock-constrained normal

London, UK – 19 March 2026: UK used-car dealers are increasingly rethinking how they acquire stock, as research from [Motorway](#) shows that stock scarcity is no longer just leading to short-term disruption, but is now a structural constraint on the market.

Insights shared at Car Dealer Live 2026 reveal that 78% of used-car dealerships in the UK are more worried about stock availability in 2026 than they were in 2025, despite continued consumer demand and signs of broader market stability.

Despite data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) showing used car transactions rose by 2.2% in 2025 to more than 7.8 million vehicles (marking a third consecutive year of growth), dealers report growing pressure behind the scenes.

Nearly three-quarters (74%) say they have already lost sales due to stock scarcity, and just under half (46%) say they are experiencing tighter margins as competition for the most desirable vehicles increases.

Demand increase in key segments

When asked which cars were hardest to source and most in demand, dealers cited hybrid vehicles (48%). SMMT data shows used electrified vehicle transactions rose 30.9% year-on-year in 2025, representing nearly one in 10 used vehicle transactions and underlining sustained consumer appetite for lower-emission vehicles.

Other types of vehicles that were listed as harder to source included three-to-five-year old petrol cars (40%) and three-to-five-year-old diesel cars (39%).

While older vehicles continue to perform well on the Motorway platform, data from the used-car marketplace shows dealer demand is strongest in the two- and three-year-old segments. Two-year-old vehicles saw average bids per car rise by nearly 9% year on year, while three-year-old vehicles increased by 7%. Beyond this, competition remains strong across older age segments, with the average bids per car on six-year-old vehicles increasing by 6% year on year.

Competition remains elevated in the five-year-old segment. While volumes of five-year-old vehicles on the platform declined year-on-year in 2025, average bids per vehicle increased by nearly 6%, reflecting tightening supply in a segment impacted by reduced new car registrations during the pandemic.

Digital sourcing moves from “optional” to essential

As competition for stock intensifies, dealers are increasingly prioritising sourcing routes that allow them to move quickly and operate more efficiently.

Motorway research found that 92% of dealers believe digital sourcing will be essential this year to remain competitive and access a wider range of stock options. Dealers say the most important features of digital platforms for stock acquisition include hassle-free payment options (29%), access to exclusive inventory (33%), easy vehicle collection management (37%), and flexible auction times (30%).

Tom Leathes, CEO and Co-Founder of Motorway, said:

“The UK used-car market is worth £100 billion annually and continues to show strong consumer demand. But the headline growth doesn’t reflect the reality that many dealers are facing. Increased consumer demand means that the most in-demand stock is moving faster. This year dealers will be looking for smarter, more efficient ways to access the right stock at the right time and the right price. We’re proud to support our network of dealers on this

journey, connecting them with up to 2,500 privately owned vehicles every day - making the best stock more easily available to dealers."

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About Motorway

Motorway is the UK's fastest-growing used-car marketplace. We connect people selling their car directly with our network of more than 7,500 verified car dealers, matching each seller on our platform with the dealer who most wants to buy their car. We help car owners secure a great price online, often in as little as 24 hours, with their car collected from home for free, while supporting car dealers to acquire the best used-car stock more efficiently.

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