

## Transport Select Committee Part 2

### [Vauxhall Zafira Car fire Face book Questions & Concerns](#)

#### Technical Questions

##### Resistor Failures

In previous responses from Vauxhall they have blamed the Resistor for being improperly repaired this has been the main point to which they have used to make it look like they have done no wrong in causing the Fires. We accept that improper repairs were a cause of some of the fires. However there was a large majority of cases where Vauxhall only serviced cars caught fire so only genuine parts were used proving that improper repairs was not the only cause of the fires.

In recall 2 Vauxhall mentioned that “In a specific set of circumstances the resistor fuse may fail”. They did not elaborate at the last meeting what these specific circumstances were?. It transpires that the fuses were failing to cut the power to the motor and resistor due to the thermal fuse not breaking cleanly. The Thermal fuse solder was not melting properly so when the solder melted it went all stringy and allowed the Thermal fuse to stay in contact and not break cleanly as expected. This would allow the resistor to eventually overheat and burst into flames causing the vehicle fire. This was caused by a design problem with this solder as when exposed to water and corrodes it does not melt correctly causing the stringy solder effect. The new red resistor encases the soldered thermal fuse so it cannot corrode and be damaged by water ingress. Why has Vauxhall not come forward with this new information and more publicly announced the technical situation and vindicated the local garages as the main culprits for this issue when this is clearly not the case. Vauxhall need to take some of the responsibility for this issue and admit they are also responsible for the car fires due to the design problem of the Thermal fuse.

##### Design Change

In 2010 the Zafira C was being designed and manufactured ready for launch in 2011. Usually when designing new models the Old models problems are highlighted to the design team so they can improve and design out the old issues to make the new product better and more reliable. Looking at the design of the Zafira C there has been significant design changes made to the HVAC system, which has taken into account that if water was to ingress into the HVAC system, that it can now be safely routed away from the key components that can corrode and cause the fires.

These changes include a drain hole in the blower motor to allow the water to drain away.





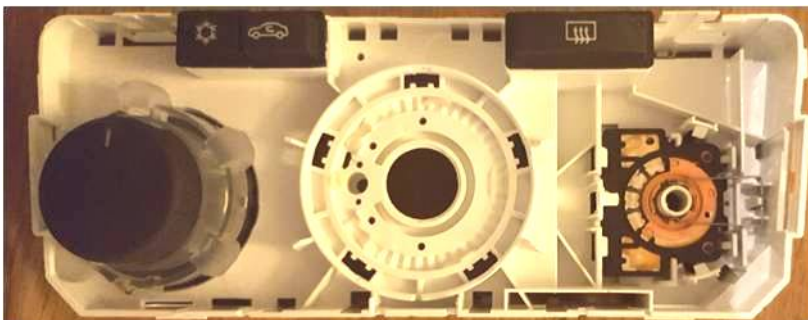
and the bearing is now protected from water by the plastic casing of the motor, the bearing is under here.

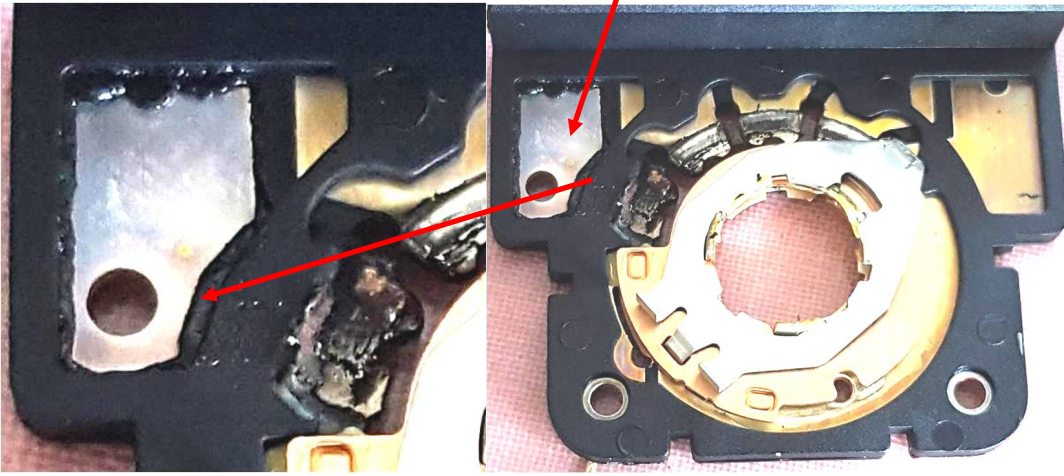


Why would these specific changes be made if Vauxhall was not aware of the damage water ingress into the HVAC system can do?

### **HVAC System Overload**

When the Blower motor corrodes and starts to struggle to turn due to the corrosion this puts undue electrical and heat stress on the whole HVAC system. In recall 2 Vauxhall have only replaced the parts that have been observed by them to be damaged. What about the other components in the HVAC system that has suffered stress due to the corroded motor like the Speed & Air directional controller? This is a picture of a melted Speed controller that has been damaged by a corroded motor.





You cannot see the damage unless you take it apart, so Vauxhall have no way of knowing if it is damaged or not. It's a sealed unit and it is not meant to be taken apart for inspection. Why has Vauxhall not replaced all the components in the HVAC system including the wiring loom to ensure the system is returned to the customer in Original factory condition? This way all damage caused by the corroded motor will be removed, even though it cannot be seen and peace of mind & satisfaction can be given to the customer that the system is now fully functional again. We are seeing many unsatisfied owners having their car returned to them with the heating system still not fully functioning properly due to the hidden damage the corroded blower motor has caused. This then causes further stress as the owners have to fight to have this repaired for free as most dealerships try to charge for this work. Completely unacceptable.

## **Vauxhall's Handling of the recall.**

### **Vauxhall Communication**

In December 2015 The Facebook Group Vauxhall Zafira fires submitted Technical information to the DVSA which was then passed on directly to Vauxhall this report detailed why Recall 1 will not be sufficient in fixing the problem. No confirmation was given by Vauxhall that this report had been received and no further communication was made by Vauxhall to us in regards to asking for Technical information that was being gathered by our page. The information gathered by the group was of enormous value yet Vauxhall did not want to know. It has taken nearly 1 year for Vauxhall to now approach us and ask for specific technical information we have that may help them understand the situation better. Why did Vauxhall not ensure they had excellent communications set up with us so any new information we gathered could be acted on promptly? It feels like we were shut out of this situation which has just caused things to drag on at the detriment of the owners.

### **The Recall Process**

The whole process of the recall has been a debacle from start to finish. It has not gone smoothly at all.

This is a list of key points of where things are going wrong, with the current Recall 2 16-C-050.

- In most cases the customer has been made to feel like a nuisance and not like a valued customer. The large volume of customers affected by this problem is a daunting and arduous task for the dealership to complete when there is little reward in it for them. The dealerships know that they

are not going to make any money from the customer as the work is completed FOC under the warranty system which generates extra paperwork for the dealership for them to claim the money back from Vauxhall for completing the work. This frustration of it not being a financially worthwhile task, is then taken out on the customer, which leads to a reduce customer service and a bad experience felt by the customer. This attitude from the dealership has been met with disgust by the customer and in most cases the customer has made the conscious decision, to never by a Vauxhall again as the aftercare service is so dreadfully poor.

- The customer vehicle is often returned to them with further problems with the heating and ventilation system.

These include:

- 1, Poor heat from the heater which is not sufficient to heat the vehicle.
- 2, The directional controls do not work properly so the owner is unable to demist their windscreen properly in the morning.
- 3, Noisy and vibrating blower motors.
- 4, Burning smell coming from the new motor. (This really distresses the owner as they are so worried the car is going to catch fire at any minute!)

The problems listed means the customer has to then return again to the dealership to sort these new issues out. The owners report that the dealerships to be unhelpful and dismiss the customers concerns with little investigation work to rectify the issue. The Dealerships common stance is that these additional issues are nothing to do with the recall and that all work will be chargeable in investigating the issue. It again goes back to the fact the dealerships are not making any money from this recall and further problems will be dismissed as much as possible by the dealership, to ensure they can focus on the paid work coming in.

The Facebook group initially contacted Peter Hope to help resolve these disputes. Peter did help a tremendous amount and did resolve all the issues to the customer's satisfaction, which is great. It was getting to the stage with so many people, with after recall 2 issues it was overwhelming our admin system, so we have made a email template so the owner of the vehicle could complain directly to Peter Hope to resolve the issues. However I think Peter is struggling to cope as well because many Facebook members report that he does not answer their emails. The volume of complaints does suggest that Recall 2, is NOT resolving all the issues, that the corroded blower motor subjects the HVAC system to, purely because the parts going wrong have not been included to be replaced in the recall and there is not through checking from Vauxhall all is o.k. before the vehicle is handed back to the owner.

- Most dealerships try to charge the customer for the work needed to be completed on the heater system because they believe it is not related to recall 2, this is the main reason why Peter Hope is contacted to ensure the owner is not charged for something they have not caused. This further upsets the customer as they are worried they have to pay large sums of money to fix the heater system which they did not break.
- It seems the new blower motor being fitted may have sporadic quality concerns as lots of Facebook members are complaining the new motor is very noisy and causes the dash to vibrate. When Vauxhall has inspected these complaints, the cause is usually because of the brand new blower

motor is faulty or incorrectly fitted. Sometimes it can take up to two of three new motors to find one that works.

- When Vauxhall diagnose that the wiring harness has melted the customer is usually delayed in getting their car back as it is common practice for the dealership not keep stock of the wiring harness. We really do not understand why it is necessary for the dealership to delay and inconvenience the customer further by not preparing their stock levels accordingly.

## **Recall Paperwork**

The recall paperwork does cause a lot of confusion for the dealership and the customer. Here is a list of the issue we have found.

- The paperwork does not include anywhere that the HVAC system has been fully tested and operational before handing the vehicle back to the customer. This simple check and confirmation by the dealership would ensure quality control of workmanship was addressed and that the technician responsible for carrying out the Recall was aware of that they would have to check the system fully before handover. Any problems identified could then be rectified before handover to the owner and keep high levels of customer satisfaction and trust in the Vauxhall brand.
- There is a tick box on the recall sheet under (Customer Advice) that states “The customer has been advised that the vehicles heating and ventilation system fan can be used in all positions”. There have been many cases reported by Facebook members, that dealerships do not tick the box or argue with the customer that they should tick the box. Why is this simple thing such a sticking point for the dealerships and why do the dealerships not know what to do about this box. The standards between the different dealerships vary so much its frustrating. Some are excellent and there are no issues reported and others are way off the mark. Surely Vauxhall should be internally monitoring this standard, so all dealerships deliver the same service across the country. Vauxhall could have setup a customer feedback system, so they can see firsthand how they are handling this sensitive and emotional recall and pick up on the fact that Recall 2 is not addressing all the issues, faced by the customer as they are left with a heating system that is not fully functional.
- There has been instances where the dealership has had the vehicle in for Recall 2 work and on the checklist sheet they have ticked that the blower motor has been replaced. It then transpires that the dealership has in fact not replaced the blower motor. The dealership then contacts them back to say that another inspection is needed without being specific to why this re-inspection is needed some dealerships do come clean and admit why because they forgot to fit it. This is good they are picking up on this but why is it a common thing? What about the ones they do not pick up on that slip through the net? Is it because they do so many recalls it has become robotic and the vigilance of the task has been lost? Is this inconsistent standard acceptable considering its one of the main components which leads to a vehicle fire?

## **How do the Zafira Owners feel about the recall process?.**

- Zafira Owners feel like second class citizens when they walk in a Vauxhall garage.
- Zafira Owners are really confused to what recall they are receiving from Vauxhall. The common miss understanding is that they are on recall three. This because they have misunderstood that the

original recall was a Field action and not an actual recall. This unfortunately also is true for the staff of Vauxhall dealerships getting confused to what recall number they are completing.

- The Zafira B model does have such a bad reputation that it has affected its market value, dramatically reducing its price in the market, as people do not want to buy them anymore due to fire risk associated with them.
- The Vauxhall Zafira is a budget family car in its own price brand. Many people are stuck with this model and cannot trade up, as other manufactures 7 seater car prices, are a lot higher in the second hand market and because of the large devaluation of the Zafira people have become financially stuck with them.
- Zafira Owners have to manage the children's fear of getting into a Zafira, as the children know it has the potential to catch fire. How this saddens the mothers and fathers who cannot afford to get rid of the car and remove the risk to their children, they have had to endure Vauxhall taking so long sorting this issue out and from what has been discussed here they still have not been given a total and reliable solution to the problem. The saga continues.!

## ECC Models

- The ECC Model shares the following key components as the Zafira B.
  - 1, Air Intake and ducting system
  - 2, Blower motor

The ECC Model also shares some of the failures that the Zafira B has.

- 1, Water can get into the blower motor as no protection available at the air intake to prevent this.
- 2, The blower motor fails due to corrosion as the water sits in the bottom of the blower motor housing corroding the motor.

Vauxhall have assessed and confirmed that the ECC model is not at risk because it does not use the heater resistor so the same defect where the fuse does not blow correctly is not present.

The ECC uses a blower regulator instead of a heater resistor which is not affected by water ingress as it is a sealed unit. However we are not convinced this is the case, as we now have two fire reports from GBB confirming that the fires did start from the glovebox area, with similar burn patterns as witnessed on the Zafira B cars.

There has been an incident where the blower regulator has started to smoke in a Vauxhall dealership and the blower fan would not turn off even with the keys out of the ignition the cause of the smoke was the failing blower regulator. To us this is an early warning sign that the corroded blower motor has electrically and thermally stressed the regulator and caused it fail. Just like we are seeing the speed controllers on the Zafira B's to fail as they have been subjected to the same stresses due to the corroded motor. Yet Vauxhall continue to ignore these early warning signs and do the right thing and commence a full recall of the ECC models.

If there was absolutely no problems with this system and Vauxhall were 100% confident with this system, why have they released a Special Warranty system where the customer has to contact Vauxhall and quote the Special Warranty number 2028320. Why has Vauxhall not upgraded this to full recall for this vehicle so people are made aware of this issue via the postal system? At the

moment Vauxhall are relying on word of mouth from our Facebook page for the work to be completed, which includes fitting the water deflector and the new style blower motor with the drain holes in. Is this the responsible thing to do to protect people from experiencing regulators catching fire or smoking then not being able to turn it off.? Considering our audience reach is only 16,000 owners out of the 250,000 owners. We understand that not all ECC owners are on our page so there is a massive shortfall of owners that are not aware of this issue and the work that can be completed to make these vehicles safe as well. To make matters worse most dealerships do not even know about this special warranty and Vauxhall customer services need to be contacted to help put them right.

## **A good example of a Vauxhall Customer complaint in relation to the recall work 2.**

We have discussed with [...] if her details can be discussed publicly at the Transport select committee meeting and its fine to do this as she is so upset with the events surrounding this complaint.

**Customer Name :** [...]

**Reg Number :** [...]

**Vauxhall Reference Number:** SRNO: [...]

**Date :** 18<sup>th</sup> Jan This was the Initial contact from [...] to [...] from the Vauxhall Zafira car fires Facebook group.

Hi [...] - I'm just looking for a bit of advice if you don't mind - we have a 2014 plate Zafira and had the first recall done last year. We booked it in at [...] [...] Liverpool for the 2 days recall before xmas and when we collected the car we were told a part was needed so we booked in for Friday 6th January to have the work done. We had a phone call that day to say the part had been put into the wrong car and another part would need to be ordered so we couldn't have it back until the day after.

I got a phone call on the Saturday morning which woke me up and the guy just said he was letting me know that the rear parking sensors would need to be disconnected and by law they would have to return it to factory settings so they wouldn't be reconnecting them. I was half asleep so said ok, then I woke up quickly as I realised that this meant that the sensors we had paid an extra £500 for at the point that of purchase will get removed. My husband rang them back literally 2 mins later and discussed the situation - they insisted that they would not reconnect or refund us the cost and that we would have to take it back to [...] in St Helen to get the reversing sensors reconnected. We collected the car that day but they insisted we had to sign to say we had refused the recall - I wrote on the sheet that we were not refusing but they refused to do the work without reconnecting our parking sensors. When we asked for a copy they refused saying it was a legal document.

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> Jan This was our response to Peter Hope asking for his support in the matter.

Recall 2 in December was not completed and [...] was allowed to continue to drive the car even though it had been diagnosed that the wiring loom was needed. Why was [...] not advised it needed a new wiring loom and the system made safe eg Disconnected while the part could be sourced.

- On returning to fit the new part on the 6<sup>th</sup> Jan the wiring loom was fitted to the wrong car we understand mistakes happen but this is worrying.
- When the speed controller was removed the technician saw then the reversing sensor power feed had been cut into 12v heater power feed. This is not ideal due to the 40 amp load on this circuit. This then sparks another question why was a professionally fitted reversing sensor system fitted by Vauxhall at [...] [...] incorrectly fitted to allow the power to be taken from the heating system?.
- I would be concerned that the reversing system fitted was not in fact an Official Vauxhall reversing system but an aftermarket one which does not have the correct connectors to professionally join into the cars wiring loom with a plug.
- [...] currently has refused the recall work based on the fact the reversing system will be disconnected if completed. Which means currently here car is at risk of fire with the added risk of the reversing system compromising the heater loom. I realise this decision is not ideal as the recall work should take precedent but from the customers

point of view, they have panicked at the thought of further costs involved, due to the reversing sensor system not fitted correctly in the first place, being corrected at another garage. Why did [...] [...] not offer to rectify this issue for [...]? They should be able to do the same as [...] [...].?

**Date 24<sup>th</sup> Jan: Response from [...] Manager of the Executive support team.**

Dear [...]

Thank you for your email below. Peter is out of the office today but he has asked that I reply on his behalf to avoid any delay

Please be assured we are currently investigating the issues raised and we are in contact with the customer direct

Thank you again for raising this with us and if you need anything else please feel free to contact me

Best regards

[...]

**Date 31st Jan: Response from [...] another Executive support manager.**

Dear Ms [...]

Please accept my apologies for the delayed response to you.

I have just spoken to [...] in the Service Department of [...] and she has advised me that you have since had the works carried out on your Vauxhall Zafira.

This is a courtesy email to advise you that now all has been resolved I shall go ahead and close your case pending any further contact from yourself.

Should you require any further assistance then please do get in touch.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for contacting Vauxhall Motors and bringing this matter to our attention, and allowing me to assist.

Yours sincerely

[...]

**Date 31st Jan: Response from [...].**

Dear [...]

I am writing to advise that the work has not been carried out and therefore the matter has not been resolved! As per the original information provided to your office, our last with [...] [...] was when we were advised that they were not prepared to do the 2nd recall without reinstating the rear parking sensors. (and we were made to sign to say we had refused the 2nd recall, when in fact this was not the case, we were simply insisting that the parking sensors fitted by [...] [...] should be reinstated). We have not been in contact with them since that date, but as we were keen to have the recall done as soon as possible to make the car in which we transport our 4 foster children safe from the risk of fire, we have booked in to [...] [...] for 10th Feb whilst we awaited your reply.

I am disappointed that even after the worrying poor service thus far, this issue has still not been dealt with.

I look forward to your response.

Regards

[...]

**Date 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb: This was the response from [...]**

Dear Ms [...]

Thank you for your email.



I apologise that I never informed you of the repair being carried out with Lookers on the 10 February. Please be advised that I have spoken to [...] in the Service Department of Lookers in St Helens this morning for you, and he has confirmed to me that they will be carrying the recall along with the refitting of the parking sensors for you.

Please be assured that I will be following this closely for you, and I will update you with the progress of your vehicle.

If I can be of any further assistance at all please do not hesitate to contact me and I will do my up most to assist you.

Yours sincerely

[...]

Executive Support Manager

## Summary

Very poor customer service and even when a serious problem like this has been highlighted to Vauxhall they cannot get it right. The customer has been let down every step of the way on their journey with Vauxhall. The biggest concern was ignored by Vauxhall that [...] was driving around and still is driving around with a Heater loom that has been diagnosed as faulty. That has the potential to catch fire at any minute and all Vauxhall are interested in is that the car is taken back to original garage to have the work completed, at further inconvenience to the customer as Vauxhall [...] Location is more convenient to [...]. (The reason for this is because Lookers St Helens completed the reversing sensor work so they can claim for the extra work to sort out the reversing sensors. [...] [...] cannot claim so cannot do the work its ridiculous.) Where is the sense of urgency to pull out all the stops to get this rectified ASAP rather than let it drag on to suit when Vauxhall can fit it in on the 10<sup>th</sup> Feb.

I think this just shows how Vauxhall are treating their customers as second rate citizens even at the highest level. This car once diagnosed with a faulty wiring loom should have been impounded by Vauxhall and not allowed to go back on the road until the part had been replaced making it safe. This was the case with Recall 1 where Vauxhall would also arrange and pay for a courtesy car, so the customer personal life was not impacted by the faulty car. It seems things have slackened on this recall and Vauxhall are willing to take the risk and put four foster children back in an unsafe car while they try to minimise their financial loss. It is totally disgusting and for us sums up very well Recall 2!

*February 2017*