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## Vehicle Maintenance Guide

There has been much debate recently about the need to legislate for the wider availability of diagnostic tools to reduce dependence on authorised dealers as a restricted source of vehicle maintenance, especially for newer vehicles. In the case of Land Rover, there are fortunately several well respected specialist service providers in each major Capital city and some larger regional areas, where the level of expertise and availability of equipment is arguably as good, if not better than would be found at an Authorised dealership. Additionally, logbook servicing by these specialists not only complies with manufacturer warranty, it may actually exceed the basic requirements.

The old adage - "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" is a somewhat foolish notion when considering around two tons of potential killing machine hurtling down a highway at over 100 KPH, Even if the vehicle never leaves the confines of the suburbs, the effects of a dud alternator or worn tyres will be bad enough, but a brake or transmission failure are too horrible to contemplate. The Fuzz are unlikely to give the benefit of the doubt if your vehicle causes some calamity due to poor maintenance.

If your exhaust looks and sounds like this, it may cause concern at the local shopping centre. Some remedial work may be appropriate.

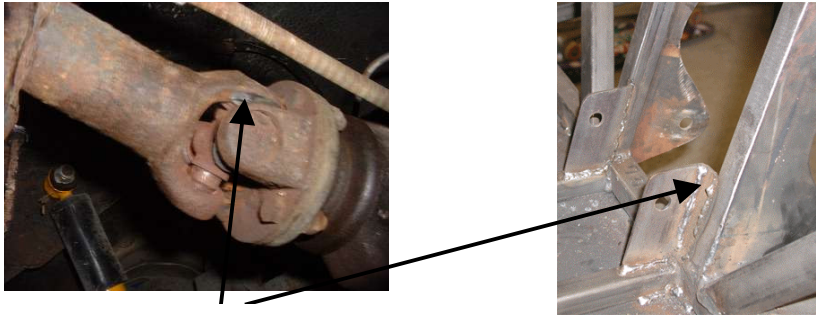


## The logbook service and application of common sense

Vehicle manufacturers do not generally welcome class action lawsuits from customers. The official maintenance schedule is related to this philosophy as well as to the welfare of its dealer network, where far more money is made from labour and parts than on the original sale. However, this does not mean that many of the standard logbook service items are unnecessary, merely that some discretion is needed about the level of service and its frequency. This especially applies to some of the more exotic maintenance elements where the cost of a repair *not* listed in the schedule may be far more important than one that might be deferred for a month or so. The reverse is also true. If a vehicle has a hard life, shortening the maintenance period only makes good sense. Also, a "hard life" can apply arguably more to a vehicle that spends all of its time in city traffic than to one that cruises expressways at high speed. The frequent stops and starts that occur in the former case are highly detrimental to component life.

## The value of being suspicious

From the perspective of someone who has driven various Land Rover models almost exclusively for nearly 30 years, one can only conclude that *any and every* new noise, vibration or misfire are worth serious attention. Vibration could be tyre damage, a bearing or a cracked universal joint. A noise that has arisen suddenly, as distinct from one that has got worse over time may mean imminent failure, but neither should be ignored. Whatever is causing this will certainly fail, probably sooner rather than later and invariably when it will be least convenient and/or dangerous.



Broken Universal joint and cracked weld

## Nothing beats experience

While the staff of an authorised dealer may be excellent, the very nature of the business encourages work to be done strictly “by the book” It is not impossible to get additional services, but a non-dealer specialist is more likely to have the broader experience and greater flexibility to keep an eye open for *anything* known to cause problems on a vehicle of your particular model and age. There are examples of what to look for in our article dealing with Trip Preparation but at the very least, it is prudent to inspect for oil and coolant leaks, including the rear of the engine and anywhere seals and O-rings are fitted. Heater hoses that are hardening, or coolant hoses softening should be considered, along with a check for any worn bushes, shocks or seals in the engine and drive train. By identifying when components and systems are nearing the end of their effective life, they can be replaced as needed, thus eliminating many potential problems that otherwise might occur.

## Upgrade advice

Although it might be a natural reaction to be careful of suggestions to spend money on upgrades, a reliable and reputable specialist will develop a personal relationship with each regular customer to understand how a particular vehicle is used. When appropriate, advice will be given on modifications that will improve performance, reduce fuel costs, improve the ride and handling and maximise vehicle safety. For most drivers, this might be nothing more than a change of tyre type or more frequent oil changes. However, the addition of a HALTEC chip can, for example, vastly improve power and economy and some suspension upgrades will make the vehicle far safer for off-road work. It all comes down to trust in the selection of a service provider with skill and integrity.

