

Changes for the better

Well things are looking up. Re-registration or import of vehicles into Spain has always been challenging which is why specialists like me exist. If it were as easy as I understand it to be in the UK, I would have to find some other way to keep my other half in the way that she has been accustomed; you know living on bread and water and only receiving nutrients from the sea and sun

The latest changes mean that more expats will be able to re-register their vehicles if they bought them after settling in Spain, so I'll try and explain just in case you have a non standard vehicle that until now you have been driving around on UK plates, avoiding the Guardia Civil. Those who read this column regularly, (yes I know that you exist because of the kind comments that you pass on and the tough questions that you set me) will be aware that every now and then I have an "anorak moment", meaning that if I'm not careful I go into detail overload and bore you with a subject which I am passionate about but is just too much for the innocent questioner, so I'll do my best to keep it simple

Change of Residence

Gets a regular mention because it is the simplest way to re-register your vehicle and applies to the majority. This means that you owned the vehicle before settling in Spain, either permanently or part time and has been covered many times before. Details on my website

Not by change of Residence

By inference means that you bought your vehicle after settling in Spain. Whilst many vehicles can be re-registered in these circumstances, not all can and this is where the most confusion, heartache and sometimes expense for drivers arises

European Type Approval .Change Number 1

When vehicles are made for the European market, each version is given a European Type Approval number (a.k.a. Homologation) which will follow this format e13*97/27*0040* This means that the vehicle can be re-registered anywhere in Europe provided that it has not undergone any major changes. Before the European standard, each country issued its own Type Approval number

Until now it has normally not been possible to re-register a vehicle with a country specific approval number, but now in certain circumstances they can

Still with me? Time for some light relief. The other week I was waiting to ask a question of an engineer at the ITV station renowned for his totally inflexible attitude and complete inability to see another's point of view. He was arguing with a young Spaniard whose vehicle had failed on some minor technicality. The engineer was

completely bemused as to why the man was arguing, but when the man in question curled up into a ball, clenched his fists and had tears welling in his eyes, I thought that I'd better come back later. Nice to know that the engineer pees off the locals too!

Emissions standards. Change number 2

Virtually any vehicle can be re-registered under change of Residence or if it has Type Approval irrespective of age; are you reading this bar room lawyer?! Other vehicles may have to have an expensive unique inspection. The biggest stumbling block here has been the requirement to achieve Euro 4 emissions standards, which were introduced in- guess what- 2004; this precluded many vehicles built before that date from being re-registered

Vehicles that meet the standards in force at the time of being built may now be allowed into Spain providing that those standards of emissions are still being met

Caravans and trailers. Change number 3

Here is the good and bad news and follows on from an article I wrote about this a few weeks ago. Caravans and trailers that are presently registered in another country may now be re-registered under the cheaper Change of Residence rules. Also where they have European Type Approval (only introduced for towed vehicles within the past couple of years) they can be re-registered relatively inexpensively without the need for an expensive unique inspection. The bad news? Caravans and Trailers are not registered in the UK or Ireland, so still have to pass the unique inspection. The CRIS certificate is inadequate for this purpose

Commercial vehicles. Change number 4

Including panel vans, pick-ups etc have until now not been allowed on Spanish plates if they are Right-Hand-Drive. The main reason sited is because of "poor vision from the wrong side of the cab". These rules have now been slightly relaxed, but before all of you white van men driving Transits, Sprinters and Dodges get carried away and block my phone lines, please read carefully!

Where a RHD vehicle that is technically classed as commercial is used for private purposes only and not in the course of a business and where the UK log book shows "Private" or "PLG", or "Disabled" then this vehicle may be re-registered as a private vehicle only. If the log book shows "Panel Van" or "Light goods"- forget it and take it home. There is no blanket exemption, each vehicle will be judged individually

More light relief? My first job in Spain was as a legally registered taxi driver working for a firm with signs in Spanish all over the cab. One day whilst parked on the corner of a large roundabout chatting to a friend, as you do when you are a cabbie, an English person drove past me and despite there being enough room for two double decker buses to get by shouted "What a f...ing stupid place to park". Thinking that I was Spanish, he was somewhat surprised by my reply in purest Anglo-Saxon

I should say that about 80% of the enquiries that I receive are for vehicles that are on the face of it straightforward for someone with my experience. The others fall into the above categories and are where there has been the most disappointment and heartache for the drivers. Hopefully, these easing of the regulations will allow more people to re-register their pride and joy and become legal in Spain

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