

The complaint

Mr D complains about how his insurer, Ageas Insurance Limited (Ageas), valued his vehicle as a total loss following an accident.

Any reference to Ageas in this decision includes their agents.

What happened

In June 2025 Mr D was involved in an accident, involving a collision with a truck, causing significant damage to his vehicle. Ageas assessed the damage and concluded repairs would cost more than the market value of the vehicle, so they would treat it as a total loss (write off). Using recognised industry valuation guides they assessed the market value of Mr D's vehicle to be £33,665.67. This was the average of three guide valuations (a fourth was discarded as it was significantly less than the other three). After deduction of the policy excess of £450 this left a net settlement of £33,215.67.

Mr D was unhappy at the valuation, saying it was too low for the make, model and specification of his vehicle. He provided examples of vehicles advertised like his own, at higher prices, including one advertised at £43,500 (but significantly lower mileage). Ageas considered Mr D's challenge but initially maintained their valuation and settlement offer was fair. However, they reviewed their valuation revised their valuation to discard the lowest of the three guide valuations they'd initially used to calculate an average. Discarding the third guide left two guide valuations at an average of £34,782 (£34,332 after deducting the policy excess). However, Mr D remained unhappy, so he complained.

Ageas didn't uphold the complaint. In their final response issued in August 2025, they referred to their revised valuation and to vehicles advertised for sale like Mr D's vehicle. One at £32,000 (same age but lower mileage) and one for £35,980 (newer, with similar mileage). So, they declined to revise their valuation and settlement offer further.

Mr D then complained to this Service, unhappy at the valuation of his vehicle. He said when he initially challenged Ageas's valuation, they said they would revise it for the correct mileage on his vehicle, only to be told subsequently they wouldn't be revising the valuation. He'd missed the opportunity to purchase two replacement vehicles because he didn't think Ageas's valuation offer was fair. Ageas had also said they could only base their valuation on a model of the same year – but they had based their offer on an older vehicle (and different model). He pointed out other vehicles advertised for sale (for example, one of the same year as his but a lower mileage, advertised for £43,500). Nor did Ageas's valuation reflect his vehicle having a towbar, which he said was worth £2,500.

Our investigator didn't uphold the complaint. She noted Ageas had initially offered £33,665.67 (less the policy excess) which they'd subsequently increased to £34,782 following further market research. The investigator had looked at the industry valuation guide figures alongside the figures provided by Ageas and the examples of vehicles advertised for sale provided by Ageas and Mr D. On the specific example provided by Mr D with a much lower mileage at £43,500 she thought the much lower mileage meant it wasn't comparable. On the issue of the towbar, she didn't think it added significant value.

Mr D disagreed with the investigator's view and requested that an ombudsman review the complaint. He said Ageas hadn't used the correct model of his vehicle in their valuations and example vehicles advertised for sale. Nor did the valuation take account of the tow bar fitted to his vehicle, which he had done at a dealer. Nor did he think the valuations took account of correcting the mileage Ageas had initially used.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

My role here is to decide whether Ageas has acted fairly towards Mr D.

The key issue in Mr D's complaint is the valuation of his vehicle as a total loss. He thinks Ageas's valuation is unfair and doesn't reflect the precise model and specification value of his vehicle. Ageas say their valuation is fair, being based on the average of the two highest of the four recognised industry valuation guides they used to value Mr D's vehicle.

In considering the issue of the valuation of Mr D's vehicle, I've first looked at what the policy terms set out. In cases of total loss, the policy provides for the market value of the vehicle to be paid. The policy states, under a heading "*If your car isn't being repaired*":

"If we don't repair your car, we'll assess its market value.

We calculate the market value by looking at what the cost would be to replace your car with one of similar age, type and mileage. We will also take into account the condition of your car just before the incident."

As a Service, our approach to vehicle valuations starts by looking at an insurer's valuation, which we generally expect to be based on relevant industry valuation guides. We'd expect an insurer's valuation to be based on the highest valuation guide figure (or higher). If it was, then we are likely to say it's fair, unless there's other evidence to say this is unfair (or that an insurer can evidence their offer is fair where it's lower than the highest guide value).

I've then looked at the valuations for Mr D's vehicle. Ageas obtained three valuations from recognised industry guides as follows:

- (A) £33,806
- (B) £31,433
- (C) £35,758
- (D) £19,420

Initially, Ageas offered Mr D the average of the three highest valuations, discounting the valuation from (D) given how far it was below the other three. They subsequently also discounted the valuation from (B) to give a revised (two guide) average of £34,782.

As part of our investigation, we obtained valuations from the same four guides, as follows:

- (A) £34,123
- (B) £31,500
- (C) £32,802
- (D) £19,420

Using these figures, Ageas's revised valuation and settlement offer is below the highest valuation we obtained, which means it is in line with the approach we adopt as a Service. So, we would start from the premise the offer was fair, given that the valuation guides use

data from across the market when producing a valuation for a vehicle make and model, based on the vehicle registration of the vehicle being valued, make, model, specification and mileage at the time of the loss.

I've also then considered the various examples of vehicles advertised for sales, provided by Mr G and by Ageas (the latter in some cases part of the overall valuation report that includes the industry valuation guide figures. The example provided by Mr D advertised at £43,500 is of the same year as his vehicle, but with a mileage nearly half of his vehicle's mileage. Which, on its own doesn't persuade me Ageas's valuation is unfair. The overall valuation report produced to support Ageas's revised valuation has two example vehicles, one of which is the same year as Mr D's vehicle (the the newer of the two registration plates for the year, and with a slightly lower mileage – for £32,000). The second for a vehicle one-year younger, similar mileage at £35,980). Neither persuade me Ageas's offer is too low.

Mr D also says his vehicle was fitted with a tow bar and he's provided an invoice for £1,418 dated 2021. However, of itself this doesn't mean this figure should be added to the vehicle valuation as non-factory fitted extras don't necessarily add value, not to the extent of their cost, even though they may make a vehicle more saleable.

On the make and model of vehicle used, the details of Mr D's vehicle were used by Ageas in their valuations, from the recognised industry guides, as they were in the valuation guide figures we obtained independently from the same valuation guides. They also use the vehicle registration for Mr D's vehicle and the correct mileage figure, so I'm persuaded that has been taken account of.

So, I've concluded Ageas have acted fairly and reasonably in their valuation of Mr D's vehicle, so I won't be asking them to increase their offer.

My final decision

For the reasons set out above, my final decision is that I don't uphold Mr D's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr D to accept or reject my decision before 5 March 2026.

Paul King
Ombudsman