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# CONTENTS

**H**appy New Year to all of our readers. We hope you had a prosperous holiday season. Our first edition of 2020 begins with a controversial announcement from Climate Action Minister, Richard Bruton. The Bill aims to enshrine in law the approach outlined in the Climate Action Plan, including: establishing a 2050 emissions reduction target in law and banning the sale of fossil fuel cars by 2030. Chairperson of the National Transport Assembly Committee (NTAC), and Spokesperson on Taxis, Tony Roe has criticised both the plan and Minister Bruton along with Minister for Transport, Shane Ross, accusing the government of trying to “grab headlines”.

In other news, attempting to adapt to the changes within the taxi industry, Xpert Taxis has decided to merge with National Radio Cabs in a new company called NXT which hopes to launch a fleet of hydrogen cars in the next few years.

Brian Crinion, director of Spectrum Optimise, a company that offers a range of services to help promote better workplace environments, has a few handy tips for drivers to take care of their musculoskeletal health in order to avoid problems in the future.

In what is becoming a worryingly regular trend a number of drivers have been attacked and or injured on the job since our last edition. In one instance an innocent taxi driver was lucky to escape with his life after being caught in the crossfire of the Drogheda feud. The victim was shot twice in the back while sitting in his vehicle on the Bridge of Peace shortly after 6pm.

Another incident occurred just across the border in County Tyrone a Taxi Driver was hospitalised following a brutal attack by a passenger. The assault is alleged to have taken place in the early hours of the morning near Glebe Gardens, Strabane. The injured man attended hospital for treatment to multiple head injuries, and an 18-year-old man was arrested by police investigating the attack.

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# ROE SLAMS GOVERNMENT ON CLIMATE ACTION BILL

Tony Roe, Chairperson of the National Transport Assembly Committee (NTAC) and Spokesperson on taxis has spoken out on progress, standards and quality in the taxi industry.

**T**axi drivers are continuing to develop their taxis by upgrading and drivers are now working longer hours to supply a satisfactory public service vehicle, i.e a taxi. Unlike other European countries, the removal of the Value Added Tax (VAT), and also the removal of the VRT reduction to taxi drivers. This helps taxi drivers immensely, and supplies them with the necessary tools to provide a more helpful and productive service. A simple gesture makes it more amenable to everyone in the taxi industry and transport development,” he said.

He went on to say that come election time, politicians are very quick to make superficial promises which are often disingenuous and unhelpful.

“Action from politicians concerning public service vehicle operators is badly needed and is sadly lacking here. When the taxi industry is spoken of, it tends to be in a negative way which disregards the great work being done by taxi drivers driving state of the art, wheelchair accessible vehicles, and unlike most European countries, we see no concessions.

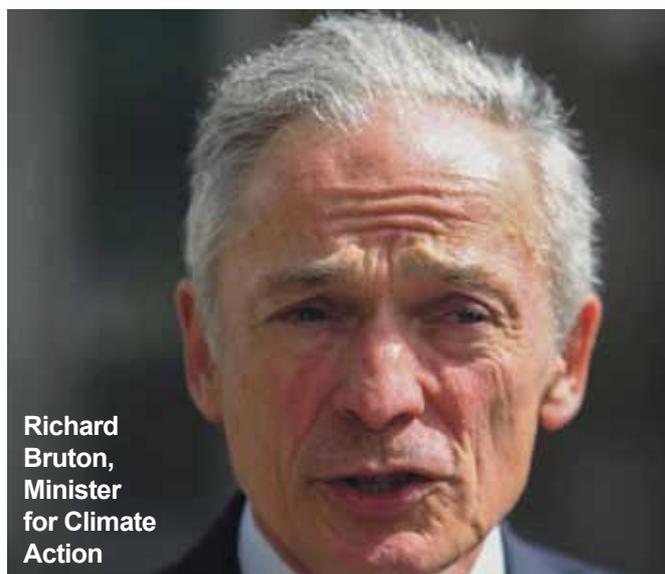
He went on to say that while politicians are quick to talk about England, and London Taxis, and Spain which have state of the art vehicles, they omit to mention the concessions and incentives available to drivers in these regions, further stating that in order to raise money for upgrades drivers in Ireland are forced to work longer hours, thereby reducing the lifespan of their vehicles.

He said that taxi regulations are not the same as elsewhere and Ireland must look at the issuing of taxi licences at source, and this must be addressed by the National Transport Authority and the Minister for Transport, Shane Ross, in a way that is productive, and not only pro-active, but reactive as well.

Meanwhile, the Minister for Climate Action and Environment Richard Bruton recently published the Draft General Scheme of the Climate Action (Amendment) Bill 2019 and confirmed that it is priority legislation for the Government in the new Dáil term.

The Climate Action Plan was published earlier this year, and the bill aims to enshrine in law the approach outlined within it, including:

Establishing a 2050 emissions reduction target in law, making the adoption of carbon budgets a legal requirement and banning the sale of fossil fuel cars by 2030.



Richard Bruton, Minister for Climate Action

The Minister is continuing to refine some of the measures and approaches set out in the Bill and will work with the All-Party Oireachtas Committee which has played a very valuable role in helping develop the approach outlined in the Climate Action Plan.

A draft Head is being developed in consultation with the relevant Government Departments to address the commitment in the National Development Plan and Climate Action Plan to introduce legislation to ban the registration of new fossil fuel cars from 2030 and to stop the granting of NCTs from 2045 (Head 16 is acting as a placeholder). In effect, from 2030 it will not be possible to register any new car which runs on fossil fuel. This will be developed further in consultation with the relevant Departments concerned and will be submitted to Government for approval in the coming months.

“We must act now and leave a better, healthier, more sustainable Ireland for future generations. Accountability is the key to making progress. We have a very short time to act. We must put in place a strong framework to ensure every sector, every policy, every decision delivers on the transformation that is required. Today represents a hugely important step in putting in place the necessary arrangements to achieve this objective,” said Minister Bruton.



Fianna Fail is also jumping on the bandwagon, with both parties vying with each other to take credit for the plans to reduce carbon emissions.

Fianna Fáil spokesperson on climate action and environment Jack Chambers accused Fine Gael of attempting to “own a key climate response” that was called for by all parties almost a year ago.

“It is welcome that the Oireachtas may finally have the opportunity to examine and progress this much needed legislation. But it is extremely disappointing that this is being described as a Fine Gael initiative,” he said.

Brian Cooke, Director General of the Society of the Irish Motor Industry, says that is a premature move:

“Other European markets are thinking more about 2040. We feel that would be a more realistic target. In the past, we’ve set targets and deadlines without having a plan. This is putting the cart before the horse.”

Commenting on this, Roe said:

“We see pie in the sky figures coming back from the Minister for Transport, the latest of which is that he wants to have all electric cars by 2030. These pie in the sky figures always seem to come when there is an election looming. Climate Action Minister, Richard Bruton’s latest announcement is that he is going to outlaw all petrol and diesel cars by 2030. There is a complete disregard for the €2b a year that’s taken back on taxes in this,” he said.

He went on to say that such a move could potentially create mass unemployment in terms of people who work in petrol stations etc and that Minister Bruton seems to be leaving a lot of details out in the pursuit of making headlines.

“The government’s lack of thought here has to be

criticised. Their track record at the moment on roads, systems is a complete shambles. We’re are looking at a system here where the Irish government are being fined €15, 500 a day due to the poor quality of air that we have, particularly around the city. We have highlighted this in the past through a survey that we did which found that taxi drivers are wasting between five and nine litres of fuel every day due to rank closures, which is definitely a contributing factor. We in the taxi industry are all working to lower chronic fumes, pollution and CO2 emissions, and how are we to do this if we are being forced onto the roads,” he said.

He went on to say that the NTAC have called for the reinstatement of ranks that have been closed and are lying dormant apart from everyday motorists who are using them for parking spaces.

“We cant understand the government’s position on this. The public are being deprived of access to taxis in heavy footfall areas. Taxis should be waiting there, ready to pick up passengers instead of driving around contaminating the roads,” he said.

He also pointed out that taxi drivers in Ireland are making less than ever, and while they are for tax, insurance etc, things like the removal of the luggage charge among other things is reducing their income.

“We would like to see some initiative coming back from the government here that is going to be beneficial for everybody,” he said.

At the time of print, neither the Department of Transport, nor the Department of Climate action had responded to requests for comment.

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# ALLEGED SEXUAL ASSAULT BY 'BOGUS DRIVER'

GARDAI have launched an investigation following an alleged sexual assault of a woman by a suspected bogus taxi driver near Howth in Dublin.

**N**o arrests have currently been made. It is understood that a pavement in the area was cordoned off until 12pm the following day. A number of posts have been shared by concerned social media users over the allegation.

A spokesman for An Garda Síochána have asked for any witnesses in the area to come forward.

A Garda spokesperson said: "Gardaí are investigating a sexual assault that is reported to have occurred in the Sutton

Cross area near Howth, in the early hours of Saturday November 23 2019.

Gardaí are appealing for anyone who may have information, particularly anyone who may have travelled on the Dublin Road, Sutton, Dublin 13 between 3:30-4:10am who observed any suspicious behaviour, or any road users in the area who may have camera footage to contact Raheny Garda Station on 01 666 4300, the Garda Confidential Line on 1800 666 111 or any Garda Station.

## GARDA OPERATION TARGETS DRIVERS

An operation targeting taxi drivers in Naas was carried out recently.

**T**he joint operation between Roads Policing Unit Naas (Kildare Garda Traffic Division) and the National Transport Authority (Taxi Regulator) targeted "unscrupulous" taxi drivers operating in breach of regulations.

Gardaí say checkpoints were carried out at various locations and ranks were inspected.

Numerous offences were detected ranging from: Meters not switched on/running; Drivers not assigned to taxi;

Areas Stickers not in place; Required safety equipment not in place; Taxis standing – not at appropriate taxi rank; Required driver identification not on display; One taxi was taken out of service for a period of time for repairs to be carried out re lighting.

"All above breaches received on the spot fines. An Garda Síochána and the NTA would like to thank the public for their cooperation during this operation," said a Garda spokesperson.

## TECH TAKEOVER

Tech has been the driving force behind the taxi industry's evolution and it's not slowing down.

**D**river and traditional companies have been thinking on their feet to keep up with new apps. Sitting in a rank in front of taxi driver Jim Waldron is a line of Dublin cabs.

Looking along the roofs, Waldron recognises antennas attached to the top of each car and attributes them to different taxi companies around the city.

"There's Lynk and National Radio Cab, just to name a few," he tells Fora when we speak to him on Tuesday morning. Inside there are also plenty of phone apps open using different services to scour the city for fares.

"They are all using a mix, and I think that's what's happening with a lot of guys," Waldron said. "There's a YouTube video and a guy has six different phones on the dash for different

companies. You're probably better off because you can pick and choose," he explained.

When it comes to apps, Free Now is the dominant player. The company is set to have some more competition as Uber rival Bolt looks like it is eyeing up an entry to Ireland's ranks. Fora reported earlier this week that the Estonian ride-hailing company is hiring a country manager based in the capital to launch its operations.

Any new player in the Irish market faces slightly different challenges to our European peers, with Irish law allowing users to only book fully-licensed taxi drivers.

It's apparent when speaking with Waldron and other industry members that these apps have transformed the way that taxi drivers do business.

## Changing patterns

With apps improving user experience and making it easier to book a taxi in minutes, traditional taxi companies have had to invest in their tech systems to entice customers that now expect seamless service.

iCabbi, a Dublin-based taxi software company that was acquired by French auto giant Renault in 2018, provides different tools to taxi companies, including technology that automates bookings made online and through an app. It also has voice recognition software.

“The core product is the dispatch product. Your booking comes in, the system automates it and sends it out to the driver,” Sinead Gillett, the head of content at iCabbi, told Fora.

She said the biggest tech-driven change for the taxi industry in Ireland is automation.

“Ten years ago you would have just had tons and tons of operators taking more bookings so the more people that you can get to use an app, the less of a human element is needed,” she explained.

“All taxi drivers are trying to automate their business by 60% or 70% and there are always going to be people who want to talk to an operator,” she said.

iCabbi is focused on getting the driver to passenger in the shortest amount of time possible and also has developed an API that allows other services to tap into the technology, like payment providers.

The company said it has helped Lynk Taxis grow its fleet from 500 to 1,500 cars through its technology.

Vincent Kearns, chief executive of Xpert taxis, told Fora his company has also invested in tech to keep apace.

“App companies like Uber brought the change and for the traditional companies like ourselves – who always adopted new tech – knew we had to be flexible in a changing environment and that’s why we are still here,” he said.

His company provides services for corporate accounts in the city and throughout Ireland including the multinationals, legal firms, banks and hospitals.

Tech won’t cut it on its own. Kearns said for the company to maintain its market share it has gone on the acquisition trail.

“As part of the changing environment, we’ve acquired a lot of smaller companies. Mergers and acquisitions are the way forward in the industry,” he explained.

Thanks to the change the apps have brought, Kearns said a lot of smaller companies have “gone by the wayside”.

## Pattern changes

Dublin Taxi drivers first turned to the Hailo app when it launched in 2012. It was set up by three London taxi drivers and the app worked by allocating jobs to the nearest car.

Hailo performed strongly in Ireland before it was merged with MyTaxi in 2016 and was rebranded. The app went through another facelift last February to become Free Now, after Daimler and BMW merged various mobility service companies including taxi-hailing apps Mytaxi, Clever, Beat and Kapten to launch a uniform service across 100 European cities.

Earlier this week, taxi drivers that use the app were notified that from 13 January the commission they pay to the company from each fare would increase from 12% to 15%. As a spokesman for the National Private Hire and Taxi



Association, Waldron told Fora the change would be noticed by taxi drivers that use the app.

In a response to questions posed by Fora, a Free Now spokesperson said in a statement the company decided to increase the commission to “be in line with the rate applied in the UK since last August.”

“While the price of most things has increased over that time, we have not changed our 12% commission structure and have kept it low for as long as possible including over the exceptionally busy Christmas period that has just passed,” the spokesperson said.

The company said it has “transformed the taxi sector in this country, with passengers and drivers benefiting hugely from the ease-of-use a ride-hailing taxi app has offered”.

Despite the prospect of increased competition, Free Now is a fixture among the industry. According to the latest National Transport Authority figures, there were a total of 20,733 licences issued this year, while Free Now said it has expanded the fleet using the app to more than 14,000 drivers and intends to continue to grow that number and invest in developing the app. was easy. An engineer called to my house and set me up in minutes. He showed me how to use the device and it was incredibly simple to get to grips with and use straight away.”

## Smoother transactions and better customer service

“BOIPA has definitely helped me overcome my previous challenges when it comes to payment collection. It has helped greatly with the connectivity issues I had previously encountered. Also, people can now see that I accept cards (with in car signage) and it saves me having to detour to ATMs to get cash, so that’s a bonus. It’s been great for customer satisfaction”

“For example, it could be late at night and I’m with a couple of other taxi’s waiting for customers at a rank. Customers ask the taxis if we accept cards, and if the other guys don’t, I win the business. That’s happened quite a few times. Yes, it’s definitely helping me win business.”

## Would you recommend BOIPA?

“Of course! It’s reasonably priced and has great connectivity and they are at the end of the phone if there is a problem. Getting up and running was incredibly quick and easy so all in all, I will definitely recommend BOIPA to other taxi drivers.”

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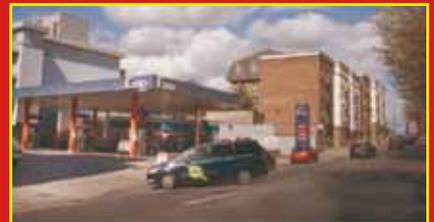
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## IRISHMAN INJURED IN CANADA TAXI CRASH

An Irishman is in a serious condition after an early-morning crash which killed a taxi driver in Canada.

It's believed the Monaghan man, in his 20s, was driving a rented vehicle when he collided with a Vancouver cab with two passengers.

The taxi driver, 28, was taken to hospital but pronounced dead after the two-vehicle collision which happened at 3.30am on December 29.

A spokesman for Vancouver Police told the Irish Mirror they believe "speed was a factor" in the tragic incident.

He said: "Vancouver Police are investigating an early-morning collision that killed a cab driver and sent three others to hospital with injuries.

"The collision occurred around 3:30 December 29 at the intersection of 1st Avenue and Renfrew Street, when a car2go smart car collided with a Yellow Cab carrying two passengers.

"The force of the collision sent the taxi into the Royal Bank on the southeast corner, causing damage to the building.

"VPD officers and paramedics from BC Ambulance Service arrived moments later and provided first aid.

"Both drivers were taken to hospital, where the 28-year-old male taxi driver was pronounced dead.

"The driver of the car2go – a man in his 20s – remains in hospital with serious injuries.

"Two passengers in the taxi were also taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

"This is Vancouver's 14th traffic-related fatality of 2019.

"VPD's Collision Investigation Unit is now collecting evidence. The Independent Investigations Office has been notified.

"Anyone who witnessed the collision, or saw the vehicles driving prior to the crash, is asked to call the VPD Collision Investigation Unit at 604-717-3012."

The Department of Foreign Affairs said it was "aware of the case and stands ready to provide consular assistance to all including the family involved".

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## DRIVER CRASHES INTO LAMPPOST DURING ATTACK

A Dublin taxi driver had a lucky escape when his car ploughed into a lamppost after he was assaulted by a passenger in the early hours of Saturday morning.

The driver, who is in his mid-30s, was treated for minor injuries following the crash on Lower Kilmacud Road, Stillorgan, south Dublin at around 2.30am on December 28.

His alleged attacker fled the scene on foot while the driver was taken to hospital to be treated for his injuries. It is understood the cabbie picked up the attacker and a woman in the Sandymount area.

He dropped the woman off before heading for Kilmacud

Road where the passenger suddenly became violent, grabbing the driver by the neck and then punching him.

The driver then lost control of the taxi, causing it to crash into the lamppost.

A Garda spokeswoman told Dublin Live they are continuing to investigate the incident.

She said: "Gardaí are investigating an assault that occurred on the Kilmacud Rd lower, Stillorgan Co Dublin on Dec 28, 2019 at approximately 2.30am.

# ESTONIAN TAX-HAILING COMPANY PLANNING IRISH LAUNCH

**BOLT, THE ESTONIAN ride-hailing company, is drawing up plans to launch its taxi app services in Dublin.**

**T**he manager will be responsible for overseeing drivers, logistics and navigating regulation. “Bolt is currently researching the possibility of opening its operations in Ireland,” a spokesperson for the company said when asked about the ad. She declined to comment any further on questions around the shape an Irish launch may take.

Bolt, formerly known as Taxify, has been aggressively expanding around Europe and has become a notable headache for Uber, launching in the key London market last year where the US company has scuffled with regulatory bans.

Similar to Uber, Bolt has ventured beyond ride-hailing and taxi operations with services like food delivery and e-scooter hire.

Headed up by chief executive and co-founder Markus Villig, the company has raised over \$240 million from several venture capital firms as well as German carmaker Daimler and Chinese ride-hailing giant Didi Chuxing.

Its \$67 million series D round last year valued the company at over \$1 billion.

## Irish launch

If launched successfully in Dublin, Bolt would be entering a competitive market for taxi services but one with limitations.

The model of ride-sharing with regular drivers made famous by Uber does not operate here. Users of the Uber app in Ireland can only book fully-licensed taxi drivers.

Uber has lobbied the Irish government for years to loosen up regulations that would allow the operation of its core business model and has pitched limited trials to get the ball rolling but to no avail.

Despite challenges on that front, the company has launched its food delivery unit Uber Eats in some Irish cities.

Should Bolt launch taxi operations in Ireland, it could follow a similar model to Free Now, the taxi-hailing app owned by BMW and Daimler, a Bolt investor.

It too uses fully-licensed taxi drivers. The company claims to have carried 16 million passengers in Ireland in 2018. It has a considerable presence in the country has been active in the market for several years, under different brand names.

There are also several Irish-founded taxi booking apps on the market including Lynk and the still relatively new player Flag.

# CORK DRIVER SHOWS XMAS SPIRIT

**If launched successfully in Dublin, Bolt would be entering a competitive market for taxi services but one with limitations.**

**G**lynn Quilter - who owns Killeady Cabs - ran his services for free on Christmas Day for families looking to bring loved ones home from the hospital or a nursing home.

This was done completely free of charge and was available to all families in Innishannon, Killeady, Crossbarry and Ballinhassig.

Making the announcement on social media, Glynn said: “If there are any families in Innishannon, Killeady Crossbarry and Ballinhassig who have family in hospital or a nursing home and would like to bring them home for Christmas Day, I’d be delighted to offer my services free of charge. My taxi is a wheelchair accessible taxi so no problem there, call me and we will sort it out.”

The post got a massive response from all parts of



Cork, with thousands of people sharing and writing to support Glynn.

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# DRIVER SET-UPON BY GANG AND ROBBED

**A man who stole cash from a taxi driver's wallet while the driver was set upon by a group of youths has been given a two-year suspended sentence.**

**T**erence Gavin (27) with an address at Moyne Park, Baldoy, Dublin pleaded guilty at Dublin Circuit Criminal Court to stealing €320 cash from Imram Shahzad at the same address on August 4, 2016.

The court heard today that Gavin was driven home by Mr Shahzad on the night in question and was asked to pay his fare before he called out to a group of teenage boys in a nearby halting site.

The teenagers set upon Mr Shahzad, punching him in the torso and head. One of them threw a stone through the windscreen of the taxi and shattered it.

While this was happening, Gavin took Mr Shahzad's wallet and emptied it of €320 before making off. He was later identified from CCTV footage of the pub Mr Shahzad him picked him up from.

The teenagers have never been identified.

Gavin, who works as a flooring contractor, had €5620 in court for Mr Shahzad as a token of remorse and to cover the money stolen and windscreen damage. He has 12 previous convictions, including for theft, road traffic offences and



threatening to cause serious harm.

A victim impact statement by Mr Shahzad was handed in to court, but not read out.

Handing down sentence, Judge Martin Nolan said he must sentence Gavin on the charge of theft before the court and not on the assault. "This man was not responsible for the attack and his wrong-doing was stealing," he said.

He handed down a two-year sentence and suspended it on a number of conditions, including that Gavin pay over the cash to Mr Shahzad.

Patrick Reynolds BL, defending, accepted the theft was "aggravated by the circumstances" and his client made "a very, very bad mistake" on the night in question. He said he had turned his life around in the intervening years since the theft and was now working and supporting two families.

He said Gavin didn't have a drink or drugs problem, but was drunk on the night in question. "He doesn't have much memory of what happened," he said.

## LYNK RELEASE 2019 FIGURES

**A Dublin passenger bizarrely spent over €700 on a taxi journey from Dublin to Mayo and back.**

**I**n an attempt to get to an important meeting on time, the business passenger clocked up a whopping €751 on the trip from the capital to the western county before returning.

In contrast to this, the shortest trip taken was from the Shelbourne Hotel to Grafton Street, figures from Lync taxi app revealed.

One Lync driver revealed the most hilarious comment of the year as one passenger said: "I thought Ariana Grande was a font," when the American popstar played the 3Arena.

And the oddest request the Lync team had this year was

a woman looking to transport her budgie from Dublin to Brussels after no airline would allow her to travel with it.

Unfortunately a total of 22 passengers legged it without paying and a further 57 got sick in the taxi.

According to the report, the most common items customers left behind were phones (32%), wallets or bags (22%) and shopping (13%).

In fact, one unfortunate bride-to-be left her wedding dress behind having forgotten it was in the boot.

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# STANDING FOR HIRE DRIVER TO BE SENTENCED

A taxi driver who was observed 'standing for hire' outside a pub and nightclub in Limerick city centre will be sentenced in the coming months.

**T**homas Burke, 68, who has an address in Ennis was before Limerick District Court relating to an incident on April 13, 2019.

Garda Christopher O'Mara told Judge Marian O'Leary he was on duty at Howley's Quay shortly before midnight when he encountered a taxi parked across the road from the pub.

He said the roof light was illuminated and that he observed the taxi for "at least three minutes". He said nobody got into or out of the Ford Mondeo during that time.

A TAXI driver who was observed 'standing for hire' outside a pub and nightclub in Limerick city centre will be sentenced in the new year.

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He said the roof light was illuminated and that he observed the taxi for "at least three minutes". He said nobody got into or out of the Ford Mondeo during that time.

Garda O'Mara said the location where Mr Burke was

stopped was not a designated taxi rank and that he approached the vehicle and spoke to him.

He told the court the defendant denied he was standing for hire and that he had been contacted by phone by a potential passenger. He also claimed he was unable to turn off the roof light.

"I was satisfied he was standing for hire," said Garda O'Mara who later informed the National Transport Authority.

In his evidence Mr Burke, said he had dropped a person off who had paid him in coins. He said the man had told him to wait for a couple of minutes and that he was putting the coins into a sorting machine when approached by Garda O'Mara.

"I dropped a fella off, he said wait a minute and drive away if I'm not out," he said adding he panicked when the garda patrol car pulled up in front of him.

Mr Burke added that there is a problem with private cars parking in taxi ranks and that he couldn't get into a rank on the night.

Judge O'Leary said she was satisfied the State had proven its case and indicated she will impose penalty in February.

A separate prosecution which has been brought by the NTA relating to the condition Mr Burke's meter was also adjourned.

## TAXISEEN

Taxiseen.ie is a hailing app with "NO Commission Fees."

**I**t is available to download free to all Cork City and surrounding area drivers. All drivers who join must meet all National Transport Authority regulations. All drivers must provide a copy of their licences and insurance. All drivers must facilitate credit card payments.

At present Taxiseen hailing app is for immediate hire only. It operates on the basis of nearest driver gets the job. No special drivers. It is hoped that many drivers will avail of this opportunity and play an active role in promoting this commission FREE app. A rear window display like the one seen here costs only €25 euro. Taxi drivers can advertise their business themselves. Remember we are asked to promote other businesses.

This is a genuine opportunity to develop a commission FREE app for taxi drivers themselves who will keep all their own earnings.



It is envisaged that when successful a flat weekly charge of €3 euro would be required to keep the driver data updated and reply to any queries from customers and drivers, and to maintain the web site. This charge will also go to improve the services on the app.

Drivers can be assured Taxiseen will be a success if they all play their part. Please give it a go what have you to lose, but all to gain "NO COMMISSION FEES" all earnings kept by yourself as it should be.!

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## NEW TOYOTA COROLLA SALOON HYBRID – QUIETLY CONFIDENT

In a car market in love with hatchbacks, estates and SUV's, the new Toyota Corolla Saloon may seem like a brave move by the Japanese car manufacturing giant. However, the saloon edition of the 'World's Best-Selling Car' is a rational and well-resolved proposition, which is capturing the hearts of taxi drivers across Ireland.

### Technical Spec

The new Corolla Saloon sits on the longer of the two Corolla wheelbases, so it does offer the same slightly larger rear cabin as the Touring Sports estate, and is sure to attract current Toyota Avensis owners (following the end of its life-cycle in 2018), along with conquest customers from rival brands too. While the Avensis was never available with a hybrid powertrain, the new Corolla Saloon comes exclusively with a self-charging, petrol-electric hybrid unit. The Corolla Saloon Hybrid is available in a full compliment of trim levels – Aura, Luna, Luna Sport, and Sol – with a 1.8-litre petrol-electric powertrain producing 122bhp and impressive torque for an instant rush of acceleration. All models in the Toyota Corolla Hybrid family come with an electronically controlled Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) and it contributes greatly to the excellent fuel economy achievable across the range.

### Stylish Good Looks

Blessed with style and substance, the new Corolla Saloon is a handsome car in its own right. To differentiate the Corolla Saloon from the equally stylish Hatchback, Toyota have provided the saloon with different bumpers, headlights, and tail-lights, while the cabin is pretty much identical to those of the hatchback and estate. This translates into excellent fit and finish on the facia, with soft-touch materials evident throughout the cabin. Build quality is of the usual high standard that we have come to expect from Toyota, while a big boot makes the Corolla Saloon a practical proposition for families, and company car drivers alike. With a capacity of 471-litres, the boot is large enough to fit a pair of large suitcases, and some smaller bags too.



### Car On Review

My review car was a Corolla Saloon Hybrid in Luna Sport specification, and it looked terrific in Ultra Silver metallic paint. While all trim levels in the Corolla range come well equipped, key Luna Sport features include 17" bi-tone black machine-faced alloy wheels, rear privacy glass, piano black upper front grille, chrome insert on upper front grille, dusk sensor, rain sensor, remote door locks, an underbody protection cover, drive mode selector, rear-view camera, front ventilated disc, high-mounted stop lamp (LED), LED rear brake lights, LED rear combination lamps, LED daytime running lights, Toyota Touch™ 2 with 'Go' navigation system, and Toyota Touch™ 2 multimedia system, along with a comprehensive suite of safety features for ultimate driving confidence. Capable of sprinting from 0-100km/h in just 11.0-seconds, the Corolla Saloon Hybrid can reach a top speed of 180km/h, and can return a fuel consumption figure as low as 3.4l/100km (up to 83mpg).

### Driving Dynamics

The Corolla Saloon has excellent space in the front for two adults, while passengers in the rear are provided with good head, elbow and legroom too. My review car performed admirably well on a variety of road surfaces, with very little wind noise from around the door mirrors. At a steady motorway speed, the car's engine tone is hardly noticeable at all, while excellent driving dynamics ensure that the car remains composed when faced with a twisty country road too.

### Pricing

Pricing for the new Toyota Corolla Saloon Hybrid starts at a very reasonable €26,920 (ex-delivery). While all Toyota vehicles are built to exceptional standards, a 3-year/100,000km warranty comes as standard. However, Hybrid vehicles have fewer parts that require servicing, and those that do are inherently durable to extend service intervals. Hybrid components within the drivetrain system have a 5-year/100,000km warranty for peace-of-mind motoring.

# TIPS FOR DRIVERS



Is sitting behind the wheel all day taxi-ing on your back? It might be time to get checked. The NCT isn't the only test you need to carry out.

**T**axi drivers know all about having to watch out for sudden traffic hazards on a daily basis, but as workers who spend a huge amount of time behind the wheel, they also need to watch out for themselves, and their wellbeing.

When it comes to driving for a living, how you are sitting, posture behind the wheel and the position of your seat can have a huge impact on your musculoskeletal health down the line.

Their vehicle is essentially their office and as such, it should be treated with the same health and safety considerations.

Brian Crinion, director of Spectrum Optimise, a company that offers a range of services to help promote better workplace environments, says employers have a duty of care to ensure their staff are ergonomically safe; whether those employees are in the office answering calls, or out on the road.

"Drivers are often neglected when it comes to ergonomic assessments, but their health and wellbeing is just as important as someone who is working in an office environment," says the chartered physiotherapist and ergonomics expert.

He added: "Sitting in the wrong position can be taxing on a person mentally as well as physically. This is quite dangerous for those who drive for long periods of time, as driver fatigue is one of the top causes of vehicle collisions. It is therefore prudent that employers offer staff an ergonomic assessment carried out to ensure that drivers have their seats adjusted correctly for their unique characteristics, posture, work practices and needs."

Brian and his team at Spectrum Optimise have carried

out over 8,000 evaluations for companies such as The Happy Pear, Collingwood Health, Allianz, and Pitney Bowes.

While Brian recommends an ergonomics assessment for optimal health and wellbeing behind the wheel, there are a few checks employees can do themselves to ensure they are sitting safely in the driver's seat.

**Raise the seat:** Adjust the seat so your hips are in line with or slightly lower than your knees.

**Get support:** Adjust the cushioned part you sit on (either pump it up or down), so that your thighs are fully supported. There should be a more even pressure along the thighs with a 2-4 finger breadth distance between the seat and the backs of the knees.

**Don't recline:** The back of the seat should provide continuous support along the length of your back, so avoid reclining the seat too far. Roll the seat back just enough so you are sitting at a slight angle, ensuring that your shoulders are behind your hips and not in line with them or ahead of them. The ideal angle is 104°, but overall it should feel comfortable!

**Check the wheel:** Adjust the steering wheel rearwards and downwards for easy reach. In terms of height, your chin should be in line with the top of the wheel. When reaching for the wheel, ensure there is a slight bend in your elbows, and the wheel should be a minimum of 10" inches away from the driver's breastbone.

**Relax the upper body:** Place hands at a 9 and 3 o'clock position, this will allow your shoulders to relax and take pressure off your neck, especially important for long journeys. Ensure that your head is in a neutral position and you can see all your mirrors without straining your neck.

# SUSPENDED SENTENCE FOR RACIST ATTACK ON DRIVER

**A man who racially abused and attacked a taxi driver has received a fully suspended sentence.**

**C**live Mason (43) claimed to be a garda while attacking the man and demanded that he get out of the car. Mason presented himself to gardaí after footage of the assault began to circulate on social media and news websites.

Mason of The Close, Robswall, Malahide, Dublin pleaded guilty at Dublin Circuit Criminal Court to assault causing harm at Malahide Road, Donnycarney, on April 21, last.

Detective Garda Andrew Fox told Dara Hayes BL, prosecuting, that Samuel Banjoko Johnson was originally from Nigeria and was a chartered accountant by trade. Mr Johnson became a full time taxi driver as a result of the recession.

Det Gda Fox said that on the date in question, Mr Johnson picked up the accused man on Baggot Street who asked to be driven to his home in Malahide.

Mason was shouting from the start of the journey, leading Mr Johnson to pull over and ask him to leave the car. Mason apologised, shook Mr Johnson's hand and the journey continued.

When the car had reached the Malahide Road, the accused asked Mr Johnson what his favourite position was. Mr Johnson said he did not understand the question.

"Do you know your position, you are a ni\*\*er," said Mason.

Mason took off his seat belt and jumped on the wheel, causing the car to turn to the left side of the road. He began to punch Mr Johnson, catching him a couple of times in the face.

Footage taken from the taxi's dash cam was played before the court. During the attack, Mason can be heard saying "drive me home you fucking ni\*\*er cunt" and claiming to be a garda while demanding Mr Johnson get out of the car.



**File photograph of Clive Mason (42), of The Close, Robswall, Malahide. Photograph: Collins Courts**

Mason got out of the car and Mr Johnson locked all of the doors. Mason walked around to the driver's door and attempted to open it, kicking the door when he failed to do so. Det Gda Fox said that footage of the assault began to circulate on social media and news websites. Mason presented himself to a garda station the following weekend.

In interview with gardaí, Mason said he was very drunk at the time and claimed this was not who he really was. Mason said the video was disgraceful and said he had no explanation for punching Mr Johnson in the head.

Mason has three previous convictions, including convictions for speeding, disorderly conduct and intoxication in a public place. He has two children.

## **'A very modern case'**

Det Gda Fox agreed with Rebecca Smith BL, defending, that her client had €5,000 in court with him for the victim. He said that Mr Johnson does not wish to accept that money and has issued civil proceedings in the High Court against Mason.

Ms Smith said her client had been subjected to abuse online as a result of the video. She said this was "a very modern case".

Judge Martin Nolan replied that while there being a video is modern, "attacking and being racist is as old as the hills".

Judge Nolan said that Mr Johnson was racially abused and subjected to "a racial attack". He said it was a "dreadful assault" and told Mason that he had disgraced himself.

He said the case was mitigated by Mason surrendering himself to gardaí, making full admissions, his apology and his taking steps to reform and rehabilitate himself. He said it seemed Mason should not drink and when he is intoxicated as he becomes bad tempered.

Judge Nolan sentenced Mason to 20 months imprisonment, which he suspended on condition that Mason keep the peace and be of good behaviour for 20 months and follow all directions of the Probation Service for six months.

He ordered that the €5,000 be handed over to the investigating garda and that if Mr Johnson does not wish to accept it, the garda should forward the money to a charity of his choice.

# TAXI INSURANCE MARKET UPDATE

**I'm delighted to see the taxi insurance space is in the best health it has been for several years.**

**W**hilst premiums may not be as low as they were 5 years ago, I feel the outlook is more positive because we are seeing more competition than we have for a long time. More competition is good for everyone and its particularly good now that there are several 'A' rated competitors to the incumbent insurers in the taxi market.

You only have to look at the example of KennCo Underwriting to see why having more than 1 competitor is good news for consumers. KennCo Underwriting came into the taxi space with aggressive pricing and this did initially lead to the existing insurers reducing their prices, too. However, once KennCo Underwriting withdrew from the market, the existing insurers simply increased their prices back to the previous levels (almost overnight), as the competition was gone.

As well as a choice of insurers, recently we also have seen real product innovation including products being based around technology that monitors driver behaviour. It will be interesting to see how such a product plays out in the heavily regulated taxi market, which consists of predominantly full-time taxi drivers, rather than the 'gig economy' workers more typically found in other territories. Will consumers adopt these products despite some of the cover differences? How will the technology and driver behaviour affect the future pricing on these products?

I'll say it again, competition in the market is fantastic for everyone and it's brilliant we are now asking these questions.

From our perspective at TaxiFair, the close of 2019 saw the latest exciting development in bringing a new competitor to the taxi market – FBD Insurance. We are extremely proud to be working with FBD Insurance as the exclusive provider of their products in the taxi space and we are already seeing a fantastic reaction to the product from consumers.

FBD Insurance, in our opinion, are 'the' Irish insurer and understand the nation better than any other insurance market. For that reason, we feel it is a perfect partnership. There are no unexpected surprises in store for FBD (sadly they are already well accustomed to the current claims culture) having been established in Ireland for over 50 years. This, combined with our sole focus on taxi insurance, means we're a very strong team.

But, at TaxiFair we feel our role as a broker is to provide products from more than 1 insurer. Our view is that if we only have 1 insurer partner, it is difficult to balance the needs of your business and those of your customers. For example, if we only had 1 insurer partner would we really push hard to get the best price for our customers? Or, would we not push the insurers too hard on price, because if we upset the insurer, we have no other product to offer our customers? It could be a delicate balance if we were in that position, which is why we've always worked with multiple partners. We demand the best quotations from insurers and let them compete for your business.

To that end, our second key insurer partner is Liberty Insurance. And, to be clear, they are second here only in alphabetical order. Liberty have been our leading partner in taxi for the past 3 years and we've seen fantastic growth during that time. We have an exclusive acceptance criteria with Liberty and extremely competitive rates – this means some policies Liberty won't quote directly or via other brokers, they will quote those same policies via TaxiFair. This is all in recognition of our expertise in the taxi space.

Whilst Liberty became the latest in a list of many insurers to exit the Irish Leisure Insurance market very recently, they reaffirmed their commitment to the taxi market at the same time. Liberty have clear growth plans for taxi in 2020 and we are delighted to be working in partnership with them.

So, generally all is very positive currently and we are delighted to be at the heart of this fast moving and evolving sector. However, we wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't touch on the issue of 'Ghost Broking' or the sale of insurance by unregulated parties.

Ghost brokers are deemed by the Central Bank of Ireland to be 'professional fraudsters selling forged or invalid discounted insurance policies to unsuspecting consumers'. We saw one recent example of this happening where a consumer was duped by an unknown website, paying them over €3,000 for an alleged taxi policy that proved to be useless – not even passing a taxi suitability test, let alone pay a potential claim (the insurer in question didn't even provide taxi cover at all and had been provided with completely inaccurate information).

The sale of insurance policies by unregulated parties is also on the rise in the taxi space. What do we mean by unregulated parties? Effectively, anyone who is selling insurance but is not under supervision of the Central Bank of Ireland. Why is this important? The Central Bank of Ireland impose strict regulations on insurance brokers and intermediaries, such as TaxiFair, in order to protect consumers. Briefly these include requirements such as:

- Staff being qualified within the insurance industry to high standards (meaning you always get advice from trained and qualified insurance professionals)
- Transparency on pricing including a clear declaration of all fees and charges
- Having professional indemnity/negligence insurance (meaning if we don't send an e-mail to put you on cover and you have a claim, our professional indemnity cover pays for your claim, so you are not adversely affected)
- We must provide any refunds due within set timeframes
- We must hold all client funds in a separate client bank account, keeping your funds secure
- Clear rules on product sales; we must sell these clearly to consumers and not misrepresent them

The list goes on and we could be here a while... but you get the idea. Whether you buy your insurance directly from an insurance company or via a broker/intermediary, make sure you buy it from a qualified professional that is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. Otherwise, a cheap deal could work out to be very expensive in the long run. There are helpful guides online within the Central Bank website, which enable you to check whether a company is regulated.

For any information or assistance on your taxi insurance (or any topic in this article) feel free to give us a call on 01 485 1996. Our offices are in Dublin and Cork, but make no mistake, we operate nationwide. So, whether you are driving a taxi in Dublin or applying for a new local area hackney license in Louisburgh, Mayo, we can help. Our team do nothing but deal with taxi insurance at TaxiFair, meaning we always have our finger on the pulse with what is happening in the market.

Finally, we understand driving a taxi is your business and livelihood – this isn't just another motor insurance policy – so you will always find us willing to help and offer the best possible advice to meet your individual circumstances.



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# LYNK TAXIS LAUNCHES NEW ONLINE COURSE TO TRAIN NEXT GENERATION OF DUBLIN TAXI DRIVERS

Lynk Taxi Training Course boasts a 89% success rate for drivers sitting the Small Public Service Vehicle test

**L**ynk, Dublin's taxi booking app, has launched a free online training course for people wishing to become taxi drivers. The course is an invaluable help for drivers and acts as a step by step guide to getting your taxi license. The comprehensive online tool features study material and mini tests on driver and vehicle licensing, general taxi regulations, navigating routes and landmarks across Dublin and running a taxi business.

The new tool, which has been in on trial since October 2019, has already attracted 1,800 users, and so far has an 89% success rate for drivers who have undertaken their taxi (SPSV) test.

The online course allows drivers to move at their own pace and comes with dedicated support and advice on issues such as insurance, to help newly-qualified taxi drivers get on the road. Drivers can measure their progress through the course and will be able to identify when their ready to book the real test. There is also an online chat function for additional help, feedback and study tips.

To support the online course, Lynk has a large taxi rental division so drivers can rent a fully licensed and insured taxi. This rental division allows drivers to build up their profile, find their feet and help prepare them for setting up their own business with their own taxi, if that's what they would like to do.

Noel Ebbs, CEO of Lynk, said: "There's currently strong interest in becoming a taxi driver because it offers great flexibility and respectable earnings for anyone supporting a young family or paying high rent in Dublin. The free course makes it easier than ever before to learn everything you



## DRIVER TESTIMONIAL: LYNK TAXI DRIVER, GARY SAID

*"Within a couple of months I successfully passed my test and got into a taxi using the online course. Sitting another test wasn't something I was expecting to do at 42 years old, but the Lynk training team made it easy. Now, I enjoy working to my own schedule and having the free time to spend with my family. It's also great to be able to head away or take holidays whenever I like"*

need to know to be a successful taxi driver.

"We have many users who are actively learning each week, coming from all walks of life, who are looking for a new opportunity. Many are looking for a change of career that allows them to set their own hours and spend more time with family, while others are attracted to the idea of being self-employed and flexible in how they work. The big benefit of training with Lynk is that we can provide you with everything you need to get started as a taxi driver – and once you have your qualification you can always be confident of having enough work."

Lynk currently has a fleet of 1,500 full-time, professional drivers in Dublin and carried over 5.5 million passengers last year. Lynk was launched in February 2015 by founder and CEO Noel Ebbs, a taxi tech entrepreneur with over 20 years' experience in taxi technology. Developed specifically for the Irish market, Lynk provides a quality, reliable and efficient service. Lynk is based in Newmarket, Dublin and provides 75 Irish jobs.

To register with the Lynk Training Portal, please visit: <https://training.lynk.ie>

For more information see: [www.lynk.ie](http://www.lynk.ie)

Follow us on Twitter @LynkTaxis and on Facebook @LynkTaxi

# FREE NOW TAXIS BECOME 'JAM CARD' FRIENDLY TO HELP PASSENGERS WITH LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

**In the first phase, 2,000 drivers will be offered free customised training in partnership with innovative social enterprise**

**F**REE NOW taxis are to become JAM Card ('Just a Minute') friendly as part of a new partnership that will support the service provided to passengers with learning and communication difficulties.

Created by Belfast-based social enterprise NOW Group, the JAM Card and app has been developed to

help people with autism, brain injury or related speech impediments to ask discreetly for a minute of patience when carrying out everyday activities that others take for granted.

Driver Ambassadors using the FREE NOW app will get free, customised training in partnership with NOW Group to help them support JAM Card passengers and to take account of the hidden disabilities that affect many taxi users across Ireland.

Leeann Kelly, Business Development Manager at NOW Group, said: "Mobility and freedom of movement are vital aspects of every-day life for all people, regardless of ability or capacity. We are extremely pleased to have FREE





NOW Driver Ambassadors join the growing JAM Card Community. For those with a learning difficulty, autism or any communication barrier, the JAM Card allows users to relay to others that they may need a little extra time in a simple, effective non-verbal manner. FREE NOW is leading the way in the private hire industry in terms of providing training to its staff to meet the diverse and varied needs of Ireland's population."

Fiona Brady, Head of Operations at FREE NOW said: "Our aim is to make mobility as simple and hassle-free as possible for everyone and we believe supporting JAM Card friendly training for drivers using the FREE NOW app, will improve the service experience for thousands of our customers.

"The JAM Card is a very powerful initiative that helps thousands of people across the country and we are delighted to support it. We want to provide drivers with the tools to cater for the diverse service needs of all of our passengers in Ireland, so we are delighted to partner with the NOW Group on what is an extremely innovative, worthwhile initiative."

FREE NOW is the first Irish taxi operator to recognise the JAM Card initiative and is working hard to help taxi drivers cater for all passengers by offering training to those using the app. This development follows its recently announced free Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle training programme, which has seen over 300 drivers already complete the training to improve service levels to passengers that are wheelchair users.

The NOW Group is working with FREE NOW to deliver a training package based on an e-learning platform and



face-to-face interaction with drivers to support them to deliver the best JAM Card friendly service possible. Since being established in 2011, over 35,000 JAM Cards have been issued across the UK and Ireland. In 2017 NOW Group designed a JAM Card app which lets users rate the customer service they receive from participating service providers. In November 2018, NOW Group won the 'UK: Tech for Good Award' for the JAM Card App.

JAM Cards are available from the FREE NOW driver office on 11 Mount Street Upper, Dublin 2, or from designated TFI transport hubs. The public can also request one directly from NOW Group by visiting the JAM Card website and filling out the request form. There is also a JAM Card app available for Android and iOS.

# RICKSHAW REGULATION DEPENDS ON PRIORITIES OF NEW GOVERNMENT

Tommy Barton has criticised the Minister for Transport, Shane Ross along with the National Transport Authority (NTA) over their failure to introduce legislation to ban rickshaws from the roads.

**T**here was a strategic committee set up by Dublin City Council in relation to rickshaws. They said there was a loophole there in relation to the law and that we needed to get on to the National Transport Authority. The NTA then said that they needed to go and discuss it with the Minister [for Transport]. This is not going on a week or two, this is going on years. [Transport] Minister Shane Ross was making excuses and putting it off because of Brexit. I have highlighted the issue of the rickshaws with three separate Ministers before Shane Ross, so there is no excuse because the work that I was doing was already ready to be implemented if they really wanted to make a full-hearted attempt for the sake of the working taxi driver. It still hasn't been addressed and it's still a majority of non nationals with student visas selling drugs. Shane Ross himself has proven how dangerous they are and still hasn't implemented anything. He was on the radio himself discussing how dangerous they are because he took one himself and at the same time, the concerns that he said he wanted to address he hasn't done anything about," he said.

A spokesperson from the Department of Transport responded saying:

"Following a public consultation in 2017 on the regulation of rickshaws, the Cabinet gave approval in late 2018 for publication of a General Scheme Bill to amend the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 so as to provide for the regulation of rickshaws. Following the passage of important Brexit-related legislation in early 2019, work began in earnest on the Bill."

The spokesperson went on to say that rather than ban rickshaws, it is proposed that the Bill would provide for a new regulatory regime for rickshaws to improve public safety and enhance the experience of passengers.

"If enacted, the Bill would ensure that drivers of rickshaws would, like taxi drivers, be obliged to apply for licences which would include vetting by An Garda Síochána. Rickshaws themselves would also be licensed only if they meet safety standards and are insured. The future progress of these proposals will, of course, depend on the legislative programme and priorities of the new Government," they said.

Barton went on to say that he believes the NTA should be pushing the Minister to ban the use of rickshaws.

"The gardai don't want them on the street, the public don't want them on the street, they are unsafe, they are dangerous, and they create nothing but havoc. The NTA don't seem to want to address or push the issue, but at the same time, they still want to make sure that you have your fire extinguisher before you get your tax clearance cert," he said.

He went on to criticise the NTA over the current system whereby a taxi driver has to go to one place for the NCT another for a taxi licence etc. He said that a one-stop-shop at which a driver could get everything done would be far more preferable.

Barton also had a number of questions for the NTA about their compliance officers.

"The NTA only has 13 compliance officers. In the last four or five years, how many have been deployed considering that there are 26, 000 taxis in Ireland, where are they based and with a three on and three off shift system how is the work carried out?" he asked.

At the time of print, the NTA had not responded to a request for comment.

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# TAXI DRIVER CAUGHT IN FUELED CROSSFIRE

An innocent taxi driver was lucky to escape with his life after being caught in the crossfire of the deadly Drogheda feud.

**A**ged in his late 30s, the victim was shot twice in the back while sitting in his vehicle on the Bridge of Peace shortly after 6pm yesterday. The taxi man was not the intended target and gardai believe he had the “grave misfortune” of taking a fare from an under- threat hitman just moments earlier.

That volatile criminal is a leading member of the so-called anti-Maguire faction and has been linked to a number of gun attacks, including an attempted murder last February.

The 24-year-old has been a prime target for the mob led by Owen Maguire.

The gangland target, on bail for a number of offences, was on his way to the garda station in the town to sign on as part of his bail conditions when the gunman struck last night.

The shooting took place during rush-hour traffic when a dark coloured car pulled up alongside the taxi and shots were fired through the window, hitting the driver.

The target's girlfriend was with him in the taxi and both made their way to the garda station for safety following the incident.

## Wounds

“This taxi driver is completely innocent, he simply took a fare off an under threat individual and unfortunately he has now suffered serious gunshot wounds,” a senior source said.

The scene on George Street at the Bridge of Peace was sealed-off to facilitate a garda technical examination.

In the aftermath of the shooting, gardai were searching for a vehicle believed to have been used in the attack. It's thought this car was found burnt out near the town a short time later.

“The driver of the taxi, a man understood to be in his late 30s injured in the shooting, has been removed by ambulance to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. His injuries are not thought to be life-threatening,” a garda spokesman said.

Gardai had received intelligence of a planned outbreak of violence being directed by the Maguire faction against their rivals, which led to detectives carrying out additional patrols. A 20-year-old criminal linked to the anti-Maguire gang was the target of an apparent hit attempt after claiming he was shot at near his home.

He is a close associate of the target of the gun attack which injured the taxi driver and both are currently facing charges for the same offence.

Gardai are investigating a report that the 20-year-old left



**John is lucky to be alive after being blasted twice**

his home with another associate in a VW Passat but they were followed by a black VW Golf.

A short time later in the Moneymore area, the Passat was rammed by the other vehicle which caused the car to spin around, hit a kerb and crash.

It is then alleged two men wearing balaclavas got out of the Golf and one of them fired a number of shots with a handgun at the 20-year-old, who fled the scene uninjured with his associate.

Gardai were quickly alerted but an examination of the scene failed to yield any evidence of bullet casings.

There have been no arrests and no one was injured.

Ahead of the shooting which injured the taxi driver, sources revealed Maguire's faction had “upped the ante” in recent days. This led to a number of surveillance operations taking place as tensions threaten to spiral out of control.

## Murders

There have been a number of murders and attempted killings linked to the Drogheda feud.

Last August Keith Branigan (29), a member of the crime group feuding with associates of Owen Maguire (35), was shot dead outside a caravan park in Clogherhead.

In July 2018 mobster Maguire was shot and seriously injured in the first major incident of the feud. He was lucky to survive and spent the following 10 months in hospital recovering from his injuries. The following April, his brother Brendan Maguire survived an attempt on his life at the M1 retail park in Drogheda.

The target in this recent shooting is the chief suspect in the attempted hit on Brendan Maguire.



**Experts inspecting the scene of the cabbie shooting in Drogheda** Credit: Ciara Wilkinson

He is also an associate of murdered Branigan and within hours of that killing had approached a number of rival criminals and “was making all sorts of threats”.

Sources say he has been “driving a lot of the hatred” in the feud and is suspected of being the man recorded goading and abusing Owen Maguire last year in a recorded phone call.

In the video recorded and shared on social media. Maguire, confined to a wheelchair, is ridiculed about being left paralysed with the rival mobster goading him: “Do you want to go for a walk and sort this out.”

A local grandmother said “It’s like this town is getting worse by the day. People are scared to leave their own homes.

“I hate to say it but I can’t see an end to all this violence.”

Another woman described how she heard a number of loud bangs when walking through the town.

“It’s like everyone who lives here is constantly on high alert,” she said.

### **Reward Offered for Information about Driver Attack**

A Taxi Driver was hospitalised following a brutal attack by a passenger.

The assault is alleged to have taken place in the early hours this morning near Glebe Gardens, Strabane.

At approximately 1.15am the cabbie picked up a male passenger in the Abercorn Square area of Strabane and took him to Glebe Gardens, where he attacked the taxi driver and caused damage to his vehicle.

The injured man attended hospital for treatment to multiple head injuries.

An 18-year-old man was arrested by police investigating the attack. Detectives are appealing to anyone who witnessed this assault or anyone who has information that could assist with enquiries, to contact detectives at Strabane on the non-emergency number 101, quoting reference 89 13/01/20.

Alternatively, information can also be provided to the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111, which is 100% anonymous and gives people the power to speak up and stop crime.

The cabbie’s operator, Streetcars, who posted photos of the injuries said: “The nature of attacks such as this and others have no place in our society. We work in a difficult industry at the best of times, and the financial gain is petty in return.”

Patrick McLaughlin from Streetcars added: “Attacks such as this are no different to attacks on medical staff or emergency service providers. We work alone and too many times we are exposed to certain threats that remain between the driver and the fare.

“I personally have decided to put up a cash reward to anyone with information on this brutal attack. Although this happened at 1.15 am, it took place in a built up area and I’m certain it was witnessed by someone in the park concerned. Any information submitted to me will be treated with anonymity.

“I wish to offer our driver a swift recovery and to relay to him that the thoughts of everyone in our firm, and indeed most people in our town are with him and his family at this difficult time.”

# XPERT TAXIS MERGE WITH NATIONAL RADIO CABS TO FORM NXT



Things move fast in the Irish taxi industry, with ride-hailing apps like Free Now and Uber, disrupting the way things used to work. If you're not adapting, you get left behind.

**X**pert Taxis has certainly been adapting – chief executive of Xpert Taxis, Vincent Kearns maintained the company has made huge investments in technology since first launching back in 2005. Tech won't do it on its own though and for the company to continue to grow it decided to merge with National Radio Cabs, one of Dublin's oldest taxi companies.

Kearns told *Fora* magazine that the merger has been in the works for the past two-and-a-half years. Back in September after both companies had fully agreed on a deal, National Radio Cabs moved into Xpert's office.

The office was filled with some of the new company branding, which is called NXT – and pronounced “next”. Daily calendars can be spotted on desks upstairs with the navy and blue logos – featuring the letters surrounded by a hot air balloon – and in the entrance hall downstairs new business cards line a desk.

“Now we are in the process of a gradual roll-out of our new branding, a gradual branding of our cars and driver uniforms,” he explained.

The Dubliner said he reckons it will take another six months for NXT to be working seamlessly. He's not too fussed on getting the message out to the public that the two have merged, as both have a loyal customer base who continue to call for cabs every day of the week.

Xpert carved a market out for itself among corporates and holds accounts with Intel, Three, Vodafone, large banks and legal firms while National Radio Cabs had accounts with the likes of the HSE.

Under the deal, Kearns remains chief executive, with Xpert Taxis owning 49% and National Radio Cabs owning 51% in the company. It has grown the fleet size to 700 cars.

For Kearns, the merger was an organic one. He explained that over the past five years, he had begun to acquire the smaller taxi companies around Dublin that weren't able to keep up with the changes in the industry.

“We acquired the likes of A to Z taxis in Walkinstown, Local Cabs in Dundrum, Near Cabs in Drumcondra, Finglas Cabs, Ashbourne Cabs and Terenure Taxis,” he explained.

“In Dublin, we cover north, south, east and west Dublin and we have expanded that to include Kildare, Wicklow, Meath, so by acquiring these companies we are getting local drivers who are familiar with the areas,” he said.

In the past five years, he estimated the number of taxi companies has been reduced by 60%. This is predominantly because they haven't had the funds to adapt to new technologies and change as the taxi apps have come along.

Kearns got a taster for how the company could grow through acquisitions but decided it was time for a bigger deal.

“I was thinking about what's the next best thing I could do for growth. It's about looking at cost and efficiencies so it seemed natural to move towards a merger,” he said.

Going forward, Kearns said the company is looking to launch a fleet of hydrogen cars.

“We will be the first taxi company in Ireland to have a fleet of hydrogen cars by hopefully 2022,” he explained.



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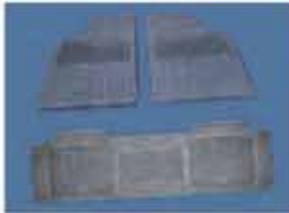
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# WORLD NEWS

## TOP STORIES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

### CANADA

#### **Toronto police say a taxi driver has serious injuries after being stabbed during a possible fare dispute recently.**

Emergency crews were called to the area of Yonge Street and York Mills Road, just outside York Mills subway station and York Mills GO station, at around 9:20 p.m. with reports of a stabbing.

A spokesperson for Toronto Paramedics told Global News the victim was taken to a local hospital in serious, but non-life-threatening condition.

Toronto police said the stabbing may have followed an argument over a fare, but a spokesperson said officers were still probing the circumstances leading up to the stabbing.

It was reported the suspect took off into a mall at the intersection and that they were still outstanding as of the time of writing.

### UK

#### **A woman has died after being hit by a taxi in Leicester. The crash happened at 4.10am 11th January, in Coleman Road, Evington.**

The woman was hit by a Vauxhall Vivaro minibus, which was initially described by emergency services as a van. She suffered severe injuries and was taken to hospital, where she later died.

A 62-year-old man has been arrested and interviewed on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving. He's now been released under investigation.

Police are asking for anyone who saw what happened to contact them, in particular a vehicle that was in the vicinity of the collision at the time and left just prior to the collision.

Detective Constable Charlotte Wright said the driver of that vehicle might have vital information about what occurred just before the collision.

"The taxi involved in the collision with the woman has been recovered and investigations will be carried out, but if

you saw it prior to the collision, we'd be interested to hear from you. If you were travelling in the area at the time and have dash cam, please let us know as you may have vital information which would be of help to our investigation."

– Detective Constable Charlotte Wright, Leicestershire Police.

### DUBAI

#### **A Pakistani taxi driver in Dubai turned a saviour for an Indian girl by returning her lost wallet that had her UK student visa just three days before she was to return after a winter break, a media report said.**

Rachel Rose, who flew to Manchester on January 8, had lost the wallet in Modassar Khadim's cab on January 4, the Gulf News said in the report on Sunday.

The corporate law student at Lancaster University was on her way to attend a friend's birthday when the incident took place.

"She had got into his taxi with another friend near Burjuman around 7.30 pm on January 4," her mother, Sindhu Biju, told Gulf News. "Just then, they saw their other friends in another car and decided to join them. They immediately left the taxi and Rose didn't realise she had left her wallet behind."

Apart from her UK residence permit card, the wallet contained her Emirates ID, United Arab Emirates driving licence, health insurance card, credit card and more than 1,000 dirhams.

Meanwhile, Khadim had finished two other trips. It was when after the second trip that he noticed the wallet as the first passenger had sat in the front seat.

"Since the family, who came next, said it was not theirs, I opened it to check if there was any contact number. I could only see all the cards and the cash," he told Gulf News.

With the help of the Roads and Transport Authority, who helped verify the details that matched Khadim's complaint which he had lodged earlier, he finally dropped off the wallet at Rose's residence. IANS



## PHUKET

**Father and son taxi drivers operating at the entrance to Freedom Beach, south of Patong, have been charged with attempted murder – and released on bail – after running down a competing taxi driver after they allegedly attempted to shoot the man dead.** The gun apparently failed to fire.

Lt Col Chompoonuch Anantayakul of the Patong Police confirmed that Natchaphon “Tong” Plodmanee and his father Jarat “Dae” Plodmanee were charged with attempted murder earlier this week.

“Jarat and Natchaphon reported themselves at Patong Police Station and were charged with attempted murder. Both denied the charges and they were released on bail on Jan 7 [last Tuesday],” Lt Col Chompoonuch told The Phuket News.

The charges follow a dispute between taxi drivers just before 3pm last Sunday (Jan 5) at two different taxi queues operating near the entrance to the private road that leads to the beach.

One of the queues is beside the entrance, the other is down the road in front of a local bar.

Prajop “Nuan” Chankaew – who described himself as a “witness at the scene” and not as a taxi driver at one of the two queues – told police that the drivers at the two taxi queues had agreed to allow only three taxis to wait at each queue.

However, a “black taxi” – a regular passenger car registered for private use being used illegally as a taxi – had turned up and was parked at the front of the queue near the entrance to the beach.

Mr Prajop said he walked up to the drivers at the beach entrance and asked them to not allow the “black taxi” to pick up passengers.

He said the drivers agreed, but later he saw the “black taxi” delivering passengers to the entrance of the beach.

Soon after, two taxi drivers Natchaphon and Jarat arrived in a black Toyota Fortuner.

A fight broke out and taxi driver Suwan Chaowadee, 47, fled the scene of the fight, Mr Prajop said.

Natchaphon and Jarat followed Suwan in the Fortuner and ran him down, leaving him in a heap in the middle of the dirt road before speeding off, Mr Prajop explained.

Mr Suwan in his report to police said that Natchaphon was behind the wheel when he and his father Jarat arrived in the Fortuner.

Jarat pulled Suwan’s shirt collar and shouted at his son to shoot him, Mr Suwan alleged.

Mr Suwan said he pushed Jarat away to escape while Natchaphon tried to shoot him, but the gun failed to fire.

Jarat took the gun from his son and tried to shoot Mr Suwan, but the gun still failed to work, Mr Suwan said.

Mr Suwan said that he ran and made it about 300 metres before he was run down by the Fortuner, which he said was being driven by Jarat.

Lt Col Chompoonuch said that Mr Suwan’s medical condition had improved and that he had been discharged from hospital care, but declined to confirm whether police were providing any protection for him.

“I cannot reveal the details [of this case]. This case is not finished. I am working on this case,” Lt Col Chompoonuch said.



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# Knock Knock

**Q: If you were forced to go through one of the following doors, which door do you go through with 100 % certainty you'd stay alive: a door with a man with a gun behind it, a door with a tiger who hasn't eaten in 7 years behind it, or a door with an electrical chair behind it?**

**A: The one with the tiger behind it, because if it hasn't eaten in 7 years it's dead.**

Four men are in the hospital waiting room because their wives are having babies. A nurse approaches the first guy and says, "Congratulations! You're the father of twins." "That's odd," answers the man. "I work for the Minnesota Twins!" A nurse then yells the second man, "Congratulations! You're the father of triplets!" "That's weird," answers the second man. "I work for the 3M company!" A nurse goes up to the third man saying, "Congratulations! You're the father of quadruplets." "That's strange," he answers. "I work for the Four Seasons hotel!" The last man begins groaning and banging his head against the wall. "What's wrong?" the others ask. "I work for 7 Up!"

**Teacher: "Anyone who thinks he's stupid may stand up!" Nobody stands up.**  
**Teacher: "I'm sure there are some stupid students over here!" Little Johnny stands up.**  
**Teacher: "Ohh, Johnny you think you're stupid?" Little Johnny: "No... i just feel bad that you're standing alone..."**

An old woman is upset at her husband's funeral. "You have him in a brown suit and I wanted him in a blue suit." The mortician says, "We'll take care of it, ma'am," and yells to the back, "Ed, switch the heads on two and four!"

A guy spots a sign outside a house that reads "Talking Dog for Sale." Intrigued, he walks in. "So what have you done with your life?" he asks the dog. "I've led a very full life," says the dog. "I lived in the Alps rescuing avalanche victims. Then I served my country in Iraq. And now I spend my days reading to the residents of a retirement home." The guy is flabbergasted. He asks the dog's owner, "Why on earth would you want to get rid of an incredible dog like that?" The owner says, "Because he's a liar! He never did any of that!"

**A woman answered the doorbell with a man standing on her porch. The man said, "I'm terribly sorry. I just ran over your cat and I would like to replace it for you." The woman replied, "Well that's alright with me, but how are you at catching mice?"**

**A man walks into a bar and sits down. He asks the bartender, "Can I have a cigarette?" The bartender replies, "Sure, the cigarette machine is over there." So he walks over to the machine and as he is about to order a cigarette, the machine suddenly says, "Oi, you bloody idiot." The man says with surprise in his voice, "That's not very nice." He returns to his bar stool without a cigarette and asks the bartender for some peanuts. The bartender passes the man a bowl of peanuts and the man hears one of the peanuts speak, "Ooh, I like your hair." The man says to the bartender, "Hey, what's going on here? Your cigarette machine is insulting me and this peanut is coming on to me. Why's this?" The bartender replies, "Oh, that's because the machine is out of order and the peanuts are complementary."**



## General Knowledge Questions

# THE TACSAÍ MAGAZINE BUMPER QUIZ

1. In which year was the first US Masters golf championship held?
2. Which NHL player was nicknamed "The Great One"?
3. Which Formula One race is held at the Red Bull Ring?
4. Which country hosted the first Rugby League World Cup?
5. Which Italian football team shares its ground with Lazio?
6. Which West Indian bowler took 14 wickets in a test match against England in 1976?
7. Which two sports are combined in a biathlon?
8. Which circuit has hosted the Australian Moto GP since 1997?
9. In which US city are the NFL team The Chargers based?
10. Which South American team won the 2015 World Polo Championship?
11. In which sport is the Swaythling Cup competed for?
12. Who in 1981 became the first Briton to win a World Judo Championship?
13. How many players make up an Aussie Rules football team?
14. Which team won all but one of the NBA championships in the 1960s?

15. In which year did Sebastian Vettel win his first Formula One championship?
16. In which New York borough is the US Open Tennis championship held?
17. In which year did the first non-USA team lift yachting's Americas Cup?
18. In which Australian city would you find the GABBA cricket ground?
19. How many players are there on a hurling team?
20. What trophy is awarded to the winner of golf's USPGA championship?

- ANSWERS**
1. 1934
  2. Wayne Gretzky
  3. Austrian Grand Prix
  4. France
  5. Roma
  6. Michael Holding
  7. Cross-country skiing & shooting
  8. Phillip Island
  9. San Diego
  10. Chile
  11. Table tennis
  12. Neil Adams
  13. 18
  14. Boston Celtics
  15. 2010
  16. Queens
  17. 1983
  18. Brisbane
  19. 15
  20. Wanamaker Trophy



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