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Christopher Flynn
FREE NOW Staff Award



Peter Woods
Ireland's Top Rated Driver



Keith Mooney
Passenger's Choice Award



CONTENTS

In this latest edition of Tacsai magazine we look at a range of issues; from technological advances in vehicles, to the ongoing concerns about the safety of drivers and the two big issues as of September 1s; namely, the introduction of the 20% fare increase and the legislation which makes it mandatory for drivers to install card machines in their vehicles in order to accept payments.

We spoke with Tony Roe, Chairperson of the National Transport Assembly Committee (NTAC) and Spokesperson on Taxis about a number of issues including; new entrants leaving the industry very quickly and the reasons for this, the lack of taxi ranks in Dublin and the effects this has on drivers, punters and the environment, the media outcry about the 20% fare increase and the mandatory introduction of card payments and the potential drawbacks that go along with it.

We also have a professional evaluation of the legality of the card machine legislation as it pertains to the Taxi Regulation Act 2013. This evaluation was carried out by law firm Sean Costello Solicitors at the behest of the National Private Hire & Taxi Association of Ireland (NPHTA).

We also bring you up to date with various taxi news from Ireland and beyond.

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Tacsai Magazine is stocked in each taxi firm in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick. Most ranks have "Rank Reps" who have a stock of magazines. Additionally, the magazine is available in the following locations:

01. Skan Taxi centre, Tolka Valley Business Park.
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03. Discount Till Rolls
04. TTnH Offices, Santry Hall Ind. Est.
05. Fonthill Motor Factors.
06. Harbour Radiators.
07. The Kesh at Dublin Airport.
08. Fonthill Autoparts.
09. Hailo, 12 Upper Mount Street.
10. Dublin Corporate Cabs, Ballymount Ind Est.
11. Phoenix Motors, Prussia Street.
12. South Dublin Autos.
13. Ozone Cabs
14. Go Service Station, Kylemore Road.
15. Excel Auto Parts, Old Naas Road



Taxi app will let users hire e-bikes in Dublin

A taxi app will allow customers to book e-bikes across Dublin as part of an innovative pilot programme that will help fight climate change.

The initial rollout will cover Blanchardstown, Swords, Malahide, Baldoyle, Portmarnock and Howth, with 100 battery-assisted Tier e-bikes available for hire.

Over the coming months, additional rollouts will take place across Fingal County, bringing the total number of e-bikes to 400.

Ireland country manager for Tier Peadar Golden, said: "Our Tier e-bikes are a great sustainable and active way for people to make journeys across Fingal County.

"Our mission is to change mobility for good, and by offering people easy access to ways of getting around that don't rely on a private car, be that by e-bike, e-scooter or taxi, we can play a part in making our cities healthier and more pleasant places to be."

The partnership follows a successful e-scooter trial across five DCU campuses, which started in 2021.

This introduction mirrors other services provided by Free Now across Europe, where passengers can book e-scooters, e-bikes, e-mopeds, taxis, and car-sharing with one app.

The project aims to help Fingal County Council reach its goal of making active travel the first choice for trips under 5km.

The facilitation of e-bikes in Ireland sits in the shadow of the 2021 Climate Targets which commit Ireland to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and a 51pc emissions reduction in just eight years.

The Climate Action Plan also includes a focus on renewable generation capacity, which will increase the nation's electricity storage.

"By 2030, up to 80pc of electricity will be generated using renewable energy," the plan says.

E-vehicles will then play an important part in meeting these goals if they are successfully adopted by the public.

Free Now, backed by BMW and Mercedes-Benz, describes itself as a Mobility Super App with 56 million users in 170 cities offered a choice of taxis, private vehicle hire, car sharing or micromobility such as e-scooters and bikes.

Berlin-based Tier Mobility says it is the world's leading shared micro-mobility provider, operating in more than 240 cities across 22 countries in Europe and the Middle East.



cab:app - we asked & you said...

In 2020 we issued a survey to over 12,000 taxi drivers registered on cab:app across Ireland and the UK, so you could tell us what services you needed in future to run your taxi business more efficiently by helping to reduce costs and grow your income.

Below is a summary of the key services and we are pleased to announce that in addition to card payments and share ownership being live, in **March** we will launch 'Paysme' our new **€ business current account** with VISA debit card for drivers in Ireland that also offers automated accounting to make life easier – see features on the next page.



Payments



E-hailing



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EV Financing



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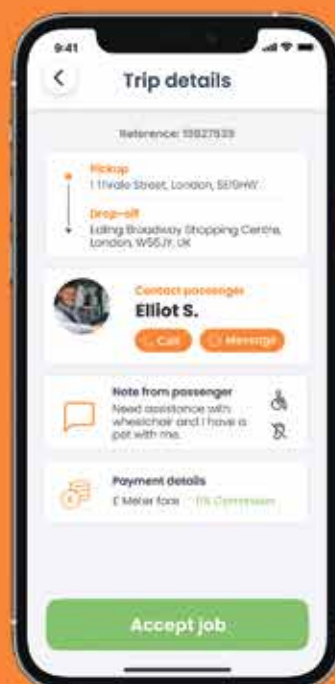
The new booking app is 70% complete and we know this is the number one priority for drivers, so we are working hard behind the scenes to make this a reality ASAP, with other services to follow.



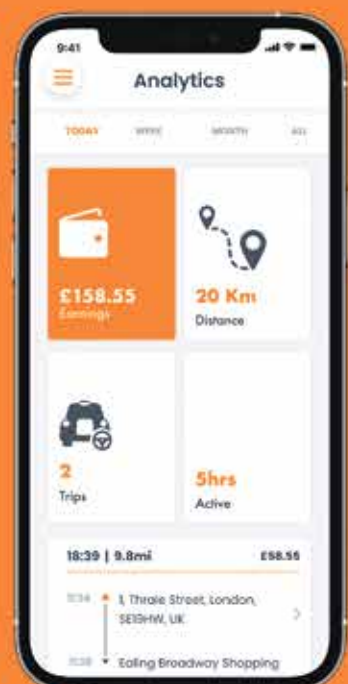
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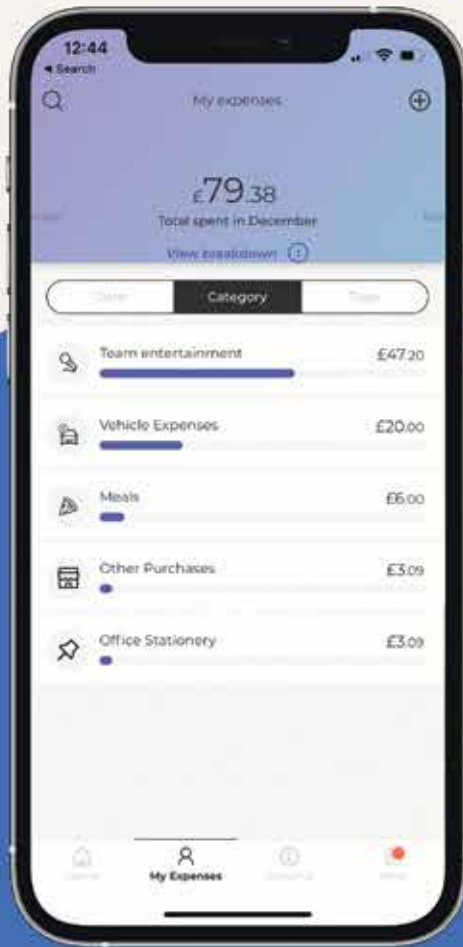
Driver home



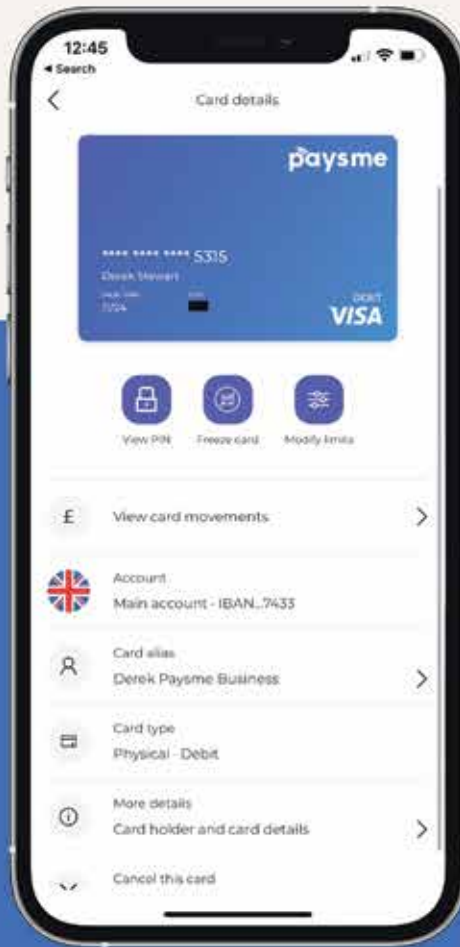
Trip details



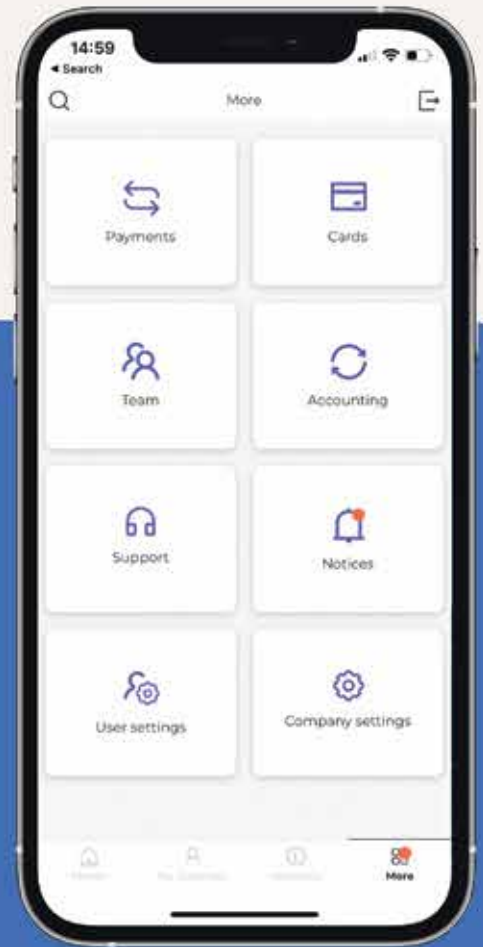
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NEW ENTRANTS TO THE TAXI INDUSTRY ARE LEAVING IN DROVES

Tony Roe, Chairperson for the National Transport Assembly Committee (NTAC) and Spokesperson on taxis has spoken out on why.

It's not just new entrants, it's also experienced drivers who are a credit to the industry. These drivers are leaving due to certain proposals in the industry which are being inflicted on them. They have decided to call it a day, and a lot of them have cited the reasons to the NTAC as; ridiculous fines for not having plasters, having fire extinguishers which are out of date etc. I

He went on to point out that the number of drivers that are attacked has risen.

Attacks on drivers are regular. In the last 12 months we have had over 700 assaults; vicious and savage assaults on drivers. 700 is a very conservative figure, because a lot of the attacks go unreported. I have actually spoken to one driver who has been attacked three times in succession; viciously and savagely, and the seatbelt was used in the attack in an attempt to strangle him. This is a reason why they are getting out of the industry. Another driver that I spoke to, who was one of the newer entrants into the industry, only in the industry a few weeks; and because of a savage attack on him, he left the industry. As an example of what he thought of the business, he is now working as a security guard in a drug clinic which dispenses methadone, and he info

Roe believes that taxi drivers should be exempt from wearing seatbelts.

I have brought this up with various government departments, because the safety belt is being used in an awful lot of

attacks on drivers. If you take yourself up the road to Newry, which is approximately; a little over an hour from Dublin city, you will find that drivers there are exempt from wearing a seatbelt. We have been pushing for this for years as it is jeopardising the safety of taxi drivers, because it is being used in so many savage attacks. We don't know why other jurisdictions can do away with the seat belt for taxi drivers. Make it an option for taxi drivers. Over here if a taxi driver doesn't use his seatbelt, he can be fined, and he can be put out of work. I think this is madness in this day and age, taking into consideration all of the attacks

Another issue that the NTAC has been raising is the introduction of legislation which makes card transactions mandatory in taxis.

An awful lot of cases, the card is a contributing factor to the assaults on drivers. For example, a card was produced to one and assaulted. So the new legislation on cards has to be looked into, and taxi drivers will have to be exempt from it. We are giving the government and the department of Transport, Mr Ryan the current Minister, because it is a recipe for disaster. It's fraught with stuff that could really jeopardise the safety of drivers, because it has been used in so many incidents. As it is at the moment, if he finds that somebody is a little less scrupulous, and his common sense tells him something, he can ask for money up front. We don't know of any other jurisdiction where this applies, it's not mandatory in any other European country, it's an option that you can



use and it's up to the driver. Taking into consideration the vulnerability of a taxi driver, especially at night, it would be lunacy to inflict this on a driver. It will put the assault rate much higher than it already is. Another driver I spoke to is leaving the industry because of an incident late at night where a card was produced, it wasn't working, and there was an argument. How many more drivers need to leave the industry? If the National Transport Authority (NTA) want to encourage more drivers into the industry, they are going to have to stop this nonsense in conjunction with the Minister for Transport, and bring resolutions to this, because this is ongoing, it's a bit like Ground-hog Day, it's happening again and again, and it

He went on to address the media coverage and public outcry over the 20% increase in standard taxi fares which has recently come

We covered this with Tacsai magazine in 2017. As well as the 13% reduction, we had a preferential tariff on the meter; tariff 3, which was taken away, and in its place was a lower tariff. Again this came under the headline as an increase for taxis. It's quite laughable. In the industry; when taxis get an increase, it generally works out as a decrease. The current increase being industry is being overlooked, subdued and disregarded by the Minister for Transport, and we would like to see this being looked into now because if new entrants are getting into the industry and are getting out of it fairly quickly; common sense tells us that something is radically wrong. The one thing we find with the current Minister is

that common sense isn't common. We would like to see this being looked into in the interest of drivers and of the public, because a content worker does a good job, and if drivers are being overlooked, subdued and treated as a sub culture, it doesn't work out well for anyone because the service suf

Roe went on to address the perceived shortage of taxis in Dublin

Following the de-regulation we had a saturation and an oversupply of taxis on the road. It was commonly known that we had more taxis on the road in Dublin, than in New York and London. We find now that there are enough taxis under normal circumstances and normal times. There are selective times, seasonal times, major concerts on, Croke Park etc. You have 90, 000 people thrown out onto the streets at the same time as people being dumped out of pubs. We had the Minister for Justice speaking out a while ago on this issue, which hasn't been looked into. It was suggested that we would have staggered times for pubs, clubs and restaurants, which happens all over Europe. If we had 1, 000, 000 more taxis on the road it wouldn't make any difference at these times, bu

He went on to point out that; due to the mass closures of ranks across Dublin, taxis are harder to find and drivers are forced to drive around constantly, looking for fares and burning fossil fuels which is bad for the environment. He said that he has brought this up to the Green Party numerous times, but nothing has been done.

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'I WOKE UP AND HIS HAND WAS RIGHT UP MY SKIRT': MAURA HIGGINS SHARES STORY OF TAXI ASSAULT

Transport for Ireland recommend their app TFI Driver Check to maintain your safety when travelling by taxi.

Love Island star Maura Higgins shared a harrowing personal story on an Instagram questions and answers session.

Maura was asked what her worst experience with a man was, and said "would you believe I have a few.

"I had an incident with a taxi driver a long time ago in Ireland."

Maura explained that she was dropped off after her friends, as she was living alone at the time.

"Silly me, I fell asleep.

"I woke up and his hand was right up my skirt, and honestly I sobered up so quickly and memorised his taxi number, and still remembered it the next day."

Maura is not the only person to experience a situation like this. The Central Statistics Office found an increase of 22% in rape offences and a 17% increase in sexual assault this year.

Transport for Ireland recommend their app TFI Driver Check to maintain your safety when travelling by taxi.

The app allows users to check that the vehicle they are about to hire has been registered correctly and that the

driver has the appropriate license to operate the vehicle. If the information is not accurate, or you find the driver is not registered and licensed, you can submit a report.

You can check these details and see a picture of your driver, and see the information matches up. You have the option to send the driver's information to a friend or family member, so you are assured somebody knows where you are and your trip is recorded. However, you can't send on the picture of the driver.

All of Ireland's taxis, hackneys, limousines and all Small Public Service Vehicles drivers are covered by this app.

The app works in rural locations as well as cities such as Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

Justice Minister Helen McEntee announced in May of this year that a night-time economy charter as part of a wider zero-tolerance strategy of sexual violence and harassment will be introduced.

This will entail venues to establish and enforce minimum safety standards for all patrons, employees, contractors, artists, and crews in collaboration with gardaí and will include bodies such as the National Taxi Drivers Union.

OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE HEARS SERIOUS CHALLENGES FACING TAXI SECTOR

BY DARREN O'ROURKE TD



This month the Oireachtas Transport Committee heard first-hand evidence from taxi driver representatives about the challenges facing the sector.

I requested this Committee hearing, as it's clear a total disinterest from the Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan and the government, is adding to the difficulties drivers are facing and more needs to be done to support the sector.

Taxis form an essential part of our transport network, but this is consistently overlooked by the government.

One of the key issues facing drivers is the ten-year rule, and as Sinn Féin's spokesperson on Transport, I've been calling on the Minister to extend the ten-year rule.

This regulation is adding to the pressures drivers are facing, as they are being forced to replace their vehicle, even if it is in perfect condition.

Most taxis got significantly less use over the past two-years as a result of the pandemic, and we believe the government should now show flexibility in this area. Taxis will still need to pass the NCT and suitability tests, so there will be no compromise on safety.

Some drivers are struggling to access finance to fund the purchase of a new vehicle and the price of used cars has shot up 56% over the last two years, which is compounding the issue.

In addition, there are long waits for electric vehicle deliveries, which means drivers will be forced to buy another petrol or diesel model, and therefore cannot avail of the EV grant scheme for taxis.

It makes complete sense to extend the 10-year rule at this time, as it will help drivers through the current difficulties and also encourage more people to buy an EV over the coming years, which will be cheaper to run and better for the environment.

Since 2019, we've lost 2,562 taxis from the system, as people are leaving the job as they can no longer make ends meet. It's vital we stop this exodus.

We need to be supporting drivers, not penalising them.

Unfortunately, instead of assistance, we've actually seen the government attempt to undermine the entire sector in recent months.

The Tánaiste's kite flying about introducing Uber has been very unhelpful and has further damaged relations between the sector and the government.

The solution to the shortage of taxis in the state is not to undercut the entire industry by introducing ride-sharing apps, as Fine Gael as suggested.

The government should be taking action to fix problems facing the taxi sector, working to make it a viable career for more people, and not seeking to deregulate the sector and start a race to the bottom when it comes to terms and conditions.

I also want to the Minister to examine other issues such as the transferability of plates and bring forward plans to reduce the costs facing drivers.

We heard suggestions at the Committee that the NCT and suitability tests be scheduled on the same day to help drivers and how reforming our nightlife closing times can help spread demand for taxis over a longer period.

There are solutions there, so it's time for the Minister for Transport to step up, recognise his responsibility for the taxi industry and introduce changes that will help drivers over the coming year.

Darren O'Rourke is Sinn Féin spokesperson on Transport and TD for Meath East.

DARREN O'ROURKE TD

SPOKESPERSON ON TRANSPORT

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Gardai looking for drivers and people waiting at taxi rank after man dies in assault in Athlone, Co Westmeath

Anyone who provided assistance to the injured man is also asked to make contact with gardai

Gardai are looking for information after a man died following an assault in the early hours of this morning.

Officers are seeking to speak with anyone who may have been at a taxi rank waiting area on Church Street in Athlone, Co Westmeath between 2.15am and 3am on Saturday, August 13.

Anyone who provided assistance to the injured man is also asked to make contact with gardai, as well as any drivers who made their way through Church Street at the above times and who may have witnessed the incident.

Anyone with video footage or dash-cam is also requested to make this available to the investigation team.

Meanwhile, gardai are also looking to identify the

owners of parked vehicles in the area.

Gardai can be contacted at Athlone Garda Station on 090 6492600, on the Garda Confidential Line on 1800 666 111, or at any Garda Station.

Gardai added in a statement: "A post-mortem has been scheduled to place later today at Portiuncula University Hospital, Ballinasloe. The results of this post-mortem will determine the course of the investigation.

"No arrests have been made."

Gardai have since arrested two men as part of the investigation.

As part of an update, they said: "Gardai investigating the fatal assault of a man in Athlone which occurred in the early hours of this morning have arrested two men under suspicion of assault.

Man Slapped Driver Three Times in 'Nasty' Assault

Demostene Braescu (38), of Rowan House, Mespil Estate, Sussex Road, Dublin 4, at Dublin District Court where he was charged with assault and public order

A drunken taxi passenger slapped the driver three times and spat in his face in a "nasty" assault in a garda station.

Demostene Braescu (38) attacked the cabbie in front of gardai after he was brought to the station in a dispute over the payment of a €15 fare.

Judge John Brennan said the assault was "intolerable" and ordered Braescu to carry out 100 hours of community service instead of a four-month prison sentence.

The accused, of Rowan House, Mespil Estate, Sussex Road, Dublin 4 pleaded guilty to assault, non-payment of a fare, threatening, abusive and insulting behaviour and public intoxication.

Garda Catherine Prenderville said she was on duty at Fitzgibbon Street station at 8.15pm on October 24 last year when there was a report of an unpaid fare.

The accused was in the station when he slapped the taxi driver twice in the face and spat in his face in front of the garda.

He slapped the cabbie again and verbally abused and

threatened him while slurring his words and stumbling.

Braescu had been intoxicated and there was a dispute over whether he had paid the fare or not, his solicitor Stephen O'Mahony said.

The driver, fearing non-payment, brought him to the garda station. Mr O'Mahony said CCTV showed the victim "marched" the accused into the station, and it looked like the two then had "a good row."

Braescu accepted his behaviour was totally inappropriate and wrong, and that he acted in a "reprehensible manner".

The accused, who was qualified in IT was usually a very quietly-spoken and non-aggressive person, Mr O'Mahony said. The fare was since paid.

Judge Brennan said it was a "nasty incident" where the accused struck the driver with "not one or two but three slaps" and spat at him.

Slapping and spitting was "intolerable" but the fact that it was done in a garda station meant it was "clearly impulsive", the judge said.

‘I WAS AFRAID, WALKING 25 MINUTES ALONE’ DUBLINERS SAY SHORTAGE OF TAXIS POSING SAFETY RISKS

Less than one third of licensed taxi driver work on Friday and Saturday night.

The shortage of taxis in Dublin’s city centre at peak times on weekends has left revellers waiting sometimes hours for transport while others were forced to walk long distances to get home at the end of a night out.

According to the National Transport Authority, currently there are 25,336 taxi driver licences, 18,849 of which are active.

An NTA survey this year found that 93% of licensed taxi drivers are now working, but only 29% work Friday and Saturday nights.

The Journal asked readers to share their experiences and received a high volume of responses, particularly from women and their partners who found themselves

feeling unsafe at the end of a night with few options for getting home.

One woman, Holly, said she will no longer go out unless she’s driving – and not drinking – or she has a lift arranged, after a bad experience two months ago.

Friends of hers were visiting and they were at a bar in the city centre until 2am.

“I would say around 50 people were on the street in the freezing cold trying to flag down taxis or book via an app,” she said.

“After a number of failed attempts, we started to walk home. I flagged a passing taxi. My friends were quite drunk and I put them in a taxi and asked him to bring them to my address.

There wasn’t enough space for me so I had to walk home alone – my friends unfortunately didn’t understand I was left alone, but it was all a rush to get them home and get them out of the cold. I was very concerned about getting them home, I said I was fine to work away. I was cold and afraid and walked 25 minutes alone.

“Since then I have not gone out without knowing how I was getting home. My boyfriend, who goes home to Clare on weekends, will now stay up in Dublin if I have something planned. Alternatively I will not drink and will drive home – anything to avoid that situation again.”

Another woman said she had to get a lift home from the manager of a hotel that hosted her birthday party after the taxi she booked through an app was cancelled.

Her friends, who all live close to one another, had



already left in another taxi and she was by herself. Hotel staff tried to arrange another taxi for her, she said, but they had no success.

“It resulted in the hotel manager having to give me a lift home, which I was very iffy about doing because he was a stranger,” she said.

“I was going to buy a room in the hotel that night but it was sold out, so I literally had no other option.”

One reader, Keith, said his girlfriend spent three hours recently trying to get a taxi.

“She walked from Fade Street, up O’Connell street to The Rotunda [hospital],” he said.

“Even then she had to ring her brother to collect her. I was at a wedding, terrified for her safety after the attacks on women from men in our country. The situation is a joke.”

Late night bus services

There are a small number of 24-hour bus routes in Dublin city, as well as 13 Nitelink services running every hour from midnight until 4am.

However readers who spoke to The Journal said buses are also busy late at night and are sometimes too full to take them. They also said the late-night routes do not cover some areas of the city and they can still face a long walk or a search for a taxi when they get off.

One woman, Rose, tried to get a 24-hour bus home with her boyfriend after a recent night out, but just missed one when they arrived at the stop. The next one, 30 minutes later, was full when it arrived so “just zoomed past us”, she said.

“We said we weren’t going to wait another 30 minutes for the same thing to happen, at this stage the crowd at the bus stop was looking like we’d almost fill a bus ourselves by the time one showed up,” she said. “I’m disabled but I don’t look it, so there was no chance of a guaranteed seat which I would need if we got onto the bus.”

Rose has myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), a chronic illness that is worsened by physical exertion. She said she has to budget her energy to allow for evenings out with friends and had done so in this case, but she could not have managed a walk home.

They had started off at Ormond Quay, walked to College Green and eventually when they reached Parnell Square they managed to flag a taxi, an hour and a half after they started looking for one.

“I hadn’t accounted for not being able to get home and I’m still exhausted two days later,” she said.

Dublin Bus said it has experienced an increased demand for late night services on its 24-hour routes in recent weeks. It said it has been providing additional services where possible.

The NTA has committed to providing additional bus services that operate on a 24/7 basis – the Route N4 from Blanchardstown to The Point commenced on 29 May and two further routes will follow this year.

Rejection based on destination

Some readers who got in touch said they did manage to hail down taxis, but when they stopped their refused to accept the fare, either because of the destination, or because they wanted to pay by card, rather than cash.

I had experiences on two consecutive weekends when



taxi drivers stopped to ask where we were going? the answer was Rathgar both times? and they just drove off without accepting the fare,? Steven Dunne told The Journal.

“At least the first guy had the decency to say no. The second guy just sped off. Over the same timeframe I’ve had numerous taxis just pass me by with their lights on. For me it’s not so much the lack of taxis, just their unwillingness to stop or take mid-range fares.”

Another reader, Daniel, said after a recent night out three taxis with their plates lit stopped for him, asked where he was going and drove off when he told them his destination.

“I’m pretty much done with going into town for nights out until it’s clear getting transport home is better,” he said.

One man said his wife had a similar experience – when she told the driver she was going to Knocklyon he rolled up the window and “drove off without saying a word”, he said.

She waited almost an hour for a taxi home.

“Luckily she had a friend who waited with her or I would have had to take our baby out of her cot to collect her,” he said.

This can be a shock

David McGuinness, chairperson of the taxi driver representative organisation Tiomanai Tacsai Na HEireann (TTnH), told The Journal that the industry lost many drivers during the pandemic as demonstrated by the 6,487 inactive drivers recorded by the NTA.

“Representative groups throughout the pandemic pointed out at every meeting that we’d need to have an industry when the pandemic finished, so this can’t be a shock for the government,” he said.

“It’s extremely busy at peak hours, I think off-peak we haven’t got back to pre-pandemic levels yet. I think people are still reluctant to use buses, it’s really busy on Friday and Saturday from 5pm to 9pm when people are starting to go out, I think people feel safer in their own company in a taxi.”

He said it is clear that drivers are less likely to use taxi apps during busy periods because of the 15% fee they have to pay through an app.

“When it’s 1am or 2am and it’s busy like that you’re just more likely to pick up from the street, if the apps reduced their fees during those hours it might make a difference,” he said.

McGuinness said there are a number of measures the government should look at including an expansion of late night public transport options, later opening times for nightclubs and a premium rate for taxi drivers during those peak times to encourage those who normally stay home on Friday and Saturday nights to work.

This kind of incentive could encourage drivers who have left the industry to return, he said.

He also said the government could consider restricting the service during those hours to ranks so there are centralised spots

for people to get taxis. Taxis would not be allowed to pick up customers in the city centre other than at these ranks. McGuinness said this rule had worked well in other countries.

When asked about examples of drivers turning down fares due to their destination, McGuinness said it was “a disgrace” and encouraged customers to report this activity to the NTA.

“This shouldn’t be happening and drivers who do that should face penalties,” he said. “It should be flagged because it’s not the way the majority of drivers operate.”

Review of maximum fares

In response to a number of queries from The Journal, the Department of Transport said the NTA is engaging in a consultation process with the industry as part of its review of the current Maximum Fares Order.

“The review process involves a detailed examination of all of the costs involved in providing these services, including fuel and vehicle costs, and all SPSV [taxi] operators were encouraged to take part in the consultation process which closed on 27 May 2022,” it said.

The draft Maximum Fares Order 2022 proposed average increases in taxi fares of 12.5%. The department said this would provide for a premium time fare for certain hours and shorter journeys.

“It should be noted that 57% of the hours in the week occur at Premium Time (20.00 to 08.00, Sundays and Bank Holidays),” it said.

“This is the period, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights, when there are the most complaints about the unavailability of taxis.”

Supports introduced during the pandemic included an increase in the maximum vehicle age and a measure to allow licence holders to be inactive for 24 months so they could remain attached to the industry with no associated costs. The department said it is hoped that a significant proportion of these licences will return now that demand is increasing.

The NTA is also providing grants, it said, for the provision and conversion of vehicles to ensure they are wheelchair accessible, which is a requirement for new entrants into the industry. Grants are also provided to convert the fleet to lower emission and zero emission vehicles.

The department said the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles continues to meet on a monthly basis and that the NTA, which is the independent regulator of the sector, “has been in constant contact with operators, drivers and representatives throughout the pandemic via email, text messages and phone calls”.

“Given the independence of the NTA, it would be not be appropriate to engage with the Minister for Transport on these issues,” the department said.



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MAJOR PRICE HIKE FOR IRISH TAXI USERS AS FREE NOW ADD NEW €1 TECHNOLOGY FEE

TAXI users will have to pay more for their trip when they order using the FREE NOW app - as they have introduced a new €1 technology fee.

The price rise, which came into effect on August 1, will be charged on all lifts successfully completed via the app.

In an email sent out to FREE NOW users, the taxi service and Ireland's leading mobility app claimed the extra charge would allow them to "continue to invest in improving FREE NOW's technology and app quality".

A FREE NOW spokesperson told us: "This enables us to continue offering passengers an important public transport service across the country at a challenging time for the taxi sector.

"FREE NOW is committed to continue providing passengers with an on-demand transport option - connecting passengers and taxi drivers to help meet individual transport needs."

This €1 charge will be in place as well as a pre existing, NTA mandated booking fee of €2 and a €5 fee if you cancel on your driver before they arrive.

This new charge is on top of an Initial Charge of €3.80 that applies between 8am and 8pm from Monday to Saturday, except public holidays.

Between the late hours of 8pm and 8am an initial charge of €4.20 applies between Monday to Saturday, and all day on Sundays and public holidays.

This means that if someone gets a taxi with the app at 9pm on a Friday evening, their fare will be €7.20 before

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Fare prices are also set to rise by a weighted average of 12 per cent on September 1, which Transport for Ireland claim reflects “the increase in operating costs faced by taxi drivers”. This will increase the initial fare charges mentioned above to €4.20 and €4.80 respectively.

Dublin City Councillor Colm O’Rourke described FREE NOW’s latest hike as “below par”.

‘The wrong route’

Speaking to the Irish Sun, the Fine Gael Councillor said: “FREE NOW have taken the wrong route with this one.

“It’s disappointing that they want to lump another charge on members of the public.

“Especially considering that people’s faith in the taxi sector has been knocked down recently due to issues such as a shortage of taxis, especially at night.”

The Dublin man added that taxi drivers themselves already “don’t get enough credit for their work” and a decision such as this will only add a further blow to the sector.

A need for reform

He said: “We know that the National Transport Authority is in the process of increasing taxi fares as is, so it really is terrible timing.

“Public transport options, particularly at night, are not up to scratch, so many people primarily rely on taxis to

get home safe.

“Recently there have been even fewer options of taxis to get home at night, so adding more costs into the mix for members of the public is concerning.

“Again, this shows the need for more public transport options, especially at night in Dublin.

“We need more 24-hour buses across the city as soon as possible, there shouldn’t be any delay with that.”

Driver woes

Despite the unrest among Irish taxi users following FREE NOW’s latest price hike, taxi drivers have also been subject to charges and won’t see a cent of FREE NOW’s newest tech fee.

According to FREE NOW’s website, in the Republic of Ireland, drivers are charged:

- 15% (inclusive of Standard VAT) of the Payment Amount* on all app bookings.
- 15% (inclusive of Standard VAT) on Pay with FREE NOW bookings.
- €2 (inc VAT) per trip in addition to the standard 15% of the Payment Amount for certain hospitality trips like hotels, restaurants & other establishments.

FREE NOW were also taking commission on driver tips until January 2020, which they subsequently repaid to drivers on a monthly basis following its removal.

Video shows bloodied man displaying injuries after horror Galway taxi stabbing

A graphic video has been doing the rounds showing a man who was stabbed while he was a passenger in a taxi in Galway city displaying bloodied torso wounds from the knife attack.

The man shows his injuries to the camera while staff ask him to lie down. He moves a bandage out of the way to give a better view of the damage before focusing on an open wound for a few seconds.

The brief clip ends with the man complying with the request and laying back down.

The clip is believed to be related to an incident in

Galway city where two men were taken to hospital after a confrontation between a number of passengers while in a taxi on Monday on the Newcastle Road at around 1am.

The incident is understood to have happened when a taxi had picked up three men in the city before a knife was produced, leading to two men being hospitalised.

Speaking about one of the men, a taxi driver (not the man in the video) - who was stabbed in the incident - manager of Big O Taxis, Frank Fahy told Galway Bay FM: "He's one of our top drivers and he goes over and above his duty as a driver, looking after customers.

"He works nights and weekends and to think that this could happen to him while he's going about his normal work is unacceptable. I suppose it's the reality of life today and it's an issue that we taxi drivers have to deal with on an ongoing basis. The incident was nothing to do with the driver, he was just doing his job."

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Why your business should consider using EVs



Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland: Information for businesses

If you're interested in testing EVs for your businesses' fleet

The EV Commercial Fleet Trial launched 21 July 2022 to afford businesses the opportunity to test an EV free of charge for a minimum period of 3 months. Its purpose is to show, through real world evidence, the benefits, savings and the suitability and viability of EVs in a commercial setting.

Due to overwhelming demand, applications for the EV Commercial Fleet Trials are now closed. Applications are being assessed by the SEAI who will be in contact with all applicants in the coming weeks.

To access more information please go to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) website.

If you would like to switch your small public service vehicle (SPSV) to EV

A grant is available for owners of small public service vehicles (SPSV), such as taxis and hackneys, to buy electric vehicles (EVs).

SPSV drivers can apply for grants of up to €10,000 towards the purchase of a new, full-battery eSPSV, with a further €2,500 available to convert it to a wheelchair-accessible model.

Taxi drivers are eligible for double the normal grant when they scrap an older, more polluting or high mileage vehicle and make the switch to electric. By scrapping and switching €20,000 will be available for a new, fully electric SPSV and if the taxi is a wheelchair-accessible electric vehicle, the supports rise to €25,000.

SPSV drivers who make the switch to an EV can also avail of VRT relief (up to €5,000), the Domestic Charger Scheme (up to €600) and annual toll refunds (up to €1,000). This is in addition to the significant fuel savings and lower maintenance costs associated with electric models.

Grants are administered by the National Transport Authority (NTA). Further information is available on the NTA website.

If you're interested in purchasing an eVan

SEAI administer a grant support for the purchase of new N1 category electric vehicles for business and public entities.

Expansion of the current electric vans grant to include large panel vans will be announced later this year.

EV Dealership Awards

The SEAI EV Dealership Awards recognise and reward

excellence in the promotion and sales of electric vehicles in Ireland.

Sports Club Scheme

The Shared Island Sports Club grant will provide funding to install a network of publicly accessible chargers in communities nationwide through their local sports clubs subject to certain eligibility criteria.

This grant, with funding provided via the government's Shared Island Fund, will operate on an all-island basis and provide grant funding via National Sports Governing Bodies to eligible sports clubs and centres to help defray the cost of installing publicly accessible EV charge points.

ZEVI is engaging with Sports Ireland in the development of this grant.

Alternatively-Fuelled Heavy-Duty Vehicles

To promote the decarbonisation of the heavy-duty sector, and to assist road transport companies to transition from fossil fuels, the department launched a new Alternatively-Fuelled Heavy-Duty Vehicle (AFHDV) Purchase Grant Scheme in 2021. The Scheme supports the purchase of new large vans, trucks, buses and coaches.

The Scheme, which is administered by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), is intended to help bridge some of the difference in purchase price between conventional heavy-duty vehicles (HDVs) and those powered by alternatively-fuelled power-trains that offer environmental benefits over standard diesel vehicle technologies, and that would not otherwise have been bought.

Grant levels under the Scheme are calculated as a percentage of the difference in price between a conventionally-fuelled diesel HDV and its alternatively-fuelled equivalent.

EV Smart Chargers registration

Manufacturers, Importers and Distributors of Electric Vehicle Smart Chargers are now invited to register their products with SEAI on the Triple E register EV Smart Chargers Register/SEAI

Charge Point Operator Registration

Register with SEAI and become a Charge Point Operator (CPO) for the Electric Vehicle Apartment Charger Grant scheme. Deliver and operate electric vehicle charging networks under this new scheme across Ireland Charge Point Operators/Electric Vehicle Charging/SEAI



CAB2K
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Cab2k and Vip taxis join forces and look to other companies to join their platform.

Cab2k and Vip Taxis are two long standing reputable Taxi companies within Dublin's taxis industry. Both companies have been market leaders in their respective areas. Cab2k have many partnerships with Hotel groups across the city while VIP Taxis are the market leader in the Corporate client space. However, the ramifications of COVID on the industry have hit hard.

The environment for dispatch operators has become extremely challenging with Multinationals taxi apps like Free Now, Blot and now Uber battling it out for market share. A view was taken that we must work together to try to compete. We feel that both companies and both brands are well respected so we will continue to operate both brands separately. But together, both sets of drivers can benefit from this receiving extra work, keeping them engaged on our platform and as a result, protecting our market share and providing more value to our drivers. The partnership has been very successful to date, the benefit of extra cars in areas has been a life saver. We are currently in talks with a number of independent taxi companies and actively looking for other companies to join our platform. Like us, they agree that their business has been damaged and partnership is the only means to survival. The rationale is simple, if you have a taxi company and you are struggling to cover your costs while finding it increasingly difficult to supply a service to your clients, why not partner with us, join our platform, reduce your operating costs and avail of the support of over 800 taxis. I need to be very clear about the following; this is extremely important. Your business is yours which has been built with years of hard work and is well respected in each



of your localities. We are not looking to take your work or damage your brand, have full control of your business while benefiting from strength in numbers.

Over the past 3 months, I have spoken to people who have worked extremely hard the past 25 years to build their business to see it dwindling away as they can not compete with app operators. This saddens me because a lot of these companies are family owned and they are losing hope. They, like us, are proud people who have pride in their business. My message is keep your business personal, keep your business local, but align it with us.

I'd like to say a special thanks to Mark Callaghan of VIP Taxis who sadly passed away this year. Mark great vision and was instrumental in creating these partnerships. Mark is sadly missed by us all.

**Cab2k and VIP Taxis are looking for drivers to support us, free trial periods are available.
Contact Anthony Kelly: 087 417 9731**

A street scene in Dublin, Ireland, featuring a brick building on the left with a 'CAB2K Taxi App' sign. In the background, a clock tower with 'TYSON' written on it is visible. The street is decorated with colorful bunting and flowers. A large yellow graphic on the right side of the image contains promotional text.

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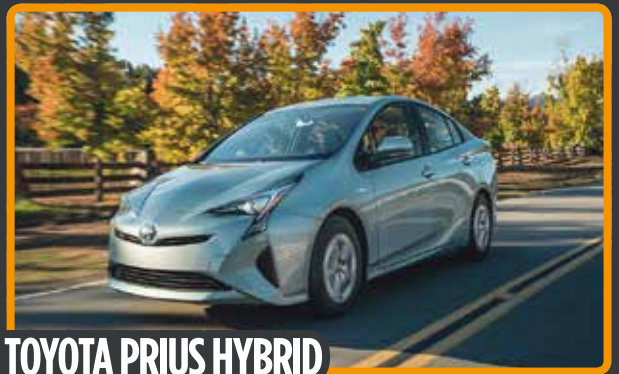
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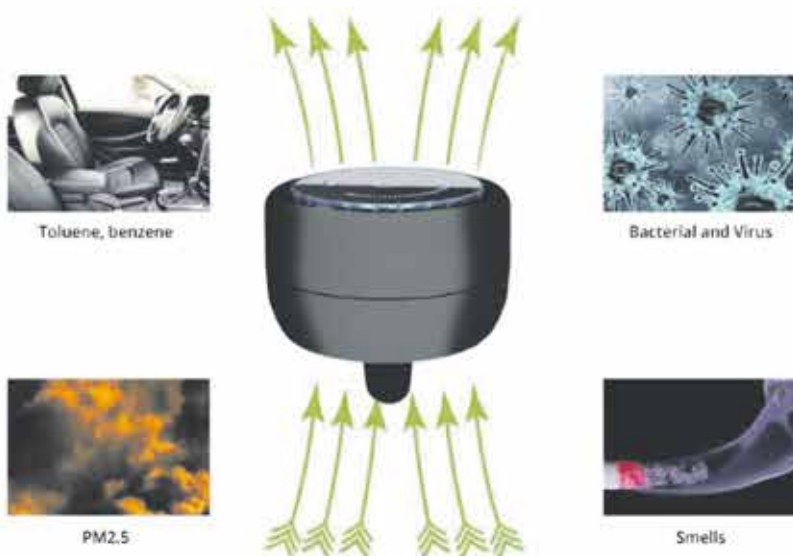
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