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EDITOR LETTER

We have a number of interesting pieces in this latest edition.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has released its annual SPSV driver report for 2022 which looks at the numbers of drivers who have left the industry compared with those who have entered it as well as the median retirement age and many other aspects of the industry.

The NTA is not alone in this as the National Transport Assembly Committee (NTAC) has conducted a survey of its own independent of the NTA which makes for very interesting reading. Along with this survey, Chairperson of the NTAC and Spokesperson on Taxis, Tony Roe has once again raised the issue of mandatory receipt of card payments, coupled with poor WIFI reception in certain areas resulting in card machines not working and subsequent arguments between drivers and passengers. Roe also raised the issue of license renewal and the painful and expensive system of renewal which has been in place since the Garda Carriage Office was scrapped.

Notably, the NTA itself is in agreement with Roe in relation to cashless payments resulting in driver assaults.

The National Transport Authority received a total

of 1,625 complaints in 2022 relating to taxi drivers, and a record number of complaints about taxi drivers last year has been linked to the introduction of a new regulation requiring licence holders to accept cashless payments for fares.

Meanwhile, in the west and south-west of the country it seems that when taxi drivers are not being assaulted they are being accused of committing assaults. One driver in Cork has said that he has been afraid to leave the house for work and when he is out working he locks his doors following a vicious assault by a passenger who refused to pay. Further up the coast in Galway a mother has revealed that she feared for her life when she awoke after falling asleep to find her taxi driver sexually assaulting her.

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NTAC DRIVER SURVEY



Tony Roe, Chairperson of the National Transport Assembly Committee (NTAC) and Spokesperson on Taxis has hit out at the current system whereby drivers renew their taxi licenses.

“ One of the main complaints we are hearing from drivers, particularly older drivers who are leaving the industry in large numbers is the situation with renewing their taxi license. Under the old system you went in, you renewed your license, you got it done there and then. You had the NCT which was carried out by the Garda Carriage Office, you also had suitability which was carried out by the Garda Carriage Office and now this is going over weeks for taxi drivers. We are hearing from drivers, particularly those in older vehicles where they can go through four tests within the 12 months; that’s two NCT tests and two SGS tests. Surely these tests can be done at the same time in the same place as was the case with the Garda Carriage office who did a great job. It was a formality but now it’s a headache and a hassle. Common sense is needed here. A lot of European countries have their taxis tested in designated garages. Garages can do those tests, issue them with the cert and if anything has to be done concerning work on the car, it’s done there and then. We are calling on the Minister for Transport, and the National Transport Authority (NTA) to explore opportunities to protect drivers and encourage them to enter the industry. Unfortunately, the opposite is happening here where drivers are packing it in. I know quite a lot of friends of mine now, I see them going through town and they’re actually driving buses. They all say the same thing to us, whether they’re old drivers or new. You have to look

at the industry where people are making laws for taxi drivers concerning this business of getting their cars looked at and they're being referred to places down the country where there are centres to get it done. This is complete and utter lunacy. Common sense has to kick in here. We are hearing a lot from people that are leaving the industry. Now it's one thing for the NTA to try to encourage people coming into the industry, but people who are coming into the industry are meeting with the same problems. You have situations now where drivers can't even get on to the taxi ranks because they are closing down. There are 35 ranks which have gone out of commission around the city, we are getting complaints from drivers, we are getting complaints from the general public," said Roe.

He went on to point out that the new National Children's Hospital which is being built on the St James Hospital campus and is set to be one of the biggest hospitals in Europe doesn't even have a taxi rank.

"This is all crazy. A mechanism has to be put in place now to enhance the taxi industry. Unfortunately, the opposite seems to be happening here," said Rowe.

He went on to say that the NTAC has carried out its own survey of 200 taxi drivers with regard to the issue of drivers leaving the industry.

"From the survey we found out that the largest number of drivers (50%) plan to retire at age 65, 25% of drivers wanted to retire earlier; these were mainly younger drivers. The reality is that most can't retire due to financial difficulties and a lot of the drivers who leave, want to come back into the industry. They don't realise what they have taken on. A lot of drivers would retire at 50, but due to boredom and a lack of routine in their lives, a lot regret retiring, which is something the current workforce in the taxi industry doesn't realise. Retirement is not for everyone; 8% of taxi drivers said they would never want to retire fully, and would work part time indefinitely to give them a sense of purpose and focus, and unless preparations are made now for these particular drivers, it would be a very bad move. A lot of taxi drivers have an outlook on retiring, some have bought apartments in Spain and elsewhere for retirement, but the reality kicks in then when they realise that the revenue needed to sustain a lifestyle of living off the state pension is not ideal. The state pension is approximately €253 a week, and that state pension would virtually put you on the poverty line. Reality kicks in there, and taxi drivers that retire tell

me that it is not all that they imagined. Their ambitions and needs and hopes needed to be attended to and planned for much earlier if they plan to retire. Many taxi drivers had the dream of stopping working long before the retirement age, and the ones that do see that it is not as blissful as they had imagined. On a positive note; we recommend that drivers who are leaving, or do leave, keep their licenses up to date, as they can renew it at different times and not let it run out. We are warning taxi drivers of the pitfalls of retirement," he said.

Roe further highlighted the issues drivers are facing with regard to the mandatory receipt of card payments.

"Concerning the current issues that we have; we find an awful lot of taxi drivers are talking to us about arguments they are having, about assaults. We found out that most of the problems encountered, and most of these assaults are done mainly in the early hours of the morning. Drivers are dealing with people who are under the influence and this is all a contributing factor to drivers who are leaving the industry. The number of complaints we have seen since this new legislation was introduced concerning card machines is out of hand," he said.

He went on to point out that there are parts of the country, (Dublin Airport being a prime example), where WiFi signal is not strong and the machine will not work resulting in an argument with the customer. He said that the Minister for Transport, Eamonn Ryan, and the NTA must act on this.

Martina Roe Lay Counselling Society

The newly rebranded Martina Rowe Lay Counselling Society (formerly the Taxi Drivers Lay Counselling Service) has been going from strength to strength since its inception.

"We have meetings every week with drivers who have any sort of issues, particularly personal issues which are being overlooked. We are having trips away soon to Spain and Romania. We have recently been to England, Scotland and Wales. We have had weekends away to Wexford, Limerick Carrick-on-Shannon, I could go on. Anyone who feels that they have issues they would like to air are more than welcome," said Rowe.

If you are interested in the Martina Rowe Lay Counselling Society, feel free to contact any of the Lay Counselling Committee or call Tony at 085 108 9482



New PEUGEOT e-Rifter is a Spirited EV People Mover. by Declan Glynn

The new PEUGEOT e-Rifter asserts itself as a new icon of the lion brand. The feline LED lighting signature and three claw rear lights mirror the very latest vehicles in the Peugeot range. With 5 or 7-seat options, 2 sliding side doors, and a large tailgate with wide access, it truly is built for everyday adventures. A horizontal bonnet, large wheels, roof bars, black side protectors, and notched wheel arch protectors reinforce the athletic style of the new e-Rifter. Two trim levels are available: Allure and GT, and both variants are available in Standard (L1) and Long (L2) wheelbase options, with a choice of 5 or 7 seats. With an overall external height of 1,882mm, the e-Rifter can comfortably fit into underground and multi-storey car parks.

Masses of Passenger & Cargo Space.

Although it is based on the new Peugeot Partner commercial vehicle, the e-Rifter has an endearing character of its own, and its van-like styling does result in a massive amount of cabin space for all occupants, and their luggage. Cargo space behind the rear seats measures in at a gigantic 1,355-litres (L1) or 1,900-litres (L2), and this can be expanded to 3,500-litres or 4,000-litres respectively when the rear seats are folded down. A large, deep storage compartment (with sliding covers) within the centre console has been ergonomically designed to hold everyday items that need to be kept away from prying eyes, but within easy reach of front seat occupants. With so much storage space located throughout the cabin, the e-Rifter offers best-in-class storage capacity.

Quick Charging & Realistic Range.

Peugeot quotes a WLTP real-world electric driving range of 280km from a full battery, and that is exactly the figure I achieved when I charged my review car during my time with it, and that is impressive in itself. The e-Rifter can charge at up to 100kW, meaning a 10-80% top up takes just 30 minutes on a CCS rapid charger, while a full charge (0-100%) via a regular wallbox charger will take around seven and a half hours to complete.

Car on Review.

My review car was a new Peugeot e-Rifter GT L2 (LWB) 5-Seater, which was finished in Deep Blue metallic paintwork. In addition to the comprehensive list of standard equipment in Allure trim, upgrading to GT trim brings with it 17" 'Aoraki' alloy wheels, 3D stamped-effect radiator grille with black surround, opening rear tailgate window, 'Quente Brown' interior ambience, 'Casual' cloth seat trim with overstitch detail, dark tinted rear side and tailgate windows, power folding door mirrors, PEUGEOT Open & Go (keyless entry and push button start), automatic dual-zone climate control, air vents in the 2nd row with fan strength command and USB socket, and a 10" digital instrument cluster, along with the ingenious PEUGEOT i-Cockpit

with an 8" capacitive touchscreen. The e-Rifter is easy to handle in town, and safe and powerful on the open road. The 100kW (136hp) electric motor is powered by a high-voltage 50kWh battery, and it provides instantaneous acceleration thanks to 260Nm of immediately available torque. The new e-Rifter offers exemplary handling and agility thanks to its electric power steering, which works in tandem with the compact steering wheel and optimised chassis design to ensure even the tightest of spaces are tackled with ease. The small steering wheel allows for precise and quick steering responses, while good levels of grip in corners, and well contained body roll, are commendable characteristics. A supple suspension set-up provides all occupants with a comfortable ride quality on a wide variety of road surfaces. The 'e-Toggle' automatic gearbox control button is located on the centre console, and a 'B' (Brake) mode button allows for increased deceleration when the accelerator pedal is released, thus increasing the driving range. Additionally, a Drive Mode selector enables drivers to choose between Eco, Normal and Power in order to optimise range or performance when required. The latest PEUGEOT i-Cockpit technology includes two new instrument panels that share all the information necessary for the proper management of a 100% electric vehicle.

Conclusion & Pricing.

The new Peugeot e-Rifter is a hugely practical and comfortable fully-electric people carrier in every respect. It has a cabin that is cavernous, usable and immensely practical, and it is sure to find favour with families and taxi operators alike. With a comfortable ride quality, responsive handling characteristics and generous levels of standard equipment, the new e-Rifter is a credible and highly commendable alternative to an SUV or estate car. Pricing starts at €39,070 for the Allure L1 variant, with my review car specification priced at €41,470. For buyers not yet ready to make the transition to a fully-electric MPV, the new Peugeot Rifter is also available with a 1.5-litre BlueHDi diesel engine, and is priced from just €33,250. Visit www.peugeot.ie for further information.

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Record complaints against taxi drivers last year due to new regulation over cashless payments



The National Transport Authority received a total of 1,625 complaints in 2022 relating to taxi drivers.

A record number of complaints about taxi drivers last year has been linked to the introduction of a new regulation requiring licence holders to accept cashless payments for fares.

New figures published by the National Transport Authority (NTA), which acts as the regulator for the taxi industry, show it received a total of 1,625 complaints in 2022.

It represented almost a threefold increase on the number of complaints received in 2021, while it was also a 17% increase over the previous record annual total of 1,383 in 2019.

The NTA said the growth in the number of complaints was “mainly due to the introduction of a new requirement in September 2022 for taxi drivers to provide cashless payment terminals for fares”.

It claimed the regulation had resulted in the complaint category of “overcharging and other matters relating to fares” accounting for almost half of all complaints made last year – a total of 793 cases.

The second most common category of complaint related to the conduct and identification of drivers which accounted for 481 complaints or 30% of the total.

The number of complaints about the condition and roadworthiness of taxis was down almost 50% on pre-pandemic levels to 42.

The NTA said 40% of complaints resulted in the driver being issued with a fine, warning, advice or a summons for prosecution.

It also reported that over 204,000 checks were carried out on taxis and other small public service

vehicles (SPSVs) as well as drivers last year which involved approximately 90% of all vehicles.

They resulted in 655 drivers being issued with on-the-spot fines.

The most common offence was the failure to notify details of the vehicle being operated to the NTA which accounted for 21% of the total.

Other common breaches of taxi regulations related to vehicle standards, the unreasonable refusal to carry a passenger and the failure to print or offer a taxi receipt.

The NTA said it initiated 146 prosecutions against taxi drivers last year with a majority of cases relating to the operation of an unlicensed vehicle.

Number of taxi drivers

Meanwhile, the number of taxi drivers in Ireland has decreased by almost 7% to just under 25,400 since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The latest figures show there were 1,835 fewer drivers of taxis and other small public service vehicles (SPSVs) at the end of 2022 compared to March 2020.

A total of 25,393 active SPSV licences were recorded last year – a decrease of 6.7% since the outbreak of the pandemic – with almost 60% of drivers licensed to operate a taxi service.

It means there are now over 22,000 fewer taxi drivers in Ireland since the peak level of 47,529 recorded in May 2009.

A general downward trend in the number of people working in the taxi industry was reversed between 2017 and early 2020 as a result of a recruitment campaign by the NTA before it was adversely affected by the impact of the pandemic.

According to the NTA, a total of 1,159 new SPSV driver licences were issued last year – more than double the number of new driver licences issued in 2021 – with almost two-thirds of the new entrants licensed to operate in Dublin.

However, the numbers leaving the industry were even higher with 25 individuals surrendering their licence, while another 1,400 allowed their licence to lapse permanently during 2022.

The latest figures also confirm the ageing profile of taxi drivers with a majority aged 50 and over.

Only 660 drivers – just 2.6% of the total – are aged under 32 years, while over 14% of all drivers are aged over 68 years.

“The figures indicate that a career in taxi driving may be popular as a second career, post-retirement,”

the NTA said.

The regulator said a majority of applicants who sit and fail the driver entry test for taxis and other SPSVs do not take the test a second time.

However, NTA figures show applicants take on average 2.8 tests before they pass the exam.

More than 2,460 candidates took the test last year. Despite the decline in the number of people working in the taxi industry, the size of the national fleet grew by almost 2% last year.

NTA figures show the total number of active licence plates rose by 1.8% to 19,281 vehicles including 16,220 taxis – an annual increase of 335.

However, the national fleet remains over 2,000 vehicles below pre-pandemic levels.

Grants

At the same time, the number of wheelchair accessible taxis reached a record level of 3,206 last year.

All new taxi vehicles since June 2010 must be capable of carrying passengers who use wheelchairs, while grants of up to €7,500 have been available for the purchase of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

A total of €1.32 million was made available in grants in 2022 which facilitated the addition of 231 new taxis and 81 replacement vehicles.

The NTA said the percentage of wheelchair accessible vehicles in the Irish fleet at over 17% compared very favourably to other similarly regulated countries.

The regulator also reported a 75% increase in applications to the grant scheme for electric SPSVs last year.

However, the NTA said only 636 applicants received funding worth €11.9 million as the remainder were unable to source a vehicle before the end of the year due to international supply chain constraints.

“Climate, energy and geopolitical challenges resulted in long delays for new vehicles in Ireland as well as inflated prices for second-hand vehicles, making it unfeasible for some to enter the fleet,” the NTA stated.

Nevertheless, the number of fully electric vehicles in the national taxi fleet more than doubled in the space of 12 months.

The latest figures show there were 1,369 e-cars in the fleet at the end of 2022 compared to 674 the previous year, while there are also a further 3,539 hybrid vehicles.

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Cork taxi driver afraid to go to work after being ‘battered’ by passenger who refused to pay



“Now I keep my doors locked when I’m going through the city. I don’t pick up anyone until I talk to them and make sure they look okay”

A taxi driver in Cork has opened up about an incident which has left him afraid to go to work.

Junaid Ayub is calling for more protection for taxi drivers, after a recent incident during which he was “battered” by a passenger who refused to pay their fare.

The passenger reportedly “punched and slapped” the driver while he was dropping them home, CorkBeo reports.

Pakistan native who has been living and working in Ireland for the past 15 years, Junaid said that he had started driving to a nearby Garda station to look for help after the passenger refused to pay their full fare and started repeatedly hitting him.

Speaking to the 96FM Opinion Line with PJ Coogan, Ayud opened up about the experience, adding that things could have been a lot worse if he hadn’t been able to flag down another driver for help.

Thankfully, Ayub was able to hold up his arm to block a barrage of punches from the passenger before he eventually managed to beep his horn enough times for another taxi to pull over for assistance.

The cab driver explained: “I was just taking a man home, he handed me €20 while I was driving and I saw he had more money. I figured the remaining amount of the fare could be sorted when I finished dropping him off.

“When the drive finished it came to €37. I told him he owed me €17 more but he refused straight away, saying he didn’t have the money. I told him I didn’t want to argue and that we could sort it out at the Garda station.

“When I left the estate he said he wanted his €20 back. Then he just punched me, slapped me – I was bleeding straight away.”

Ayub said that he is now afraid to do his job, adding that he is very cautious regarding which passengers he picks up since the incident.

My doors are locked when I’m going through the city. I’m not picking up anyone until I talk to them and make sure they look okay.

“When I feel safe, then I unlock the door. I haven’t been picking up people who are alone, or anyone who looks too drunk.”

Bobby Lynch, who has been working in the area for decades and is a member of the Cork Taxi Council, commented: “Incidents like these aren’t uncommon but they’re happening, and they’re happening too often. A lot of drivers aren’t reporting it cause there’s nothing being done about it.

“I’m telling drivers out there now to report everything and to be careful out there. What happened to that chap is an absolute disgrace.”

Gardaí are investigating the incident.

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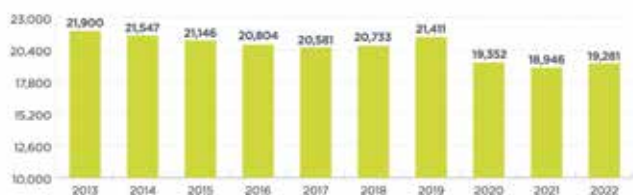
SPSV Report 2022

Small Public Service Vehicle Licence States Broadly speaking, all SPSV licences exist in one of three states:

- 1. Active:** Where SPSV licences are active, the associated vehicles are licensed and may be used for the carriage of passengers for hire or reward (all other regulatory requirements being met). See Figures 1 and 2.
- 2. Inactive:** This means that the SPSV licence has expired. However, the licence holder is entitled to apply for a replacement, within twenty-four months of the expiry date. See Table 1.
- 3. Dead:** The SPSV licence can no longer be replaced. A new licence application must be made.

Following an SPSV fleet decline of 6% from 2013 to 2017, NTA saw the industry beginning to grow in 2018 with a 4% increase between 2017 and 2019 with the upward trend set to continue. Covid-19 and the severe impact this had on the industry led to a reduction in 2020 and 2021, with an 11.5% decline in fleet numbers. 2022 saw this reverse once more with a 1.8% increase in fleet numbers during that year. Figure 1 illustrates the changes in SPSV licence numbers from 2013 to 2022.

Figure 1: Active Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Year, '13-'22



The SPSV fleet increased throughout 2022 at a steady pace, with nearly all months showing an increase on the previous month, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Active Small Public Service Vehicle Licences by Month, 2022

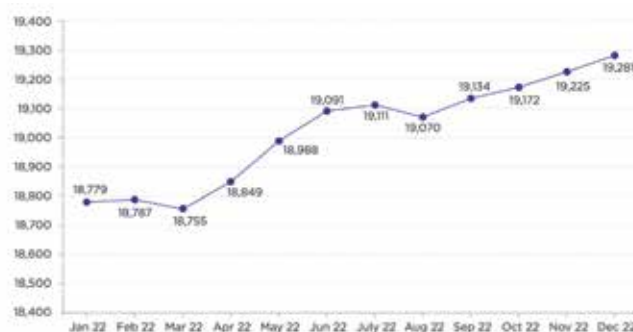


Table 1: Inactive SPSV Vehicle Licences, 2021 - 2022

SPSV Licence type	State	31 Dec-21	31 Dec-22	Difference
Vehicle	Inactive	1,270	2,349	1,079

Table 2: SPSV Vehicle Licences Status that Changed to Dead by Month, 2022

SPSV Dead State	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
SPSV Dead State	63	91	44	8	0	111	210	253	210	145	123	81

Vehicle Licences Issued

New SPSV licences can be granted for a Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab (WAT), Wheelchair Accessible Hackneys (WAH), limousines and Local Area Hackneys (LAH). Since June 2010, it is no longer possible to apply for a new SPSV licence for a taxi that was not a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) under the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 (Grant of Taxi Licences) (Amendment) Regulations 2010.

Under the same law, the transfer of a licence was prohibited for all new SPSV licences granted. This was extended to all SPSV licence holders in 2014, which effectively meant a licence could not be sold or transferred from one licence holder to another. The only exception is where an SPSV licence holder appoints someone who can apply to take over that licence in the event of the original licence holder's death. Figure 3 and Table 3 below reflect the number of new SPSV licences issued from 2013 to 2022. While this number was increasing year-on-year, driven in part by the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Grant Scheme introduced in mid-2014, and NTA's 2018 driver recruitment campaign for new industry entrants (covered in more detail in the 'SPSV Driver Licences' section of this Bulletin), Covid-19 in 2020 impacted this significantly. Compared to 2019, 2020 saw a 56% decrease on new vehicle licences issued and 2021 a 66% decrease. During this period, SPSV inspection centres were closed from late-March and early-June 2020 under HSE Covid-19 guidelines, resulting in no new licences joining the fleet in those months. 2022 did once again see an upward trend appear with a 10.5% increase on new SPSV licences issued compared to 2021.

Figure 3: New Vehicle Licences Issued by Year, 2013 - 2022

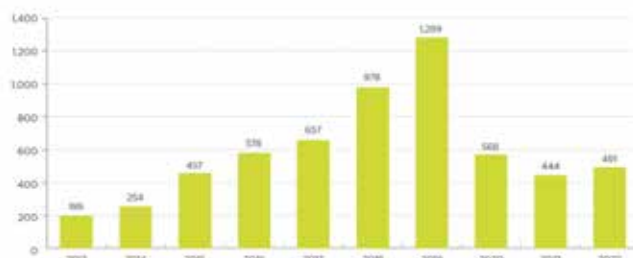


Table 3: New Vehicle Licences Issued by Year and Category, '13-'22

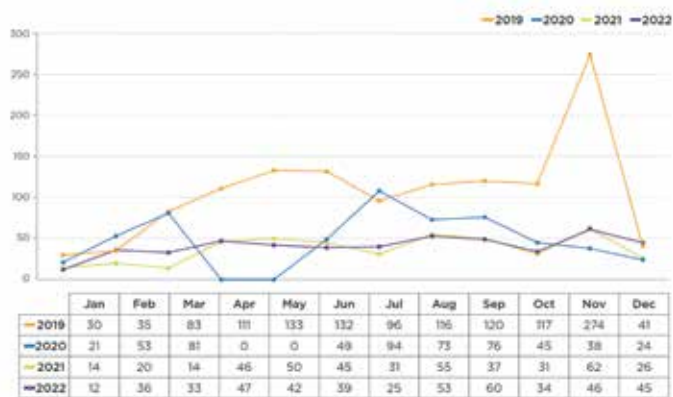
Year	Taxi	Hackney	Limousine	Wheelchair Accessible Taxi	Wheelchair Accessible Hackney	Local Area Hackney	Total
2013	0	0	177	16	8	0	199
2014	0	0	190	12	5	7	214
2015	0	0	269	157	16	11	453
2016	0	0	255	287	22	2	576
2017	0	0	290	245	21	1	657
2018	0	0	236	719	25	4	976
2019	0	0	208	944	28	8	1,289
2020	0	0	146	404	12	6	568
2021	0	0	122	297	27	5	444
2022	0	0	231	231	21	8	491

Main point for 2022

The decrease in new SPSV licences issued since 2019 and the impact of Covid-19 is evident. 2022 saw the figure increase once more but brought with it new global challenges regarding supply of new and second-hand vehicles. Climate, energy and geopolitical challenges, covered in more detail in the "2022 Industry Challenges - Global Vehicle Shortage" section above and the 'SPSV Fleet Profile' section later in this Bulletin, resulted in long delays for new vehicles in Ireland as well as inflated prices for second-hand vehicles, making it unfeasible for some to enter the fleet. Figure 4 below, illustrates the licences issued

monthly for 2019 and 2022. Regulatory measures introduced by NTA in 2022 in relation to increasing the maximum permissible age of vehicles sought to counteract the impact of these factors on the industry. This is discussed further in under 'Vehicle Age Profile' later in this Bulletin.

Figure 4: New Vehicle Licences Issued by Month, 2019 - 2022



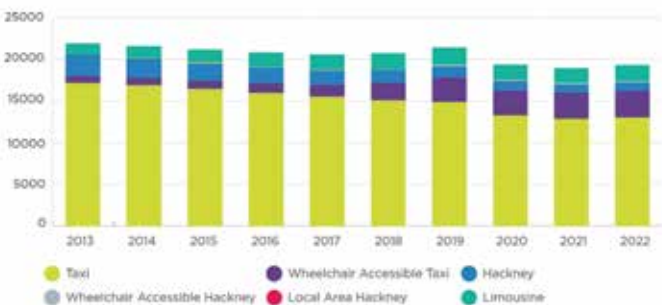
SPSV Fleet Profile

The SPSV fleet is made up of taxis, hackneys, and limousines. Table 4 and Figure 5 provide a breakdown of the overall makeup of the SPSV fleet from 2013 to 2022.

Table 4: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category by Year, 2013 – 2022

	Taxis		Hackneys			Limousines	Total
	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible (WAT)	Standard	Wheelchair Accessible (WAH)	Local Area (LAH)		
2013	2036	89	2,532	16	1/1	138	21,900
2014	16,698	889	2,081	34	7	1,827	21,647
2015	16,492	889	2,081	38	17	1,871	21,486
2016	15,967	1,000	1,836	39	10	1,740	20,604
2017	15,490	1,471	1,631	34	11	1,994	20,581
2018	15,064	2,215	1,477	105	11	1,916	20,733
2019	14,861	2,991	1,349	119	16	2,110	21,411
2020	13,258	3,015	1,115	116	21	1,828	18,332
2021	12,881	3,118	1,015	132	21	1,709	18,948
2022	13,014	3,104	944	141	23	1,448	18,281

Figure 5: SPSV Fleet by Vehicle Category, 2013 to 2022



Training and information programmes including the JAM (Just A Minute) scheme, dementia awareness, mobility issues awareness and guide and assistance dog recognition and awareness are provided for drivers. Service accessibility for wheelchair users is another core strategy for NTA. All vehicles which are suitable to be licensed as taxis, hackneys and limousines have a boot size and shape which can carry a folded wheelchair. For those passengers who travel seated in a wheelchair, the fleet contains Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV).

In June 2014, wheelchair accessible vehicle numbers were at a low of 850 in a fleet of 21,604 SPSVs (4%). New regulations were introduced which reduced the legal size specification for WAVs to enable SPSV operators to provide wheelchair accessible services in smaller vehicles (5-6 passenger seater vehicles, to accommodate one passenger using a wheelchair with just one other passenger, rather than the previous much larger and more expensive 8 passenger seater vehicles). In July of the same year, a very easy to complete Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Grant Scheme (WAV14) was launched to assist licence holders to purchase a WAV. The WAV Grant Scheme, which has run each year since 2014, has assisted

in funding 3,655 new or replacement/upgraded vehicles to year-end 2022. The WAV14 – WAV22 Grant Schemes offered financial aid of up to €7,500 nationwide for the purchase or conversion of a new or replacement WAV.

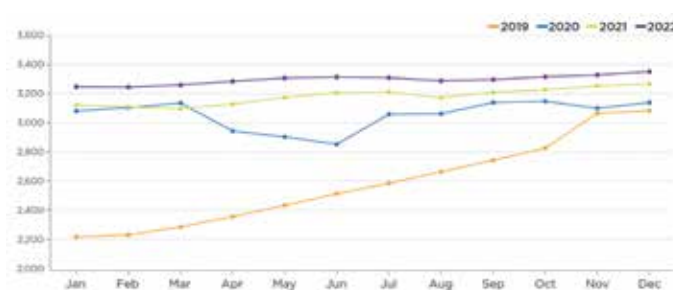
The 2022 WAV scheme opened on 1 January 2022 and 312 grants disbursed with each grant either bringing a new vehicle into the fleet or enabling the replacement of an older licensed vehicle. Table 5 below represents the grants issued each year from 2014 to 2022.

Table 5: Grant Assisted Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles, 14'-22

	Grants	Capital	New WAV to Fleet	Replacement of WAV within Fleet
2014	128	€89,000	52	76
2015	164	€97,000	74	90
2016	335	€197,500	284	51
2017	284	€174,500	233	51
2018	161	€138,000	179	82
2019	1,139	€4,420,000	907	232
2020	264	€120,800	227	37
2021	279	€169,500	221	58
2022	312	€133,500	211	101

Although Covid-19 affected the fleet heavily, WAV licences continued to increase nonetheless. 2022 saw the highest number of WAVs active in the fleet each month when compared to the last 4 years as illustrated in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Wheelchair Accessible Licences by Month, 2019 - 2022



At end 2022, the Irish fleet penetration rate for WAVs was over 17%. This is high compared to other similarly regulated countries, i.e. those countries where WAV service provision is mandated through the taxi and hackney fleet, rather than only by discrete health or public authority paratransit, contracted or ambulance services.

NTA has committed to increasing WAV penetration by 25% from 31 December 2021 (3,250) by 31 December 2025. In our continued efforts to improve accessibility for passengers travelling in a wheelchair, our current WAV service improvement programme includes, at a high level:

- a prohibition on granting new vehicle licences for taxis or hackneys which are not wheelchair accessible since 2010;
- much reduced WAV licence application and renewal fees;
- mandatory and free disability awareness training provision for all grant recipients, which includes a practical assistance module;
- a commitment to greatly enhanced grant levels for 2023 (up to €17,500 per vehicle or €42,500 if the WAV model is electric) which, combined with the anticipated improved availability of such specialised vehicles, NTA believes will further increase the numbers of WAVs in the fleet;
- enacting legislation to increase the fine for an unreasonable refusal to provide services to a wheelchair user to the maximum permitted under our legislation, €250 per offence;
- specifically trained NTA compliance and enforcement team members for WAV service related investigations (noting that complaints received have reduced in 2022);
- the WAV Register available on the Transport for Ireland (TFI) website, which shows the contact details for all WAV licence holders by county with their contact details for direct bookings, with a link directly to our Complaints Page for users who do experience poor service;
- dedicated accessibility group representatives on the Advisory Committee for SPSVs and NTA's Transport Users Advisory Group (TUAG); and
- consistent messaging for industry members on their duties and responsibilities towards passengers with a disability through our newsletters and website updates.

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WORLD NEWS

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UK

'CASH PREFERRED': Card processing fees eating into taxi drivers' income

In the age of digital payments, taxi drivers face mounting costs associated with card transactions.

Drivers in some cases are being charged around 3.75% in fees for accepting card payments. While this may seem like a small amount per individual fare, it adds up significantly over the course of a year, with some cabbies paying over £2,000 in processing fees annually.

The main issue for cabbies lies in the fact that if a fare were paid in cash, the taxi driver would retain a larger portion of the total amount. This enables them to invest more quickly in new vehicles and allows the trade to attract more drivers to an industry that offers better pay. As a result for passengers, paying in cash could mean less waiting time, better vehicles and increased availability of taxis.

Furthermore, cash payments provide drivers with immediate access to funds, which can serve as a vital lifeline for covering bills and managing high living expenses. In contrast, card payments often take longer to clear, causing additional financial strain on drivers who are already facing tight budgets during the cost of living crisis.

Australia

Taxi drivers to be fined \$1,000 for refusing to turn on meters or declining fares in NSW

Transport minister Jo Haylen says drivers had been warned that enforcement officers would be out in force, especially during events like Vivid

The New South Wales government is increasing on-the-spot fines from \$300 to \$1,000 for rogue taxi drivers who are caught refusing to turn on their meters, refusing fares or negotiating prices with riders amid rising reports of dodgy operators across the state.

The transport minister, Jo Haylen, said drivers had been warned that enforcement officers would be out in force, especially during events like Vivid, and would not hesitate to issue them with a hefty fine.

"There are rogue taxi drivers out there who are refusing to

turn on the meter, who are refusing fares and negotiating fixed prices. That's illegal," she said.

However, it's important to consider the downsides of relying solely on cash

payments too. Carrying significant amounts of cash puts drivers at risk of being targeted by criminals. Additionally, depositing cash into bank accounts requires drivers to take time away from their work, leading to lost earnings.

These reasons explain why more taxi drivers are opting for "cash preferred" signs on the partition screens. It serves as a reminder that cash payments help bolster their income and maintain the efficiency of their operations.

Ultimately it's the customers choice on their preferred method of payment. The ease of contactless payment makes it undeniably attractive and there's no tangible financial benefit for the passenger regarding their choice. However, more passengers are steadily starting to question where their money goes for the service they pay for.

New York

New York City taxis fight for survival against Uber and Lyft

New York City's yellow taxis have been a symbol of the metropolis for decades. But taxi drivers only make up about 10% of the total driver landscape in the city — giving way to Uber and Lyft.

While this is in large part due to consumer choice and the ease of ordering a ride-share car, it's also a result of the tough work conditions taxi drivers have faced. They work an average of 9.5 hours a day, six days a week, according to the Journal of Transport & Health. In addition, to driving a taxi, drivers have to own or lease a medallion, which can cost a fortune.

Medallions reached a hefty price of over \$1 million in the early 2010s after being artificially inflated by predatory lending, the lure of a rare asset, and industry leaders purposefully overpaying.

Prices subsequently tanked with the rise of Uber and Lyft which caused great anguish for drivers who owned their own medallion. The Covid pandemic made things even worse as taxi hailers became almost non-existent.

"With the government shutdowns of various cities due to the Covid pandemic, a lot of drivers moved to different areas of



work,” said David Do, commissioner of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission. Now, taxi drivers are fighting for space in the industry as they recover from the medallion crisis and Covid-19 pandemic. So, will taxis survive the changing industry

Japan

Toyota-backed startup gets approval to test 'air taxi'

A US startup backed by Toyota Motor has received approval to start test flights of its all-electric air taxi.

The US Federal Aviation Administration says California-based Joby Aviation can start taking its prototype vehicle into the skies. The firm is developing flying taxis that can shuttle people around cities without creating noise pollution.

Toyota invested about 400 million dollars in the project in January 2020 to enter an industry where global competition is taking off.

In addition to the financing, the two companies recently signed an agreement for the long-term supply of powertrains and other components.

France

Air taxi maker races to serve Paris Olympics as sector struggles for funds

PARIS/TORONTO, June 18 (Reuters) - A year ahead of the Paris Olympics, flying taxi maker Volocopter wants to prove to executives at the Paris Airshow it is on track to ferry customers around the sporting showcase and take off globally.

The world's largest air show tends to focus on military and commercial planes. But electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft makers are also there in force, with Lilium (5KDF) announcing a deal on Monday for China's HeliShenzhen Eastern General Aviation Co. to buy 100 of its jets.

The sector's challenges are many, as firms need to secure regulatory approval and convince consumers they are safe, at a time when investors are also reining in funding.

Germany's Volocopter is working to overcome these hurdles and launch the first commercial flying taxi service to take customers around Paris during the 2024 Olympics and will use the air show to demonstrate its progress.

"The Olympics are our North Star," Volocopter CEO Dirk Hoke told Reuters.

Success could boost the broader urban air mobility sector by persuading risk-averse investors that air taxis are worth putting money into, analysts and executives said.

"I think with any of the timelines for early operations it will be helpful for the industry if they are met as it will create buzz," said Robin Riedel, who co-leads the McKinsey Center for Future Mobility at the management consulting firm.

Volocopter hopes to be the first, but still needs to run its aircraft through intensive weather tests and provide thousands of pages of documentation to Europe's regulator, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA).

"It's not a walk in the park to be the first to certify," Hoke said. Intensive weather tests will take place in Germany next month, with a pilot and passenger.

A broader trust challenge looms too, as many flying taxi makers have pushed back their dates for commercial launch as they struggle to bring their projects to fruition.

"You need to re-instill credibility and reputation," Hoke said, adding the current financial backdrop is also challenging.

"In combination with a difficult market, less liquidity in the market is a problem for the whole industry."

Air mobility projects that went public through special purpose acquisition companies (SPAC) in recent years have lost at least 30% of their initial value. Venture capital is down across several industries, with a shift in spend from air taxis to drones, Riedel said.

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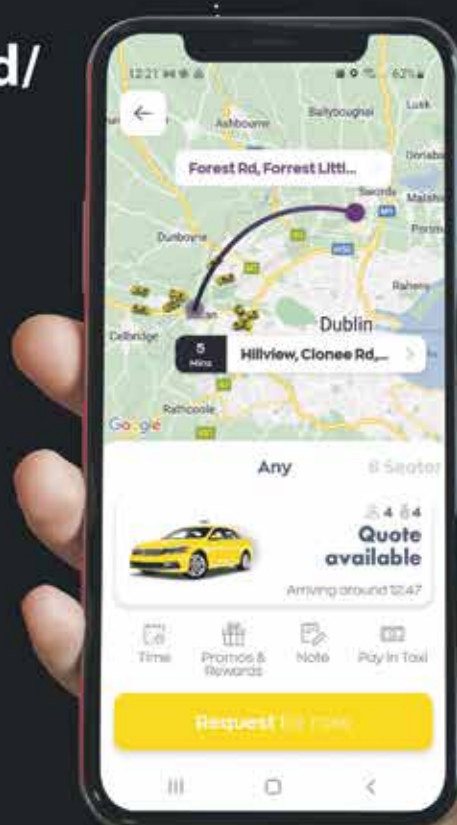
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Galway taxi driver jailed over sexually assaulting sleeping mum as victim ‘feared being killed’



Chloe has bravely spoken out after waking up to find her taxi driver on top of her

A Galway woman who was sexually assaulted by a taxi driver in Galway city during a journey home feared she would be killed as she bravely opened up about the moment her “life changed forever”. Chloe Hornibrook, 31, told her story to Galway Beo after former taxi driver Francis Oseghale, whose address was given at one point in the proceedings as Cartur Mor, Knocnacarra, was

sentenced on Tuesday 23 May at a sitting of the Galway Circuit Court to 18 months in prison with a further 18 months under probation for the disgusting act of sexually assaulting the drunk young woman while she slept.

The mother-of-two has waived her right to anonymity to make women and girls aware of the dangers posed on a night out and warn about her attacker, Francis Oseghale.

Galway native Chloe, who was living in Galway city at the time of the attack, told the publication that she left her Gleann Dara home for a night out for a friend's birthday in July 2018 - the night when her life would change forever.

Chloe explained: "I was living in Galway at the time and it was my friend's birthday. We were out, we were drinking."

She said that she was "tipsy drunk", having enjoyed the night out with her friends and that she got into a taxi at around 3.30am on Sunday morning, 15 July 2018, at the rank on Bridge Street.

Chloe said: "I remember speaking to a woman hanging around the rank and it turned out we were going in the same direction, so we said why don't we share the taxi. I got into the taxi and leaned my arm on the window and just conked, fell asleep instantly."

Chloe revealed that the next thing she remembers is Francis Oseghale, the driver of the taxi, on top of her in the back of the stopped car. The other woman had been dropped off already when Chloe was subjected to the assault.

She said: "I woke up and he was on top of me in the back of the taxi. He dropped the other girl off first and I was asleep in the back of the taxi. When I woke up, he was on top of me, the playsuit I was wearing was pulled to one side, the top of my playsuit was pulled down so that my breasts were exposed. It was instant fear - I was so afraid I started to cry and I did try to hold back those tears but I couldn't. I wasn't able to move - all I could do was cry at that moment."

Chloe, who was 26 years old at the time, said

that she believes Oseghale saw her tears or heard her breathing change before he got off of her. She told Galway Beo: "I can't say for sure but for whatever reason, he stopped what he was doing and got off of me and back into the driver's seat in the front of the cab."

The victim impact statement read aloud before the court at the 23 May 2023 sentencing continues: "That day, 15 July my life changed forever and it will never be the same again. I will never forget the fear I felt waking up to a stranger laying on top of me with my body partially exposed. My first instinct was to pretend I was still asleep for fear if he knew I was waking, what would have happened. It was truly the most terrifying ordeal I have ever gone through.

"However, today is not about what happened that night, this is about how it has impacted my life and that it has.

"I was diagnosed with PTSD shortly after the assault. I was having panic attacks quite regularly, which never happened to me before and I was prescribed Anti-Depression medication. I decided to go to counselling to help deal with what had happened. I became very paranoid thinking he was watching me and stalking my house as he knew where I lived. It was just me and my four-year-old son at the time so the fear was overwhelming. I needed to get out of that house where he couldn't find me, but I struggled to find anywhere suitable at the time. So I uprooted my life and son and moved to Kildare to be next to my older sister. In my mind this guaranteed our safety and helped to ease my paranoia.

"I still to this day get uncomfortable in a taxi and I will never get in one alone. I cannot remember the last time I truly let myself go and have a bit of fun on a night out; subconsciously I believe this is because we have to get a taxi home and the fear creeps in again. Every night ends the same, us sitting in a taxi and everyone slightly quiet as they're all thinking 'how's Chloe's head now'. I don't even think they realise they're doing it but it's very clear to see and I can feel the awkwardness.

“What has affected me the most is the not knowing all that he done to me that night, I’m still in the dark about exactly what happened. I know he couldn’t keep his hands to himself, besides my breasts, what else did he do to me? What else did he see or touch without my knowledge or consent? I’m a very self-conscious girl and I would cry in the shower looking at my body with these thoughts. I felt absolutely disgusting in my own skin, I felt no amount of water could wash away his hands.

“I stupidly blamed myself for awhile thinking ‘oh I shouldn’t have gone out, I shouldn’t have had so much to drink, I shouldn’t have fallen asleep’. But thankfully, with the help of counselling and support from my loved ones my attitude changed. I was not to blame, I was not in the wrong! Anyone should have the right to enjoy a night out, fall asleep in the back of a taxi and be driven safely home, not molested!

“I cannot put into words just how truly broken I have been since but each day I get a little stronger for me and my family. I am honestly

so proud of myself for staying mentally strong these past five years to get to this point. I’ve done this for me and for any girls and women out there who may not have had the chance to try get some justice for what happened to them.

“I’ve just had a beautiful baby girl and it scares me to think these types of assaults are happening all the time, and for the majority of cases with no consequences to the attacker, only the victims. If today’s outcome can prevent this from happening to even one more girl or woman I feel I, we’ve, achieved something.

“I wish I could be there today to look that man straight in the eyes while reading this out but unfortunately due to complications from pregnancy and delivery my health won’t allow it.”

If you have been affected by sexual violence, please consider talking to Galway Rape Crisis Centre on 1800 355 355 or call the National 24-hour Rape Crisis Helpline on 1800 77 8888.

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Oh! Man



Mr. and Mrs. Brown had two sons. One was named Mind Your Own Business & the other was named Trouble. One day the two boys decided to play hide and seek. Trouble hid while Mind Your Own Business counted to one hundred. Mind Your Own Business began looking for his brother behind garbage cans and bushes. Then he started looking in and under cars until a police man approached him and asked, "What are you doing?" "Playing a game," the boy replied. "What is your name?" the officer questioned. "Mind Your Own Business." Furious the policeman inquired, "Are you looking for trouble?!" The boy replied, "Why, yes."

A blonde and a redhead have a ranch. They have just lost their bull. The women need to buy another, but only have \$500. The redhead tells the blonde, "I will go to the market and see if I can find one for under that amount. If I can, I will send you a telegram." She goes to the market and finds one for \$499. Having only one dollar left, she goes to the telegraph office and finds out that it costs one dollar per word. She is stumped on how to tell the blonde to bring the truck and trailer. Finally, she tells the telegraph operator to send the word "comfortable." Sceptical, the operator asks, "How will she know to come with the trailer from just that word?" The redhead replies, "She's a blonde so she reads slow: 'Come for ta bull.'"

Reaching the end of a job interview, the Human Resources Officer asks a young engineer fresh out of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "And what starting salary are you looking for?" The engineer replies, "In the region of \$125,000 a year, depending on the benefits package." The interviewer inquires, "Well, what would you say to a package of five weeks vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every two years, say, a red Corvette?" The engineer sits up straight and says, "Wow! Are you kidding?" The interviewer replies, "Yeah, but you started it."

Kid 1: "Hey, I bet you're still a virgin." Kid 2: "Yeah, I was a virgin until last night ." Kid 1: "As if." Kid 2: "Yeah, just ask your sister." Kid 1: "I don't have a sister." Kid 2: "You will in about nine months."

A bus full of ugly people had a head on collision with a truck. When they died, God granted all of them one wish. The first person said, "I want to be gorgeous." God snapped his fingers and it happened. The second person said the same thing and God did the same thing. This went on and on throughout the group. God noticed the last man in line was laughing hysterically. By the time God got to the last ten people, the last man was laughing and rolling on the ground. When the man's turn came, he laughed and said, "I wish they were all ugly again."

Teacher: "If I gave you 2 cats and another 2 cats and another 2, how many would you have?" Johnny: "Seven." Teacher: "No, listen carefully... If I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?" Johnny: "Seven." Teacher: "Let me put it to you differently. If I gave you two apples, and another two apples and another two, how many would you have?" Johnny: "Six." Teacher: "Good. Now if I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?" Johnny: "Seven!" Teacher: "Johnny, where in the heck do you get seven from?!" Johnny: "Because I've already got a freaking cat!"



General Knowledge Questions

1. The Nicobar Islands belong to which country?
2. What flavour is the best selling soup in the UK?
3. In which city was the first cricket test match held in 1877?
4. In which George Eliot novel would you find the characters Dorothea Brooke and Mary Garth?
5. Which songs with "Radio" in the title were UK top twenty hits for the following artists, [a] Kings of Leon (2010), [b] Tiffany (1988), [c] Martine McCutcheon (2001), [d] Rush (1980) and [e] McFly (2013)?
6. In the children's animated series, who was the pilot of Thunderbird 4?
7. Where might a fumerole be found?
8. In which year was Mahatma Ghandi assassinated?
9. What is the most southerly city in the UK?
10. According to the movies, what type of gun does Dirty Harry carry?
11. Which London theatre was the first public building in the world to be lit entirely by electricity?
12. In Greek mythology, how many Muses were there?
13. The mountain "Goat Fell" is found on which Scottish island?

THE TACSAÍ MAGAZINE BUMPER QUIZ

14. In which city was double Eurovision winner Johnny Logan born?
15. In what branch of science would Napier's Bones be used?
16. What is the Sunday prior to Easter Sunday called?
17. What colour is the cross on the Greek flag?
18. How many years did Prohibition last in the USA?
19. What is the name for the metal frame on a dart board?
20. What was Stan Laurel's real surname?

1. India
2. Tomato.
3. Melbourne
4. Middlemarch.
5. [a] "Radio Active", reached no 7, [b] "Radio Romance", no 13, [c] "On The Radio", no 7, [d] "Spirit of Radio", no 13 and [e] "Love is on the Radio", no 6.
6. Gordon Tracy.
7. On the side of a volcano
8. 1948
9. Truro.
10. (Smith & Wesson model 29) 44
11. Savoy Theatre.
12. Nine.
13. Arran.
14. Melbourne.
15. Mathematics.
16. Palm Sunday.
17. White (on a blue background).
18. 13 years (1920-1933).
19. Spider.
20. Jefferson.

Gardai urgently seek taxi driver's help in connection with hit-and-run that killed young dad



Ross Rice, who was in his early 20s, died in the collision on the R403 in Celbridge on Tuesday, July 18 at around 10.50pm.

Gardai have issued an update on their investigation into a hit-and-run which claimed the life of a young dad in Co Kildare.

Ross Rice, who was in his early 20s, died in the collision on the R403 in Celbridge on Tuesday, July 18 at around 10.50pm.

It's understood he was a passenger in a car that collided with a lorry. The driver of the lorry was uninjured. The driver of the car in which Mr Rice was a passenger fled the scene, gardai said.

Mr Rice, who was from Cherry Orchard in south west Dublin, had become a father for the first time in August last year.

A man aged in his late teens was arrested on Tuesday of this week. He has since been released without charge and a file will be prepared for the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

This evening, gardai asked for a taxi driver to come forward to help in their investigation.

Gardai believe the taxi was travelling on the R403 between Celbridge and Lucan at approximately 11pm on Tuesday, July 18. It is believed this taxi driver collected a fare from the Lucan Road/New Adamstown Link Road area of the R403 and brought this fare to the Liffey Valley/Palmerstown area of Dublin.

They are also continuing to appeal for any witnesses to this collision to contact them.

A spokesperson said: "Gardai in Leixlip are continuing to

investigate a fatal road traffic collision involving a truck and a car that occurred at approximately 10:50pm on Tuesday 18th July 2023 on the R403 in Celbridge, County Kildare.

"A passenger from the car, a man in his 20s, was fatally injured during the course of this collision. The driver of the car failed to remain at the scene.

"On Tuesday 26th July 2023, a man in his late teens was arrested as part of this investigation and detained at a Garda station in the Eastern Region. He has since been released without charge and a file will be prepared for the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

"Gardai are now appealing for a taxi driver to come forward, who Gardai believe was travelling on the R403 between Celbridge and Lucan at approximately 11pm on Tuesday 18th July 2023.

"It is believed this taxi driver collected a fare from the Lucan Road/New Adamstown Link Road area of the R403 and brought this fare to the Liffey Valley/Palmerstown area of Dublin.

"Gardai are continuing to appeal for any witnesses to this collision to come forward.

"Any road users who may have camera footage (including dash-cam) and were travelling on the R403 in Celbridge between 10:30pm and 11:15pm on Tuesday 18th July 2023 are asked to make this footage available to Gardai."

Anyone with any information is asked to contact Leixlip Garda station on 01 666 7800, the Garda Confidential Line on 1800 666 111 or any Garda station.

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