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ever the same.

The same goes for insurance. Just like you've seen all possible fares inside your vehicle at different times, we've seen all possible circumstances for customers seeking SPSV/Taxi insurance. That's because SPSV insurance is, quite simply, all that we do.

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New entrants: Another area we can help with. In recent months we've covered a range of drivers here in different circumstances at very different prices – from a 21 year old with little experience, to a 60 year old finishing up driving with Dublin Bus.

Electric vehicles: Many drivers are availing of the EV grant and we have comprehensive and competitively priced products to cover these vehicles.

What else? Whilst the above list may seem exhaustive, it's not. We haven't mentioned Local Area Hackneys, School Transport Vehicles and even Declined Cases Agreement (DCA) policies – yes, we can even help you through the DCA process, if required.



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EDITOR LETTER

Thank you for picking up the latest edition of Tacsai magazine. In this edition, the National Transport Authority (NTA) continues to avoid answering the questions levelled at them by taxi industry leaders. This time around, Tony Roe, Chairperson of the National Transport Assembly Committee (NTAC) and Spokesperson on taxis renewed his calls for a rethink on the legislation which makes it mandatory for drivers to accept card payments. Roe cited increasing numbers of attacks on drivers stemming from disputes over card transactions, but as in our last edition the NTA passed the buck to the guards.

In our last edition we had comments from a number of drivers with immaculate vehicles who will have to take them off the road next year. This time around we have photos of some of the vehicles which demonstrate their near perfect condition. We encourage any drivers in the same position to get in touch.

In other news A man has been sentenced to three years and nine months in prison for driving a stolen taxi and bringing the gardaí on a pursuit that spanned two counties. During the pursuit, the accused drove the car through red lights at speeds of up to 170 km per hour. Other road users had to take evasive action and the vehicle kept weaving in and out of the lane to stop the gardaí from overtaking him.

The accused drove through a toll plaza without stopping and narrowly missed an unmarked garda car was. He also drove through a junction at 120 km per hour.

The court heard that gardaí from the Armed Support Unit, as well as gardaí from Louth and Dublin, were involved in the pursuit. The accused was sentenced to three years and nine months in prison.

Also in this edition we have a cybersecurity researcher who recently discovered an unprotected database with personal details of nearly 300,000 passengers who used the services of Dublin-based taxi dispatch service iCabbi, outside of Dublin a Mayo based driver has said the overregulation of the NTA is pushing drivers out of the industry and the Martina Roe Lay Counselling Society is planning a big trip to Romania.

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Investigation launched after taxi spotted with alleged duplication of another taxi's roof licence number

An image circulated on social media showing the two taxis allegedly bearing the same taxi roof sign with the same licence number

An investigation is under way after a taxi was observed with an alleged duplication of another taxi roof licence number sign.

The National Transport Association (NTA) compliance team, along with gardai, promptly seized the alleged duplicate sign recently when the allegation was reported to the gardai.

An image circulated on social media showing the two taxis allegedly bearing the same taxi roof sign with the same licence number.

When contacted by the Irish Mirror and shown the image of the two taxis bearing the same licence number sign, the NTA confirmed an investigation is underway and the two vehicles are part of the ongoing investigation.

“On April 16, NTA received a report of an alleged duplication of a taxi roof sign as seen in the image you sent,” the NTA confirmed.

The image showing two vehicles — the previously licensed red car and the newly licensed black car — is part of the ongoing investigation.”

Crazy' regulations are forcing some taxi drivers to quit

An increasing number of taxi drivers will be forced to quit the profession if the licensing system is not reformed, a Mayo driver has warned.

Westport-based hackney driver Pat O'Malley, of Swift Cabs, has worked in the industry for 26 years but does not know how much longer he will be able to continue.

“Since the National Transport Authority (NTA) took over the sector, it is nothing but regulations and they have driven people out of the business completely.”

Mr O'Malley said one of the most contentious rules relates to the age of vehicles used by taxi drivers (vehicles must be less than 10 years old to qualify for a licence). The rules were relaxed during the Covid-19 pandemic but that scheme finishes up next December, leaving many taxi drivers in a very precarious position.

If your vehicle is up for renewal at any time this year they will extend the licence for three years (even if it is older than ten years), but my licence is up in March next year, so I do not qualify,” explained Mr O'Malley. “There are vehicles older than mine which will still be operating whereas I will have to get a new vehicle.

Mr O'Malley, aged 62, has just finished paying for his eight-seater 2015 Ford Tourneo, which is subject to an NCT test each year but won't qualify as a public service vehicle next year.

When it is 10 years old you cannot use it anymore – it is a crazy system,” he said. “I have to replace this minibus now before next year or I will lose my

licence. I will get about €6,000 trading it in but the price of new vehicles has gone through the roof and a brand new van like this is €80,000 and there is no way I could justify it as the business is not there. This is the quietest January I have ever had.”

Fine Gael TD Alan Dillon says the Government must look at reforms to the taxi industry in Ireland. He has backed party colleague Senator Tim Lombard who led the Taxis for Ireland Coalition at Leinster House last week to urge for change.

“Capacity needs to be built back into the system,” said the Mayo TD, adding that there is such a shortage of taxis that people can no longer enjoy a night out without booking a taxi first.

Deputy Dillon believes the likes of ridesharing service Uber would be a viable solution, especially in rural areas, but the NTA regulations are “quite strenuous” compared to other EU countries. Uber can operate in Ireland but drivers must also hold a taxi license, which is not the case in Northern Ireland or many parts of Europe.

“I think we need the NTA to review the obstacles for the likes of Uber, especially on the basis that we are an all-island economy and the fact that Uber is licensed in Northern Ireland,” the Castlebar-based TD said. “I think once a driver is registered, vetted and their car is up to the required standard that should be sufficient. Young people would certainly have an appetite to provide a service to earn that bit more money.”

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Dublin Airport denies new taxi system will increase wait times for passengers

E-hailing app Free Now is claiming the new measures will affect taxi drivers who don't hold a permit to operate at Dublin Airport

Dublin Airport has rubbished claims that a new taxi system will increase wait times for passengers.

Daa's comments come after Free Now claimed the new measures will result in reduced taxi availability and longer wait times. The new Dublin Airport Taxi Permit (Pre-Booked Only) will grant permission to all drivers who collect a pre-booked fare at Dublin Airport, from one of the airport's car parks, in compliance with the airport's bye-laws.

This new permit is separate from the existing taxi permit which allows drivers to pick up from outside of the two terminals at Dublin Airport. Each new permit will be valid

for one year from the date of issue and at the end of the permit year each driver will have the option to renew if they so wish.

The new permit does not allow for the pick-up of passengers by a taxi from anywhere other than the airport's car parks. Dublin Airport's bye-laws strictly state that no picking up of passengers is allowed anywhere on airport grounds without a valid permit.

Details of the new scheme, which is separate and does not impact on the existing taxi permit scheme at Dublin Airport that allows pick-ups from the taxi ranks outside the two terminals, are being communicated to drivers and taxi companies ahead of the go-live date."




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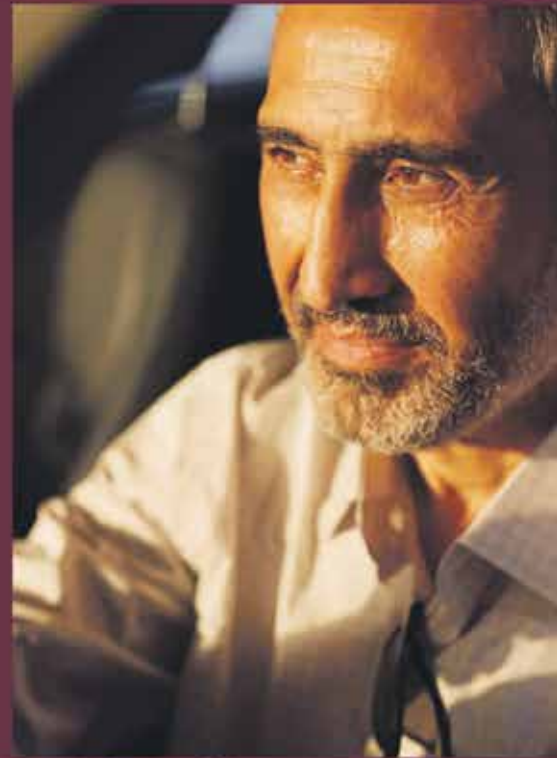
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IRISH TAXI APP USERS' DATA FOUND IN UNPROTECTED DATABASE



The personal data of thousands of taxi app users in Ireland and the UK was found in a non-password-protected database.

Cabbi said the data was in an AWS public file as a result of the migration of taxi company data from one app to another and stressed that its system was not hacked.

A cybersecurity researcher recently discovered an unprotected database with personal details of nearly 300,000 passengers who used the services of Dublin-based taxi dispatch service iCabbi.

Jeremiah Fowler, a researcher at vpnMentor who finds and reports data breaches and vulnerabilities, revealed in a statement recently, that he was able to access a non-password-protected document with personal details of the passengers based in Ireland and the UK.

These details, he said, included names, emails, phone numbers and user IDs. Email domains included high-profile media organisations such as the BBC, UK government agencies such as the UK's HM Treasury and Ministry of Justice, and around 2,000 UK university accounts.

"Upon further research, it was identified that the records belonged to a company called iCabbi, which provides a taxi dispatch platform technology for taxi services and passengers," Fowler said of the breach that was first discovered in January.

"I immediately sent a responsible disclosure notice of my findings, and public access was restricted the following day. It is unclear how long the data was exposed or if anyone else may have accessed the non-password-protected database. Only an internal forensic audit would identify any additional access or suspicious activity."

Sinead Gillett, chief marketing officer of iCabbi, said that the exposed data was in an Amazon Web Services (AWS) public file as a result of the "migration of taxi company data from one app to another".

"We deleted the data file, let the taxi companies know of the event and took additional steps to make sure there were no other potential exposures," she said, adding that iCabbi's system was not hacked.

"We are unaware of why vpnMentor ... chose to post this article today – we were given no advanced notice of the posting. We respectfully suggest that the title of the post is misleading."

Fowler clarified in his post that as an "ethical security researcher"

he never bypasses authorisation credentials and only views documents that are "publicly accessible to anyone with an internet connection".

"The potential risk of cybercriminals knowing the file paths of where documents are stored could allow a targeted brute force attack against the wider network or identifying individual misconfigured documents," he wrote.

"I am not saying iCabbi's network was at imminent risk, but I am providing a hypothetical risk of exposing the file path where customer documents are collected and stored."

Last November, iCabbi managed to gain access to Google's Fleet Engine to level the playing field between its taxi customers and global ride-hail giants. The company said the integration will give its customers improved system performance and new fleet analytics to manage demand and supply more effectively.

A cybersecurity researcher discovered and reported the database which contained names, phone numbers and email addresses of nearly 300,000 taxi passengers in Ireland and the UK.

The records belonged to Dublin-based iCabbi, which provides taxi dispatch platform technology for taxi services and passengers.

Mr Fowler said he immediately notified iCabbi of his findings and public access to the database was restricted the following day.

"I imply no wrongdoing by iCabbi, their partners, clients, or customers. I am also not saying the data was at risk or accessed by any other individuals," Mr Fowler said.

He added that iCabbi acted fast and professionally to secure the data upon receiving his responsible disclosure notice.

In a statement, iCabbi said it is aware of the incident reported on vpnMentor.

"iCabbi took appropriate action and contacted the affected taxi companies," a spokesperson said.

The Data Protection Commission (DPC) said it is aware of the matter.

"We can confirm the DPC is aware of this issue and are engaging with iCabbi on the matter," a spokesperson said.



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SAFETY CONCERNS PUSHING DRIVERS OUT OF INDUSTRY

Tony Roe, Chairperson of the National Transport Assembly Committee (NTAC) and Spokesperson on taxis is appalled that no action has been taken by the current Minister for Transport (Eamon Ryan) and the National Transport Authority (NTA) concerning the continuing, life threatening attacks on drivers which seem to be rampant.

Speaking to Tacsai magazine, Roe said:

“These incidents are responsible for many taxi drivers leaving the industry in large numbers. One new driver that I spoke to in the trade has left after working for a few weeks, after a vicious attack on him. This is repeating itself all over the place, and the funny thing about it is; the best part of these attacks are coming out of the system that is currently being inflicted on taxi drivers. The system where you must accept a card. It is out of hand altogether because an awful lot of these incidents and vicious attacks are starting over arguments about cards not working, no money in the various accounts and it is life threatening in an awful lot of cases. It's the same old story, the driver stops and there are arguments about the card, and these things are normally happening during the early hours of the morning when drink and drugs are often involved. This old chestnut raises its head once again and there is violence.”

He went on to say that it is nonsensical to force taxi drivers to accept cards.

“The €200 fine [which is imposed on taxi drivers who do not accept cards] is something that we are raising with the European Commission. There is a court case coming up shortly concerning this incident. I think personally that it should be an option [for drivers to accept card payments], and I propose that drivers should have their say, as is the case with most businesses. I have recently been into several businesses where I have seen signs up that said it would cost extra to make your transactions by card. There are several pubs which I could mention, where if you have a drink and you pay by card it costs an extra 50c,” said Roe.

He said that there have been an awful lot of incidents out by the airport.

“I was recently talking to a guard in the airport, and there was a case going on where there was a driver that couldn't receive payment, and the police were involved. I was talking to a female guard in Dublin airport and I was with the driver. He was telling me that he came from the southside of the city with quite a substantial fare. I arrived at the scene, and the driver beckoned me over and said to me: ‘This man doesn't have any money. Is there anything we can do?’ I said of course there is a lot we can do; the passenger can leave his suitcase

there and go into the airport, to the bank, and can have his money transacted there and pay the fare. So, it was quite a long time, the man came back and there was no money on the card. The female guard that was there, then contacted the police in the airport (there is a police station in the airport), and when the police came up, the man became abusive. It ended up that the police in the airport took the man (presumably to bring him to a cell or whatever they do with these people), and the driver was not paid. I was talking to the guard who told me that this is quite common. Surely the dogs on the street and the birds in the sky know. If that's the case, let's do something about it. Let's stop paying lip service to this. I have been on to Eamon Ryan's office on Suffolk Street on many occasions raising this particular issue and yet nothing is being done, so we want the Minister to get up off his hind quarters and act on this. Maybe the NTA could get involved as well because there is an outbreak of these incidents,” said Roe.

Roe went on to relate the story of a driver who has left the industry following an attack.

“One particular driver I was talking to has since left the industry, after being viciously assaulted. Again it was late at night and it was about a card payment. It's not right that the lads are going through this. We can be terrified that something serious is going to happen and there is a fatality in it. I know a hell of a lot of drivers who are contacting the transport authority and have contacted us to see if there is anything we can do. All we can do is highlight this to the government and we want a resolution to this problem before someone is seriously hurt. I know several drivers who have left the industry, and some of these incidents have involved drivers having their homes attacked. One driver even had his car set alight in his garden, so we must have some input here, and we are calling on Mr. Ryan to act effectively and efficiently here,” he said, adding that the NTAC is hoping to soon get word back regarding proposals it has made regarding driver safety standards and quality of service for both drivers and the general public alike.

A spokesperson from the National Transport Authority (NTA) responded to Roes' comments' saying: “We would encourage any driver assaulted or threatened to report it to

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Martina Roe Lay Counselling Society



Established several years ago as the Taxi Drivers Lay Counselling Society, and subsequently renamed the Martina Roe Lay Counselling Society, the service, which is free for all taxi drivers who are experiencing bereavement, has grown exponentially in recent times.

Speaking to Tacsai magazine, Roe said:

“We are just back from a trip over to Spain, to Lanzarote. There was approximately 30 drivers, we got a fairly beneficial package which was quite inexpensive collectively, and we have part two now coming up. We have a couple of trips, the next one we hope to have is a trip to Romania for five days, and anyone who is suffering from bereavement can get in touch with us. It has been very successful; we meet once a week for various outings and most of the

lads are taxi drivers, but we also have a lot of bus drivers, train drivers and tram drivers. It just means that there is something there for them to do. We have all been through the same situation and have seen the various scenarios. It is open to everybody, so people needn't feel like they are on their own.”

If you are struggling with bereavement, don't suffer in silence. Please contact Tony Roe at 085 108 9482.

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Man jailed for driving stolen taxi in high speed chase with gardaí across two counties

A man has been sentenced to three years and nine months in prison for driving a stolen taxi and bringing the gardaí on a pursuit that spanned two counties.

He has 64 previous convictions, which include convictions for burglary, attempted burglary, unauthorised taking, theft, criminal damage, hijacking, assault, misuse of drugs, public order and road traffic matters.

Passing the sentence, Judge Orla Crowe said the accused drove in the most dangerous fashion and that gardaí from Ardee, Dundalk, Swords and members of the Armed Support Unit were all involved in this pursuit.

Judge Crowe said the court had to consider “the number of gardaí who put their lives and limbs at risk during this pursuit”.

The judge said the aggravating factors in this case were Grogan’s previous convictions, some of which were very significant, the amount of garda resources that had to be deployed, the speed and manner of driving and the criminal damage caused to the taxi.

Judge Crowe said the taxi had significant damages caused to it and that this was the injured party’s “work car, his business and his means of earning a living”.

She considered Grogan’s guilty plea, his admissions on arrest, his addiction issues, his difficult childhood and that he will now be deprived of his children’s company due to his current prison sentence.

Judge Crowe sentenced Grogan to a global sentence of three years and nine months in prison, which she backdated to when he went into custody on this matter. She also disqualified him from driving for two years.

Garda Colm Randle told John Moher, BL, prosecuting, that a taxi driver returned to his home at 4:30 pm on September 22nd, 2021. He parked his car in his driveway, and at 10 pm that night, he noticed that his taxi had been stolen.

He reported this to the gardaí and at 1:40am gardaí in Ardee saw the car being driven by Grogan. The gardaí activated their blue lights but the car failed to stop.

During the pursuit, Cosgrove drove the car through red lights at speeds

of up to 170 km per hour. Other road users had to take evasive action and Grogan’s car kept weaving in and out of the lane to stop the gardaí from overtaking him.

Grogan drove through a toll plaza without stopping and an unmarked garda car was narrowly missed by Grogan. He also drove through a junction at 120 km per hour.

The court heard that gardaí from the Armed Support Unit, as well as gardaí from Louth and Dublin, were involved in the pursuit.

When the car finally came to a stop in the Swords area, Grogan was arrested by armed gardaí. He was unable to be interviewed for several hours due to being under the influence of intoxicants and was described as being “unable to keep his eyes open”.

During his interview, Grogan told gardaí that the last day was a “blur” and that the “yokes” he received were bad. Grogan is currently serving a prison sentence and will be released in June 2026.

Gda Randle agreed with Patrick Jackson, BL, defending that his client had been intoxicated when arrested, but when he was sober, he was easy to deal with.

The garda agreed with counsel that Grogan had addiction issues and that he looks a lot better now compared to on the night in question.

Dublin Circuit Criminal Court heard Matthew Grogan (26) of Applewood Village, Swords, Dublin, pleaded guilty to possession of stolen property, trespassing, criminal damage, driving without insurance, and two counts of dangerous driving at various locations in Co Louth and Co Dublin between September 22nd and 23rd, 2021.

Mr Jackson said his client left school when he was fourteen and began using drugs but is now completely clean from all drugs.

Counsel said Grogan is still relatively young and has spent a large portion of his life in and out of custody.

He said Grogan has two children, and he will miss the first three years of one of his children’s lives due to his current prison sentence, and this has been a wake-up call to him.

MAKE THE CHANGE TO ELECTRIC! eSPSV24 is open to applications

The eSPSV24 Grant Scheme remains open for applications.

This year, €11.5 million has been allocated for grants via the eSPSV24 Grant Scheme, which enables owners of taxis, hackneys and limousines to buy electric vehicles.

Significant grant levels of up to €25,000 for electric WAVs and €20,000 for electric standard vehicles can be applied for, with these higher grant levels available

for those scrapping older, or high mileage vehicles.

The scheme is funded by the Department of Transport and administered by NTA.

Further information about the eSPSV24 Grant Scheme, including how to apply, can be found at: <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/taxi/forms-and-guides/>

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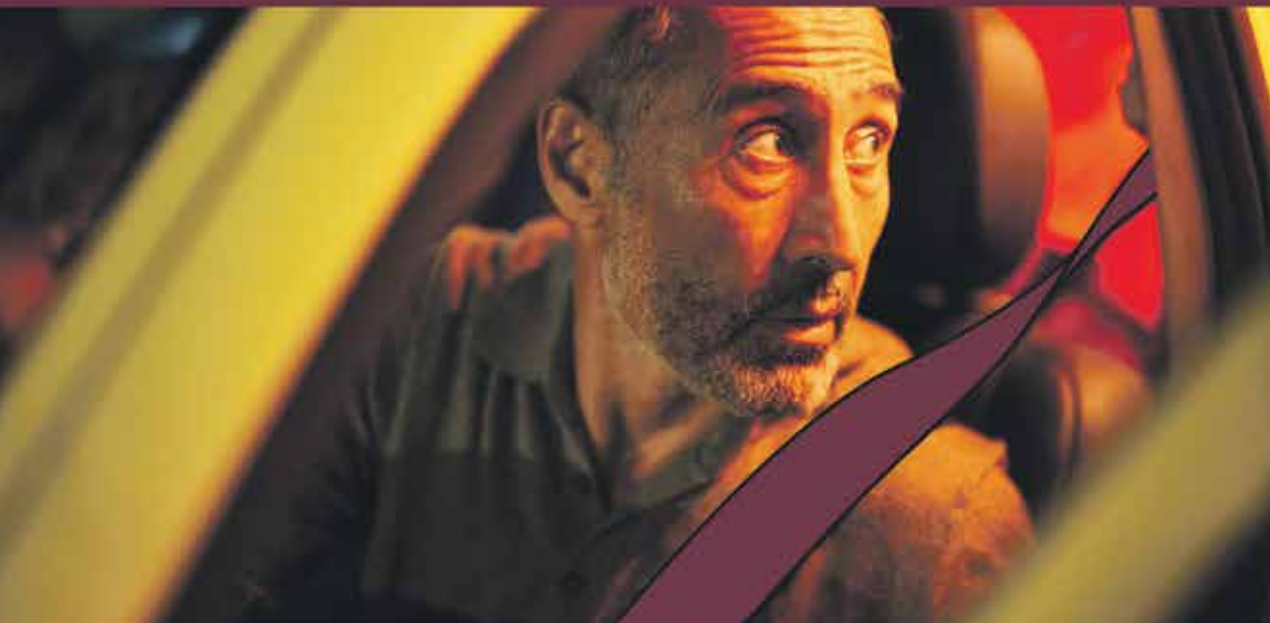
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John McGrane K1263 PLATE 18340

Over the past few too short years I have had the honour to call John a friend I was lucky enough to work closely with John and without his help in getting my business up and running made I am not sure how I would have coped. With his passing Dublin GAA and Taxi drivers countrywide have lost a friend and strong advocate who worked tirelessly for everyone, he built an amazing network of drivers who he was happy to share work with, During his time in the National Taxi Forum John was always looking for ways to improve the industry and help fellow drivers, no call for help was ever ignored by John and his advice and good council was given freely with a reassuring smile. Many were the evenings we discussed ways to improve the lot of our fellow drivers and so many drivers have benefited from his research on credit card machines, payment systems and he was the person behind the Micro Finance Ireland EV loan scheme. He was never slow in asking people to step up and help other drivers with advice or to make submissions on their behalf.

Outside of the Taxi industry John was a committed family man who loved

nothing more than to watch his beloved Dublin Gaa team play. This passion meant he travelled the country with his daughter Heather to watch Dublin play and he often told me that these were his special father daughter days. He was always first to put his hand in his pocket at a fundraiser or to buy someone a coffee.

Bob McAuliffe | About Ireland Taxi Tours

NORTHERN IRELAND'S MAXIMUM TAXI FARES TO GO UP

The maximum prices that a taxi driver can charge are to rise across Northern Ireland.

The maximum fare will increase by 9.5% during the day and 19.5% at all other times

However drivers can still charge less than the maximum if they want.

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) said "challenges about the availability of taxis, particularly in the evenings and at weekends" has led to concerns around public safety.

The DfI said this was a context which had led to the rise.

The taxi industry in Northern Ireland has been dealing with falling numbers of drivers in the last few years.

In 2014, there were more than 15,000 licensed taxi drivers while in June 2023 there were just 7,665 licensed taxi drivers, the lowest on record for 10 years.

The department put the price rise out to public consultation in August 2022 and had 790 responses, including from the Consumer Council, taxi drivers, larger taxi firms and members of the public.

It said the price increase was designed to "balance the needs of taxi

customers, including vulnerable passengers who are more likely to use taxis on a daily basis, with those of drivers and operators who face rising fuel costs".

However, the department said it recognised the impact the current financial climate was having on the public.

In a statement the department said the measures had been brought in to "assist the taxi industry and support the wider economy, while trying to ensure an affordable means of transport".

Colin Neill from Hospitality NI said he hoped the price rise would mean more drivers working at weekends.

"Nobody likes to pay more for a taxi but it's important fares rise," he said.

He said price rises were a positive step in terms of getting more drivers into the industry so that there would be more transport options for people who wanted to go out at evenings and weekends. "We must incentivise more drivers to work weekends." He added that he felt the taxi driver theory test was another barrier to people getting into the job.

He said that he also wanted to see more year round night buses.

TEN YEAR RULE UNDER FIRE

In our last edition we addressed the issue of extensions to the Ten Year Rule, and the perceived unfairness of the process whereby 2011, 2012 and 2013 cars were given extensions while 2014 cars were not.

We heard from a number of drivers in this predicament, some of whom have provided photos which demonstrate the excellent condition of their vehicles.

If you are in the same situation we at Tacsai magazine would encourage you to get in touch with us.

Uber launches new services

Uber's growth in the Irish taxi market shows no sign of deceleration. With more drivers using the app right across the country, the number of local and international passengers continues to grow. The recent launch of two new services in Dublin that have been warmly welcomed by drivers suggests that the competition is only getting stronger.

Upfront Tipping

When a passenger is experiencing longer wait times than usual for a driver to confirm their request they are now presented with an option to pay their driver an upfront tip. The tip is displayed on the driver's offer card in the app and helps distinguish the request from others. This can help passengers make their trips more appealing to drivers at peak times than streethail or when their request has a longer pickup ETA.



100% of the tip goes to the driver.

Taxi Reserve

Uber passengers can now schedule their pick-up time up to 90 days in advance. This feature welcomes a new group of customers to Uber who require that extra peace of mind when booking a trip to the airport, train station or that important appointment.

An increased passenger cancellation fee of €10 occurs on Taxi Reserve trips in recognition of the time commitment from drivers in scheduling their arrival.

For drivers, it also means more opportunity to control how they earn and to select from offers that are best suited for their time on the road. The service is also likely to help Uber expand into less populated areas where this reliability is key.

Based on the successful launch of these services in Dublin, expect the national roll-out to commence soon and the growth of Uber in Ireland to continue.



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ONE IN THREE CONFIDE ABOUT THEIR LOVE LIVES TO TAXI DRIVERS



Some 46 percent of survey respondents also admitted to having shared a kiss with a date in the back of a cab.

Taxi drivers have heard it all - from the making and breaking of relationships to lovers spilling their hearts out - with one in three Irish people having confided in a cabbie.

That's according to new research from FreeNow - Ireland's leading multi-mobility app - which reveals that taxi drivers are often unexpected confidants for lovelorn passengers.

The research reveals that one in three people in Ireland admit to confiding in a taxi driver about their love life.

And taxi drivers' advice is highly valued by passengers with 75% of those who confided in drivers saying they found it a helpful experience.

It seems that taxis have also witnessed the blossoming of many romances, with 46% of people in Ireland admitting to sharing a kiss with a date in a taxi.

It's clear that, for many, the journey is just as important as the destination when it comes to matters of the heart.

When it comes to celebrating love on Valentine's Day for those who are in a relationship or married, preferences vary.

The classic candlelight dinner is the dream Valentine's date for one in three (36%), while a cosy evening at home is the ideal scenario for 24% of people.

A further 12% would love to celebrate by taking a short break with their partner.

However, Valentine's Day is not just for couples. Some 45% of single people plan to spend the day with friends or family, while a third (33%) will embrace some alone time.

The most popular celebration among singles is a night out on the town (37%), with one in five (22%) planning to go for dinner, and a further 25% are planning a cosy night in.

According to the research, Galway is deemed to be the most romantic city in Ireland, with 37% of respondents swayed by

the charm of the west, while 32% say there is no city quite like Dublin for a romantic break.

And whether it's a romantic dinner with a partner or a lively night out with friends, 68% of Valentine's Day celebrants plan to travel by taxi, with FreeNow set to play a key role in their planned activities.

Commenting on the findings, Charlie Gleeson, general manager with FreeNow Ireland, said:

"On average, we see a spike in booking requests on Valentine's Day by 31%, and as always, our driver partners will be on hand to help passengers get to their romantic dates, solo plans or group gatherings this coming Valentine's Day safely.

"With the research also indicating that a significant percentage are planning to celebrate this year, we are looking forward to a busy Valentine's Day ahead."

The research shows:

- 38% of people in Ireland have confided in a taxi driver about their love life
- 46% of people in Ireland admit to sharing a kiss with a date in a taxi
- 75% of those who confided in drivers say they found it a helpful experience
- Candlelight dinner is the dream Valentine's date for one in three (36%)
- 45% of single people plan to spend the day with friends or family
- 37% of singles plan to celebrate Valentine's Day with a night out
- Galway is deemed to be the most romantic city in Ireland (37%)
- 68% of Valentine's Day celebrants plan to travel by taxi



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Couple 'devastated' after losing brand new engagement ring on St Patrick's weekend as appeal issued

The pair are 'wishing for a miracle' in the hopes that their engagement ring is found

A couple have been left "devastated" after losing their engagement ring over St Patrick's weekend only two days after purchasing it.

One Irish social media user took to X on St Patrick's Day to issue a heartfelt appeal to the public in a bid to track down the taxi they took from the city centre on the previous Saturday evening.

Unfortunately, the couple have been unable to track down the taxi driver as they hailed the taxi on the road and paid cash for the ride.

While the couple have been unable to track the driver through the use of an app, they have tried to narrow down who the potential driver was by sharing with followers that the pair grabbed a Dublin Taxi from Baggot St.

Taking to social media, Mark Fearon told followers that he was "wishing for a miracle" after the loss and pleaded with people for shares

and any advice on what to do, along with doorbell camera footage of the taxi and some pictures of the stunning ring.

He wrote: "Wishing for a miracle. Would appreciate a RT and any advice. Last night at midnight myself and Orla got a Dublin Taxi from Baggot St.

"We had the engagement ring only two days. We left it in the back of the taxi. Absolutely devastated. We got the taxi on the road and paid cash."

The public jumped to support Mark and his fiancée in the search to find their beautiful engagement ring just days after getting it, with many people commenting to say they would ask taxi drivers they were friendly with.

One user suggested he try Store St Garda Station, as this is where all the lost and found items from taxis go, while another told him they would share the information in a taxi driver WhatsApp group they were in.

Business Community Wants More Taxis

Coalition of business interest groups have reiterated their call for urgent action to be taken to increase the number of taxis available across the country.

The Taxis for Ireland Coalition said there is a chronic shortage of availability, particularly during peak times.

The group is meeting with TDs and Senators in Leinster House today, to press home the case for measures to be put in place to increase taxi supply.

"The current taxi shortage poses a direct threat to our late night economy – bars, late bars and nightclubs – with customers leaving venues early due to the difficulties they will face in getting taxis home," Donall O'Keeffe, CEO of the Licensed Vintners Association.

"The safety of our patrons is of paramount importance, yet the taxi shortage is affecting this. We are calling for measures to rectify the shortfall and protect the late-night economy of our Capital city."

Nearly half of requested trips by customers can go unfulfilled at peak times between Friday midday and Sunday morning, a recent survey by Bolt found.

The research also found there is even a shortfall of 16% during the quieter period of the week from Monday afternoon to Thursday

afternoon.

Another YouGov survey carried out for the coalition this month found 39% of people are worried about getting home safely because of the shortage of taxis.

Two thirds of respondents said action is required in relation to the issue.

"The scarcity of taxis is disrupting the dining experience for our customers, with many facing challenges just getting to and from rural and urban restaurants," said Adrian Cummins, CEO of the Restaurant Association of Ireland.

"This shortfall urgently needs to be rectified to ensure the viability of our restaurants."

The group is recommending a minimum market-based target be set for an increase in Small Public Service Vehicles and new policies to meet them.

It also wants a re-valuation of the current requirement for new SPSVs to be Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles.

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WORLD NEWS

Top stories from around the globe

UK

Number of London black taxi drivers joining group Wolverhampton Council crackdown on illegal 'Ghost' plates used by taxis and PHVs

City of Wolverhampton Council's taxi licensing and compliance officers are intensifying efforts to eliminate the use of illegal 'Ghost' number plates used by licensed vehicles across the UK.

These infra-red (IR) reflective plates, often referred to as '3D', '4D', or 'ghost' plates, become invisible to IR cameras, which poses a challenge for law enforcement.

These problematic plates prevent detection by speed, bus lane, and low emission zone cameras, thereby constituting an offence under the Road Vehicles (Display of Registration Marks) Regulations 2001. It is strictly illegal to modify the characters or to apply materials that make the plates retroreflective.

A comprehensive operation recently conducted across several regions, including Wolverhampton and Birmingham city centres, Manchester Airport, and Central London, led to the inspection of over 80 vehicles. This initiative, in partnership with Transport for London and local police forces, identified several vehicles with these illegal plates. One notable incident involved a vehicle tested with an IR camera and found to have an illicit reflective front plate.

This national effort was inspired by collaborative work between West Midlands Police and the Council, which involved piloting the use of these cameras. This pilot identified a private hire vehicle equipped with ghost plates, resulting in a £100 Penalty Charge Notice issued to the driver by the police.

Australia

Uber 'not to blame' for downfall of taxi booking app
A taxi booking app was already facing challenges as UberX

brought rideshare to Australia with an intent to "crush" the competition, a civil trial has been told.

Taxi Apps, the company behind the app GoCatch, is suing Uber in the Supreme Court of Victoria over claims it knowingly launched UberX illegally in Australia with the intention of injuring GoCatch.

Lawyers for GoCatch have claimed "tech bros" at the rideshare giant said they wanted to crush and destroy the business, suggesting they targeted Taxi Apps, but Uber today argued the language simply equated to "out-compete".

"It's just the language of the business ... it's the way they hype each other up," Uber's barrister John Sheahan KC told the court.

"Crushing' GoCatch is beating them. It's out-competing them at their own game."

Sheahan said GoCatch and UberX effectively operated in "different dimensions" with the latter starting up in Sydney in April 2014.

Taxi Apps' lawyers earlier pointed out peer-to-peer ridesharing did not become legal in NSW until December 2015, and then later in other Australian states.

Sheahan suggested GoCatch was to blame for its financial failings, with business plans to mandate in-app payments long-delayed and evidence some taxi drivers were "gaming" the app.

GoCatch's decline in performance was not because of UberX drivers in the market, and it showed its ability to grow while UberX was around, Sheahan said.

GoCatch lost market share to other taxi operators, he said. By April 2014, GoCatch had monthly growth of about 35,000 drivers – "objectively small numbers" – and was making about 40 cents in revenue for every job, the barrister said.

Pay Rise : As drivers in other major American cities strike by banning airport trips on Valentine's Day



NYC

Pay Rise : As drivers in other major American cities strike by banning airport trips on Valentine's Day, The New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC) is pleased to announce that beginning March 1, 2024, NYC's rideshare drivers will receive a minimum per trip pay increase of 3.49% to compensate for inflation. The increase, tied to the Consumer Price Index, comes as part of the city's requirement to adjust minimum pay for rideshare drivers annually.

For the city's 84,000 active rideshare drivers, the new pay rates will amount to almost a dollar extra for a typical 30-minute, 7.5-mile trip. New York City was the first U.S. municipality to mandate minimum driver pay, a policy that other cities have since adopted. The increase carries no requirement that Uber and Lyft, which determine their own prices, pass on additional costs to passengers.

"New York City drivers are some of the hardest working people on the globe, working day in and day out to keep our city moving," said New York City Mayor Eric Adams. "Just a few years ago, many of these incredible drivers were unfairly making less than minimum wage because there were no protections in place. Not on our watch. We are proud that these rules now exist, keeping our city a place where working-class people can live and raise a family."

"The minimum driver pay standard has been a lifeline for the tens of thousands of for-hire drivers who meet us when and where we want them and safely get us to our destinations," said Deputy Mayor of Operations Meera Joshi. "They support us, and we must support them—that means maintaining fair pay that tracks with living costs, both for the wellbeing of drivers and the health of the overall industry."

"Our minimum pay standard ensures that our hardworking drivers aren't just spinning their wheels and going nowhere because of inflation," said TLC Commissioner David Do.

"The adjustment can mean the difference between falling behind on rent or food due to rising costs and keeping up with the economic times. I'm proud to be part of the agency that first required this and it's a pleasure to be able to let drivers know that they'll be getting an increase."

"An annual CPI adjustment is something every working person should have, and especially meaningful for Uber and Lyft drivers who bear the costs of operations while the companies take the lion's share of the revenue. We organized to win TLC's ground-breaking regulations that were the first-of-its kind to ensure Uber and Lyft drivers were not left in poverty," said Bhairavi Desai, Executive Director of the 28,000-member NYTWA which represents app-dispatched and taxicab drivers. "Last year, we had to organize three strikes against Uber to get the company to not pursue litigation when the TLC redid the CPI rules in light of historic inflation. Drivers had to choose between food and fuel as their income didn't keep up with cost of living. It's taken a fight, but in the end, we've prevailed. We are proud today to celebrate as Uber and Lyft drivers get their 2024 CPI adjustment. New York City's minimum pay standard is a model for the rest of the country. Next up for us, is to get the same income protection for other taxi and FHV drivers."

"New York's Uber and Lyft drivers continue to struggle to make ends meet amid soaring costs, so these cost of living increases are desperately needed. Our Guild led a years-long campaign for New York to enact the nation's first minimum pay rates for rideshare drivers and we appreciate Commissioner Do acting promptly to enforce these wage standards," said Brendan Sexton, president of the Independent Drivers Guild, a Machinists Union affiliate which represents and advocates for more than 300,000 rideshare drivers.

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