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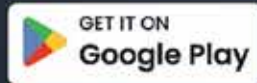
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EDITOR LETTER

This month, we cast a wide net across the industry—from the streets of Dublin to the showrooms of Europe’s biggest manufacturers—because the conversations shaping your working life are happening everywhere at once.

We begin with A Day in the Life of a Dublin Taxi Driver, a window into the reality of the rank, the road, and the relentless search for a fare. With fuel prices volatile, If the Fuel Crisis Drags On – Public Transport and Taxis Will Feel It First examines what lies ahead. For those considering their next car, we review the New Fiat 600e and the Škoda Enyaq 2025, alongside a look at Why Hybrids Are Winning the Middle Ground.

On the policy front, we unpack The 2015 Plate Reprieve and ask whether The Fare Review will truly cover rising costs. Elsewhere, we celebrate drivers doing vital work in Wheelchair Work – The Drivers Doing It Right, and take a lighter look at the road with What Your Car Says About You in 2026.

As always, this magazine is for you. If there is an issue you want us to dig into, let us know.

The Tacsai Magazine Team

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SATURATION CRISIS – TOO MANY TAXIS, NOT ENOUGH RANKS, AND A CALL TO REOPEN ST. JAMES'S HOSPITAL TAXI RANK

The National Transport Assembly has issued a stark warning about the state of Dublin's taxi industry, highlighting a critical oversupply of vehicles, the closure of vital ranks, and the urgent need to reinstate the rank at St. James's Hospital.

Tony Roe, speaking on behalf of the Assembly, described a system in crisis. He pointed to unsustainable figures: London, with a population of 9.1 million, operates 14,407 taxis. Dublin, with a population of just 1.3 million, now has over 18,000 taxis on its streets. "This is getting to the stage where there's nothing but cars on the road during the day," Roe stated, arguing that the capital suffers from a saturation of over-supply.

This glut is compounded by the disappearance of taxi ranks. In the inner city alone, over 14 ranks in high-footfall areas have closed within a one-mile radius. Drivers are now forced to "drive around like headless chickens" searching for fares, increasingly reliant on app companies charging "exorbitant rates" of up to 25% per call. Many experienced

drivers are leaving the industry for more stable employment, such as driving buses for €1,000 a week.

A "Non-Brainer": Reopen the St. James's Hospital Rank

A particular flashpoint is the closure of the taxi rank at St. James's Hospital. Roe described the situation as "way below an acceptable standard of reasonable behaviour" and a threat to public safety.

He highlighted the stark contrast: every other major hospital—including Beaumont, the Mater (which has three ranks), Connolly, and Tallaght—has a functioning taxi rank. St. James's, one of the busiest hospitals in the country, does not.

Drivers report being stuck in city centre congestion for up to 55 minutes when dispatched to pick up a fare at the hospital. Meanwhile, vulnerable patients—many

elderly or using walking aids—are left waiting for hours. In one distressing case, a woman waiting for a taxi outside the hospital suffered a fall and later passed away. Her family believes the stress of the incident, which could have been avoided with a proper rank, was a contributing factor.

Roe condemned the "spurious excuse" given by hospital authorities that a previous disagreement between two drivers justified the rank's closure. "This is a non-brainer," he said. "It's in the interest of public safety, both for the young and for the old, and particularly for the aged. We need a resolution sooner rather than later."

The Assembly is calling for an immediate reinstatement of the rank and a comprehensive review of Dublin's rank network and licensing system.



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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DUBLIN TAXI DRIVER

From airport runs to life advice, no two shifts are ever the same

There are jobs where every day looks much the same. Taxi driving in Dublin is not one of them.

A Dublin taxi driver can start the day with a 5.30am airport run for a businessman who says three words in total, then by 6.15am be transporting a man home from a night out who wants to explain, in painful detail, why he “definitely should have gone for the chips.” Before breakfast, the driver has already witnessed ambition, regret, overconfidence and someone trying to pay in coins found down the side of a passenger seat.

The day usually begins in darkness, particularly in winter, with the taxi warmed up, the radio murmuring in the background, and the first coffee of the day balanced somewhere between essential tool and medical necessity. Early fares are often a mix of airport passengers, shift workers and people heading into town for appointments.

These are generally the calm customers. They’re awake, but only just. They tend to offer quiet politeness, the occasional weather comment, and that uniquely Irish apology for existing. “Sorry now, would you mind dropping me just up here?” as though they are requesting a personal favour instead of paying for transport.

Then Dublin wakes up properly.

Suddenly the city is all movement: buses edging out with confidence, cyclists appearing from nowhere, delivery vans parked in places that suggest both creativity and lawlessness, and motorists behaving as though indicators are a sign of weakness. The taxi driver, meanwhile, navigates all this with the patience of a saint and the reaction speed of a goalkeeper.

By mid-morning, the cab becomes a confessional on wheels. People tell taxi drivers things they wouldn’t tell a priest, a solicitor or their own families. There is something about sitting in the back of a taxi, watching Dublin pass by, that

encourages honesty. Engagements are announced. Break-ups are dissected. Jobs are celebrated. Feuds are explained. Local politics is solved. National politics is condemned. The housing crisis gets a full airing. Somebody always knows exactly what’s wrong with the country and how they’d fix it by Tuesday.

By lunchtime, the driver has likely encountered at least one tourist who says they’re “basically Irish” because their great-grandfather once met a man from Mayo. They want to see “the real Dublin,” which generally means a careful balancing act between historical landmarks, lively pubs and avoiding the impression that Temple Bar is the full national story. The Dublin taxi driver is often part-driver, part-tour guide, part cultural translator. They can explain where to get a decent pint, why everyone is giving out about traffic, and which route will save twenty minutes if the quays are in bad form.

Then come the school runs, local runs

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and short hops — the bread and butter of the afternoon. These can be uneventful, but often aren't. There is always someone in a rush, someone with too many bags, someone who says "I'm only going five minutes away" and somehow turns the journey into an emotional saga. There are shoppers, grandparents, office workers, and people who insist they know a "quicker route" which is never, ever quicker.

But if the daytime shift reveals Dublin at its practical best, night work reveals it at its theatrical peak.

Once evening falls, the city changes character. The atmosphere gets louder, looser and far less predictable. Groups spill out onto pavements full of optimism, false confidence and questionable footwear. The taxi rank becomes a stage where every human type appears: the philosopher, the flirt, the exhausted nurse, the roaring office party survivor, the man who suddenly decides he must sing, and the woman who begins the journey saying she is "grand" before crying quietly halfway through because

her ex has posted a photo with someone from Portmarnock.

A Dublin taxi driver on the late shift is not just a transport provider. He is crowd manager, amateur therapist, referee, negotiator and occasionally witness to the worst singing ever inflicted on the capital. He must identify who is merely merry and who is too far gone. He must decide whether the takeaway in the passenger's hand is likely to remain safely in the bag. He must endure debates over whether Coppers is still any good, whether Dublin was better years ago, and whether the passenger's cousin "knows your brother, I'd say."

All the while, the meter runs, the traffic crawls, the stories pile up.

And that is the thing outsiders often miss. Taxi driving in Dublin is not just about getting from one place to another. It is front-row access to the city's daily life. Taxi drivers see Dublin in all its moods: sleepy and frantic, generous and exasperating, funny and occasionally cracked. They see hospital visits and wedding mornings, job interviews and

missed flights, first dates, bad dates and nights that should probably never be spoken of again.

They also develop a sixth sense for people. Within seconds, most drivers can tell whether they are about to have a peaceful trip, an intense monologue, a row between a couple in the back seat, or twenty minutes of someone saying "Do you know what now?" before launching into material that should really be billed as a live performance.

By the end of a shift, the driver may be tired, under-caffeinated and after seeing enough roadworks to last a lifetime. But he will also have gathered a collection of stories that no office worker could match in a month. Because a Dublin taxi is more than a car. For a few minutes at a time, it is a moving slice of the city itself.

And tomorrow morning, before most of Dublin has even found its slippers, the whole thing starts again.

If you want, I can also turn this into a shorter punchier editor's column version or a more humorous tabloid-style version for a taxi trade magazine.



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CARS AS LIVING ROOMS

How In-Car Tech Is Changing Everyday Driving

There was a time when the inside of a car asked very little of us. You turned a key, adjusted a mirror with some mild annoyance, tuned the radio badly, and set off.

The cabin was a place to sit while getting somewhere else.

Now it is becoming something closer to a second living room. Or, depending on the children in the back, a second battlefield.

The modern car interior is no longer just about seats, vents, and a glovebox full of forgotten sunglasses. It is increasingly a digital environment, shaped by software, screens, voice controls, driver profiles, connected services, and updates that arrive long after the car has left the showroom. Deloitte's 2026 global consumer study says buyers place the greatest value on connected features that improve safety and security, while many are also open to AI-driven personalisation and over-the-air software enhancements that extend a vehicle's usefulness over time.

That matters because it changes what a car feels like to own.

You are no longer simply buying a machine. You are buying an experience that may keep changing. The dashboard is no longer static. It evolves. Features can improve, menus can shift, assistants can get smarter, and the car can begin to remember who you are, how warm you like the cabin, where you place your seat, what route you normally take, and perhaps even how quickly you lose patience in traffic. Google's latest push in Android Automotive shows just how far this shift has gone: software that once mainly handled infotainment is now being extended into non-safety functions like climate control, lighting,

seating adjustment, digital key management, remote cabin conditioning, maintenance alerts, and personalised driver profiles.

Which is how the family car starts to feel less like transport and more like domestic space.

This is especially obvious in everyday Irish life, where so much of motoring is not glamour at all, but routine. The school run. The supermarket loop. The trip to training. The long drive to see relations. The hour spent waiting outside an activity nobody really wanted to commit to in the first place. In that context, comfort and digital ease are no small thing. A good cabin now means not just legroom and cup holders, but intuitive controls, decent voice functions, smoother navigation, reliable phone integration, better visibility, calmer parking aids, and enough charging points to prevent family-level diplomatic incidents.

In other words, the car is becoming a managed interior.

And like all managed interiors, it reflects modern life. We now expect our environments to respond to us. Our homes remember our heating schedules. Our phones know our habits better than some close relatives. Our streaming apps think they understand our moods. It was only a matter of time before the car joined the same club. Deloitte's research suggests consumers increasingly judge vehicle brands not only on hardware, but on trust, transparency, value, service quality, and the usefulness of connected features.

Of course, not everyone is delighted by this. For every driver thrilled by a crisp central screen and a clever voice assistant, there is another muttering darkly about the loss of proper buttons. And they are not entirely wrong. A living room should be comfortable,

but it should also be easy to use. The danger with the modern cabin is that it can become over-designed, over-digitised, and slightly exhausting. Nobody wants to feel they need a tutorial to demist the windscreen. That tension is now built into the industry itself: consumers are interested in software-led convenience, but concerns around data sharing remain high.

Still, the direction of travel is obvious. McKinsey says automotive electrical and electronic architectures are shifting away from older distributed systems towards newer domain-based and zonal setups, with more centralised control expected to dominate much more of vehicle production by 2035. That is a technical way of saying the car is being reorganised around software and central computing power, which makes these more seamless cabin experiences possible in the first place.

And once that happens, the car stops being a collection of separate bits and starts behaving like one connected space.

That is why the phrase "cars as living rooms" no longer sounds fanciful. It sounds descriptive. The cabin has become a place where people work, wait, snack, argue, charge devices, take calls, follow maps, control temperature, listen to podcasts, and try to preserve some shred of peace between one obligation and the next. The journey still matters, but the interior experience now matters almost as much.

The old family car was about getting there. The new one is increasingly about how it feels while you are on the way.

And perhaps that is the most modern thing of all: even when we are moving, we still want to feel at home.



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NEW ŠKODA ENYAQ IS EVEN MORE DESIRABLE

The big-selling Škoda Enyaq is the brand's flagship electric SUV, and it has been thoughtfully updated in order to keep it fresh in the face of ever-increasing competition. **By Declan Glynn**

The update builds on the Enyaq's reputation as a spacious, practical, and well-rounded family EV that has consistently impressed Irish buyers with its sensible approach to electric motoring.

'Modern Solid' Design Language.

The new Enyaq adopts Škoda's new 'Modern Solid' design language, inspired by the smaller Elroq SUV, creating a more cohesive brand identity in the process. Key changes consist of a slimmer, black-panel front grille replacing the old design, improving aerodynamics and enhancing efficiency. New sculpted bumpers, aerodynamic wheels, and refreshed rear lights enhance both efficiency and style, whilst maintaining the Enyaq's distinctive presence. The Enyaq is now even more appealing, with 27 additional specification upgrades, including significant interior enhancements such as a choice of 6 distinct 'Design Selections', heated seats, enhanced digital capabilities, and more advanced assistance systems. Sportline models feature 20-inch 'Vega' anthracite alloy wheels, Matrix LED headlights, LED tail lights with dynamic indicators, dark tinted privacy glass, tech-deck front grille, and a Sportline exterior styling pack for enhanced visual drama.

Intuitive Touchscreen.

The interior of the Enyaq was pretty perfect as it was, so cabin updates were kept to a minimum. One such benefit is improved touchscreen usability, with new 'hotkeys' that make essential functions more accessible whilst driving. New leather upholstery options also form part of the update, along with subtle brightwork elements that elevate the premium feel throughout the spacious, well-appointed cabin. As well as generous leg and head room for all 5 occupants, the Enyaq has a well-executed cargo area, which measures in at an impressive 585-litres behind the rear seats.

Battery & Trim Options.

As before, Škoda has kept the Enyaq range relatively simple to understand, with three

battery sizes available – 62kWh (badged 60), 82kWh (badged 85), and 84kWh (exclusive to the RS version). The smaller battery model produces 201bhp (150kW), with power sent to the rear wheels, while the Enyaq 85 produces 282bhp (210kW) and is also rear-wheel drive. For drivers looking for the benefit of all-wheel drive motoring, an 85X variant is available, with an identical power output as the regular 85. The performance-oriented RS model also comes with all-wheel drive as standard, and it can sprint from 0-100km/h in just 5.4-seconds. The Enyaq 60 models have a claimed driving range of up to 430kms, with the Enyaq 85 capable of up to 573kms on a single charge. Due to the added weight of the all-wheel drive system, the range drops to 540kms and 535km for the Enyaq 85X and RS respectively. With a DC fast-charging capacity of up to 175kW (model dependent), a 10-80% charge can be achieved in as little as 24-28 minutes, while a 0-100% charge via a domestic wallbox charger (11kW) can be completed in 6 hours or 8 hours for the Enyaq 60 and Enyaq 85 respectively.

Car on Review.

My review car was a Škoda Enyaq 85, which looked very elegant in its Graphite Grey metallic paintwork and standard 20-inch 'Vega' silver alloy wheels. The interior of the Enyaq is welcoming, luxurious and tastefully finished in quality materials throughout. The 13-inch

infotainment system offers crisp and clear graphics, and it comes with integrated sat-nav, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity as standard. The Enyaq feels refined and self-assured on the road, and it proves itself to be surprisingly dynamic to drive. A well-judged suspension set-up ensures that road imperfections are soaked up with ease, while its precise and well-weighted steering works well around town. Motorway driving is made easy by the provision of plenty of mid-range punch from the electric motor, allowing for the safe and predictable overtaking of slower moving traffic. Additionally, being rear-wheel drive, there is none of the torque steer that can be evident in many front-wheel drive EVs. Featuring a 282bhp (210kW) electric motor powering the rear wheels, the Enyaq 85 can sprint from 0-100km/h in just 6.7-seconds, with the achievable top speed electronically limited to 180km/h. With 545Nm of instant torque on offer, a spirited driving experience is guaranteed.

Conclusion & Price

The Škoda Enyaq is already one of Europe's most successful all-electric vehicles, and the recent updates add even more desirability to the mix. On-the-road pricing for the new Škoda Enyaq starts at €43,790 (Enyaq 60) with my test car specification priced from €45,980.



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The ever-changing Irish SPSV Insurance Market

A News Update from TaxiFair Insurance

Ze-Gone

The SPSV insurance market continues to be a focal point of discussion as we approach the last quarter of 2025. Most recently, Zego, often described as an ‘insurtech unicorn’, announced that they are leaving the Irish market, leaving thousands of customers seeking a new insurer in an already small market.

Solvency

Zego’s exit, based on their own PR and recently published accounts, does not appear to be related to solvency issues. So, if you are currently with Zego and have a claim (or are already dealing with a claim), there should be no concerns over their ability to handle, or pay, those claims—which is reassuring.

The dilemma

If you have several months left on your Zego policy, should you stick with them until cover expires, or seek a new insurer now? While Zego appear able to pay claims, if you have a clean record but then experience a claim in the remaining months of your policy, what happens at renewal? Will you still be able to get a quote from another provider with a claim on your record? That will largely depend on whether a claim is open or settled, how much was paid, etc. All theoretical unknowns, of course.

Ultimately, if you can’t get cover elsewhere, you will fall into the Declined Cases Agreement with Insurance Ireland. While this guarantees you will get a quotation, it generally comes with higher premiums and less cover. So, there is definitely an argument that if you can move insurer now, you should strongly consider it.

Exciting developments

While Zego’s exit from the market is a shame —competition benefits everyone —at TaxiFair we have been working on bringing a new entrant to the market for over 12 months. This new entrant will launch in October. The timing is certainly more luck than judgement, as no one foresaw Zego’s sudden exit, but it is welcome news at a time when many customers need a new insurer.

The product

The new product is underwritten by Accelerant Insurance and will be arranged and administered by Ornella Underwriting, based in Wexford.

For context, Accelerant Insurance holds an AM Best financial strength rating of A- (“Excellent”), reflecting the group’s robust financial position. They are widely renowned as a forward-thinking, technology-led specialty insurer—a perfect fit for the Irish SPSV market. Accelerant Insurance

are part of Accelerant Holdings, which listed on the New York Stock Exchange in July, this year.

Accelerant writes policies via local partners, which is where Ornella Underwriting come in. Based in Wexford, Ornella Underwriting bring the local underwriting expertise, systems, and administration to bring the product to life. At TaxiFair, we will be working with Ornella daily to meet the needs of Irish SPSV operators and drivers.

Cover

The new product will offer more choice for customers, as well as comprehensive coverage including the important essentials: unlimited windscreen cover (if using an approved repairer), breakdown, radio, roof sign and meter cover, plus fire brigade charges (essential if driving an EV). It will also be the only product in the Irish market to include Public Liability cover as standard, at no extra cost—a great development for those with Bus Éireann contracts.

Importantly, it will provide competitive pricing for newer entrants into the SPSV market, which we are seeing more and more of in 2025.

Choice

TaxiFair entered the Irish SPSV market 10 years ago with a mission to bring much-needed competition. This new offering builds on that commitment. As we continue to grow, our focus remains on helping customers go to work—if we can’t enable you, we have no position in the market. Going forward, with three insurer partners, we are better positioned to help more drivers than ever before.

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TaxiFair

Offering choice and unrivalled expertise in the Irish SPSV market for 10 years.





THE NEW IRISH FAMILY CAR

Why Hybrids Are Winning the Middle Ground

For years, the family car was a fairly simple thing. It needed to start on damp mornings, survive supermarket car parks, swallow buggies and schoolbags, and make it to Westport or Wexford without causing domestic tension. It did not need to make a statement. It just needed to get on with it.

That is no longer the case.

The Irish family car now sits at the crossroads of money, guilt, practicality, and technology. Households are being asked to think not just about boot space and comfort, but also emissions, charging, resale value, fuel prices, urban driving, and whether Granny in the back will ever figure out how to open the hidden door handle. In that atmosphere, it is no surprise that hybrids are emerging as the sensible compromise. In Ireland, hybrid petrol-electric cars led the new-car market by engine type in both January and February 2026, while battery-electric sales also rose strongly.

That tells its own story. Irish buyers are not rejecting electric motoring. Far from it. Battery-electric registrations were up 48.7% in January 2026 and up 36.9% year to date by the end of February, according to SIMI. But the same figures show hybrids holding the strongest overall share, which suggests that many families like the direction of travel without wanting to leap all at once.

And you can see why.

A fully electric car makes enormous sense for many households. SEAI says EV ownership in Ireland rose 36% in 2025, that battery-electric cars reached a 19% market share last year, and that EV running costs

can be far lower than diesel, with grants and lower tax also improving the case. New EVs typically offer quoted ranges in the 350 to 550 kilometre bracket. On paper, and increasingly in real life, that is a persuasive package.

But family life is not lived on paper.

Family life is the unplanned dash to training, the late school pickup, the long weekend with too much luggage, the Christmas trip across the country, the forgotten charging cable, the rain, the cold, and the mild panic that sets in when two adults are pretending to be relaxed while watching the battery percentage fall. Even for buyers who admire EVs, hybrids remove a layer of mental admin. They offer some of the efficiency benefits of electrification without making the household entirely dependent on charging routines, public infrastructure, or a home setup that may not suit every property.

That is why hybrids have become the grown-up answer to a grown-up problem. They are not the dreamers' choice and they are not the nostalgists' choice. They are the choice for people who have done the sums, thought about their weekly patterns, and concluded that a bit less drama would be nice.

Across the wider EU, the same pattern is visible. ACEA says hybrid-electric vehicles accounted for 38.7% of the EU market in January and February 2026, making them the most popular power type, while battery-electric cars took 18.8% and the combined petrol-and-diesel share fell to 30.6%. This is not just an Irish wobble or a temporary quirk. It looks much more like a broad consumer preference for middle-ground motoring.

There is something very Irish about that middle ground. We are often early enough

to want the benefits, but cautious enough to avoid unnecessary hassle. We will embrace progress, certainly, but preferably after somebody else has tested it in January rain with two children in the back and a boot full of gear.

The hybrid speaks directly to that instinct. It says: you can cut fuel use, lower emissions somewhat, enjoy smoother low-speed driving, and still head off for a spontaneous cross-country trip without having to build the day around chargers. It is not quite the future in the boldest sense, but it is future-adjacent, and for many households that is exactly the point.

There is also the wider national backdrop. SEAI says transport accounted for 42.3% of Ireland's energy demand in 2024, and private cars alone made up just over 41% of transport energy use. So the family car is not a trivial object in Irish life; it sits right at the heart of how the country moves and how the country emits. That makes the shift towards hybrids and EVs more than a showroom trend. It is a cultural shift in slow motion.

Still, culture changes one driveway at a time.

For some families, 2026 will be the year they go fully electric and never look back. For others, the hybrid will be the bridge between the old world and the next one. And perhaps that is the real meaning of the modern family car in Ireland. It is no longer simply about transport. It is about how much change a household is willing to take on at once.

Right now, many are saying yes to change, but only in moderation.

Which, in this country, is often how the biggest shifts begin.



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Tacsai Magazine

Q&A with Danny O’Gorman, General Manager at Freenow by Lyft Ireland



There’s been a lot of discussion regarding deregulation of the taxi industry in recent months. What impact do you believe this would have on the industry?

Over the last 30 years, the taxi sector has transformed dramatically. Whilst the deregulation of the early 2000s saw an initial increase in availability, it was quickly followed by falling driver incomes, poor service quality, and serious safety issues.

The introduction of Taxi Regulation Act 2013 established a proper regulatory framework, mandating better driver vetting, standardised branding, and increased inspections to professionalise the industry. Within this strengthened regulatory framework, the industry has grown at a safer and more sustainable pace. There are now almost 28,000

active SPSV driver licences and over 21,000 active vehicle licences.

A competitive, well regulated taxi sector benefits both drivers and passengers. There are many ways to get a taxi - through dispatch operators, ranks, street hailing, and through apps. Taxi apps in particular have transformed convenience and reliability. NTA research found app bookings to be the most popular method for getting a taxi, with over the phone second most popular. Freenow’s own data shows nearly 90% of people find it easy to book via an app.

This competition drives higher standards, better service and greater flexibility for drivers. In short, the regulations have worked. We now have a much safer industry for both drivers and passengers.

I noticed Freenow was recently before the Oireachtas Transport

Committee to discuss challenges facing the taxi industry in Ireland. What are some of these challenges?

We’ve recently produced a new report exploring the challenges facing today’s taxi sector. In it we concluded that whilst the regulatory environment has led to a safer, stronger taxi trade challenges still remain. We explored a number of issues including a warning against the campaign for deregulation and ‘hyper-growth’ from the Taxis for Ireland Coalition, supported by Uber and others, which we believe would see taxi drivers lose near €400 a month.

The report also highlighted two immediate areas of concern: hidden VAT liabilities, and driver safety.

Potentially the most serious issue facing drivers is the hidden VAT liability created by the reverse charge model



used by Uber. Thousands of drivers are unknowingly non-compliant, jeopardising their ability to receive a Tax Clearance Certificate, necessary for the renewal of their SPSV licence. This could lead to a sharp reduction in the licensed driver pool, straining service availability and damaging thousands of drivers' incomes.

While journeys with Freenow by Lyft don't impose any VAT liability on drivers, many drivers use multiple platforms and are unaware of this liability with Uber. There is no minimum threshold for VAT liability on this - even a single journey triggers VAT registration and ongoing VAT obligations. Over time, these liabilities of course, accumulate.

Taxi apps operating under the reverse-charge model have been placing the burden of VAT on taxi drivers without their knowledge, this practice is completely unacceptable. Other EU countries have acted on this. Poland, for example, requires platforms to register domestically and invoice drivers locally,

eliminating the reverse charge model. We believe Ireland should do the same.

Another major concern facing the industry is driver safety. Our report highlights 31% of drivers feel unsafe while working, one in three feel less safe than they did a year ago, and 64% have ended shifts early due to safety fears.

No taxi driver should have to choose between personal safety and earning a living. Addressing

safety concerns through targeted enforcement, dedicated support channels, and equal inclusion in transport policing measures are essential to sustaining a reliable, nationwide taxi service.

How does Freenow by Lyft support its driver partners?

At Freenow by Lyft, we work in partnership with our drivers. Since 2024

we have had an established cooperation agreement in place between Freenow and driver partners - highlighting our dedication to working together for the future of the trade.

Last year we conducted over 10 driver surveys, engaging opinions on issues including safety, public policy, and driving experience. This direction is used in all decision making, where Freenow and the driver partners contribute to make changes to the joint provision of passenger transport.

We hold regular webinars and in-person gatherings, where our partner drivers could meet Freenow leadership, including myself, and raise any questions or problems directly with the business.

We also welcome hundreds of drivers to our driver centre in Dublin every week. While we recognise there are areas where we and driver representatives may not always agree, we value engagement and communication.

IF THE FUEL CRISIS DRAGS ON, PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND TAXIS WILL FEEL IT FIRST



Fuel shocks always begin the same way: with numbers on a forecourt sign. People notice the jump, complain at the pump, and reassure themselves that it will settle down in a week or two. But when a fuel crisis lasts for months, it stops being a motoring story and becomes a public-transport story, a taxi story, and eventually a story about how a country functions day to day. That is where Ireland now needs to focus.

The current spike is tied to the Middle East conflict and wider oil-market disruption, and the Government has already responded with temporary excise cuts, a reduced NORA levy and an enhanced diesel rebate for hauliers and bus passenger operators. Those measures run only for a defined window: the excise cuts to 31 May 2026, and the higher diesel rebate to 30 June 2026.

If the pressure is still there by early summer, the conversation will change from relief to resilience. Temporary tax cuts can soften a spike, but they do not remove the basic problem: Ireland remains heavily exposed to imported fossil fuels. SEAI says 93% of Ireland's transport energy came from fossil fuels in 2024, that transport accounted for 42.3% of national energy demand, and that private cars alone made up just over 41% of transport energy use. It also says Ireland imported all of its oil in 2024 and that overall energy import dependency rose to 79.7%. That is not a system built for a long external shock.

For public transport, the first issue would be operating cost. Bus and coach operators have at least been recognised in the Government's emergency package, which is significant in itself: ministers did not just help private motorists, they specifically increased the diesel rebate for bus passenger operators from 7.5 cent to 12 cent per litre. That tells you where the pressure points already are. If diesel stays high for months, operators will either need further support, or the State will have to absorb higher subsidy costs to keep fares and service levels stable. Otherwise, the risk is not necessarily an immediate collapse in services, but a slower squeeze: tighter margins, delayed service expansion, and more political pressure over fares.

There is some protection in the system, but not enough to make Ireland comfortable. The Department of Transport said in September

2025 that 41.3% of the Public Service Obligation bus fleets in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford were already low- or zero-emission, with Limerick becoming the first Irish city to have a fully electric fleet. That is real progress, and it means parts of urban public transport are less exposed to diesel shocks than they were a few years ago. But it also means most of the wider network is not yet insulated, especially outside the most advanced city fleets and across diesel-dependent coach and regional operations.

The second issue would be demand. When driving becomes painfully expensive, more people look again at buses, trains, trams, Local Link and park-and-ride. Ireland was already seeing record public-transport use before this crisis intensified: the Department of Transport said daily journeys across PSO services topped one million in 2024, while Local Link recorded 4.7 million journeys, up almost 47% year on year. So if fuel costs remain elevated, public transport could see a double effect at once: higher operating costs and higher passenger demand. That is good for mode shift in theory, but in practice it can mean fuller services, more crowding and louder demands for capacity upgrades before the system is fully ready.

That is why international energy advice in this kind of shock tends to move quickly beyond pump-price relief. The IEA said on 20 March that governments, businesses and households should use measures such as remote work, lower speed limits, car-sharing and greater use of public transport to cut oil demand, noting that road transport accounts for about 45% of global oil demand. Its analysis says encouraging public transport can reduce national oil use for cars by around 1% to 3%, depending on infrastructure. In plain English, if the crisis drags on, governments stop treating public transport as just a service and start treating it as part of fuel security.

Taxis would face a harsher version of the same problem, because they do not have the same

cushioning from State support. The current Irish emergency package explicitly mentions haulage and bus passenger operators, but not taxis. At the same time, the NTA has already begun its 2026 National Maximum Fare Review and says it is surveying drivers specifically about insurance, fuel and other operating costs, alongside current taxi demand and supply. That suggests the regulator already knows where the pressure is landing. If this crisis lasts for months, the likely outcomes are straightforward: greater pressure for fare increases, fewer drivers willing to work thin-margin hours, and an even weaker late-night and rural taxi supply than many places already experience.

There is, however, one possible long-term shift hidden inside the pain. Fuel instability makes electric and hybrid taxis look less like a climate gesture and more like a business hedge. The Government reopened its support for electric small public service vehicles in February 2026, allocating €7 million to the scheme and offering grants of up to €7,500 for a new electric SPSV, up to €17,500 where an older high-polluting vehicle is scrapped, and up to €25,000 for a new electric wheelchair-accessible SPSV. Since 2018, more than 3,600 operators have been supported to switch. If diesel volatility becomes the new normal, that transition will stop looking optional for many drivers.

So what would a months-long fuel crisis really mean? For public transport, it would mean a sharper political argument over fares, subsidies and capacity, and a stronger case for accelerating low- and zero-emission fleets. For taxis, it would mean a tougher immediate hit on earnings and availability, especially at night and outside the big urban centres, alongside faster pressure to electrify. And for the rest of us, it would be a reminder that transport policy is not just about climate or convenience. It is also about how vulnerable everyday life becomes when too much of a country still runs on imported fuel.

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RIDE-HAILING IN IRELAND: THREAT, OPPORTUNITY, OR A LOT OF TALK?



Mention ride-hailing in an Irish taxi conversation and you can nearly hear the temperature in the car rise by two degrees.

To some people, it is the obvious answer to Ireland's taxi shortages. More drivers, more cars, shorter waits, problem solved. To plenty of licensed drivers, it sounds more like the old story in a modern jacket: undercut the trade, dress it up as innovation, and hope nobody notices who gets squeezed. That debate sharpened in early 2026 when the CCPC called for barriers to ride-hailing services to be removed, while Government said it had no intention of allowing the private-car model here. That is why this is such a good argument.

Everybody feels they are the sensible one.

The passenger says, "I cannot get a taxi."

The app companies say, "We can fix that."

The regulator says, "Not so fast."

And the driver says, "Easy for you to say when it's not your licence, your insurance, your car and your living on the line."

The pressure for change is real. The CCPC said in February that 40% of people who tried to get a taxi in December 2025 had difficulties, and that 49% of taxi users would like the option of ride-hailing services. Outside Dublin, the frustration is even sharper. That is enough to make the public wonder why Ireland still cannot simply press a button and magic up more cars.

But that is where the Irish version of this argument differs from the one abroad. In Ireland, carrying passengers for money is still treated as a regulated public-service activity, not something anyone should drift into because they have a satnav and a free evening. The State's position remains that the focus of taxi and hackney regulation is consumer protection and personal safety, and the Government has said clearly it does not intend to allow the model where private drivers use their own ordinary cars to operate as taxis through an app.

That matters, because a lot of drivers hear the word innovation and think cheaper competition with lighter obligations.

And to be fair, that is not an irrational fear.

A licensed taxi driver in Ireland is not just some fella with a decent playlist and a clean boot. There are vehicle rules, driver licensing, compliance checks and dispatch regulation. The NTA states that operating an SPSV without the proper licence is an offence, and dispatch operators also require licences. So when people talk breezily about "opening up the market", what many drivers hear is this: you follow all the rules, then we bring in another crowd who can take the cream off the work anyway.

That is the threat side of the argument, and it is real. If Ireland ever fully embraced the UberX-style model, it would put obvious downward pressure on the earnings of existing drivers. More supply can be great for passengers, but it is not always great for the people already trying to make a living from the trade.

Still, calling it purely a threat misses something important. Ride-hailing is also a pressure point. It is forcing the Irish system to confront questions it has been able to sidestep for years. Are passengers happy with current waiting times? No. Are rural and late-night services good enough? Often not. Has technology changed what people expect from booking, tracking, safety and payment? Obviously. The NTA seems to recognise that much, because in March 2026 it launched a Call for Inputs on dispatch operator licensing, saying the market has changed significantly due to booking technology, digital systems, app-based operators and changing passenger expectations.

That is where the real opportunity lies.

Not necessarily in throwing the gates open to every private car in the country, but in modernising how the existing market works. Better dispatch rules. Better app standards. Better accessibility. Better safety systems. Better accountability when something goes wrong. Better matching of drivers to the hours

and places where demand is strongest. That is less dramatic than a big ideological fight about Uber, but it is probably more useful.

And that is why ride-hailing can also be a red herring.

Because sometimes the debate is framed as though Ireland has only two options: keep the present system exactly as it is, or surrender completely to the Silicon Valley version of transport. That is nonsense. The real problems in the trade are wider than one app model. Driver numbers, cost pressures, rural viability, late-night safety, shift economics and whether the job still feels worth doing all matter just as much. Even the Government response to the CCPC has leaned heavily on the idea of a sustainable taxi sector, not just a bigger one.

So what is ride-hailing in Ireland?

It is a threat, because many drivers are right to be wary of any system that widens supply without widening protections.

It is an opportunity, because the industry cannot ignore how badly some passengers feel served by the current market.

And it is a red herring when it pretends that one app-based reform will somehow cure every weakness in the trade.

The truth is less dramatic and more Irish. We are unlikely to wake up one morning and find that the full private-car ride-hailing model has suddenly arrived. The Government has pushed back too firmly for that. But we are also not standing still. The regulator is reviewing dispatch rules, the competition watchdog is pushing hard, and passengers are plainly fed up with not being able to get a car when they need one.

So the question for taxi drivers is no longer whether this conversation matters. It does.

The question is whether the trade helps shape whatever comes next, or waits until it is announced and then starts roaring about it over tea at the rank.



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THE FARE REVIEW: WILL IT REALLY COVER RISING COSTS?



There is a particular kind of silence that can fall in a taxi when the meter ticks up and the passenger clocks it. It is not always hostile.

Sometimes it is only surprise. Sometimes it is resignation. But every driver in Ireland knows the feeling. The passenger is thinking, that's gone up. The driver is thinking, you should see what everything else has done. That is why the current National Maximum Fare Review matters so much.

The National Transport Authority confirmed in February 2026 that the review is now under way and that a confidential telephone survey of around 500 drivers nationwide has begun. The point of it is not only to look at fares in isolation, but to assess insurance, fuel and other operating costs, alongside taxi demand and supply. The NTA says this review is carried out roughly every two years.

On paper, that sounds sensible. In the real world, taxi drivers will ask a simpler question: will this review actually reflect the cost of staying on the road?

That question is more loaded than it sounds. The last fare changes only came into effect on 1 December 2024, when maximum taxi fares rose by an average of 9 percent on a weighted basis. The pre-booking fee also went from €2 to €3, and the special rate was extended into the weekend peak in an effort to bring more drivers into the night-time economy.

To many passengers, a 9 percent increase sounded substantial. To many drivers, it probably felt more like a correction than a windfall.

The NTA's own 2024 fare-review material explains why. Its Taxi Cost Index is designed to estimate average taxi operating costs across the industry, not the exact costs faced by every driver. In other words, it is a broad instrument, not a portrait of your own weekly headaches. The fact sheet makes that plain: some drivers have very different patterns of mileage, car finance, insurance exposure and platform costs from others.

And yet even on that averaged basis, the costs

are not small. In the NTA's 2024 fact sheet, car purchase and finance costs were put at €5,021, insurance at €1,895, and radio/app affiliation costs at €2,997. That is before you start adding fuel, servicing, tyres, cleaning, licensing, NCT, calibration and the dozen other little bites that turn into one large annual chew.

That is where the public conversation often misses the point. Taxi fares are visible. Taxi costs are mostly invisible.

Passengers see the receipt. They do not see the insurance renewal email. They do not see the app commission. They do not see a driver doing the maths on tyres, brake wear, valeting, downtime and replacing a vehicle that is aging faster than the finance is shrinking. They certainly do not see the lost hours. Yet labour, according to the NTA's 2024 review, remains the single biggest element in the Taxi Cost Index, accounting for 67 percent of the total. The review concluded that the index had risen by between 9 percent and 11.1 percent between 2022 and 2024, with the recommended increase capped at 9 percent partly because of concern over the effect on consumer demand.

That last part is crucial. Taxi fares are never reviewed in a vacuum. The meter has to work for drivers, but it also has to avoid scaring off customers.

And that is the trap at the heart of every fare review in Ireland. If fares lag behind costs, drivers feel squeezed and some will reduce hours, avoid certain shifts, or leave the trade altogether. If fares rise too sharply, passengers may travel less, walk more, use public transport more often, or simply reserve taxis for when they are stuck. The NTA's 2024 review itself noted that cost-of-living pressures were affecting taxi demand, with users socialising less, having lower disposable income, and increasingly turning to public and active transport.

So, when drivers ask whether the fare review will "cover rising costs", they are really asking two questions.

First: will the numbers be honest?

Second: even if they are, will the outcome be brave enough?

Because honesty in this trade means acknowledging that the economics are no longer what they were. A driver working nights, weekends or airport runs is not just offering transport. They are absorbing risk, antisocial hours, wear on the vehicle, and the growing unpredictability of demand. If the fare structure does not properly recognise that, then all the industry talk about supply shortages and patchy availability starts to sound less mysterious.

But bravery matters too. The NTA's 2024 decision showed caution. Even though its review found cost growth as high as 11.1 percent using driver-reported activity levels, it recommended a maximum 9 percent increase, citing the likely impact on consumer demand. That may have been economically prudent, but many drivers will see it as proof that fare reviews can acknowledge the pain without fully compensating for it.

None of this means every fare increase should automatically be waved through. Drivers know better than anyone that price sensitivity is real. A taxi journey that feels too expensive is one that may not happen next time. But there is a difference between keeping fares realistic and expecting drivers to quietly absorb rising costs for the sake of public comfort.

The current review, then, is not just a bureaucratic exercise. It is a test of whether the system still understands the trade it regulates.

If the final outcome reflects the real cost of insurance, fuel, finance, affiliation fees and labour, drivers may feel the process still has credibility. If it lands too softly, expect the same familiar grumbling at ranks, in cafés and over late-night dispatch calls: the fare might be reviewed, but the driver is still the one carrying the gap.

And that, in the end, is the issue. The meter is only the visible part of the business. The real story is everything behind it.



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For a lot of Irish taxi drivers, the 2015 plate extension did not feel like a policy decision. It felt like oxygen.

After years of cost pressure, vehicle headaches and the constant feeling that the next big bill is already on its way, the rule change gave some drivers something they have not had much of lately: time. The NTA approved the Taxi Regulation (Taxi Maximum Permissible Age) Regulations 2025 in March 2025, and the change took effect on 1 April 2025. It applies to taxis already in the fleet, first registered in 2015, that were due to hit their final operating date between 1 January and 31 December 2025.

That sounds simple enough, but the detail matters. This was not a blanket pardon for every 2015 taxi until the end of 2026. It was a 12-month extension from the date each vehicle would otherwise have aged out. So, if your car was due to time out in June 2025, you got until June 2026. If it was due out in November 2025, you got until November 2026. For drivers, that distinction meant the reprieve was real, but it was not the same for everyone.

And that is the thing about taxi policy in Ireland. Every change sounds neat in a press release. On the ground, it lands messier.

Because for one driver, this extension meant another year's earnings from a car that was still doing the job. For another, it meant looking at the news and muttering something unprintable because they had already changed vehicle, borrowed money, or made a move before the regulation came in. The minutes of the SPSV Advisory Committee in March 2025 noted that the one-year extension would apply from 1 April and that drivers whose vehicle licences had expired from January to March would be contacted and reinstated where applicable. That

helped, but only up to a point.

The strong support for the measure shows how badly the trade wanted breathing room. In the NTA's consultation report, 84% of submissions backed the change, and 77% of all submissions came from taxi drivers or owners. That tells its own story. Drivers were not cheering because they love old cars. They were cheering because replacing a taxi has become a serious financial event.

And that is where this issue becomes bigger than one plate year.

A taxi is not just a car with a roof sign. It is finance, insurance, testing, maintenance, downtime, compliance and the constant fear that one hefty repair bill will arrive just before the insurance renewal. So, when people casually say drivers should "just upgrade", they are talking as if changing a taxi is like swapping the kettle. It is not. For many operators, the 2015 reprieve was not about hanging on to something shabby. It was about avoiding being forced into a costly decision before the sums stacked up. That policy objective was also reflected in the Programme for Government 2025, which specifically included extending the ten-year limit for 2015 taxis by one year.

Of course, there is another side to it. The age rule exists for a reason. The regulator is not trying to annoy drivers for the sport of it. Age limits are supposed to help maintain vehicle quality, passenger confidence and a professional fleet. If every taxi on the road starts looking tired, the trade pays a price in reputation as well as reliability. So, the argument against repeated extensions is not ridiculous. There are people in the industry who worry that every temporary reprieve becomes the start of a permanent

shrug.

That is why the 2015 move is best understood as a pressure-release valve, not a new long-term policy. The official information note made clear that the aim was to give effect to the Programme for Government commitment on 2015-registered taxis. It was a targeted measure, not a wholesale rewriting of the age-limit system.

So, what did it mean on the ground?

It meant relief for drivers who needed one more year.

It meant frustration for drivers who moved too early and felt they missed out.

And it meant the bigger argument has merely been postponed, not settled.

Because sooner or later the trade still has to face the hard question: who is expected to pay for keeping the Irish taxi fleet fresh? If regulators want newer vehicles, cleaner vehicles and better presentation, that comes at a cost. If drivers are expected to carry that cost while margins stay tight, then every age-limit rule becomes a flashpoint. The 2015 reprieve eased the pressure. It did not remove it.

In that sense, the extension was both welcome and revealing. Welcome because it gave genuine breathing space. Revealing because of how many drivers clearly needed it.

Nobody in the trade seriously believes the future is an endless parade of ageing 2015 cars. But plenty of drivers will say this much: if policymakers want newer taxis, they need to understand the cost of getting there. Otherwise, every time a vehicle reaches the limit, the same old story begins again. The car is aging out, the bills are stacking up, and the driver is left hoping someone in authority has finally noticed what life on the road actually costs.

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WHAT YOUR CAR SAYS ABOUT YOU IN 2026

Once upon a time, your car said one of three things about you. You were sensible. You were flashy. Or you got a good deal off a cousin in Longford.



In 2026, it is a bit more complicated than that.

Cars are no longer just mechanical objects with seats and a boot full of old shopping bags. They are now lifestyle statements, financial confessions, technological comfort blankets, and, in some cases, rolling identity crises. What you drive says less about horsepower and more about how you see yourself in the world. Or at least how you would like the neighbours to see you.

Take the electric car driver. Once the preserve of the brave, the wealthy, and the sort of person who uses the phrase “energy ecosystem” in ordinary conversation, the EV owner in 2026 is no longer quite such a rare species. But even now, fully electric demand remains uneven, while hybrids continue to appeal to buyers who want lower emissions without gambling the family weekend on charger availability. Across the EU in January and February 2026, hybrids held a larger share of new registrations than any other power type, while battery-electric cars continued to grow but from a more mixed base.

Which brings us neatly to the hybrid driver: the great pragmatist of modern motoring.

This person does not want lectures from either side. They are not interested in being told they are saving the planet, nor are they keen to hear they are part of the problem. They simply want a car that starts every morning, does not drink fuel like a sailor on shore leave, and does not require a doctoral thesis to plan a trip to Galway. The hybrid owner is the adult in the room. Their car says: I have considered the options and chosen peace.

Then there is the SUV parent. Their vehicle says many things, most of them practical. It says: I carry children, footballs, forgotten school

projects, a buggy that folds in theory, and at least one damp towel at any given time. But it also says: I would like to survive the potholes, the kerbs, the supermarket car park, and possibly the apocalypse.

The modern SUV is not always bought for adventure. In many cases it is bought for visibility, comfort, a feeling of security, and the vague but powerful belief that higher seating equals better life decisions.

The nearly-new premium driver, meanwhile, is a fascinating figure. This is the person who wants quality, badge value, and leather seats, but also enjoys saying, with studied casualness, “I’d never buy brand new.” Their car says: I appreciate refinement, but I also understand depreciation. This is the motoring equivalent of buying designer shoes at half price and making sure everyone knows it.

Then we have the faithful keeper of the older car. This is not always about money, though sometimes it is. Often it is about loyalty, suspicion, and principle. This person does not want twelve menus to adjust the heating. They do not want a subscription to unlock a feature the car already physically has. They would rather trust a dependable diesel from a simpler era than a vehicle that updates itself overnight and then asks for feedback. Given that consumers are increasingly weighing trust, transparency, service quality, connected features, and data-sharing concerns when choosing vehicles and brands, that scepticism is not entirely irrational.

And what of the tech enthusiast? Ah yes, the driver whose car can talk, park, pre-heat itself, update over the air, and possibly judge your playlist. Carmakers are leaning harder into AI-driven personalisation, connected services, and software-enabled features, though enthusiasm

is stronger in some markets than others. For this owner, the car is not just transport. It is an extension of the phone, the home, and the self. Their vehicle says: I enjoy innovation and I am willing to risk the occasional glitch in exchange for feeling like the future has arrived.

Of course, the most revealing thing about any car in 2026 may not be the badge on the bonnet at all. It may be the motivation behind it.

Did you buy it to save money?

To feel safe?

To look successful?

To keep up with the times?

To avoid being left behind by the times?

To fit the children, the dog, the golf clubs, and your own idea of yourself into one mobile package?

Because that is what cars have become: not just transport, but autobiography on wheels.

The old clichés still survive. The flashy car still suggests vanity. The battered hatchback still implies a person of either admirable modesty or catastrophic procrastination. But the modern car tells a more layered story. It speaks of cost-of-living pressures, technology fatigue, environmental intentions, image management, and personal compromise. Consumers have become more value-driven, more cautious, and more focused on fairness and trust, which means the car on the driveway increasingly reflects not fantasy, but negotiation.

So what does your car say about you in 2026?

Probably that you are trying, like the rest of us, to balance aspiration with practicality, image with affordability, and modern life with the faint hope that nothing expensive starts flashing on the dashboard.

Which, when you think about it, may be the most honest status symbol of all.

A Lifeline for the Taxi Community

THE MARTINA ROE LAY COUNSELLING SOCIETY

The Martina Roe Lay Counselling Society, formerly known as the Irish Taxi Drivers Association, is continuing its vital work supporting people in the transport industry who are suffering from bereavement, depression, and isolation.

Made up entirely of volunteers from the industry who have all personally experienced loss, the society offers a free, peer-led alternative to costly professional counselling. "We're offering something other than to sit at home and vegetate," said Tony Roe. "We've all been through it ourselves."

What's On Offer:

The society provides a full calendar of social events designed to combat loneliness and build community:

Weekly Céilí: Every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at the Kadine Hotel in Newbridge. Early dancing begins at 8:00 PM, with tea, biscuits, and a "taxi dance" continuing until 11:30 PM. A bus is available from town.

Friday Night Social: Music and a get-together every Friday.

Group Holidays: The society organises heavily subsidised trips. This year kicked off with a trip to Kilkenny for 30 drivers. Upcoming trips include Latvia (date to be confirmed) and Kerry. Last year's highlights included a week in Alicante for

€200 and a week in Lanzarote for €380, including flights and hotel.

Annual Events: The society also attends the Fleadh Cheoil in Wexford annually, with many drivers taking up music lessons.

The society emphasizes that no one should feel overlooked or disregarded. "We don't kick the can down the road. We don't pass the book. We're there for you," Roe stated.

Contact can be made through the magazine, via Tony Roe, or any committee member. All are welcome, and there is no charge for support.

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WHEELCHAIR WORK: THE DRIVERS DOING IT RIGHT

There is a certain kind of taxi driver who does not make a song and dance about doing the job properly. They just do it. Ramp ready. Space clear. Straps in order. Tone calm. No fuss, no sighing, no performance of inconvenience.



For passengers who travel in a wheelchair, that sort of driver is not merely “good with people”. They are the difference between a straightforward day and a logistical headache. Ireland’s accessible fleet has grown sharply in recent years, but the real standard is not just having the right vehicle. It is having drivers who understand what the service actually means.

That is why wheelchair work deserves more respect in the trade than it sometimes gets. Too often it is talked about as a niche, or as a grant-supported sideline, when in reality it is a core part of how the Irish SPSV sector is supposed to function. Since 2010, all new taxi and hackney licences in Ireland have been granted only for wheelchair-accessible vehicles, which tells you this was never meant to be a token add-on. It has been baked into policy for years.

And the numbers show that policy has had an effect. Under the Government’s Sustainable Mobility Policy action plan, the NTA had a target to increase wheelchair-accessible vehicles in the SPSV fleet from 3,250 at the end of 2021 to 4,062 by the end of 2025. It says that target was reached in September 2024, and by the end of 2024 the fleet comprised 4,213 WAVs. The same bulletin says WAVs made up 20% of the total SPSV fleet and 23% of the taxi-and-hackney fleet by year-end 2024. As of 5 March 2026, the NTA’s live vehicle statistics page listed 4,638 wheelchair-accessible taxis and 153 wheelchair-accessible hackneys.

That is the progress story. But numbers only tell part of it. A WAV on a spreadsheet is not the same as a WAV that actually answers the phone, turns up on time, knows how to assist a passenger properly and does not treat the journey like a favour. The NTA has had to remind operators of that in plain language. In its August 2025 newsletter, it said WAV licence holders have legal obligations to provide services to

wheelchair users, and must prioritise bookings for persons with disabilities, including people who wish to travel in their wheelchairs. It also said refusal to carry wheelchair users can attract a €250 fine. In other words, this is not optional good behaviour. It is part of the job.

The drivers doing it right understand something simple that regulation sometimes struggles to say in human terms: accessible taxi work is not about the vehicle alone. It is about confidence. A passenger wants to know the driver knows what they are doing. They want to know the ramp will come out without drama, that the clamps will be handled correctly, that the trip will not begin with uncertainty and end with embarrassment. That is why the training side matters. The NTA’s 2026 WAV grant guide requires the proposed driver to complete approved SPSV disability-awareness training, and the grant terms say no money is released without confirmation that the training has been completed. The NTA is also offering free practical WAV training and disability-awareness training more broadly, including hands-on instruction on lifting and clamping equipment.

That training is part of a much bigger push to make wheelchair work viable. The current WAV26 grant scheme offers up to €15,000 for a new wheelchair-accessible vehicle, with lower amounts for younger used vehicles down to €3,500 for a WAV under six years old. The same scheme requires recipients to agree to register their contact details on a public website or free smartphone booking app nominated by the NTA for priority provision of the service, and to keep journey records that can be requested by the Authority. This is not just a subsidy to buy a van. It is an attempt to build a usable service.

There is also growing evidence that drivers see a future in this part of the market. The NTA says 346 new wheelchair-accessible taxi and hackney licences were added to the fleet in 2024 without grant support, which is a striking figure

because it suggests operators were entering or expanding in the sector even without direct assistance on those vehicles. The same bulletin says the WAV grant scheme has assisted in funding 4,504 new or replacement or upgraded vehicles since it began in 2014, with 438 grants paid in 2024 alone. That points to two things at once: continued State support, and real industry buy-in.

Of course, nobody in the trade needs to be told this work can be harder. The vehicle is usually more specialised, the loading process takes care and competence, and the service carries a greater duty of professionalism. A driver who does wheelchair work properly cannot bluff their way through it. But that is exactly why the best operators in this area deserve to be seen not as reluctant box-tickers, but as some of the most skilled and useful people in the SPSV sector. The system itself recognises that accessible transport is not marginal; the NTA has repeatedly linked the growth of the WAV fleet to national accessibility policy and continues to support it with grants, training and licensing rules.

And there is a simple truth at the centre of it. For many passengers, a good WAV driver is remembered for the same reasons any great taxi driver is remembered: they arrived, they knew the job, they took the stress out of the trip, and they treated the person in the back as a passenger rather than a problem. The trade talks a lot about standards. This is one of the clearest examples of what standards actually look like on the road.

In that sense, wheelchair work is not some side branch of taxi driving in Ireland. It is one of the places where the trade most clearly proves its value. The drivers doing it right are not just serving a market. They are making daily life more possible for people who depend on the service being there and being competent when it arrives. That is not soft-hearted sentiment. It is transport doing exactly what public transport is supposed to do.

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NEW FIAT 600E WILL ELECTRIFY YOUR EMOTIONS

While the original Fiat 600 was launched in Europe in 1955 with a tiny 25bhp petrol engine, the all-new Fiat 600 shares nothing, but its name, with its iconic predecessor. **By Declan Glynn**

The stunning new Fiat 600 takes the best of the B and B-SUV worlds to offer a beautiful, joyful and pampered driving experience, marking the Italian brand's return to the highly-competitive B-segments. Available in both hybrid and fully-electric, the new Fiat 600 is an ideal car for Irish roads, and the perfect embodiment of the brand's values of celebrated Italian style and sustainability. It is the fully-electric Fiat 600 (badged 600e) that the editorial below refers to.

Latest Electrified Platform.

In 2021, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) and the French PSA Group merged to form Stellantis – one of the largest automakers in the world. As a result, the fully-electric 600e uses the latest Stellantis e-CMP2 platform, with its integrated battery design boosting rigidity in the process. Its 156hp electric motor sits transversely within the platform and it sends its power to the cars' front wheels in a composed and amenable fashion. The new 600 features a sharper and more assertive face than its Fiat 500 sibling, and it comes with a distinctive LED lighting identity. The elegant, yet dynamic, exterior look is enhanced by stylish wheels (from 16" to 18" in size), matt black wheel arches, and black trim elements around its lower edges to emphasise its robust nature. Additional exterior highlights include glossy black details, chrome accents and suitably-distinctive rear lights. The characterful exterior styling is replicated in the cabin where its smart interior design is both visually impressive and pleasingly practical for up to 5 occupants. With all rear seats in their upright position, the boot has a capacity of 360-litres, but this can be expanded to 1,256-litres when the rear seats are folded down. The last time Fiat dealerships had the opportunity to have a 500 and 600 on display together in their showroom was in the early 1970's, so the arrival of the new 600 is a really big deal for the iconic Italian brand.

'Red' and 'La Prima' trim grades.

The lithium-ion batteries in the 600e come with a 54kWh capacity (51kWh usable) that provides a range of up to 408km on a WLTP combined driving cycle, and more than 600km on a city-only driving cycle. The 600e is equipped with a 100kW fast-charger system

and it comes with a 11kW on-board charger and a Mode 3 cable for charging at home, or in public. The electric powertrain produces 156hp and 260Nm of instant torque, providing acceleration from 0-100km/h in just 9-seconds. Drivers can choose from three driving modes – Eco, Normal & Sport – which can be selected to match individual driving styles. With the 600e, buyers can choose between 'Red' and 'La Prima' trim grades, which are priced at €32,995 and €37,995 respectively (inclusive of SEAI Grant & VRT Rebate).

Level 2 Assisted Driving.

As with the 600 Hybrid, the 600e is packed with state-of-the-art safety and driver assistance features that make it ready for everyday life. It offers level 2 assisted driving, bringing all the associated benefits to every journey. Features include Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC), Stop&Go function, Electric Parking Brake, Autonomous Emergency Braking, and Drowsy Driver Detection to monitor driver concentration levels. In order to enhance comfort and connectivity for all occupants, the new 600e 'Red' is available with key standard features such as; a red-painted dashboard fascia, electric windows x 4, auto air-conditioning, dusk and rain sensors, a 4-speaker sound system, a fully customisable 10.25-inch infotainment screen with wireless Apple CarPlay & Android Auto, a 7-inch digital driver information cluster, rear parking sensors, and a Red Version Kit that comes with a variety of exclusive internal and external styling, with logos located on the front and side of the car. Upgrading to 'La Prima' trim brings with it additional key features like a handsfree tailgate, Navigation, leather seat upholstery, Ivory painted dashboard fascia, 18" diamond-cut alloy wheels, chrome styling accents, rear privacy glass, 6 speaker sound system, driver seat with 8-way power adjustment and massage function, front, rear and side parking sensors, rear view camera with dynamic gridlines, wireless charging, traffic sign recognition, and urban blind spot monitor.

Car on Review.

My review car was a Fiat 600e 'Red', which was finished in Black metallic paintwork (a €695 option) with a red-painted '600' badge on the nose of the car, and a red FIAT badge, along

with a discreet blue-coloured 'e' moniker on the tailgate door. The FIAT smartphone app offers drivers a broad range of services so that they can stay connected to their car and bring their digital world on board. While the 600e does have its own rounded instrument cowl and upper dashboard design, pretty much everything from the air vents down is shared with the Jeep Avenger, including the very useful voluminous lidded centre console storage cubby. On the road is where the new 600e really comes into its own. The electric motor is impressively quiet, and the cabin is well insulated from road, wind and tyre noise. The centre console-mounted gear selector is of the push-button variety and is super-intuitive in its operation. Brake regeneration is easy to access on the selector panel, and engaging it means that energy usually lost through braking can be sent back to the battery for an enhanced driving range. The 600e is an easy and undemanding car to drive, and its manoeuvrability along congested city streets is so easy to get used to. With the Sport drive mode selected, the accelerator pedal response is sharpened, and all the motor's power is made available for an enhanced driving experience. There is a nicely-weighted feel to the steering and the car maintains good grip through sharp bends and tight corners. The suspension in the 600e is comfort-oriented, so that all occupants can benefit from a cossetting ride quality on every journey. When it comes to the time for charging the battery in the 600e, the quickest option is to connect via a 100kW DC public fast charger that can complete a 20-80% charge in as little as 27 minutes. However, a domestic wallbox charger is the option that many owners will opt for as they can achieve a full charge as they sleep and wake up to a fully charged battery in the morning. Excellent electric efficiency guarantees low running costs, and annual road tax is just €120.

Conclusion & Price.

Having spent a week behind the wheel of my 600e 'Red' review car, I can confidently say that it is a comfortable car to sit in, it is very well equipped, it is easy to drive, and it offers all occupants good visibility throughout. Visit www.fiat.ie for further information.

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NEW ŠKODA ELROQ - VERSATILITY ELECTRIFIED

By Declan Glynn

The new Škoda Elroq is the Czech brand's first foray into the compact electric SUV market segment. As the smaller sibling to the big-selling Enyaq, the Elroq encompasses Škoda's all-new 'Modern Solid' design language, while also offering an excellent real-world driving range, cutting-edge technology, and everyday usability.

Impressively Spacious.

As is the case with every vehicle in the impressive Škoda line-up, the new Elroq is a sensible, stylish and practical car in every respect. As well as generous head and legroom for all occupants, it has a well-executed cargo area too. The 470-litres of space available behind the rear seats can be expanded to 1,580-litres when the rear seat backs are folded down. A separate storage space underneath the boot floor is ideal for storing the charging cables, but can also accommodate the likes of electronic devices in order to keep them out of the sight of prying eyes. Standard safety features include a Blind Spot Monitoring System, Crew Protect Assist, Adaptive Lane Assist (including Emergency Assist), Turn Assist, and multiple airbags, along with Front Assist, which comprises of Forward Collision Warning with Emergency Brake and Pedestrian Recognition.

Battery & Trim Options.

Škoda has kept the Elroq range relatively simple to understand, with three battery sizes available. With usable capacities of 52kWh, 59kWh, and 77kWh, model designations are referred to as Elroq 50, Elroq 60 and Elroq 85 respectively. The electric motor powered by the smaller battery produces 168bhp and 310Nm of torque, and has a range of up to 370km from a fully charged battery, while the power and range figures increase to 201bhp and 427km respectively with the mid-size battery unit. When the electric motor is paired to the 77kWh battery there is quite a substantial difference, with power and torque figures rising to 282bhp and 545Nm respectively, while the range increases to 560km. The range figures quoted were achieved under strict WLTP real-world testing procedures on a combined driving cycle. Three trim levels are available in Škoda's latest SUV – an entry-level 'Elroq', mid-spec 'Sportline'

and range-topping 'RS'. Power is sent to the rear wheels in the 'Elroq' and 'Sportline' models, with the 'RS' version coming with all-wheel drive as standard.

Impressive Charging Speed.

Charging the Elroq's batteries from 0-100% can be done via an 11kW AC wallbox in a timeframe of between 5.5 hours and 8 hours depending on the battery capacity. The majority of drivers will never let the battery get anywhere near empty before charging their car, resulting in a reduced charging time. However, at a public DC fast charging station (with a max charging capacity of 165kW), the Elroq can achieve a 10-80% charge in as little as 24 minutes (model and battery dependent). Buyers looking for an all-electric family car are becoming increasingly spoiled for choice, and the Elroq not only has to compete with rivals from within the VW Group, it is also up against tough competition from the likes of the new Kia EV3, Hyundai Kona Electric, Volvo EX30, Ford Explorer, and the Renault Scenic E-Tech.

Car on Review.

My review car was a Škoda Elroq 85 in entry-level trim, and it looked amazing in its Timiano Green solid paintwork (€777), and optional 21-inch 'Supernova' anthracite alloy wheels (€744), along with optional 'Lodge' black & grey, fabric & leatherette upholstery (€690). The spacious interior of the Elroq is welcoming, comfortable and tastefully finished in quality materials throughout. The standard-fit 13-inch colour touchscreen infotainment system comes with integrated navigation, Smartlink (Apple CarPlay & Android Auto connectivity), Bluetooth, voice control, DAB radio with 8 speakers, and two USB-C ports, along with a 3 year subscription to Infotainment Online and Remote Access. The Elroq feels refined and self-assured on the road, and it proves itself to be undeniably dynamic to drive. A well-judged suspension set-up ensures that road imperfections are soaked up with ease, while the precise and well-weighted steering works well around town. Motorway driving is made easy by the provision of plenty of mid-range punch from the electric motor, allowing for the safe and predictable overtaking of slower moving traffic. The Elroq is comfortable,

refined and responsive to drive, and being rear-wheel drive, there is none of the torque steer that can be evident in some front-wheel drive EVs. The Elroq 85 can sprint from 0-100km/h in just 6.6-seconds, and can reach a top speed of 180km/h, so it is never left wanting in terms of outright performance. The Elroq's brake pedal offers progressive modulation without the artificial feel that plagues some EVs. Drivers can tailor the car's deceleration characteristics through three levels of brake regeneration, with the strongest setting providing significant energy recuperation in the process. The electric powertrain operates in near-silence, and overall refinement is excellent, with minimal wind and road noise – even at motorway speeds.

Conclusion & Pricing.

The new Škoda Elroq is, in my opinion, one of the most well-rounded and sensible propositions in the compact electric SUV market segment. The Elroq rewards drivers with a dynamic driving experience, impressive ride quality, excellent energy efficiency, and terrific practicality. The Elroq in two-wheel drive format has a 1,000kg braked-trailer towing capacity, with this increasing to 1,200kg for the all-wheel drive RS model. Pricing for the new Škoda Elroq starts at just €36,545 (Elroq 50), with my test car specification priced from €42,315. Quoted prices include dealer-related delivery charges, VRT relief and an SEAI grant for private buyers. Visit www.skoda.ie for further information.



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