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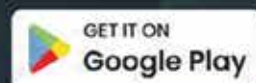


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EDITOR LETTER

This month, we tackle the big questions head-on. Tony Roe, Chairman of the National Transport Assembly Committee, joins us with two hard-hitting features exposing the saturation of taxis on Dublin's roads and the astronomical prices in Temple Bar that are driving trade – and drivers – away. He also renews his urgent call for the removal of drivers' names from taxis, a simple safety reform that could save lives.

We also look at the issues shaping your daily life. From the beeping symphony of modern cars to the rising cost of insurance, from the rural transport crisis to the great imported car hunt – we are not shying away from the struggles you face every day.

But this issue is also about solutions. We explore how Artificial Intelligence could become the taxi driver's unpaid office assistant, handling paperwork, translating for tourists and even helping you plan your shift. We chart the changing taxi, from diesel workhorses to hybrids and EVs. And we highlight the Martina Roe Law Counselling Society, where music, trips and the famous "taxi dance" are proving that the best therapy is sticking together.

Don't miss our 20-question taxi quiz on page 36 – test your knowledge and win a prize!

Read every article. Do your own research. And remember, collectively, we can walk together to find a resolution to these problems.

Stay safe. Stay informed.

The Tacsai Magazine Team

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TACSAÍ MAGAZINE

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Saturation Crisis – Dublin’s Taxi Overcrowding Problem

Tony Roe, Chairman of the National Transport Assembly Committee (NTAC), speaks without prejudice on the chronic situation concerning taxis at the moment, where we have a saturation of taxis on Dublin’s roads, leading to congestion, poor quality control, and contamination of the trade.

Recent research has shown that London has 9.12 million people and just 14,470 black taxis. New York has a population of 8.45 million, with a taxi fleet of just 13,587. Even when you consider the wider metropolitan area of New York – over 19 million people – the figures confirm that Dublin has a saturation of taxis.

The official figures, which we take to be quite spurious, state that Dublin has 17,663 taxis on its roads. On top of that, there are 12,600 wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs). This is a conservative estimate.

Profit-driven publicans in Temple Bar are mourning that trade is falling off due to the fact that they can’t get taxis. This is absolutely lunacy.

We can remember back in the day when there were protests outside pubs when the price of a pint went up by two pence – the streets were brought to a standstill. Now we hear these same people blaming taxis for their falling trade. We’ve done our own research and found that the reason for the drop in revenue is the astronomical price of drink in Temple Bar.

We looked at regions where taxi drivers are doing very well – late-night trade on the weekend – and Temple Bar is definitely not one of them. We’ve had reports that a pint of Guinness in Temple Bar can cost over €12. A bottle of Corona with a slice of lemon can cost €8.20, which is virtually a half-pint (320ml). Two half-pints together is €16.40 for a pint.

Now let’s look at the comparisons. We

walked a couple of hundred yards from Temple Bar all Pints cost €5:

The Liberty Bell : sensational pint of Guinness with music – €5

Tom Kennedy’s : fantastic pint of Guinness, great quality, music, friendly staff – €5

The Lark: music, great atmosphere – €5

The Malt: great bar staff, darts, music, karaoke, poker – €5

Tenners: no music but karaoke, dancing – €5

I hope the people in Temple Bar who are charging excessive prices wise up. If your pub is losing clientele, it’s due to economics. Why would you pay €12 for a drink in Temple Bar when you can walk a couple of hundred yards up the road and have entertainment for two for the price of one?

Assaults on Taxi Drivers – The Temple Bar Blackspot

These excessive prices in Temple Bar aren’t just bad for business – they’re creating a blackspot for assaults on taxi drivers.

Drivers are reporting that Temple Bar is one of the worst areas for assaults. These drivers are usually young men working late at night, supporting families, paying mortgages, and they’re being abused and assaulted.

We are calling for more Garda presence in the area and for the government to introduce police control for drinking in the Temple Bar area. This cannot be allowed to go on. This is like Groundhog Day – we see the same things happening going back in time.

Safety First – Removing Names from Taxis

With the influx of new entrants into the industry, quite a lot of them have been in contact with us about safety issues.

When you get into a taxi, the first thing you see is a man’s name. This can jeopardise safety in the age of scams and identity theft. A passenger can say, “We know your name. Your name is John Smith. We know where you live.”

In the past, we have featured a taxi driver in True Taxi Magazine who went through this. He had his home attacked. The culprits weren’t caught. And it was said to the taxi driver, “We know your name and we know how to get you.”

The Gardaí have been involved. We’ve done a story on this. Now we are calling for safety to be paramount.

What we want to see:

Remove the name from display in the taxi. Make the driver’s unique individual number bigger and more prominent

Keep the driver’s identity private while still allowing passengers to identify the vehicle and driver

You don’t see a Garda going around with his name on display. You don’t see a bus driver with his name on display. Common sense should tell you that displaying names is a safety risk.

We call on the government to issue the necessary reforms to safeguard public service vehicle operators. We raised this with the last two Ministers for Transport and nothing was done. We will keep raising it.



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Every week, a percentage of your work leaves the trade.

Drivers earning on the apps are typically taking in €1,200 to €1,400 a week. While commission is presented at 15%, the reality across different forms of work often brings that figure towards 20%, and in many cases as high as 25%.

That is €200 to €300, and often more, removed from weekly earnings. This is how the current system operates.

Tap a Taxi replaces that model with a fixed €120 monthly contribution, allowing drivers to retain their fares.

A 300 share ensures drivers are not just users of a system, but owners of it.

That contribution remains within the co-operative, supporting operations and building long-term assets for drivers. It is retained within the trade rather than extracted from it.

The co-operative is structured on a not-for-profit basis, with those involved focused on establishing a viable and sustainable platform for drivers, not personal gain.

Customers are already recognising the difference. Demand is present.

The opportunity is clear.

Drivers now decide whether to take part.

Further details can be found at <https://aitra.ie/>



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THE TRUE COST OF OWNING A CAR IN IRELAND

Buying a car is the easy part

You walk into the garage, admire the paintwork, convince yourself that the monthly repayment looks perfectly manageable and drive away delighted. Then the car begins sending

invoices.

Insurance.

Motor tax.

Fuel.

Servicing.

Tyres.

NCT.

Parking.

Tolls.

And eventually the mechanic says:

“While we have it up on the lift, we noticed something else...”

This is rarely followed by good news.

The true cost of a car is therefore not the figure written on the windscreen.

It is what the car costs you every year thereafter.

Fuel: the obvious one

For petrol and diesel drivers, fuel remains the expense they notice most because they physically watch the numbers spinning upwards at the pump.

In July 2026, AA Ireland put the average price of petrol at about €1.75 a litre and diesel at €1.73.

Take a fairly ordinary petrol family car averaging 6 litres per 100km and travelling 18,000km a year.

At current petrol prices, that's roughly €1,890 a year in fuel.

A reasonably economical hybrid averaging 4.5 litres per 100km would use roughly €1,420 worth.

Over five years, the difference is more than €2,300.

This explains the extraordinary lengths motorists will go to save three cent a litre at a petrol station

ten kilometres away.

We may use €2 worth of petrol getting there, but psychologically we have beaten the system.

Electricity changes the calculation

An EV charged mainly at home can be dramatically cheaper to fuel.

SEAI's current comparison calculator uses a night-rate electricity price of about 14.4 cent per kWh and assumes annual driving of 18,000km for a typical private motorist.

Using an illustrative EV consumption figure of 17kWh per 100km, those 18,000 kilometres would cost only about €440 a year if all charging were done at that night rate.

Compare that with almost €1,900 for our petrol example and you can see why home charging is one of the strongest arguments for electric cars.

There is an important phrase there, however:

Home charging.

Regular use of public rapid chargers increases the cost considerably. SEAI itself makes clear that its lowest running-cost assumptions are based on private night-rate charging.

An EV is therefore particularly attractive if you have a driveway.

If you live in an apartment and depend on public chargers, the sums need another look.

But first, buy the charger

Home charging isn't entirely free to set up.

SEAI estimates that a typical charger and installation costs around €1,200 to €1,600, although a grant of up to €300 is currently available.

After that initial expense, however, cheap overnight charging can make a substantial difference over several years.

This is one of the peculiarities of buying an EV.

You buy the car.

Then you buy its own miniature petrol station and bolt it to the wall of your house.

Insurance

Then comes the annual envelope everyone opens cautiously.

The latest Central Bank figures available in 2026 showed the average private motor insurance premium at €655 during the first half of 2025, up 4% on the previous year.

Of course, hardly anyone appears to pay the average.

Your premium depends on age, driving history, location, vehicle, occupation and enough other factors to make comparing insurance quotes one of life's less rewarding annual rituals.

You enter exactly the same information into five websites.

One insurer wants €540.

Another wants €920.

A third appears to believe you are planning to enter the car in the Monte Carlo Rally.

The lesson remains the same: shop around.

Servicing and repairs

This is where older cars begin to fight back.

You may have finished the repayments years ago and proudly announce:

“The car costs me nothing.”

The car hears this.

Within weeks it requires tyres, brake pads and something deep inside the engine whose name you have never heard before but which apparently costs €700.

SEAI's own cost calculator currently assumes annual maintenance of around €700 for a conventional petrol or diesel passenger car, compared with about €350 for an EV.

Those are estimates rather than guarantees, but

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EVs do have fewer moving mechanical parts. There is no engine oil, exhaust system, clutch or traditional gearbox to maintain.

They still have tyres, brakes, suspension and plenty of expensive electronics, of course.

Technology has not yet invented a car that cannot produce an alarming warning light.

Then there's motor tax

Motor tax varies considerably depending on the age and emissions of the vehicle.

Battery-electric cars currently sit in the lowest motor-tax category at €120 a year.

For petrol, diesel and hybrid vehicles, the annual bill depends on emissions or, for older vehicles, engine capacity.

It may not be the largest cost of car ownership, but over five years even a few hundred euro annually becomes significant.

Cars have a wonderful ability to make €200 seem insignificant simply because another part of the car costs €20,000.

The cost we conveniently forget

Then comes depreciation.

This is the expense nobody particularly enjoys calculating because no money visibly leaves your bank account.

You buy a car for €35,000.

Several years later you sell it for €18,000.

Somewhere in between, €17,000 has quietly disappeared.

Nothing broke.

Nobody stole it.

The car simply became older.

Depreciation can completely change the apparent economics of choosing between petrol, hybrid and electric.

A car with wonderfully low running costs isn't necessarily cheap to own if it loses value rapidly.

Likewise, an older car with higher fuel consumption may still make financial sense if it has already suffered most of its depreciation.

This is why changing cars solely to save money on fuel needs careful arithmetic.

Spending €40,000 to save €1,000 a year requires a certain amount of optimism.

And then come the small expenses

Parking doesn't feel expensive when it is €2 here and €4 there.

Tolls don't seem enormous individually.

Neither does a €15 car wash.

A tyre repair.

Windscreen wipers.

A bulb.

NCT fees.

Roadside assistance.

A set of mats that you absolutely did not need but the salesman somehow included in the conversation.

Individually, none will ruin you.

Collectively, they explain why the annual cost of motoring is considerably higher than most people imagine.

Petrol, hybrid or electric?

There is no universal winner.

A petrol car may suit someone doing modest mileage who wants a lower purchase price.

A hybrid can make excellent sense for mixed driving without requiring charging.

An EV becomes particularly attractive for motorists doing reasonable mileage who can charge cheaply at home. SEAI continues to argue that EVs offer lower fuel, servicing and taxation costs over the longer term.

But the right comparison isn't:

"Which car uses the least fuel?"

It is:

"What will this car cost me to own for the next five years?"

Include the purchase price.

Finance.

Depreciation.

Insurance.

Tax.

Fuel or electricity.

Servicing.

Tyres.

And everything else.

Only then do you know which car is actually cheaper.

Unfortunately, by the time you have completed the calculation, the sensible conclusion may be rather disappointing.

The cheapest car is often the one already sitting outside your house.

Provided, of course, the mechanic doesn't say:

"While we have it up on the lift..."



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SKYWELL BE11

A New Name in the EV Game.

Established in 2010 by entrepreneur Stephen Wong, and part of the multi-billion dollar Skyworth Group, Skywell are one of China's newest automotive brands with global ambitions. With 10 locations across China, Los Angeles, and Germany, Skywell now employs more than 30,000 people across all departments of automobile development and production. Whilst relatively new to passenger car production, Skyworth already exports a broad range of vehicles globally, including LCVs, minibuses, HGVs, specialist driven equipment, coaches and buses. Skywell recently embarked on its introduction to Western Europe, including Ireland.

Decades of Innovation.

The exclusive main dealer and official distributor for Skywell in Ireland is Carland Dublin, and the very first model on sale is the all-new, fully electric Skywell BE11. However, we will see a growing passenger car range from Skywell in the near future, including an all-new hatchback, SUV and saloon, plus the introduction of a new fully-electric light commercial vehicle (LCV). Backed by the Skyworth Group, the brand benefits from decades of innovation across consumer electronics, software, energy infrastructure and commercial vehicles. This multi-sector ecosystem enables Skywell to deliver electric vehicles that are not only well-built, but also energy efficient, and future-ready.

BYD-Sourced Electric Motor.

The new Skywell BE11 is a mid-size electric SUV with dimensions that place it in direct competition to the likes of the Skoda Enyaq, Renault Scenic, Nissan Ariya, MG S6, Peugeot e-3008, Opel Grandland Electric,

and many more besides. The BE11 is powered by a 201bhp BYD-sourced electric motor that produces 320Nm of torque in a front-wheel drive configuration, and it can complete a 0-100km/h sprint in 9.6-seconds. There are two BE11 variants to choose from: the Standard Range model, which features a 72kWh NMC battery with an official range of up to 400km, and the Long Range 86kWh version with 489km of range on a combined driving cycle. With a maximum DC charging speed of just 80kW, the BE11 does fall well short of what is expected for a mid-size SUV, with a 20-80% charge possible in approximately 36 minutes. Alternatively, charging the car from 0-100% via a 7.2kW domestic wallbox will take around 10 to 12 hours to complete.

Generously Equipped.

The BE11 is available in one generously-equipped trim level, with key standard features such as 19" diamond-cut alloy wheels, a full-length opening panoramic roof, 'razor' LED headlights, front & rear parking sensors, 360-degree panoramic parking camera, rear spoiler, heated auto-fold door mirrors, rear privacy glass, heated & ventilated seats, power tailgate, premium suede/faux leather upholstery with 6-way electric front seats, 12.8" infotainment touchscreen, 8-speaker Metz sound system with an underfloor subwoofer, climate control, Bluetooth, DAB radio, wireless smartphone connectivity, and ambient lighting with 128 colour options. The BE11 is enhanced with Skywell's new suite of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), bringing the total number of driver assistance and safety features to more than 30. Cocooned within the galvanised high-strength steel body are multiple airbags which provide reassurance.

Car on Review.

My Skywell BE11 Long Range review car looked elegant in its Midnight Blue metallic paint (a no-cost option) with contrasting bi-tone alloy wheels. The overall exterior design is simple, yet effective, with the 'Razor' LED headlights and chrome bumper accents providing the car with a distinctive look, while the rear of the BE11 features a full-width LED light bar with illuminated brand lettering. The 201bhp front-mounted electric motor ensures that the BE11 isn't short of power when pulling away from a standstill, and has more than enough punch for effective overtaking or when joining fast-moving traffic on a motorway. Uniquely, the strength of the BE11's regenerative braking can be adjusted on a sliding scale to anywhere between 0% and 100%, making it easy to find just the right amount of braking force required to suit individual driving styles. The brake pedal feel and steering response come with the choice of two settings: Comfort and Sport. The brakes do feel quite spongy in Comfort mode,





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everyone. The airy cabin features soft-touch materials on the top of the dashboard, and the seats, centre console and multi-function steering wheel feature contrasting double-stitching that visually enhances the overall look. The standard 467-litre boot capacity expands to a cavernous 1,608-litres when the rear seats are folded down, and there are numerous storage spaces dotted around the cabin – including a two-tier centre console, two cupholders and large door pockets.

Conclusion, Price & Warranty.

The all-new Skywell BE11 is a value-focused electric SUV, and the comprehensive list of standard equipment certainly reflects that. It

is one of the largest cars in its class, and that results in impressive cabin and boot space within. The previous-generation Skywell BE11 was not available to buy in Ireland, but it did receive criticism due to its poor driving dynamics, and below-par infotainment system, but the new BE11 is vastly improved. With prices starting from €39,999 (inclusive of an SEAI Grant & VRT Rebate), buyers do get a lot of car for the money. The new Skywell BE11 comes with a comprehensive 7-year/160,000km vehicle warranty and an 8-year/250,000km warranty for the battery – providing peace of mind for the road ahead. Visit www.carland.ie for further information.

but select Sport mode and they do feel better suited to normal driving, while the light steering is a bonus when driving in urban settings. The suspension setup is geared towards comfort, and this is what most drivers will want from an SUV of this size, with rutted road surfaces and potholes largely going unnoticed. Drivers can select 'Worm' mode, which allows the car to creep forward without the driver touching the accelerator, and this is of great help in heavy traffic. Thanks to a 2.8-metre wheelbase, there is no shortage of space within the cabin for up to 5 adult occupants, with generous leg and headroom available for



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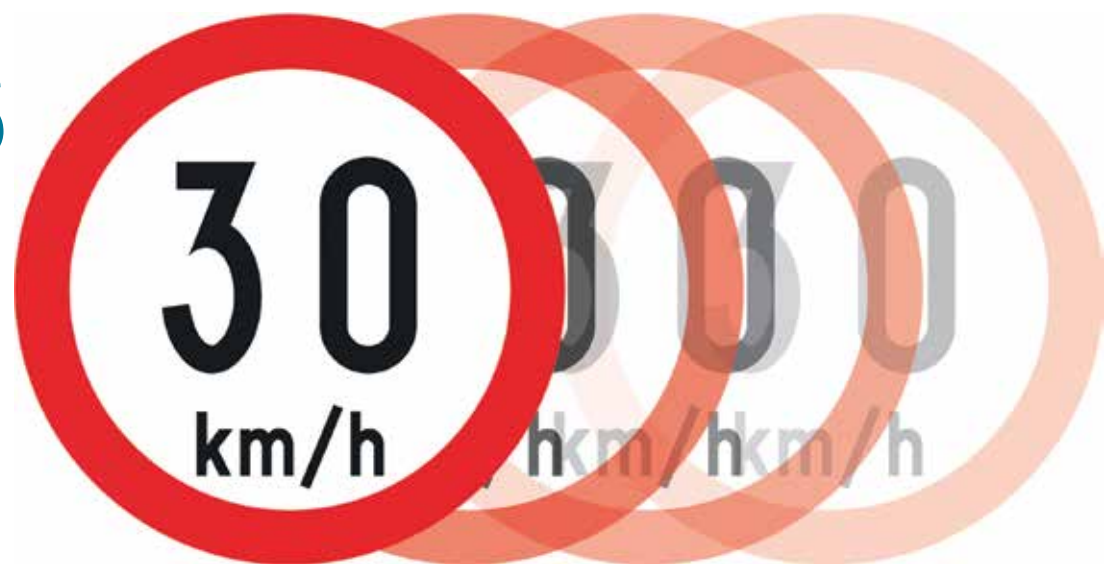
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IRELAND IS SLOWING DOWN



Not financially. Not politically. On the roads.

Following the reduction of many rural local-road limits from 80km/h to 60km/h in 2025, the next phase is bringing more 30km/h limits into towns, villages, housing estates and urban centres. The rollout is now under way around the country.

Thirty kilometres an hour.

It sounds less like driving and more like moving briskly through a supermarket car park.

At 30km/h, there is time to admire shop windows, recognise pedestrians and possibly exchange Christmas cards with the cyclist beside you.

Yet there is a serious reason behind it.

Why 30km/h?

The basic argument is difficult to dispute.

The slower a vehicle is travelling when it hits somebody, the greater that person's chances of survival.

Research highlighted by the RSA says that at 50km/h around three out of ten pedestrians struck by a vehicle will be killed. At 30km/h, around nine out of ten survive.

That is the statistic that matters.

Nobody seriously wants cars travelling quickly past children leaving school, older people crossing a town centre or pedestrians stepping from between parked vehicles.

The argument isn't really about whether 30km/h is safer.

It clearly is.

The argument is whether drivers will actually stick to it.

Thirty feels very slow

Anyone who has tried driving steadily at 30km/h will know something strange happens.

You feel as though you have accidentally selected first gear.

Your foot keeps wanting to press slightly harder on the accelerator.

The car behind moves closer.

You look at the speedometer.

Twenty-eight.

Surely we can't be moving this slowly.

You look again.

Thirty-two.

Suddenly you are a criminal.

This may explain why compliance with existing 30km/h zones has not exactly been magnificent.

An RSA speed survey published in 2025 found that 54% of drivers observed on 30km/h roads were exceeding the limit.

So perhaps the biggest challenge won't be putting up the signs.

It will be persuading us to believe them.

Will journeys take forever?

This is where motorists become nervous.

If every town becomes 30km/h, will a simple trip to the shops require sandwiches and an overnight bag?

Probably not.

The RSA argues that lower urban speeds can have only a limited effect on overall journey times because urban driving already involves traffic lights, junctions, parked cars and congestion. It also says lower speeds can make traffic movement smoother.

And that makes sense.

Very few people genuinely travel through an Irish town centre at a continuous 50km/h.

You accelerate.

Brake.

Stop at lights.

Accelerate again.

Stop behind someone turning right.

Wait while somebody reverses into a parking space using a seventeen-point manoeuvre.

Then catch up with the same car you were behind two minutes earlier.

The average speed was never particularly impressive.

But one size doesn't fit every road

The danger is that motorists may lose respect for lower limits if they appear in places where they make little sense.

Thirty kilometres an hour through a busy shopping street or housing estate feels reasonable.

Thirty on a broad, open road with good visibility may feel unnecessarily restrictive.

The Government's approach allows local authorities to decide where lower limits are appropriate rather than simply treating every road in every town identically.

That distinction matters.

Speed limits work best when the road itself makes the limit feel logical.

A narrow town street full of pedestrians practically

tells you to slow down.

A wide, empty carriageway tells your right foot something quite different.

Then there are modern cars

There is another problem.

Today's cars don't like speeding either.

Many newer cars recognise speed-limit signs and immediately begin beeping if you stray above them.

In a 30km/h zone this can create an interesting relationship between driver and vehicle.

Beep.

"Yes, I know."

Beep.

"I'm doing thirty-one."

Beep.

"There is nobody here."

Beep.

Eventually you start arguing with a dashboard.

The technology is probably improving road safety, but it has also created the first generation of cars capable of sounding disappointed in their owners.

Perhaps we'll simply get used to it

Most major changes in driving produce outrage initially.

Seat belts.

Penalty points.

Smoking bans in cars with children.

Lower drink-driving limits.

Speed cameras.

Drivers complain, adapt and eventually forget that things were ever different.

Thirty kilometres an hour may be the same.

The first few months will involve endless checking of speedometers, confused motorists and someone in every town insisting that the new limit is "absolutely ridiculous".

Then gradually it may become normal.

And if slower traffic means fewer pedestrians and cyclists being killed or seriously injured, that seems a reasonable trade.

Even if travelling at 30km/h occasionally feels as though you could open the door and jog alongside the car.

Just don't.

There's probably a law against that too.

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CASH IS NO LONGER KING

Taking payment in a taxi used to be simple.



The meter said €18.40. The passenger handed over €20. The driver found €1.60 in change, usually after searching every compartment in the car, and everyone went home happy.

Those days are disappearing.

Since September 2022, Irish taxis have been required to accept both cash and card payments, and drivers cannot add a surcharge for paying by card.

For passengers, it is wonderfully straightforward.

"Can I tap?"

For drivers, that little tap comes with considerably more machinery behind it.

There is the payment terminal, transaction charges, mobile coverage and the occasional machine that decides, at precisely the wrong moment, that it has lost contact with civilisation.

This usually happens after a €70 journey to somewhere remote.

The passenger taps.

Nothing.

Taps again.

Nothing.

Then both passenger and driver stare at the card machine as though sufficient concentration might persuade it to reconnect.

Cash, by comparison, has excellent network coverage.

Nobody carries cash anymore

The problem for drivers is that many passengers now assume they will never need actual money again.

Their phone pays for coffee, lunch, groceries and the taxi home. Some younger passengers probably regard a €20 note as something their grandparents used.

Card payments are undeniably convenient. There is less need to carry change, less cash in the vehicle and no argument over whether

the passenger really did hand over a €20 or a €50.

But convenience isn't free.

Every card payment has to pass through a payment provider, and depending on the provider and package, the driver may face transaction charges.

Individually, these amounts seem tiny.

Across hundreds or thousands of fares, they aren't.

And the driver cannot simply add 50 cents to cover the cost. The NTA rules specifically prohibit a surcharge for paying by card.

So, the card company gets its slice.

The passenger gets the convenience.

The driver gets the receipt.

The disappearing tip

Card payments may also have changed another small part of taxi life: the tip.

With cash, a €17.60 fare frequently resulted in:

"Keep the twenty."

The economics were simple. The passenger didn't want €2.40 rattling around in a pocket.

With a card, €17.60 can be precisely €17.60.

Technology has eliminated loose change with ruthless efficiency.

Of course, many payment terminals now offer tipping options, but there is something slightly awkward about handing a machine to a passenger while it displays:

TIP? 10% — 15% — 20% — NO TIP

Both parties suddenly become fascinated by something outside the window.

Then there is the failed payment

Every driver has encountered some variation of it.

The card doesn't work.

The phone battery is dead.

Apple Pay has mysteriously forgotten the card.

The bank has declined the transaction.

And inevitably the passenger announces:

"I don't have any cash."

This information would have been considerably more useful twenty minutes earlier.

Officially, passengers are required to pay the metered or agreed fare.

In practice, the driver now finds himself providing unpaid financial-services consultancy in a lay-by.

"Have you another card?"

"Could someone Revolut you?"

"Is there an ATM nearby?"

"Do you have a relative who still uses money?"

Cash isn't dead yet

Despite all the predictions, cash remains part of the taxi business.

Indeed, taxis must still accept it as well as cards.

And plenty of drivers still like it.

Cash works when the mobile network doesn't. It doesn't require charging overnight. It doesn't suddenly announce that a software update is required.

Most importantly, when somebody hands you €20, you know you have €20.

No spinning circle.

No "processing".

No "transaction declined".

Just money.

But there is little doubt where the industry is heading. Contactless payment has become normal, and passengers increasingly expect paying for a taxi to be as simple as buying a coffee.

That is probably progress.

Although somewhere there must still be an old-school taxi driver smiling at a wallet full of notes and thinking:

"Cash never told me to try again."



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HAS IRELAND FINALLY FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THE ELECTRIC CAR?



For years, the electric car conversation in Ireland followed a fairly predictable pattern.

Someone would mention buying one. Immediately somebody else would ask: “But what if you want to drive to Donegal?”

Apparently Donegal represented the outer limits of civilisation, beyond which neither electricity nor charging points existed.

Then came the other questions.

How long does the battery last?

What happens if you run out?

How much does a new battery cost?

Can you drive it in the rain?

That last one may not have been widely asked, but given the Irish relationship with electricity and water, someone has certainly wondered.

Yet something has changed.

Electric cars are suddenly selling in serious numbers.

The numbers have taken off

July 2026 was the biggest month ever for new battery-electric car sales in Ireland.

A total of 9,682 new EVs were registered during the month, almost double July 2025. By the end of July, 29,840 new electric cars had been registered during 2026, up 61% on the same period last year.

For the first time, battery-electric cars had also become the largest individual section of the new-car market, with just over 26% market share.

That's no longer a handful of enthusiastic early adopters silently congratulating themselves at charging stations.

Something more significant is happening.

SO WHAT CHANGED?

Probably several things at once.

The first is choice.

Not so long ago, buying an electric car meant choosing from a relatively small selection, often at fairly ambitious prices.

Now practically every major manufacturer has electric models, ranging from modest family cars to enormous SUVs capable of making their petrol equivalents look environmentally responsible.

Volkswagen, Kia, Hyundai, Skoda and Tesla are currently among Ireland's leading EV brands, while the Volkswagen ID.4 is the country's best-selling new electric model so far this year.

Competition matters.

The more manufacturers fight for customers, the

better the cars—and eventually the prices—have to become.

RANGE ANXIETY IS LOSING ITS GRIP

Then there is the great fear of every prospective EV owner: range.

People who happily drove petrol cars for years with the warning light glowing for 40 kilometres suddenly became extremely concerned about running out of electricity.

With petrol, we apparently trusted ourselves to find a filling station.

With electricity, we imagined being stranded on a mountain road at midnight with 1% battery while our family silently reconsidered our suitability to make major financial decisions.

Modern EV ranges have made that fear less convincing for many motorists.

If your normal day involves 30 or 40 kilometres of driving and the car can comfortably cover several hundred kilometres between charges, range becomes much less interesting.

Especially if you can charge at home.

You arrive in the evening, plug the car in and the following morning it is ready to go.

It is essentially a very large mobile phone, although considerably more expensive when you drop it.

GOVERNMENT MONEY HELPS

There is also the small matter of incentives.

Private buyers can currently receive a grant of up to €3,500 towards an eligible new battery-electric car, along with VRT relief of up to €5,000 on qualifying vehicles.

The Government also introduced a €10 million ICE2EV initiative in 2026, including a pilot scrappage scheme designed to encourage motorists to replace older petrol and diesel cars with electric models. SIMI believes those incentives contributed significantly to the surge in EV sales.

It turns out motorists can develop environmental enthusiasm remarkably quickly when accompanied by several thousand euro.

Rural Ireland is joining in

Perhaps the most interesting change is that EV growth isn't confined to Dublin.

SIMI says registrations have increased in every county. Donegal, for example, recorded 475 new electric cars in the first seven months of 2026 compared with 285 during the equivalent period

last year—a rise of nearly 67%.

That matters.

The electric car argument has always been easiest in suburban Dublin: driveway, home charger, predictable commute and plenty of nearby charging options.

The real test was whether someone living outside Letterkenny, Castlebar or Tralee would buy one.

Increasingly, they are.

BUT WE'RE NOT COMPLETELY CONVERTED

There are still perfectly reasonable reasons for hesitating.

If you can't charge at home, the economics and convenience can look very different.

Apartment dwellers remain particularly dependent on public infrastructure.

People regularly making very long journeys may still prefer petrol, diesel or hybrid.

Used EV values and long-term battery condition also concern buyers, while public charging can still produce the occasional unwanted adventure.

Driving into a service area to discover one charger occupied and another displaying an error message does little for your commitment to the green revolution.

Ireland's charging network therefore has to expand along with EV ownership. The Government says more than €120 million was allocated in 2026 to support the EV transition and charging infrastructure, acknowledging that charging availability needs to keep pace with rising demand.

PETROL ISN'T DEAD YET

It would therefore be premature to announce the death of the petrol pump.

Hybrid cars remain extremely popular, while petrol and diesel still account for a substantial part of the market.

But the argument has changed.

A few years ago, somebody buying an EV was likely to be asked why.

Increasingly, somebody buying a new petrol or diesel car may find themselves being asked the same question.

Perhaps that is the real turning point.

Ireland hasn't completely fallen in love with the electric car.

But we're certainly dating seriously.

And apparently we're now prepared to take it to Donegal.

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WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXIS

Opportunity or Expensive Commitment?



Ask anyone who uses a wheelchair about taxis, and you may hear a familiar complaint. Finding a taxi is one thing. Finding one you can actually get into is another.

Ireland has been trying to increase the number of wheelchair-accessible taxis and hackneys for years, and the financial incentives are significant. Under the 2026 Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Grant Scheme, support ranged up to €15,000 for a new wheelchair-accessible vehicle, with lower grants available for vehicles up to six years old.

That sounds attractive.

Unfortunately, the vehicle dealer doesn't stop counting when the grant does.

A more expensive taxi

Wheelchair-accessible vehicles tend to be bigger and more specialised than the average saloon or crossover.

There are ramps, restraints and accessibility equipment to consider, along with the normal taxi expenses of insurance, tyres, servicing, depreciation and fuel or electricity.

A €15,000 grant can therefore make the numbers considerably more attractive, but it doesn't necessarily make a wheelchair-accessible taxi cheap.

Drivers considering electric have had even greater potential support. The 2026 electric SPSV scheme provided particularly generous assistance for electric wheelchair-accessible vehicles. Demand was so strong, however, that the scheme became fully subscribed almost immediately and the NTA says there are currently no plans to reopen it during 2026.

Clearly, taxi drivers know a good grant when they see one.

Is there enough work?

This is probably the more important question. A wheelchair-accessible taxi can carry ordinary passengers just like any other suitable taxi, so the driver isn't sitting around waiting exclusively for wheelchair users.

But holding a WAV licence brings additional responsibilities.

Wheelchair-accessible taxis and hackneys must give priority to bookings from passengers with disabilities.

Drivers receiving the 2026 WAV grant must also complete approved disability-awareness training, maintain appropriate insurance and keep records of wheelchair-accessible journeys that can be requested by the NTA.

So this is not simply a matter of collecting the grant, buying a bigger vehicle and carrying on exactly as before.

You are providing a specialist service.

And it is a service that matters

For most passengers, an unavailable taxi is irritating.

For somebody using a wheelchair, it can mean missing a hospital appointment, social event or family occasion.

There may be ten taxis nearby, but if none can carry the passenger, there are effectively no taxis at all.

That gives wheelchair-accessible drivers something valuable: a market in which there is genuine demand for the service they provide.

Hotels, hospitals, nursing homes, businesses and families may all want the number of a reliable accessible taxi operator.

And reliability matters.

If you become the driver who answers the phone, turns up when promised and knows how to assist passengers properly, repeat business can follow.

In the taxi trade, having customers who

specifically ask for you is rarely a bad thing.

The other side of the argument

There are practical drawbacks.

Loading and securing a wheelchair takes longer than somebody simply opening the back door and getting in.

The larger vehicle may cost more to run.

Specialist equipment has to be maintained.

And depending on where you operate, demand for wheelchair journeys may be uneven.

A driver working around a large town or city, hospital, airport or healthcare facility may see a very different level of demand from someone working in a sparsely populated area.

The decision therefore needs to be a business one, not simply a reaction to the headline grant figure.

How much will the vehicle actually cost?

What will the repayments be?

What will it cost to run?

And, most importantly, is there unmet demand in your area?

Opportunity or obligation?

Probably a bit of both.

A wheelchair-accessible taxi is more expensive and comes with additional responsibilities.

But the grants reduce the initial cost significantly, the vehicle can still perform ordinary taxi work, and accessible transport remains an essential service.

For the right driver in the right location, it could be a very sensible business decision.

And there is another advantage.

In a trade where passengers frequently tell you they have been waiting ages for a taxi, it must be rather satisfying to arrive and discover that, for once, you are exactly the taxi they were waiting for.



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THE GREAT USED-CAR IMPORT COMEBACK

For years, importing a used car into Ireland was almost a national pastime.

You searched the British websites, found a car with twice the specification of the Irish version, flew over with a small bag and returned on the ferry feeling like an international motor trader. Then Brexit arrived. Suddenly there was VAT, customs duty, VRT, NOx charges and enough paperwork to make that bargain BMW considerably less of a bargain. Imports fell.

But now they are back. And in a big way. 55,000 and counting

In the first seven months of 2026, 55,724 used cars were imported into Ireland, up 37% on the same period last year. July alone saw 8,616 imported used cars registered, 27% more than July 2025. This isn't a one-month curiosity either. Imported used-car registrations were already up 39% by the end of June. Clearly, Irish motorists have rediscovered their enthusiasm for somebody else's car.

Why?

The obvious answer is price and choice. Ireland is a relatively small car market. Look outside it and suddenly there are thousands more vehicles, specifications and combinations available. That particular model with leather seats, automatic transmission, upgraded sound system and every optional extra? Somebody somewhere bought it new, absorbed the painful depreciation, and is now ready to sell it to you. This is one of the great attractions of the used-car market – let the first owner pay for the extras.

But Britain isn't as simple as it used to be

Before Brexit, buying a used car in Britain could be remarkably straightforward. Today, a car imported directly from Great Britain may be liable for 23% import VAT, and Customs Duty may also apply. VRT and, where relevant, the NOx levy then have to be considered as well. This creates the most important rule of importing a car: never fall in love with the advertised price. A £15,000 car is not necessarily a £15,000 car by the time it reaches an Irish registration plate. The correct calculation is the price of the car sitting outside your house, Irish

registered and fully taxed. Everything before that is merely temptation.

Northern Ireland is different

Northern Ireland can be more attractive, but buyers need to understand the rules. A qualifying used vehicle purchased in Northern Ireland can generally be registered here without additional Customs Duty or import VAT, although VRT still applies. The crucial issue is the vehicle's history and whether it satisfies Revenue's Northern Ireland requirements. So seeing a car advertised in Belfast does not automatically mean it qualifies. A vehicle that previously came into Northern Ireland from Great Britain may require additional documentation and can potentially attract extra taxes depending on its circumstances. In other words, check first. This is not an area where "I'm sure it'll be grand" is an accepted Revenue classification.

Then there is Japan

Perhaps the biggest change in the import market has come from much further away. Japanese used cars have become increasingly visible on Irish roads. By September 2025, Ireland was importing almost three times as many used cars from Japan as from the UK, according to analysis of registration data reported at the time. Japanese imports can offer high specification levels, automatic transmissions and models that are either difficult to find or expensive on the Irish market. They can also provide something every used-car buyer loves: low mileage. Although, as with any import, low mileage should be verified rather than admired.

And that brings us to the catch

Buying an imported car can be excellent value. It can also be an excellent way of buying someone else's problem from another country. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission recommends obtaining a full vehicle-history check and, for an imported car, an international history check where possible. Buyers should look for previous odometer readings, crash or insurance history and whether the car has previously been used as a taxi. The CCPC also advises considering an independent mechanical inspection and checking available

documentation, including invoices and previous advertisements. This matters because once the shiny car is sitting on the driveway, discovering that it previously had a more adventurous life than expected is considerably less exciting. The CCPC has even called for a State-backed system giving used-car buyers easier access to information such as mileage, import history and write-off status.

Age matters too

Interestingly, Ireland isn't importing only nearly-new cars. CSO figures for the first four months of 2026 showed that 29% of imported used cars were more than ten years old, while another 36% were between six and nine years old. That means nearly two-thirds were at least six years old. There is nothing inherently wrong with an older car. But age makes service history, mileage and condition increasingly important. A ten-year-old car with 80,000 kilometres, one careful owner and a folder full of service invoices can be an excellent purchase. A ten-year-old car whose history appears to have been lost during a mysterious administrative incident somewhere outside Birmingham requires more thought.

Is importing worth it again?

Absolutely – sometimes. That last word is important. For the right car, particularly an unusual model, high-specification vehicle or one significantly cheaper than its Irish equivalent, importing can still make excellent financial sense. But the days when you could simply compare the UK sticker price with the Irish dealer price are gone. You need to calculate everything: purchase price, transport, currency conversion, VRT, possible VAT and customs charges, NOx levy, registration costs, and preferably a history check before handing over the money.

Do all that and there are still bargains to be found. The remarkable rise in imports during 2026 suggests plenty of Irish motorists have already reached that conclusion. So the great imported-car hunt is back. It just requires slightly more research than it used to – and possibly a calculator. A very large calculator.



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WHY DOES MY NEW CAR KEEP BEEPING AT ME?

For years, importing a used car into Ireland was almost a national pastime.

Modern cars are safer, smarter and packed with technology. They are also extraordinarily judgemental.

Buy a new car today and within five minutes it will have formed several opinions about your driving. You are too close to the white line. You are going 2km/h over the speed limit. You haven't indicated early enough. You appear tired. There is something behind you. There is something beside you. There may possibly be something several counties away that concerns the car deeply.

Beep. Welcome to modern motoring.

The car knows the speed limit

New cars increasingly recognise road signs and warn drivers when they exceed the posted limit. In principle, this is excellent. In practice, it can result in you driving at 51km/h while the dashboard behaves as though you have just attempted to break the land-speed record. Beep. "Yes, I know." You reduce to 49. Silence. Then the car sees another sign. Beep. This relationship continues for the rest of the journey. The system can be particularly entertaining when the car reads a speed-limit sign on a side road and decides that it applies to you. Suddenly you are travelling perfectly legally at 80km/h while your own vehicle is accusing you of doing 50 over the limit.

Stay in your lane

Lane-departure systems are another clever safety feature. If you drift towards a white line without indicating, the car warns you. Some even gently steer you back. Again, sensible technology. Until you are driving on a narrow Irish road where avoiding potholes, cyclists, parked cars and vegetation occasionally requires a more flexible interpretation of lane discipline. The steering wheel suddenly resists. The dashboard flashes. The car appears to be saying: "Please remain in lane." There is only one problem. There isn't really a lane. There is a road, a hedge and an approaching tractor. At this point, the driver and the car have different views about priorities.

Parking has become a musical event

Parking sensors were once a luxury. Now many cars have sensors at the front, rear and sides, combined with cameras offering enough

angles to direct a television drama. Approach a parking space and the concert begins. Beep... beep... beep... Closer. Beep-beep-beep. Closer. BEEEEEEEEEEEP. You stop. Get out. And discover there is still enough space behind the car to hold a small garden party. The sensors have done their job. They have prevented you from getting within 40 centimetres of danger. Or a leaf. Sometimes it is difficult to tell.

The car thinks you're tired

Driver-attention monitoring is becoming common too. Some cars monitor steering movements. Others watch the driver's face. If the system decides you are tired or distracted, it suggests taking a break. A little coffee cup appears on the dashboard. This can be useful on a long motorway journey. It is slightly less welcome ten minutes after leaving home. "Consider taking a break." "I've just started." The car remains unconvinced. Perhaps you blinked too slowly. Perhaps you looked at the heating controls. Perhaps at your age the car has simply decided you should have an afternoon nap.

Something is in your blind spot

Blind-spot monitoring is one of the more genuinely useful modern systems. A warning light appears in the mirror when another vehicle is beside you. Try to change lane and the car objects. Quite rightly. But once you become accustomed to these systems, there is a danger that drivers begin to rely on them. Technology should assist observation, not replace it. The old-fashioned glance over your shoulder remains remarkably effective and does not require a software update.

Emergency braking

Automatic emergency braking can detect a potential collision and apply the brakes if the driver fails to react. This technology can prevent accidents and save lives. It can also occasionally misunderstand the situation. A car ahead turns left. You can clearly see that it will be gone before you reach it. Your car is less confident. Warning lights flash. An alarm sounds. For one dramatic second, your vehicle believes disaster is imminent. You know everything is fine. The car believes you are dangerously relaxed.

Why all this technology?

There is a serious reason for the electronic supervision. Since July 2024, new cars sold in the EU have been required to include a range of advanced safety systems under the EU's General Safety Regulation. These include intelligent speed assistance, reversing detection, driver-attention warnings and emergency-braking technology. The aim is straightforward: reduce crashes caused by speeding, distraction, fatigue and simple human error. And statistically, many of these systems can make cars safer. The problem is that good safety technology can become irritating if the warnings are too frequent or overly sensitive. And when drivers become irritated, they start looking for the button that turns everything off.

The first job after starting the car

For some drivers, the modern pre-flight procedure now goes something like this: Seatbelt. Mirrors. Start engine. Turn off speed warning. Turn down lane assist. Disable driver monitoring. Dismiss privacy notice. Close software-update reminder. Drive. Next morning, several systems have mysteriously switched themselves back on. The car has won. There is an irony here. Manufacturers have spent billions developing sophisticated safety technology. Motorists have spent considerable time learning the exact sequence required to silence it.

Are the beeps worth it?

Probably. Annoying though they can be, these systems exist because drivers make mistakes. We become distracted. We miss vehicles in blind spots. We drift out of lanes. We misjudge distances. And occasionally we exceed the speed limit without noticing. A warning at the right moment can prevent a collision. So perhaps we should tolerate some of the electronic nagging.

The trouble is knowing which warning matters. After a while, every journey produces so many pings, flashes and beeps that the driver develops selective hearing. Which is why the next stage in automotive technology should be obvious. A car clever enough to decide whether something is genuinely dangerous before making a noise.

Until then, modern motorists will continue having conversations with their dashboards. Beep. "Yes." Beep. "I know." Beep. "For God's sake."

And somewhere inside the car, a computer quietly records: Driver appears agitated.



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WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE STILL DYING ON IRISH ROADS?

Modern cars are safer than they have ever been.

They have airbags, automatic emergency braking, lane-departure warnings, stability control, reversing cameras and enough electronic assistance to become mildly alarmed if the driver sneezes.

Our major roads are better too.

We have motorways, improved junctions, barriers, speed cameras and increasingly sophisticated enforcement.

Yet people are still dying on Irish roads in disturbing numbers.

As of 10 August 2026, 113 people had lost their lives on Irish roads this year, compared with 101 at the same point in 2025.

Last year was already bad. The RSA recorded 185 deaths on public roads during 2025, an 8% increase on 2024 and the highest annual total in a decade.

So what is going wrong?

The car has improved. The driver hasn't changed quite as much.

Cars can now detect pedestrians, warn us about speed limits and even apply the brakes themselves.

Unfortunately, they still can't prevent every bad decision made by the person behind the wheel.

The familiar causes remain remarkably stubborn: excessive speed, drink or drug driving, mobile-phone distraction and failure to wear a seatbelt.

During just the five-day August Bank Holiday roads-policing operation this year, Gardaí detected more than 4,400 speeding offences, arrested 169 people on suspicion of intoxicated driving and detected more than 370 motorists using mobile phones or not wearing seatbelts.

Those figures came from one bank-holiday operation.

This is not therefore simply a problem involving a tiny number of reckless drivers.

There are still plenty of ordinary motorists taking extraordinary risks.

Speed remains the big one.

Speeding has an image problem.

Drink driving is socially unacceptable.

Using a phone while driving is increasingly frowned upon.

But speeding often comes with an excuse.

"I was only a few kilometres over."

"The road was empty."

"I know that road."

"I was keeping up with the traffic."

Yet speed determines both whether a collision happens and how serious it becomes.

So far in 2026, 57% of road fatalities have occurred on roads with speed limits of 80km/h or higher.

That doesn't mean every one of those deaths involved speeding.

It does remind us that when something goes wrong at higher speeds, there is much less room for forgiveness.

A momentary mistake at 30km/h may result in a dented bumper.

At 100km/h, the physics are rather less accommodating.

The phone in your hand

Then there is the mobile phone.

We all know using one while driving is dangerous.

Apparently knowing this has not entirely solved the problem.

Between January 2021 and June 2026, Gardaí recorded more than 150,000 offences involving either mobile-phone use while driving or failure to wear a seatbelt.

The modern smartphone presents a particular temptation because it does everything.

Calls.

Messages.

Music.

Navigation.

Social media.

Work emails.

And that crucial WhatsApp message which, on closer examination, turns out to be somebody sending a photograph of their dinner.

The problem is not simply taking your eyes off the road.

Attention shifts too.

A driver may physically be looking through the

windscreen while mentally composing a reply to somebody who wants to know whether they remembered to buy milk.

At motorway speeds, several seconds of distraction can mean travelling the length of a football pitch without giving the road your full attention.

No message is that important.

Especially one about milk.

Drink driving hasn't disappeared either.

Ireland has changed enormously in its attitude to drink driving.

What was once tolerated is now widely condemned.

But it hasn't disappeared.

Almost 50,000 drivers were arrested for intoxicated driving between January 2021 and June 2026, according to Gardaí figures.

Alcohol also continues to appear in fatal-collision data. The RSA has specifically warned that coroner data shows alcohol remains a significant factor in road deaths.

And then there is the morning after.

People who would never deliberately leave a pub drunk and drive home may still get behind the wheel the following morning believing that sleep and a large breakfast have solved the problem.

The body works to its own timetable.

Coffee has many admirable qualities.

Accelerating alcohol metabolism is not one of them.

Young people are appearing too often in the figures.

One of the most worrying features of 2026 has been the number of younger people dying.

By late July, people aged 16 to 25 accounted for 27% of all road fatalities.

That deserves attention.

Younger drivers have less experience, but experience alone is not the whole answer.

Confidence can arrive before judgement.

Modern cars can also reach speeds with remarkable ease. A perfectly ordinary family car today may have performance that would once have been considered impressive in a sports

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car.

The vehicle feels secure, quiet and stable.

Unfortunately, feeling safe and being safe aren't always the same thing.

Weekends remain dangerous

The statistics also reveal when the risk rises.

More than 40% of fatalities recorded by late July happened on Saturdays and Sundays. About a quarter occurred between noon and 4pm, with another 24% between 8pm and midnight.

That challenges the idea that serious crashes are mainly a 2am phenomenon involving deserted roads.

They happen in daylight.

They happen in the afternoon.

They happen during ordinary journeys.

Road safety is not something that applies only after leaving a pub.

Are the roads themselves part of the problem?

Driver behaviour matters enormously, but blaming everything on motorists is too simple.

Road design matters.

Junction design matters.

Roadside barriers matter.

Pedestrian crossings, cycle infrastructure, lighting and speed-limit design all matter.

Ireland's current Road Safety Strategy uses what is called a Safe System approach. The principle is that people will inevitably make mistakes, so roads, vehicles, speeds and enforcement should be designed to prevent those mistakes from becoming fatal.

That is an important distinction.

You cannot engineer human error out of existence.

You can try to engineer roads so that human error doesn't automatically result in death.

The Government's stated target is to reduce deaths and serious injuries by 50% by 2030, with the longer-term ambition of reaching Vision Zero — no road deaths or serious injuries — by 2050.

At current levels, that remains an enormous challenge.

Perhaps familiarity is the enemy

Most of us don't think of driving as dangerous.

We get into the car, fasten the seatbelt and drive to work, the supermarket or school without giving it much thought.

We have done it thousands of times.

And that may be part of the problem.

Driving becomes routine.

The risks become invisible.

We would never operate unfamiliar heavy machinery while checking a text message, drinking coffee and arguing with the radio.

Yet put the same person inside a two-tonne vehicle travelling at 100km/h and somehow it feels perfectly normal.

Most journeys end without incident.

Until one doesn't.

Better cars, better roads and better technology can reduce the risk.

But ultimately there is still one safety device that matters more than all the others.

The person holding the steering wheel.

Music, Trips, and a New Kind of Support

THE MARTINA ROE LAY COUNSELLING SOCIETY

The Martina Roe Lay Counselling Society, formerly known as the Irish Taxi Drivers Lay Counselling Association, is offering something different: music, social nights, and affordable holidays – all free from judgment or medication.

We can't overemphasise this. There are a lot of taxi drivers going through bereavement. Some of them are paying €80 per hour for therapy – they sit down, talk to someone, listen, and then get handed a bill. We find this unacceptable.

We're not knocking that procedure – if you're doing that, consult your doctor and go ahead with what you're doing. But we're offering you something to run in conjunction with that. And here's the good thing about it – it doesn't cost a cent.

What we offer

We listen to you

We bring you into a friendly environment

We teach you music, which is absolutely magnificent as treatment and therapy

We have members practically all over the different regions, which allows us to meet in various regions – hence the large number of weekends away and holiday breaks we have.

Condolences

We give our condolences to one of our former drivers who passed away – Alex Mooney. Alex was known by most senior taxi drivers. We were lucky that we had him up to the end – we

got him out of the house and introduced him to music. A man who had no interest in music whatsoever – we had him playing the guitar, and it was great therapy.

Regular events

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday – Meet at the Keadeen Hotel in Newbridge. There is a bus from town – you pay at the door. It's a great night with music, dancing, and the likes.

Friday – Meet at the lodge, music, all welcome

Saturday – Witherspoons Camden Street, where you can pick up the taxi magazine at the door

Sunday – Meal in the lodge – a small meal for €10, everybody welcome

Upcoming trips

Spain – Looking at preferential rates. We got Spain for €200 to Alicante last year. We also got Benidorm and Lanzarote for €380.

We hope to get similar breaks this year. We will be bringing a contingent of people who want to take part and classify it as therapy.

Who is welcome?

Normally not only taxi drivers, but bus drivers, train drivers, new drivers, and the whole gamut of public transport. All volunteers

who could give up their time to all suffering from bereavement, with hands-on input from people who have all experienced bereavement themselves.

A lot of people go into bereavement and quite honestly, they fade away. We're sick looking at this happening to colleagues and friends. This has been going on since Adam was a boy. We have decided to do something.

We don't condemn anybody. We don't pretend to be anything. None of us are from a medical background. We emphasise lay counselling.

How to get involved

If you have any problems, contact any of the committee, or contact the magazine and they will forward it on.

We hope to see as many people as we can, particularly people suffering from bereavement issues. We just want to let you know that we're there and we don't intend to go away. We hope it can be beneficial to you as it was to us.

"We don't condemn anybody. We don't pretend to be anything. We just listen, and we offer an ear, a friendly face, and a way back."

For more information, contact Tony Roe through True Taxi Magazine.



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COULD AI BECOME THE TAXI DRIVER'S NEW PASSENGER?

Taxi drivers have always carried experts.

Experts on football. Experts on politics. Experts on immigration, house prices, the weather and precisely how the country should be run. Now there is another know-it-all available — Artificial Intelligence. The difference is that this one doesn't sit in the back seat telling you there was a much quicker route. At least not yet.

AI tools such as ChatGPT are becoming increasingly useful for small businesses, and a taxi is, after all, a small business on four wheels. Used sensibly, AI could take care of some of the irritating jobs that normally have to be done after the driving stops.

Your unpaid office assistant

Take paperwork. A driver could enter weekly figures for fuel, insurance, servicing, card charges and other expenses and ask AI to organise them into categories. It could help prepare a simple spreadsheet, calculate costs per kilometre or compare this month with last month. It won't replace an accountant, and you certainly shouldn't submit a tax return simply because a chatbot says, "That looks fine." But it might help turn a carrier bag full of receipts into something approaching civilisation.

The letter you've been putting off

Taxi drivers occasionally have to write to insurance companies, garages, licensing authorities or other organisations. You know what you want to say. You just don't particularly want to spend forty minutes

saying it. Tell AI: "I need a polite but firm email explaining that my vehicle has been off the road for six days waiting for a part." Seconds later, you have something that sounds as though you spent the afternoon composing it rather than dictated it while eating a sandwich. You should still check it. AI can make mistakes with enormous confidence — a quality previously thought exclusive to certain passengers.

The international interpreter

Tourists present another possibility. A passenger from Spain, France, Germany or Japan may have only limited English. Translation apps already help, but AI can also quickly translate questions and explanations. "Do you want to go directly to the hotel or stop at the pharmacy first?" Much easier than speaking English slowly and loudly, which remains Ireland's traditional method of international translation. It could also explain local attractions. A passenger asks what there is to see in Dublin, Galway or Cork and AI can quickly suggest museums, restaurants or places of interest. Although experienced taxi drivers may regard this as unnecessary. They have been recommending restaurants since long before Silicon Valley discovered algorithms.

Could it help plan a shift?

Possibly. AI can help organise information about events, concerts, sporting fixtures and busy periods. Give it a list of what's happening locally and it can help identify

times when demand may increase. A concert finishing at 10.30pm, a football match at 9.15pm and three weddings in nearby hotels? You don't need artificial intelligence to tell you there might be work around 11pm. But it can put everything into one useful schedule.

Then there are the passengers

Perhaps the greatest potential use is answering questions taxi drivers have heard approximately 40,000 times. "What's the weather doing tomorrow?" "Is that restaurant any good?" "How long will it take to the airport?" "Why is the traffic so bad?" In future, the driver may simply point towards the dashboard and say: "Ask the computer."

Unfortunately, AI has limitations

It cannot guarantee that the passenger will be standing at the collection point. It cannot make somebody who booked a taxi for 8.15 actually emerge from the house at 8.15. It cannot explain why four people with six enormous suitcases booked a normal saloon. And despite astonishing advances in computing power, scientists have yet to develop technology capable of stopping a passenger saying: "Sure, I'll just be two minutes."

So taxi drivers needn't worry about being replaced just yet. AI may become the driver's accountant, translator, secretary, researcher and occasional adviser. But there is one job it probably won't want. Driving the Saturday-night shift.

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THINGS PASSENGERS SAY TO TAXI DRIVERS

Taxi driving is one of the few jobs where complete strangers climb into your workplace and immediately start a conversation.



“Been busy tonight?”

Every taxi driver has been asked this so often that it should probably appear on the meter. The correct answer is always vague. “Not too bad.” This works whether you have had twelve fares in two hours or have been sitting on a rank since lunchtime wondering if everyone in the town has bought a car.

Then comes: **“What time do you finish?”** Taxi drivers don’t really finish. They merely reach a point where they decide another €9 fare isn’t worth another hour of their life. The passenger, of course, imagines there is a whistle somewhere at midnight and all the taxis return to a depot.

Next up is the classic: **“You must hear some stories.”** Yes. Mostly from people who begin by saying, **“I won’t bore you with the details...”** They then provide every detail. Family history. Relationship problems. Workplace disputes. A cousin in Australia. Someone called Derek who apparently cannot be trusted. By the end of the journey, the driver knows more about the passenger’s family than several members of the family do.

Then there is the amateur navigator. **“I know a quicker way.”** This statement is usually delivered just as the driver approaches the route he has used successfully for the past twenty years. The passenger’s quicker way involves three speed ramps, a road closure and a

housing estate built in 1987. Ten minutes later comes: “It used to go through here.”

Closely related is: **“Sure, just follow Google Maps.”** Google Maps is a wonderful invention, but it has never driven through Dublin at 5.15pm on a wet Friday. Taxi drivers know things Google does not. They know which junction will seize up because a van is unloading. They know which school empties at 3.20. They know that a road technically exists but should never be entered unless you plan to live there.

Passengers also have an unusual relationship with time. **“I’ll only be two minutes.”** There is no recognised scientific measurement for a passenger’s two minutes. It can mean five minutes, twelve minutes or, on rare occasions, enough time to complete a small home renovation.

Then there is the passenger who gets into the taxi and says: **“I’m in a terrible rush.”** This is usually someone who booked the taxi for 8.00, came out at 8.12 and now considers the driver personally responsible for getting them to the airport by 8.20. The taxi becomes an emergency service.

Another favourite comes at the end of a journey. **“Can you stop just here?”** **“Just here”** invariably means immediately beside double yellow lines, a bus stop, a cycle lane or somewhere that would bring traffic in three counties to a halt. If the driver

hesitates, the passenger points helpfully. **“Just there. Beside that Garda car.”**

And then we have the payment ritual. **“Can I tap?”** **“Yes.”** **“Do you take Revolut?”** **“Yes.”** **“Can I pay by card?”** **“Yes.”** **“I’ve only got a fifty.”** Of course you have.

But perhaps the most predictable taxi conversation concerns the weather. A passenger enters dripping wet. **“Some night out there.”** The driver agrees. This is followed by a detailed discussion of rain, wind, last summer, next summer and somebody’s sister who has just returned from Lanzarote where it was 31 degrees every day.

It may all sound repetitive, but there is something reassuring about it. Taxi drivers spend their working lives meeting people they may never see again. For ten minutes, twenty minutes or occasionally much longer, two strangers share the same small space and talk. Sometimes it is funny. Sometimes serious. Sometimes completely forgettable. And every now and then, a passenger tells you a genuinely remarkable story.

Then gets out, closes the door and disappears. The driver pulls away. A new passenger gets in. And before the door has properly closed comes the inevitable question:

“Been busy tonight?”



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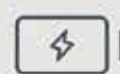
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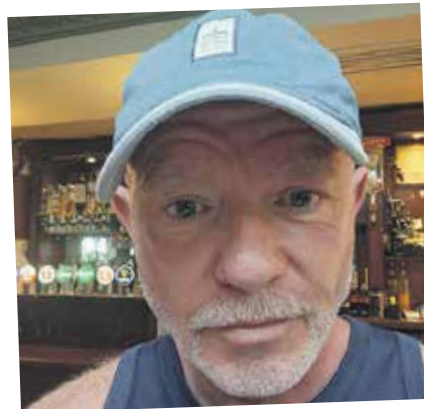
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THE TACSAÍ MAGAZINE BUMPER QUIZ

Quiz winner Henry White. H

TAXI KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS

- #1 Where does the word “cab” come from?
- #2 When was the first taxi meter invented?
- #3 Who made the first taxi in 1897?
- #4 What language does the word “taxi” come from?
- #5 Can Taxi Drivers record video of fares ?
- #6 In the game of Scrabble, how many points do you get for the word “taxi”?
- #7 In what country do you have purple cabs? (Spelt: K-A-B--I)
- #8 In the TV show Taxi, what was the taxi company name?
- #9 What two countries don't have their own taxis?
- #10 What position in government was Kevin Boxer-Moran?
- #11 What is the meaning of the word “Chemo taxi”?
- #12 What country have B-H-A-R-A-T taxis?
- #13 What country would you be in if the taxi was called a ‘coca’ taxi?
- #14 Name of the Dublin Taxi Driver said to be the oldest taxi driver in the world.
- #15 Who was the taxi driver who recorded the song “Heartache Tonight”?



Winner of Taxi Quiz

Thomas Walsh

- #16 To do the taxi test, how many industry-related taxi questions are there?
- #17 What country are taxis called Tuk Tuks?
- #18 In North Korea, how do you spell taxi?
- #19 Who invented the first taxi meter?
- #20 In London, taxis are hired and charged. What is the minimum fare? (In pounds)

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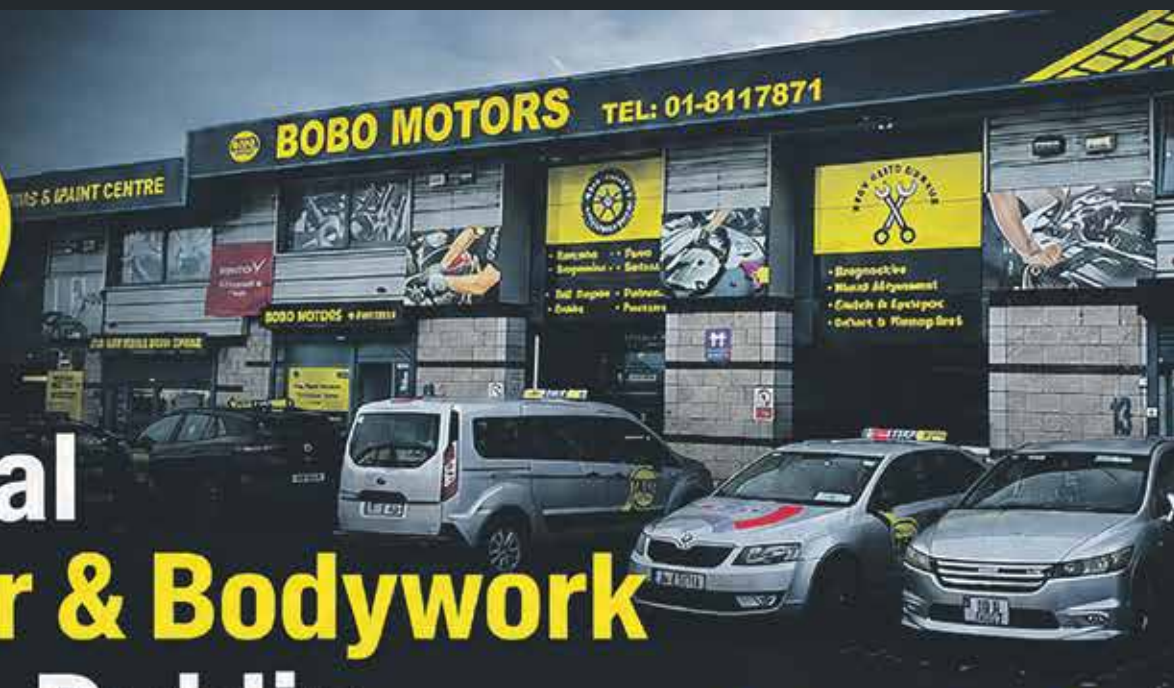
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FINDING A TAXI OUTSIDE IRELAND'S TOWNS AND CITIES



In Dublin, Cork or Galway, getting a taxi can sometimes require patience. In rural Ireland, it can require patience, contacts, advance planning and, occasionally, a relative who hasn't had a drink.

For years, the shortage of taxis in rural areas has been discussed as if it were simply an inconvenience. But if you live five miles outside a small village and don't drive, it can affect everything from getting to a medical appointment to having a pint on a Saturday night. The National Transport Authority has now made another attempt to tackle the problem by revamping its Local Area Hackney scheme.

The idea is fairly straightforward. Instead of requiring someone to become a fully fledged taxi or hackney operator capable of working nationwide, a person can obtain a more limited licence specifically to provide a service in their own rural community. And there are plenty of communities where that could make a considerable difference.

The rural taxi problem

Public transport has improved greatly in many parts of rural Ireland. Local Link services have expanded and there are more buses connecting towns and villages. But buses operate to timetables. Rural life frequently doesn't. The wedding reception doesn't necessarily finish when the last bus leaves. Neither does the pub, the restaurant, the concert or the neighbour's 60th birthday party.

Then there are people who need transport during the day: older residents attending hospital appointments, people travelling to shops or banks, and those who simply don't have access to a car. In urban Ireland, we have become accustomed to opening an app and expecting a car to appear. Try that at 11.30 on a Saturday night from a house six miles beyond Ballywherever and you may discover that the rotating symbol on your phone is less a booking facility and more a meditation aid.

So what is a Local Area Hackney?

The Local Area Hackney licence is specifically designed for small rural communities. Under the current system, eligible areas generally have populations no greater than 5,000 and must appear on the NTA's Local Area Hackney map. The driver can pick passengers up only within the approved local area, although those passengers can be brought anywhere. So a driver might pick up Mary in the village and take her 30 kilometres to hospital. That's fine. What the driver cannot do is drop Mary off and

then start picking up fares in the town outside his or her licensed area. It is deliberately a local service rather than a cut-price route into the general taxi business. Bookings must also be arranged in advance and locally; Hackneys cannot simply join a national booking service.

The rules have been loosened

The NTA changed the scheme in April 2026 after consultation with communities and potential operators. One of the biggest changes is that up to five licensed Local Area Hackney drivers can now use the same vehicle. Previously, the scheme effectively revolved around a single driver. That could make a significant difference. A rural hackney service operated by one person has an obvious weakness: the driver occasionally wants to sleep. Allowing several people to share the driving means a family, community organisation or local business could potentially provide a much wider service without one unfortunate individual becoming permanently attached to the driver's seat.

Licences can now run for up to five years, subject to continued community support, reducing some of the administrative burden on operators. Applicants also don't have to sit the normal SPSV Driver Entry Test, although drivers still require Garda vetting, appropriate licensing, SPSV insurance and safeguarding and disability-awareness training. This isn't therefore a case of somebody sticking a handwritten TAXI sign on the family Toyota and announcing themselves available after tea. There are still standards.

But will anyone actually do it?

That is the bigger question. The shortage of rural taxis isn't necessarily caused by a shortage of people capable of driving cars. It is caused by the economics of the business. A city taxi can potentially find another passenger minutes after completing a journey. A rural driver might travel ten miles to collect somebody, drive another fifteen miles to their destination and then return fifteen miles empty. The fare may look reasonable to the passenger, but the economics look rather different from behind the steering wheel. Fuel, insurance, vehicle costs, maintenance and depreciation don't disappear just because the driver happens to know everyone in the parish.

And rural customers often want taxis at exactly

the same times: Friday and Saturday nights, weddings, festivals and Christmas. There may be very little demand at 11am on Tuesday. That makes running a conventional full-time taxi business difficult in many small communities. The Local Area Hackney concept recognises this reality. Instead of trying to create hundreds of traditional full-time taxi businesses, it allows transport to be provided on a more local basis.

A threat to existing taxi drivers?

Some established taxi and hackney operators may understandably look cautiously at any scheme that creates another category of licence. The important distinction is that Local Area Hackneys are tightly restricted. They cannot roam into nearby towns looking for business and cannot pick passengers up outside their designated area. Used properly, they should fill gaps rather than compete directly with established taxi services. Indeed, they may actually generate work. A Local Area Hackney might take passengers from a remote village into a larger town, where conventional taxis provide the onward or return transport. The problem begins only if a supposedly local service starts behaving like an unrestricted taxi operation. Enforcement therefore matters as much as the regulations themselves.

Rural transport isn't just about buses

Politicians understandably like announcing new bus routes. A photograph beside a shiny bus makes for considerably better publicity than announcing that Paddy now has permission to drive Mrs Murphy to bingo. But both forms of transport have their place. A bus can move dozens of people efficiently between population centres. A taxi or hackney can collect one person from a house halfway up a boreen at precisely the time they need to travel. In rural Ireland, that flexibility matters.

The Local Area Hackney scheme won't solve every rural transport problem. Much will depend on whether enough people are willing to take on the licences and whether operating them makes financial sense. But the principle is sound. Because for people living in rural Ireland, good public transport doesn't necessarily mean having a bus every ten minutes. Sometimes it simply means knowing that when you need a lift home on Saturday night, there is actually somebody you can ring.



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- **Choice Not Compromise** - Multiple insurers for the best price and policy.
- **Speed and Convenience** - Same day service for certificates.



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*Data collected from all TaxiFair renewals offered with an effective date between 01.01.2023 and 31.12.2024

TaxiFair Insurances Limited T/A TaxiFair Insurances is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.