

FREE MAGAZINE APRIL - MAY 2018

TACSAÍ

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PAGE 25**

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EDITORIAL

Things never do stay the same. They move with the times, and usually for the better. But the clever clogs, whoever he or she was, who came into the Dublin City County Council offices and said: "Hey lads, d'ya know College Green? Well you know how it's the centre of the capital city and a gateway from Dame Street to O'Connell Street, connecting the Southside to the Northside... well, let's put a big plaza there so only the Luas and rickshaws can use it."

If there's one thing worse than an idiot it's a loudmouthed idiot.

So, it seems, the plans are going ahead. And so taxis will not have to deal with the rush-hour shout-out in the area they do now, they will be blocked from the area entirely.

In this issue we hear from drivers and organisations who have been and will be affected. More importantly we hear from one man, whose mother is disabled.

Her life has been affected by the changes at College Green. She can't get a bus or a Luas from her door to O'Connell Street. Only a wheelchair accessible taxi can do that. The authorities have dropped the ball on College Green, and in a big way.

We also look at the NTA's new plans for a recruitment drive. They are seeking to put 1,600 new drivers on the roads. Considering they seem to spend most of their time tearing the industry and drivers down, it's an interesting declaration of care by the National Transport Authority.

mytaxi are doing their bit to get drivers back in the fleet and are helping cabbies to prepare for their SPSV test. They also have their say on College Green, and needless to say, they are none too happy either.

We that and lots more in this edition of Tacsai Magazine.

Safe travels,
Stephen Young
Editor

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Taxi drivers!
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01. Skan Taxi centre, Tolka Valley Business Park.
02. Emo Station (*Mount Brown*), Kilmainham.
03. Discount Till Rolls
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06. Harbour Radiators.
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09. Hailo, 12 Upper Mount Street.
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Thur	€200	€15	€200	€24
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Sun				
Total	€1000	€75	€1000	€120
			12% Company	€120
			Flag Tiered Commission Structure	€75
			Total Saving Per Week =	€45
			Total Savings Per Year =	€2,160
<p>Based on 48 weeks of the year, does not include hospitality charges from 12% Company or commission taken on tips. Flag will never take commission on tips.</p>				

Peter Clohessy
and his mother
Mary Theresa
Clohessy



THE FORGOTTEN DISABLED

Wheelchair Accessible Taxi users in Dublin have been left high and dry by the College Green taxi ban

Robert Burns said: “The best laid plans of mice and men may often go awry.” The best laid plans of Dublin City Council most certainly did. The cross-city Luas works that have wreaked havoc in the capital for the past three years – uprooting taxi ranks and causing huge traffic chaos – were tough enough to endure, but the final straw for the public now seems to be the controversial closing of College Green to all but pedestrians and the politicians’ pet project, the Luas.

Even as we are preparing to go to print, Hugh Creegan of the National Transport Authority has just reversed a previously-held position on buses’ access to the area and said: “Two-way bus operation on Parliament Street is our preferred arrangement following any closure of College Green to east west vehicular movement,” he said. “However, if two-way operation on Parliament Street is not permissible to be conditioned as part of this planning process, and I now understand that to be the case, we would in those circumstances recommend the granting of planning consent on the basis set out in the Dublin City Council application.”

And while the Council, the NTA and the government align themselves behind this PR push in Dublin’s City centre, they have forgotten about 13% of the population. 600,000 people in this Republic, according to the last census, are disabled.

600,000 citizens of Ireland have no direct access from their front door to Trinity College by Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle.

That is the worst possible scenario. Of course, 13% of the disabled population here do not live in Dublin or it’s commuter belt. Not all of those people will require a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle, and many of those people will live closer to Cork or Galway or Limerick for example. But let’s do some maths and see how the numbers look for Dublin. County Dublin has one quarter of the country’s population. So it’s disabled population is just over 3% of the country’s number – roughly 150,000 people. And so, 150,000 people are now excluded from College Green unless they take a taxi from their door to a Luas station and board the Luas to the nearest available stop on their journey to their intended destination.

Since the NTA love to deal in numbers and stats we

thought we’d put those out there for them to chew on.

Tacsai recently spoke to a concerned man Peter Clohessy. Theresa Clohessy, his mother is in a wheelchair, and she and her son have been simply forgotten about by those that hold the power to do such things as the taxi ban at College Green.

Peter said: “We’ve been massively affected. You know if we’re heading into town in the morning to get a bit of shopping done, we have to jump out then wheel my mother up to O’Connell Street or wherever we have to go that day. We’re coming in from Kimmage (where there’s no Luas) and it’s a bloody nuisance to be honest with you. We can get the bus yes, but it’s a walk to the bus stop and it still that doesn’t get us as close as we need to get and it’s an ordeal trying to get on the bus and off the bus as well too. Then once you get off you’ve got a 15 or 20 minute walk to get to where you have to get and that can be a long enough walk pushing a wheelchair you know?”

Tony Roe, the Chairman of the National Transport Assembly Committee, spoke to Tacsai on this issue.

“The unintended consequences of this taxi ban are huge. People in wheelchairs are contacting us saying they can’t get taxis, that they’re the only mode of transport that they have to bring from their door to the exact place in town that they want to go. The bus can’t take them from their doorstep, the Luas can’t do it, and yet taxis are being banned from the city centre.

“We’re going to take this up with various government departments and we’re demanding that there’s a resolution on this because it’s complete and utter madness.

“It’s a backwards step for the city and it looks bad. Why take away taxi ranks and ban taxis where they are most needed?”

Tony has also rounded on Dublin City County Council for their short-sightedness when it comes to taxis operating in that area and on the closures of 18, soon to be 20, ranks too.

He added: “There’s an environmental fall-out from this. The by-product of the ban is forcing taxis on longer journeys, a massive contributing factor to fossil fuel wastage. Where all other countries are cutting back on carbon monoxide, and releasing Co2 fumes which are literally deadly, we now have over 1,000 taxis every single day due to rank shortages driving around town contaminating the city needlessly.

“We’ve been onto many politicians about this; taxis are wasting between five and nine litres of fossil fuel a day, and this number is going through the roof. The Council are complaining that there are too many taxis in town, well the reason there are too many taxis driving around town is that we should be able to work off more ranks instead of wasting fuel, harming the environment and harming ourselves financially too.

“We’re calling on the Grafton Street and Dawson Street ranks to be reopened. The excuse at the time was, they were closing the ranks because of the Luas. The Luas is not interfering with these ranks that are closed it wouldn’t if they were open.

“This is kamikaze politics by the Dublin City County Council and it must stop. It is important for tourism to have taxi ranks in high footfall areas like Grafton Street and Dawson Street, O’Connell Street etc. And yet the exact opposite is being done by the Council.”

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NTA ON A RECRUITMENT DRIVE FOR 1,600 DRIVERS BUT TACSAÍ HAVE THE SMALLPRINT AND IT MAKES FOR INTERESTING READING

*Caution spoilers ahead

The National Transport Authority hopes the recruitment drive can help to address shortages of taxis, particularly at peak times.

Anne Graham, the authority's chief executive, said there were about 26,000 drivers licenced to drive a small public service vehicle in the State.

"That might sound like a lot, but they are not all available all of the time, which means there can be shortages at certain periods particularly at peak hours and weekend nights," she said.

"Last year we recruited about 800 new drivers into the sector, and with this campaign, we would like to double that in 2018."

She added: "If you're bored with your nine to five, or you're looking for something that will give you more flexibility, or you'd prefer to be your own boss, driving a taxi, might be just what you're looking for."

An advertising campaign will begin in broadcast, online and print media effective from early March. Anyone with a clean driving licence may apply.

Last year, 3,204 driver entry tests were undertaken by 1,352 candidates, an 8 per cent increase on 2015. Almost 43 per cent (580) of the candidates were successful and, on average, the candidates required three attempts to achieve a pass mark.

However, 32 per cent of successful candidates passed on their first attempt.

Figures from the authority show the number of active taxi driver licences fell by 3.7 per cent from 27,440 in 2015 to 26,420 in 2016. This is a drop of 44 per cent on the all-time peak in May 2009.

The authority recently carried out a major review of the SPSV driver licensing framework and a full public consultation was carried out in November.

So the NTA have sent out their warm welcome – "come join us..."

Two weeks before Ms Graham made her pronouncement, the NTA released ANOTHER set of unflattering figures to again feed the media some more fodder stories about smelly cabs and one driver not having roll in his/her receipt printer.

Let's look at that another way; there's a tech company that are looking for new staff. Their ad says things like:

"Bored with your nine to five, or you're looking for something that

will give you more flexibility, then this tech company might be just what you're looking for."

But let's then imagine that you read, two weeks later, that the tech company in question rounds on the workers under their charge and criticises them in the media.

What an appealing place to work, you might think. Where do I sign up?

I think not.

And the proof is here, as per the Irish Examiner; Complaints by members of the public over the state of taxis more than doubled last year, according to new figures from the National Transport Authority (NTA).

In one documented case, a passenger believed that a taxi had no working indicators after the taxi-driver asked a front-seat passenger to indicate manually out the window for him.

The case was investigated and no evidence of any offence was found.

In another case where a taxi was operating without indicators following a complaint by another motorist, the NTA intervened and following an investigation by an NTA Compliance Officer, the car was taken out of service.

In one case, a passenger complained to the NTA last July that "the inside of the car was absolutely filthy. Every gap on the dash and controls was caked with dust. Seat covers were visibly stained all over."

In that case, the NTA fined the driver concerned.

In another case, a passenger reported to the NTA a "strong stench on entering the car - had to open and keep the window open for the journey".

In that instance, the NTA investigated and found no evidence of an offence after inspecting the vehicle.

Another passenger reported that within seconds of getting into the taxi "I noticed a bad smell". The NTA reports that the vehicle was replaced.

In total, the number of complaints made by members of the public over taxis and taxi driver behaviour last year increased by 148, or 15%, from 998 to 1,146.

The detailed figures released in response to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request show that the biggest increase was



complaints over the condition and road worthiness, cleanliness of taxis more than doubling from 34 to 72.

The biggest area of complaint was the conduct, behaviour and identification of taxi drivers accounting for 445 complaints. A further 380 complaints were made over alleged overcharging and other fare matters while 248 complaints were made on the hiring and booking of taxis. One complaint was received over the identification of taxis.

In August, one passenger complained about the “very poor condition” of a taxi and “what concerned me more was there was a brake warning light on the dashboard that had been covered with a sticker and another engine light that had been covered with a piece of black tape”.

The NTA investigated and inspected the vehicle, identifying a senior fault and the matter was rectified by a dealership.

In September, a passenger complained a taxi “was dirty inside and out. The boot contained bags and containers that were dirty. The rear seat was stained, torn and dirty. The springs in the rear seat were broken”.

The NTA report that the vehicle was replaced the day after the incident.

One passenger complained that a taxi-driver was not familiar with the rules of the road as “he did not look right when coming to roundabouts” and drove with main beams on behind other cars.

Another complaint said that a taxi-driver “concealed his identity, refused to give a printed receipt and was abusive”. In that case, the NTA fined the taxi driver.

In another case, a Dublin airport taxi-driver charged €43 for a trip from the airport that would usually total €25 after he took “a significant detour” to take the passengers to their destination.

In that case, the driver made full admissions and apologised and made a full refund of the fare after an NTA investigation.

In another, a taxi driver told a passenger that he couldn’t give the passenger a requested printed receipt at the end of the journey.

The passenger stated: “I told him (nicely) that he shouldn’t be driving a taxi and picking up fares without being able to give a printed receipt.

“At this point, he stopped the taxi and told me to get out! He was extremely angry and as he drove off honked his horn at me but had dumped me halfway to my destination.”

The NTA investigated and after admitting the offence, the driver was fined.

A female passenger travelling alone made a complaint after a driver became aggressive after she took a photo of his driver ID.

She said: “He demanded that I delete the picture and get out of his cab. I thought this was standard practice, particularly for a female travelling alone at night...The driver I ended up travelling with had no problem with me taking a picture of his ID to send to my brother for re-assurance”.

In that case, the driver was spoken to given advice on his conduct.

The NTA stated that it told the passenger that the Driver Check App can be used to check the licence of a taxi driver and vehicle and those details can be forwarded.

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DTA CALL OUT AUTHORITIES ON “RICKSHAW PLAZA”

“We’ll have a situation where these things will one giant rickshaw rank in the centre of Dublin City”



It's not hard to imagine... The last Luas has left at 12.30am, there are still thousands of revellers hovering in the centre of Dublin looking to get home. Where are they going to swarm to as the fast food shops send out their smoke signals? The pedestrianised College Green area – Rickshaw Plaza.

No taxis will be able to get near it, and so if women want safe passage home without having to deal with all sorts on the Nite Link, they will have to walk long distances to get a safe cab home.

This is the grim and unsafe future awaiting us when the College Green plans come to fruition.

This is “progress apparently, and the current government, Dublin City Council and the NTA have so far turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to taxi drivers’ remonstrations, along with those of local businesses and regular travellers to the area.

We spoke to Tommy Barton of the DTA.

He said: “At the moment we’re already restricted. But of these full plans are implemented we’re going to be restricted from St Great Georges Street going to this plaza.

“The Rickshaw Plaza as the DTA are calling it – because this thing will be a free-for-all for rickshaws. They’ll be able to work with impunity. So, instead of the authorities clamping on these operators – some of whom have been found dealing Class A drugs – we’ll have a situation where

these things will one giant rickshaw rank in the centre of Dublin City.

“Rickshaw Plaza will be an absolute disaster!

“Our concerns have fallen on deaf ears at every junction in this process. The NTA were meant to be doing a report on it but yet again they haven’t taken into consideration the accounts and concerns of taxi drivers, and even more importantly the passengers and businesses in the area.

“Now we, along with the other representative bodies, met with Mary Lou MacDonald on April 6th, and she has promised to keep the lines of communication open and it was a productive meeting. We all brought up the issue of the perceived lack of care shown by the current government on this issue.”

Tommy added: “In the coming months the DTA will also be pursuing an electrical policy and hopefully with the conjunction of the National Transport Authority we will be pushing for electrical charging points on taxi ranks we believe it’s the way forward for a better and more economical and sustainable Dublin city network transport system and were hoping to meet representatives in the Dáil and also the National Transport Authority to pursue this very important issue now that drivers are turning to electric and will be in the future.”



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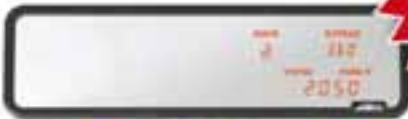
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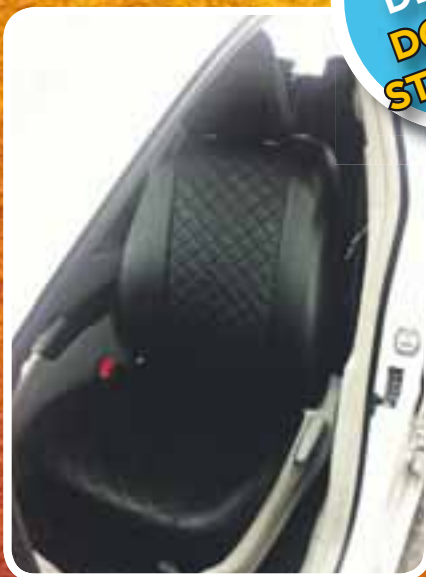
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App company helping drivers prepare for their SPSV test with a helpful online resource

App company mytaxi want to get the Irish taxi industry motoring again. And so, the company are backing new drivers to enter the industry and they are doing everything they can to help them.

So far, mytaxi have helped over 125 drivers pass the SPSV test and get motoring.

The mytaxi Manual is an online resource designed to help you become an accredited SPSV driver and get on the road.

This online revision platform is the most effective way to prepare for the test - with over 18,000 roads in Dublin there's a lot to take in!

The mytaxi Manual incorporates the use of spaced repetition which automatically helps you focus on questions where you are weak. We have developed the material with the help of data from 20 million Dublin taxi journeys to identify the most important locations for taxi drivers to know. This modern approach utilises embedded Google Street View and Google Maps content to provide visual context for users while preparing for the difficult entrance exam.

The manual is broken up into two sections: Area and Industry Knowledge. Area knowledge is broken down into 14 chapters with over 500+ questions. Industry knowledge is broken down into three chapters and has a total of 150+ questions. Each chapter is related to specific questions that arise in the SPSV test and the majority of the questions in the manual have appeared in the test before.

The Area knowledge section is split up into 14 chapters. Each section will ask you multiple questions just as they would appear in your SPSV entry test.

Area Knowledge Chapters

- Churches & Cathedrals
- Embassies
- One-way Streets
- Hospitals
- Museums & Galleries
- Points of Interest
- Hotels
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After picking an answer, the manual will reveal whether you have chosen the correct or incorrect option. In addition to this it will also load up Google Map and Street View link to help pinpoint the exact location that the question is referring to.

Students can also talk directly to the mytaxi Manual administrators by using the live chat option located in the right hand corner of the webpage. This allows you to ask any questions that you might have had while studying and get you up to date information from the company's administrators regarding how to study and how to take the test.

mytaxi also encourage you to raise any questions that you have seen appear on the test but are not on the manual yet. The more relevant content the better!

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MYTAXI SUBMIT A WARNING TO AN BORD PLEANÁLA



“The restriction of taxis at College Green would hinder public access to certain parts of Dublin...” and is “anti-competitive”

Taxi fares in Dublin city could increase by 25 per cent if the proposed civic plaza development at College Green proceeds, according to mobile taxi hailing application mytaxi.

In a submission to An Bord Pleanála ahead of an oral planning hearing regarding the project next week, the company suggests the restriction of taxis at College Green would hinder public access to certain parts of Dublin.

mytaxi, which carried 3.8 million passengers in the final quarter of last year, called the proposals “anti-competitive” and suggested they would affect retail spending, damage tourism and increase traffic congestion in parts of the city taxis are diverted to.

The taxi firm’s concerns were shared by retailers and restaurants in the area with Flairline Fashions, the company behind the women’s clothing brand Pamela Scott saying it was concerned that customers “will be dissuaded from ever coming into the city to shop”.

“As it is we have seen a huge decline in footfall in the city centre of the last 10 years or so,” it noted in its submission, which added that the firm had lost one in three customers in that period.

“Dubliners find their journeys to and through the city centre made longer and more complicated by the imposition of a traffic free College Green, they will be further discouraged from shopping in the city and will be bound to favour the easy access offered by shopping centres on the fringes of the city.”

A group including the Porterhouse Brewing Company, The Oak bar & restaurant and Zaytoon restaurant argued in a joint submission that the plaza would ultimately be “reminiscent in its character to that of Smithfield being broad, windswept, empty and devoid of activity”.

Hanaohoe Solicitors, on behalf of the group, suggested the effect of diverted traffic on Parliament Street would be “profound” noting “the sheer numbers traversing the street on an hourly basis”.

They said the congestion would render the entirety of the street “incapable of any reasonable use, impossible to continue to live on and destroy the amenities, prosperity and potential of these businesses and residents”.

Private bus operators, represented by the Coach Tourism and Transport Council (CTTC), were slightly less damning of the plaza itself and called the concept “desirable”.

However, it said a coach and bus ban would have “long term implications, negatively impacting on accessibility of leisure travellers to access the key tourist hubs in the locale” which could prompt them to choose to visit other international capitals.

A wide range of businesses and lobby groups in the city have previously complained about the proposals including Tesco, Dublin Chamber, the Shelbourne and the Westin hotels, retailers Arnotts and Brown Thomas and the Restaurants Association of Ireland.

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TTnH SAY INSURANCE STILL A HUGE CONCERN

We hear from Dave McGuinness on premiums and College Green, plus we have news of 24-hour buses that are in the pipeline

Insurance is still a huge issue for drivers. Whilst premiums have come down from their peak in 2016 and 2017, they are still far higher than were in 2015, and many are feeling the pinch. We spoke to the TTnH recently on that issue as well as many others.

Dave McGuinness told us: "The biggest issue facing drivers are the current insurance hikes. We have raised this issue with the Minister, Department of Finance and all relevant bodies and will continue to do so. These exorbitant hikes are causing huge hardship to taxi drivers. Whilst the media are reporting a decrease in motor insurance policies, taxi drivers continue to see hikes in premiums. The long awaited report carried out by Minister Eoghan Murphy has done nothing to ease hikes.

"Currently the fare review gave rise to 3.22% and is due to be installed by all drivers with a start date of February 1st 2018. As members are aware we rejected this fare review due to the cost of installation and meter resealing.

"Also regarding rickshaws, they are illegal unvetted, unlicensed, uninsured remain a huge issue of contention for taxi drivers. The NTA undertook a public consultation on behalf of the Dept. Of Transport and we have petitioned the Minister to make the results of the consultation available. Drivers were encouraged to engage with the consultation and to request Insurance, Tax clearance Certs and Visa checks for owners and operators of rickshaws. It is our view these range of measures will force rickshaws out of business.

"At College Green, the proposed plaza and a ban on Taxis through the corridor are totally unacceptable. At the time of writing we have received a strong mandate from members

to take protest action. We have been engaged with DCC and Luas Engineers since the start of this project and they have adopted none of the recommendations we offered.

"Taxis are the only 365 days a year 24/7 door to door transport service and are an integral part of the public transport system and should be treated as such. During 2017 members of the Taxi Advisory Council requested a Transfer on Exit scheme be adopted by the NTA.

"The scheme would allow drivers wishing to exit for varying reasons return their licence to the NTA for a fee paid to the licence holder. The licence could then be reassigned to a driver on a waiting panel. This would tackle the ageing profile and stop new licences being issued. As a result of this request the NTA have agreed to review the whole industry in 2018. This review will encompass every aspect of the taxi industry and it is our intention to host regular meetings attended by drivers to gain their input prior to producing a document to be presented to the NTA. The last industry review took place in 2012 during a harsh economic recession, high unemployment and oversupply within the SPSV industry.

"Finally, January 13 saw the introduction of new EU regulations regarding Credit Card Charges. Service charges can no longer be passed on to customers. A levy averaging 2.7% must be borne by drivers. London black cabs in October 2017 received a 20 pence increase on the start rate as credit cards were made mandatory in London black cabs.

Dublin Bus, meanwhile, it has been revealed, could be launching 24-hour bus routes later this year.

A proposed pilot scheme aims to roll out the service for the three main routes in the Greater Dublin area before the end of 2018.

The Chairperson of Dublin City Council's Transport committee feels the capital needs such a facility to fulfil its role as a modern city.

Green Party Councillor Ciaran Cuffe believes there's plenty of demand for this.

He said: "Dublin Bus in conjunction with the NTA will pilot three routes north, south and west of the city. These routes will operate through the night. The demand is not just from party revellers going home in the small hours - there's quite a demand from night workers who simply want to be able to get to and from home through the night, and that is what a modern city needs."

"We're seeing a growing trend towards night time working and I think people are sick and tired of paying a lot for taxi fare and they want to have the alternative of public transport."

"The airport buses operate pretty much throughout the night at this stage, and I think ordinary Dubliners would like to see this service rolled out as well."

Responding to concerns over anti-social behaviour on a night time bus service, Mr Cuffe said that Dublin Bus has a very good record on customer safety.

"They have CCTV on their buses and their drivers are trained to deal with anti-social behaviour if it arises."

Dublin Bus currently operates 18 Nitelink services in the city. The late-night bus service typically runs between midnight and 4am on Friday and Saturday.

The move could have a big effect on taxi business in the city. Let us know your thoughts on this proposed move.

Email the editor at stephenyoung399@hotmail.com

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DRIVER CAUGHT AFTER CHEATING ALMOST €19,000 FROM THE DOLE



TAXI

A taxi driver has been told by a judge to make a dent in repayments after he admitted unlawfully claiming almost €19,000 from the dole.

Father-of-two Mozahid Ahmmed, of Foxborough Road, Dublin, pleaded guilty to making false statements that he was unemployed.

Judge John Brennan heard at Dublin District Court that he made two false declarations to the social welfare authorities in 2015 and 2016.

The total fraud was €18,818.

However, he was paying the money back at a rate of €200 a month and his barrister said he intended to increase the amount to €300.

It would take six years to repay the full amount at the current rate, Judge Brennan was told.

Adjourning sentencing, Judge Brennan said Ahmmed would have to find some money to make a dent into the amount owed.

In the district court the offence can result in a fine of up to €2,500 and a six-month sentence, in addition to repaying the money.

The authorities also have a mechanism to continue to recoup money even after a case has been finalised.

Meanwhile, A taxi driver has said he lost a tooth after he was attacked by a customer who refused to pay a €15 fare in Co Louth.

Halil Kayisoglu (49) collected a male customer at a taxi rank in Drogheda on Wednesday afternoon, who wanted to go to Duleek. Mr Kayisoglu, originally from Turkey and has been living in Ireland for the last 20 years, said the man was drunk and used abusive language during the journey.

“When we arrived he said how much is it and I said €15. He said I’m not paying you and began swearing at me. I said okay and I tried to take his picture inside the car to show the guards but he hid his face,” Mr Kayisoglu said.

“I tried to get his picture again when he got out of the car but he hid his face again.”

Mr Kayisoglu said he told the man he was going to call the gardaí.

“When I was going to ring, the man attacked me. I held his hands and said: ‘Look you will be in big trouble if you hit me.’ Then I let him go. He starting punching me, he punched me at least 20 times.

“I was in the army in Turkey and can defend myself. I couldn’t touch him though because if I touch him I lose my licence. He kept hitting and punching me.”

Mr Kayisoglu said the man hit him in the face and his tooth fell out.

“He kept punching me but couldn’t knock me down and eventually got tired,” he added.

Mr Kayisoglu has reported the incident to gardaí.

“Taxi drivers are not safe in their cars. If I didn’t know how to defend myself I might have a broken nose or brain damage.

“We are not protected, we are alone in the car. You can’t touch the customer even if they’re attacking you. I like my job but my kids said to me: ‘Dad, don’t go to work, what’s going to happen if this man comes up to you again?’ The kids are worried, my wife is worried.”

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“Taxi”, the word conjures up visions of drama: heroes and heroines exchanging their first kiss, proposals of marriage or dramatic partings, careering car chases through clogged city streets with tourists, business reps, shoppers, visitors, and night revellers; precipitous arrivals and departures at bus and train stations, ferryports and airports. The taxi is universally recognised as an integral part of contemporary life and there are few areas of the 20th century culture it has not penetrated.

By Derry Coughlan of the Cork Taximen’s Association

The National Transport Authority hopes the recruitment drive can help to address shortages of taxis, particularly at peak times.

Hundreds of films and popular songs feature taxis and taxi drivers and whole fleets of toys have been designed to express taxicabs that served our major cities worldwide. The taxi has been used in advertising to represent strong and durable automobile construction; the taxi business’s own advertising includes everything from billboards, magazines, postage stamps and posters to matchbooks, thermometers, and cigars.

Contemporary artists have used taxi imagery in their work; folk artists all over the world have used not only the imagery, but the vehicle itself as a canvas. The “Single Fare Method” was calculated by the “Patent Mile Index” until Wilhelm Bruhn in 1891 invented the modern “taximeter” in Hamburg, Germany.

Taximeters then became standard equipment on all licenced vehicles “plying-for-hire” in major cities and marked the start of the taxi business as an industry. Most cities today control the number of taxicabs, establishing specific zones and meter rates, they also regulate the fare, travel terms and conditions, also the way in which taxis can function, such as restricting the conditions under which drivers can “ply-for-hire” and the system in place to pick up passengers at taxi ranks, street hailings, or advanced booking orders.

The simple reason for the success of the taxi-cab industry is convenience. The taxi provides easy, comfortable, private door-to-door transportation service for the urban traveller. Taxis are public transit vehicles in every sense.

As you are aware, the Cork Taximen’s Association was founded in 1938, that’s as far back as we could trace the full “Committee Elected Members Names”, but the history books state that the Cork Taximen’s Association headed the Opening Parade for the Great Cork International Exhibition in 1902/1903 as a guard of honour for the visit of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra at this event. This parade, under the banner of the Association, at the time had jarveys, side-cars, horse coaches and motor cars (taxis, hackneys and undertaker vehicles). After that hilarious jarvey era, the undertakers strike in or around 1946, was an effort to phase out the ‘jarveys, side-cars and horse coaches, with the changeover to ‘motor-cars’, the undertakers were putting out Ford and Hudsons converted hearses and limousine style cars.

Hackney and Taxi drivers were later to follow, and to help this changeover, petrol was allotted to Taxis and Undertakers only.

Nowadays, we strive to maintain the growth and development of this famous and respected trade, by seeking the proper and correct legislation for its operators and passengers in conditional change, the legal conditions and protection for both the service provider and the hirer, which are totally out of date and frustrating for everyone. The two-tier trade provisions must be addressed

under the operational and functional regulations for:

1. Instant hire on street or terminal taxi ranks incorporating hailing a taxi.

2. Advanced hiring booking methods for Taxis, whether instigated by a Dispatch Base Office or Electronic Digital hiring schemes available to the public.

Everyone wants to know “Where they stand”. The National Transport Authority, the Local Authorities and the public Garda Carriage Offices must face up to their responsibilities in protecting the public and setting the “legal guidelines” for the taxi drivers which must be documented in Statutory Instrument form for once and for all (terms and conditions for your PSV Drivers Licence and Taxi Vehicle Licence). This is becoming a critical situation in this country. Self-regulation must be banned with the encroachment of unlicensed outside interest, trading in the public transport methods of distribution, preparing unfair competition and taking the advantage. One wonders about the validity of your taxi licence.

The purpose of a license is control and protection all around, but it must be accompanied by regulations and bye-laws precisely, not vague like the present situation, no workplace directions but only fees, fines, penalty points and insurance loadings. How unjust? We must demand changes if our business is to prosper, otherwise we will have to “load fares” as a protest to get the public behind us, the Civil Servant doesn’t know any better.

A Law Commission must be established in this country – proper revision of the Small Public Services Vehicles. Taxi regulations in the Road Traffic Act is now the only answer, with too many taxi drivers now in operation, this will cut out the anger, frustration, disputes and stress that has come into the job. “self-regulation” and the “gentleman’s agreement” no longer work etc. Plus the fact that nowadays you have too much interference from the “digital share-croppers”!

Taxis have changed “the way of life” in our country and let’s respect that for evermore – respect and support the taxi driver who invests in the State’s public transport, thus give them equality with the first car hiring system on all ranks. Statistics show that the well-being of taxi drivers is not great, deaths have occurred and constant ill health reports, fall in service levels, all because of their fairness principle not being adopted in our workplace, also the intending passengers must support these issues, under law!

Meanwhile, as regards surcharge fee for the use of cards: Traders in the EU are not allowed to charge you extra for using your credit card or debit card. The only exception to this rule are the American Express/Diners Club cards and business or corporate cards, where your employer is billed instead of you. If you use these cards, you may still be charged a fee but the fee can’t be more than what it actually costs the trader to process your payment.

You should be aware that if you’re paying in EU countries other than in euros, you may still be charged a currency conversion fee by your provider when you use your card in another EU country.

DRIVER SENTENCED FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT

A taxi driver has been sentenced to two years in prison with the final year suspended for sexually assaulting a schoolgirl in his car.



Father of four, Toni Muzinga (48), of Cartur Mór, Clybaun Road, told the 16-year-old she should keep secrets from her mother, before offering her money and a new phone if she went with him to Oranmore where no one would see them.

Muzinga pleaded guilty before Galway Circuit Criminal Court last December to sexually assaulting the girl on February 16 last year.

Sentence was adjourned to last week for the preparation of a victim impact statement.

Garda Neil Lydon said Muzinga knew the victim since she was a child and on the date in question he saw her in Eyre Square and offered her a lift home. She got into the back of his taxi but on the way home she became uneasy due to the nature of his comments to her.

He told her she should keep secrets from her mother and her mother didn't have to know everything she was doing.

He asked for her number and started making arrangements to meet her, telling her to keep that information from her mother. He offered her money and a new phone. He told her he would give her lots of things that her mother could not afford to give her and she was to keep them a secret from her mother.

Muzinga offered to bring the girl to Oranmore where they would not be seen. He then put his hand back and groped her. He asked her to kiss him before letting her out of the taxi.

The girl told her mother what had happened and they went to Gardaí.

The girl told Garda Lydon she was shocked and stunned and "just froze" when the assault happened.

Garda Lydon said Muzinga knew the girl's family for many years through mutual friends.

He was interviewed and admitted picking the girl up in Eyre Square.

However, he denied sexually assaulting her, saying that he accidentally touched her while opening the door to let her out.

Garda Lydon confirmed Muzinga had nine previous convictions, including one for handling stolen property, while the rest were for traffic offences.

Defence barrister, Aisling Wall, said her client was a widower since his wife died suddenly ten years ago. The couple had come to Ireland in 2001 and were granted asylum. He had always worked and was the sole carer for his children as his extended family still lived in DR Congo.

She said Muzinga could offer no explanation for what he did but he was sorry and had brought €2,000 to court to offer to the victim.

He had to surrender his taxi licence last December and could no longer work.

His actions, she said, had a detrimental impact on his own children as well as the victim.

The girl told the court she had been a happy-go-lucky girl before this incident, but she was now more cautious and wary of people, especially men.

Judge Rory McCabe said the maximum sentence for sexual assault was ten years.

He said Muzinga planned this offence and had the young victim not been so alert it may well have been the first step on a journey to 'grooming'.

Whatever plan Muzinga had in mind did not succeed thanks to the girl's proper conduct and quick and decisive action in telling her mother, the judge said.

Thanks to the girl's decisive action, the offence did not go any further and as a result it could be placed at the lower end on the scale of gravity for similar offences.

He said Muzinga tried to minimise the offence to Gardaí and it was "disturbing and worrying" that there was no explanation given for his behaviour.

"The testimonials handed in paint a different picture to the sex offender before the court and the gravity must be marked with a custodial sentence," Judge McCabe said.

He imposed two years in prison and suspended the final year for five years.

Rickshaw round-up

Nineteen rickshaws were seized in Cork City centre in early March in a Garda-led operation in conjunction with Customs and Social Welfare officers.

The aim of the operation was to check that all rickshaws in the city were compliant with roadworthiness, including having proper lighting.

Officers were also checking if rickshaws had electric motors, which, depending on the kilowatt output, could require road tax.

Social Welfare officers were also investigating complaints that some rickshaw drivers were in receipt of welfare payments while working.

Local Fine Gael Councillor Joe Kavanagh, who has campaigned for the removal of rickshaws, said: "It is a step in the right direction in relation to the regulation of these rickshaws.

"I'm delighted to see the law is being applied on a level playing field for everyone. For too long these rickshaw drivers have been ignored while blatantly flouting the law.

"People have been allowed to operate a business with these rickshaws which are uninsured, untaxed and are often seen breaking the rules of the road."

Mr Kavanagh said rickshaws are a public safety concern.

Mr Kavanagh said: "These rickshaws have been seen driving on footpaths and going the wrong way up one-way streets. It is a matter of safety for the general public.

"Also it is great news for the law-abiding public service operators in the city."

Spokesperson of the Cork Taxi Council, Bobby Lynch, also expressed delight at the news of the garda crackdown.

"These rickshaws have no lights and they do what they want. They have been taking taxi fares from us. Our insurance is through the roof and these people are operating without any insurance and charging what they like.

"There are rickshaws charging a fiver from the Old Oak to Reardens, if we charged that we would lose our licence. I'm delighted there has been a clampdown. For a long time it seemed that no one cared about the taxi drivers."

A Garda Spokesperson confirmed the rickshaws had been seized under the Road Traffic Act and investigations were ongoing.

Galway remains the only city in Ireland so far to have banned these operators.

Meanwhile, in Dublin and Limerick, authorities seem to be no closer to resolving the issue of rickshaws. Summer is just around the corner and with concerts and GAA matches taking place the likelihood of the scurrilous rickshaw operators – some of whom have been found to be dealing Class A drugs amongst other offences – will be taking members of the public in greater numbers once more.

Rickshaws are a problem that the NTA and the Department of Transport have swept under the carpet for far too long.



VETERAN DRIVER CLEARED OF ‘LONGER JOURNEY’ CHARGE

A VETERAN TAXI driver has been cleared of not bringing passengers on the shortest journey from Dublin Airport to Temple Bar after demonstrating to a court that the longer route he picked was cheaper.

Liam Perkins, who has been driving taxis for 25 years, was prosecuted by the National Transport Authority (NTA) and appeared at Dublin District Court on charge under the Taxi Regulation Act for not taking the shortest route where practicable. Mr Perkins, from Maddoxland, Riverstown, Dundalk, County Louth, pleaded not guilty.

During the hearing, Judge John Brennan heard the NTA had allegations that some taxis coming from Dublin Airport were failing to take the shortest route.

NTA inspector Anthony Carey said that in conjunction with gardaí, a checkpoint was set up at the R139 on the morning of 20 June last year. Mr Perkins's taxi was stopped.

He had three passengers who had just arrived from Australia and were going to the Temple Bar Hotel. One of the group indicated he had not been in Ireland for 15 years and he did not know the shortest route.

The court heard driver, Mr Perkins, was questioned and told the NTA inspector the reason he failed to take the shortest route was because "it is quicker this way".

The inspector told the court the shortest route was by heading southbound but the driver had gone east on the R139 toward the coast, Clarehall, Donaghmede or Clontarf. The court heard the R139 was at the end of the M50 and also led to Malahide and Howth.

The defence counsel argued that shortest route could also mean time.

In evidence, Mr Perkins explained that that he didn't go southbound after he heard weather and traffic reports on the radio. There had been "torrential rain" that morning which



had caused a traffic jam at O'Connell Street, he said.

Work on the Luas line in the city-centre had also caused delays, he said. He did not use the Dublin Port tunnel because of the fees.

His route was to firstly go on the R139 and then he planned an alternative route into the city centre, he said.

After he spoke to the NTA inspector he took the shortest route, 9.4km, to Temple Bar and it cost €25.80. He had a copy of the receipt which was signed by the passenger.

He told the court that after he dropped off the group he came back to the Airport area and did the run again, this time going on the R139 and along the route he had originally intended.

He produced another printout of a receipt with details of the second journey.

Judge Brennan noted it was 11.2km, however the fare was €22.20, some €3.50 cheaper even though it was a longer route.

His barrister submitted that his client was a taxi driver 25 years and was abhorred at the suggestion he would take advantage of passengers in circumstances where the route he planned was cheaper. Judge Brennan dismissed the case.



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WORLD NEWS

TOP STORIES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

PARIS

The “godfather” of Parisian taxis has offered hundreds of cabbies free politeness lessons, conceding that the controversial arrival of Uber and other minicab companies in the French capital has forced them to finally go up a gear in customer service.

Parisian taxi drivers, whose cars are easily recognisable by their green or red signs, have long had a reputation for being among the world’s rudest.

Tales long abounded of grumpy cabbies playing loud music, almost never accepting credit cards and turning up for a booked ride with €10 already on the meter.

They have also often been notoriously hard to find. But the boss of the French capital’s main taxi company insisted all that is changing.

Nicolas Rousselet, CEO of G7, by far Paris’ biggest taxi company, confessed that with minicabs flooding Paris and cabbies now receiving marks on smartphone applications, the industry has been forced to enact a “cultural revolution”.

He said he had a crack team dedicated to retraining hundreds of cabbies in need of lessons on how to be polite to customers.

“We found that 800 out of 8,000 drivers in our Service Plus category had less than three stars on our application,” he said. “We decided not to take them off the platform but to retrain them.”

Since receiving lessons on service with a smile, an ironed shirt and basic communication skills, he said the average mark on the application had rocketed to 4.6 stars out of five.

EGYPT

Ride hailing service Uber and competitor Careem will not be banned in Egypt after a court overturned a judicial decision to pull the companies’ licenses, allowing both companies to continue operations there for the time being.

Per Reuters, the suit was brought by Egyptian cab drivers who claimed that Uber and Careem were violating local laws on the use of private vehicles and had illegally registered under the wrong industries:

Forty-two Egyptian taxi drivers filed a lawsuit in the administrative court a year ago against U.S.-based Uber and its Dubai-based competitor Careem, arguing they were illegally using private cars as taxis. They also claimed that the two firms were registered as a call center and an internet company, respectively.

In March, the administrative court ordered the government to suspend

the licenses of the two companies.

But Reuters reported that the Cairo Court of Urgent Matters heard an appeal from the companies and ordered that they be allowed to stay in business until a final ruling from the Highest Administrative Court. Neither Uber or Careem ever actually shut down in accordance with the original order.

Uber has sunk a considerable amount of resources into Egypt such as a new \$20 million support center and subsidized car purchases, per Reuters, and claims to have nearly 160,000 drivers and four million users there. Taxi drivers have thrown protests alleging that ride hailing companies are only able to compete by dodging the hefty fees usually applied to transport vehicles, though per Agence France-Presse, the apps are often sought out by locals who think they offer better service than the rest of the market.

“The white taxis are a nightmare,” Heba Hashem, a 23-year-old graphic designer in Cairo, told Egypt Independent. “Their service is irritating, drivers don’t use the meter, they break it or overcharge for the fare. Moreover, they sometimes pick more than one customer at the same time to get more money.”

ALASKA

Two taxi assaults within less than a week of each other last month have taxi drivers on edge in the Alaskan city of Anchorage; with at least one cab company changing its policies because of the attacks.

It’s every cab driver’s worst nightmare and it came true for two men last month.

They both describe similar situations in which they were robbed and beaten by a young couple who called for their help, a couple who were identified by one of the drivers; 21-year-old Shirley Qinoes and 20-year-old Hector Rivera, who appeared in court on charges for one of the cases.

The victim, in that case, is Ahmed Hassan, who was attacked in the parking lot of the Ulu Factory in downtown Anchorage on March 22.

The other victim has requested not reveal his identity for fear of another attack. For the purposes of this story, he is referred to as “Bob”.

“I never had any problems, till those guys now,” Bob said of what seemed like a routine call for the taxi driver of more than 30 years.

On the night of March 27, a couple called for help opening their car at West High School. The camera in Bob’s taxi caught a quick glimpse of them in the dark.

The scenario turned out to be a trap.



“The guy grabbed my jacket and tried to knock me down. And when I tried to get the guy, the lady with the baton hit me straight in the head,” Bob said. “The lady kept hitting me in the head, those guys tried to kill me.”

Bloodied and severely beaten, Bob managed to drive to the hospital.

Even weeks later, his blood stains still mark the scene, hidden behind a snow bank. Bob’s attackers got away with less than what some people keep in their wallet.

“They got from me 15 or 17 dollars, just my change. I just started late that night,” Bob said.

Hassan believes those were the same people who robbed him at gunpoint just five days before at the Ulu Factory in downtown Anchorage. It was the same story, a couple said they’d locked their keys in the car.

“When I came out, I start grabbing my stuff in the trunk, I see people just punching me. But I saw he pulled a pistol,” Hassan said.

Hassan soon found himself begging for his life.

“She said ‘shoot him, shoot him,’ and I said, ‘please don’t shoot. If you want money or something, take it, but don’t shoot me,’” Hassan said.

When Hassan moved to Alaska with his family, from Somalia, several years ago, Anchorage was supposed to be a safe haven.

“I come here to live, to get peace -- that’s why I fled from my country, to get peace,” Hassan said.

Hassan says cab companies need to do more to field calls and ensure they aren’t sending their drivers into dangerous situations.

Since the attacks last month, Anchorage Checker Cab says it has revamped its policies. It’s now sending two drivers to some late night calls, instead of just one.

But both drivers and dispatchers agree -- the safest thing for the industry would be if customers used apps to call for cabs.

NEW YORK

It was a sombre scene outside New York’s City Hall in late March. Four coffins sat at the foot of the steps; one by one, taxi drivers covered them with white flowers, before assembling on the steps and shouting for the city to “stop Uber’s greed” and “stop making us slaves.” It was the second such gathering in two months, as drivers and their advocates mourned another suicide that they attribute to the rise of ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft. That sudden increase in the number of for-hire vehicles on the city’s streets, they claim, has made it impossible for drivers to earn a decent living.

On March 16, Nicanor Ochisor, a 65-year-old yellow cab driver, took his own life in his Queens home. According to his family and friends, he had been drowning financially as his prized taxi medallion, on which he had hoped to retire, plummeted in value. The circumstances surrounding Ochisor’s death were upsettingly familiar: In February, driver Douglas Schifter shot himself outside City Hall after posting a lengthy statement to Facebook blaming politicians for letting the streets get so saturated. According to the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, a nonprofit group that advocates for drivers, at least two other drivers have killed themselves since December in response to mounting financial pressures.

At Wednesday’s rally, Bhairavi Desai, the executive director of NYTWA, described the situation as “a living nightmare.” The assembled drivers echoed her sentiment. Noureddine Afsi said he began driving a yellow cab in 2001 when a friend said it would be easier money than his job in retail. “You could work nine hours and easily make \$200 in a day,” he recalled. “Now, you’re lucky if you make \$50 or \$60.” Beresford Simmons, who has been driving a yellow cab for more than 50 years, expressed a similar frustration: At 71 years old, he said, he had just had heart surgery and was on dialysis—and he was in no financial position to take a break from driving. “We have guys at home who are losing their houses,” he said. “I know cab drivers who are homeless today.”

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General Knowledge Questions

1. Often used as a fertiliser what is the excrement of seabirds known as?
2. On which island would you find Brunei?
3. Whose abduction led to the Trojan Wars?
4. In which fictional Welsh town does Fireman Sam operate?
5. What sport is played on a diamond?
6. Which former Beatle released the album "All Things Must Pass"?
7. How many lines does a sonnet contain?
8. Which word can be a spot, a small burrowing animal or a unit in science?
9. With which Charles Dickens' character would you associate the phrase "Bah, Humbug"?
10. In which country is the city of Sevastopol?
11. Which of Henry VIII's wives survived him?
12. By what name did author Charles Dodgson become better known?
13. With which sport is the ABA concerned with?
14. Who played Sally in the 1989 movie "When Harry met Sally"?

15. What is the fruit of the blackthorn called?
16. Cantilever and Suspension are both types of what?
17. Which song has been a hit for Harold Melvin and the Bluenotes, Thelma Houston and The Communards?
18. Which European city is associated with the work of architect Antonio Gaudi?
19. The Battle of Bosworth Field was the last battle in which war?
20. How many cards are dealt to each player in a hand of contract bridge?

11. Catherine Parr
12. Lewis Carroll
13. Boxing (Amateur Boxing Association).
14. Meg Ryan.
15. Sloe.
16. Bridges.
17. Don't Leave me This Way".
18. Barcelona
19. The War of the Roses.
20. T hirteen.

ANSWERS

1. Guano.
2. Borneo.
3. Helen of Troy.
4. Pontypandy.
5. Baseball.
6. George Harrison.
7. Fourteen.
8. Mole.
9. Scrooge.
10. Ukraine.



Knock Knock...

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

A boy asks his father, "Dad, are bugs good to eat?" "That's disgusting. Don't talk about things like that over dinner," the dad replies. After dinner the father asks, "Now, son, what did you want to ask me?" "Oh, nothing," the boy says. "There was a bug in your soup, but now it's gone."

In a Christian Brothers school canteen, a priest places a note in front of a pile of apples, "Only take one. God is watching." Further down the line is a pile of biscuits. A little boy makes his own note, "Take all you want. God is watching the apples."

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

There was an elderly couple who in their old age noticed that they were getting a lot more forgetful, so they decided to go to the doctor. The doctor told them that they should start writing things down so they don't forget. They went home and the old lady told her husband to get her a bowl of ice cream. "You might want to write it down," she said. The husband said, "No, I can remember that you want a bowl of ice cream." She then told her husband she wanted a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream. "Write it down," she told him, and again he said, "No, no, I can remember: you want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream." Then the old lady said she wants a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top. "Write it down," she told her husband and again he said, "No, I got it. You want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top." So he goes to get the ice cream and spends an unusually long time in the kitchen, over 30 minutes. He comes out to his wife and hands her a plate of eggs and bacon. The old wife stares at the plate for a moment, then looks at her husband and asks, "Where's the toast?"

A proud and confident genius makes a bet with an idiot. The genius says, "Hey idiot, every question I ask you that you don't know the answer, you have to give me \$5. And if you ask me a question and I can't answer yours I will give you \$5,000." The idiot says, "Okay." The genius then asks, "How many continents are there in the world?" The idiot doesn't know and hands over the \$5. The idiot says, "Now me ask: what animal stands with two legs but sleeps with three?" The genius tries and searches very hard for the answer but gives up and hands over the \$5000. The genius says, "Dang it, I lost. By the way, what was the answer to your question?" The idiot hands over \$5.



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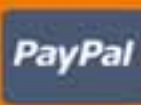
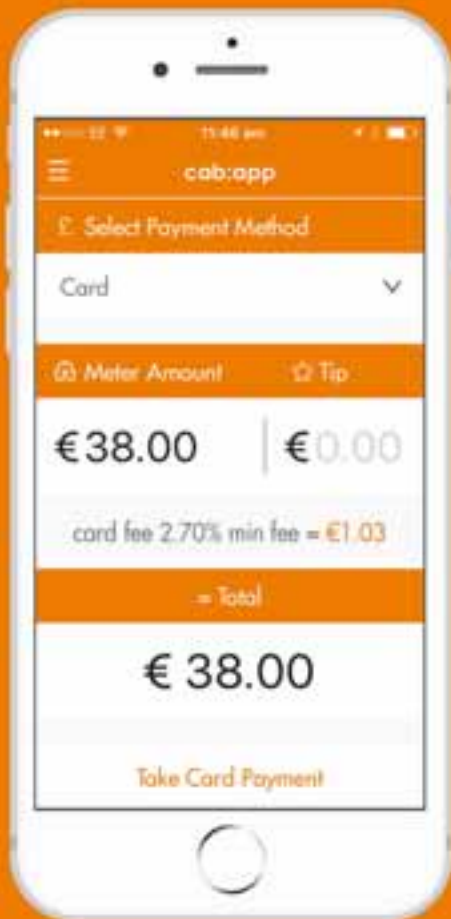
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