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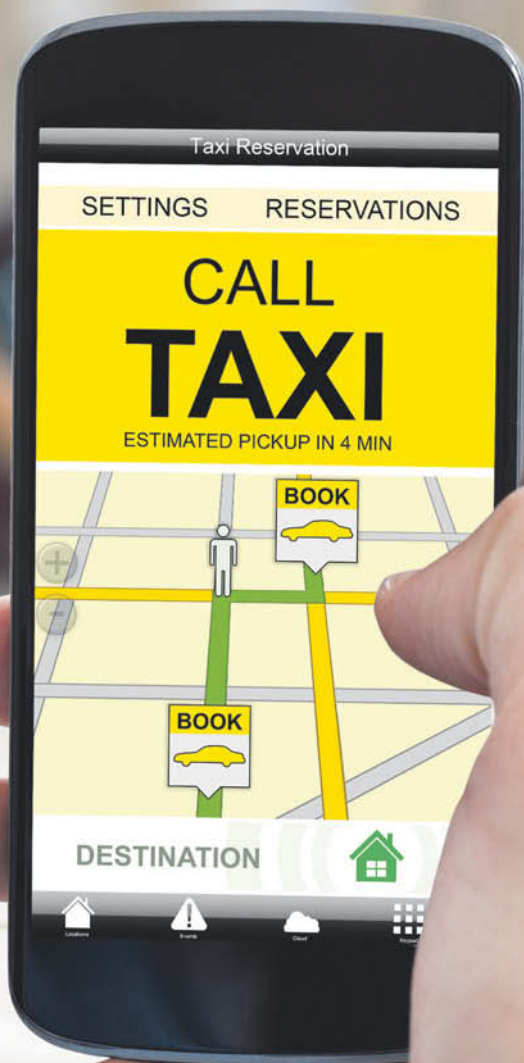
TACSAÍ

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ROWE CALLS FOR APP REFORM

An alarming number of attacks on taxi drivers prompts Tony Rowe of the NTA Committee to call for action.

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CONTENTS

Well, it has been a while since we were last out, but it seems that the same issues seem to be presenting themselves again and again.

Taxi drivers continue to find themselves in terrifying situations at the hands of armed young thugs. There have been an alarming number of such incidents in the four months since Christmas. A spate of violent robberies and thefts over Christmas and the New Year has resulted in some taxi drivers refusing to operate in areas of west Dublin such as Tyrrelstown, Ongar and Clonée over fears for their safety.

Drivers have been held up at knifepoint for cash, had their equipment stolen, and have had passengers refuse to pay their fares and then run off.

More recently a man and a woman tried to stab an elderly taxi driver before stealing his car in Tallaght with the man suffering minor injuries and his female passenger left terrified. The car was later found burnt out and the 73-year-old victim was treated in hospital for his injuries.

Meanwhile on the same Friday night another driver was attacked by three teenage girls in Coolock. One of the girls pulled a knife, but driver managed to pull it off her before the girls fled.

Chairperson of the National Transport Assembly Committee, Tony Rowe believes that this is due in part to the current App system which allows the thugs to single out elderly drivers as easier targets. The NTA and Department of Transport have declined to comment, and the Department of Justice has no intention of increasing the penalties for such crimes at present.

The issuing of taxi licenses and the ease with which illegal immigrants get hold of them continues to be an issue also. With both the National Transport Assembly Committee and the Dublin Taxi Drivers Association questioning what the Government is doing about the situation.

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- 2. As a taxi driver working in the industry, would you feel safe for a member of your family to travel in a taxi?

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THIEVING DRIVER GETS 2 YEARS

A taxi driver who stole €75,000 from the bank account of an elderly customer with dementia has been jailed for two years.

Trevor Walsh, 53, used Pamela O'Brien's bank card and forged her signature on bank documents to steal the money.

Mrs O'Brien had used the taxi driver to take her to the shops and later run errands for her, Dublin Circuit Criminal Court heard.

The court was told that the 83-year-old victim has dementia and is now in a nursing home.

The thefts came to light when two friends of Mrs O'Brien helped her to look at her bank statements and noticed a number of unusual transactions.

Walsh, of Rochdale, Honey Park, Kill Avenue, Dún Laoghaire, went with Mrs O'Brien to PTSB bank to set up a second bank account.

He then forged documents to authorise the transfer of monies from her old EBS account to this new one.

He used the account to pay a number of utility bills and used Mrs O'Brien's bank cards to make cash withdrawals of up to €500.

Walsh also forged a letter to direct the bank not to send bank statements to Mrs O'Brien's home. Judge Pauline Codd said this showed a level of deviousness and calculation.

Walsh admitted five sample counts, from a total of 21 charges that span a 21 month period up to September 2015.

The charges include theft of €500 at the PTSB on Georges Street, Dublin, theft of €733 at the Credit Union in Ballybrack, Dublin, and stealing €160 at Sallynoggin Post Office, Dublin.

Detective Garda Richard Redden told the court that the total amount taken in the 21 months was €75,000.

Judge Codd said the elderly and vulnerable had to be protected. Walsh knew Mrs O'Brien relied on him and his crimes were a significant breach of trust, she said.

She suspended the last year of a three-year prison term on condition that Walsh attend alcohol addiction programmes under The Probation Service.

Dt Gda Redden told the court that on 9 September 2015

he went to the EBS in Dalkey and met Mrs O'Brien.

He said she was confused and distressed and he learned she was suffering from the early symptoms of dementia.

Walsh was identified on CCTV withdrawing the cash from her account. Det Gda Redden told the court that Walsh was a taxi driver who Mrs O'Brien had used to take her to the shops and elsewhere.

She had first availed of his service by simply calling the local taxi firm and later began ringing him directly.

Later again, he began running errands for her and these included using her bank card to buy groceries.

When arrested, Walsh admitted the thefts and said he had a drinking problem. He said he had used the bank account to make small day-to-day purchases and was shocked at the total amount taken.

Kieran Kelly BL, defending, said his client is a married father whose wife and children were in court to support him. He said he is a working man with no previous convictions and he asked the court to give him an opportunity to pay the money back.

Walsh brought €4,000 to court to give to the victim, who was not present. Counsel said his client has significant health problems and has been unable to work of late because of stress about this sentencing hanging over him.

Judge Codd asked counsel what was the point in adjourning it to give him time to make more payments if Walsh was unable to work.

She noted that Walsh was previously a man of good character and testimonials described him as a kind, caring person and a trustworthy employee.

Judge Codd said his relationship with the victim had no doubt started out positively with him assisting her. She said he later fell into temptation while battling with alcoholism and noted he is now sorry for his actions.

Det Gda Redden told the court that there has been no recompense from the banks involved to the victim. Walsh and members of his family sobbed in court as the jail term was handed down.

ROAD SAFETY

A line of cones won't stop a speeding car but you can: A Road Safety reminder from Fingal County Council



Every year there are hundreds of incursions into roadworks which put road workers' lives at risk and lead to deaths and serious injury. This has spurred local authorities from around Ireland to join forces to take action.

An Orange Cone Safety Zone Week campaign, which has its focus on the lack of awareness of some drivers that roadworks are a place of work for thousands of people and that all of us have a right to expect a safe working environment, is being launched by local authority road safety officers from around the country.

The campaign is being launched on a very fitting day: April 1 (April's Fool's Day). The message here is 'only a fool speeds through roadworks sites'.

Andrew Nolan, Road Safety Officer said: “A small minority of drivers still think it is ok to speed when driving through roadworks. This is not only dangerous to themselves, but they are also putting the lives of the road workers at risk.

“The campaign is about reminding road users that road works are like any other work place, and our workers have just as much right to work in a safe environment. We know you want to get home but so do our workers. See the cones, obey the zones.”

David Storey, Director of Services, Operations Department said: "Improving safety at roadworks takes real collaboration across the roads industry, and I am delighted that these companies have come together to jointly support this campaign."

"It epitomises the spirit of co-operation that exists in our

supply chain on this important issue as we continue our work to ensure that nobody comes to harm as a result of working for or on behalf of Fingal County Council.”

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- **Make yourself visible:** All workers should always wear high-visibility clothing during roadworks.
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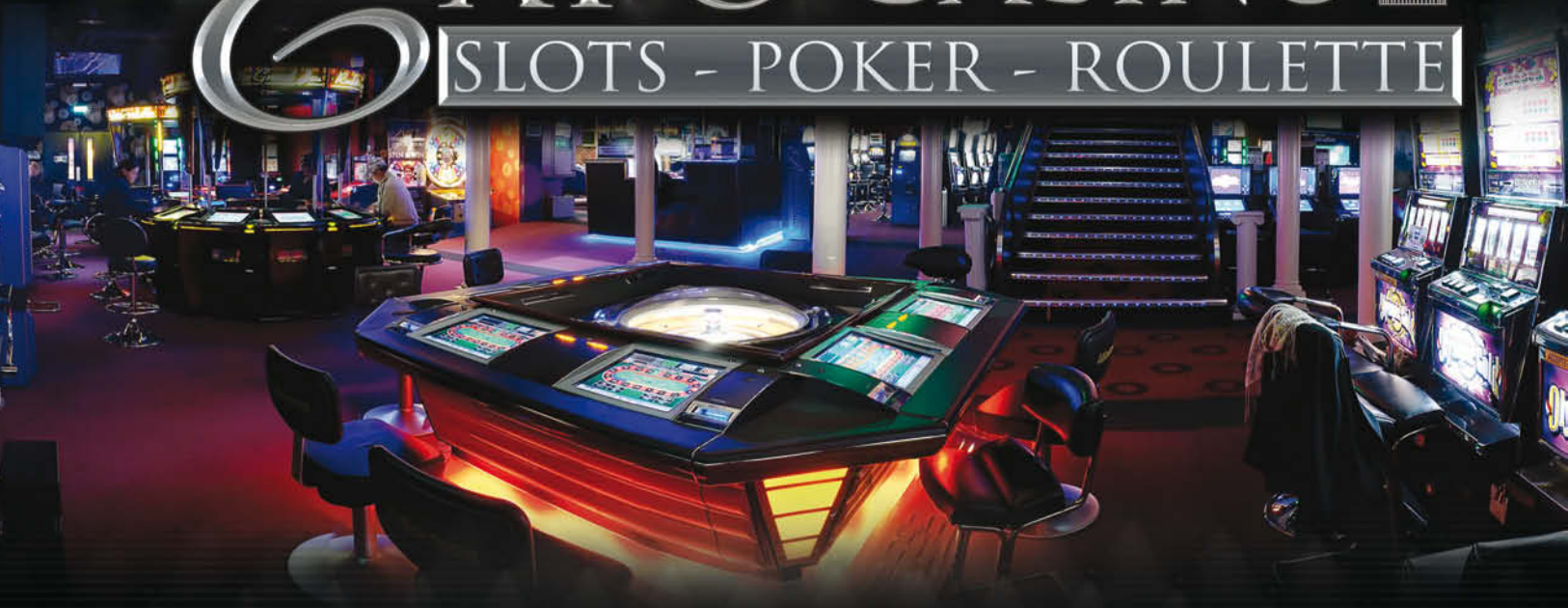


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ROWE CALLS FOR APP REFORM

In the wake of an alarming number of attacks on taxi drivers in recent months, ranging from assault and robbery, to threats against their families, Tony Rowe, Chairperson of the National Transport Assembly Committee has called for action.

In the wake of an alarming number of attacks on taxi drivers in recent months, ranging from assault and robbery, to threats against their families, Tony Rowe, Chairperson of the National Transport Assembly Committee has called for action.

Thugs who want to rob taxi drivers or flee without paying are now using taxi apps to screen potential victims on the basis of their age and fitness levels, drivers believe.

A spate of violent robberies and thefts over Christmas and the new year has resulted in some taxi drivers refusing to operate in areas of west Dublin such as Tyrrelstown, Ongar and Clonee over fears for their safety.

Drivers have been held up at knifepoint for cash, had their equipment stolen, and have had passengers refuse to pay their fares and then run off. In one incident on December 30 one man who refused to pay the fare for himself and two other passengers thought that by stealing the taxi driver's dash camera he would not be traceable.

But although the camera was stolen the footage it was recording was uploaded to cloud storage. The driver has now posted footage on social media in the hope that others could identify the culprits.

The driver who was targeted has told how the thugs who he collected had used a popular app to book him - which shows a photo of the driver. "I've been told since that they had requested and declined several taxis before they eventually chose me, probably on that basis that I'm a bit older and less likely to go after them," he said.

On December 30 alone there were two incidents in the Tyrrelstown and Clonee areas in which taxi drivers were targeted. One was when the driver's dash cam was stolen and the passengers refused to pay after being driven from Parnell Street. But in a more violent incident in the early hours of the morning a driver was threatened with a knife by a male passenger and a sum of cash was stolen. This incident happened at Littlepace Road in Clonee at 12.50am.

"It would make me think twice about working Tyrrelstown again, and there are other taxi drivers who have said the same thing," the driver whose dashcam was stolen said. "It leaves you shaken."

Speaking to *Tacsaí* magazine, Tony Rowe said:

"We have had a lot of assaults on taxi drivers of late. There have been about 15 or 16 drivers in touch with us of late, and they all maintain that they have been contacted through a taxi app that we have up and running. Now it has been running for years and we have had meetings with Paschal Donohoe back when he was Minister for Transport and we raised issues about people being handed information [about taxi drivers], through this app."

He went on to say that in his opinion, the app in its present state is not fit for purpose.

"It is being used by criminals who pick drivers up through it, and they rob and mug them. It's happening now at an alarming rate, and there is a gang mainly operating in the Blanchardstown area. They are rampant, and they are attacking and terrifying and they are robbing taxi drivers who they see as an easy target. The app allows them to pick up taxi drivers, and the response we are getting from taxi drivers is that they seem to be hand-picked. This is something I raised with Paschal Donohoe who was then Minister for Transport, before Shane Ross. They [the criminals] are downloading people off the app, hand-picking them, and they are mainly men who would be less intimidating, like senior men. We have had two drivers who were actually held up and knives were involved. They put knives to their throats and actually told them that 'We know your name, we have your photo, and if you report these incidents to the police we are going to come after you.' One of the expressions used was; 'We'll burn your gaf.' A lot of the taxi drivers are in the phonebook and can be easily contacted. In my opinion the app in its present state is not fit for purpose. The app used to include a photograph, it included a name, and it also included the address of the driver. Through our campaigning back then with Paschal Donohoe, we were able to get the address removed. It shouldn't be on it anyway, it's not needed," he said.

Taxi drivers concerned for their safety and that of their families want swift and radical action to stamp out this rising trend.

"What we are campaigning for now is that the photograph and the name be taken off both the app and the license displayed on the dashboard of the taxi," said Rowe, "What



we are suggesting is that this be replaced by the driver's individual number which is in the car at the moment. We are suggesting that the number be made bigger in the front and also be included in the back. This number is indigenous to all drivers. The app in its present form is being abused, it's being used by criminals to attack hard pressed drivers. We have had two fatalities already. We've had a fatality recently where a driver has died in James' Hospital after being attacked. A lot of the drivers are reporting this to us. It's well known, it's been well documented and highlighted. There are no other public transport professionals with their names on display. Drivers are being robbed at an alarming rate, and unintentionally, this app is playing into the hands of criminals. We need radical deterrents here, we need radical reform here, and the app needs to be upgraded to stop it from being used in this manner. The app is being described as a catalyst by drivers to commit robberies. The app must be renewed and must be reformed. We need a radical deterrent strategy here, and it must be introduced by the minister and the National Transport Authority (NTA). We don't see any other public service operators going around with their names on display like this for obvious reasons. That is why taxi drivers shouldn't be put into this volatile position," he said.

He went on to say that he would like to see tough mandatory sentences handed down for criminals who commit these crimes.

"Minister Ross must act on this before there are more fatalities. It can't be tolerated because I can see I getting worse. What we must do here is close this loophole. We would like to see penalties that are mandatory complete with statutory fines. This would be a great deterrent," said Rowe.

A spokesperson for the Department of Transport declined

to comment on these issues on the grounds that: "Crime and sentencing would be a matter for the Department of Justice as is personal information which is to do with GDPR."

A spokesperson from the department of Justice responded saying:

Robbery and assault are two very serious crimes that have the potential to cause significant harm to victims, and as such there are very strong penalties for those who commit such crimes:

Under section 14 of the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act, 2001, the maximum sentence for conviction on indictment for robbery is life imprisonment.

Under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997 the following maximum sentences apply for assault where harm occurs:

Assault causing harm (section 3) – 5 years imprisonment

Assault causing serious harm (section 4) life imprisonment.

Within the parameters set by the Oireachtas in the above pieces of legislation, the sentence to be imposed in a given case is a matter for the courts. Judges are independent in sentencing matters, subject only to the Constitution and the law. The court is required to impose a sentence which is proportionate, not only to the crime but to the individual offender. They must identify where on the sentencing range the particular case should lie and then apply any mitigating factors or aggravating factors which may be present in all the circumstances of the case.

There are no plans at present to amend the laws on either assault or robbery to provide for mandatory penalties. The Law Reform Commission and the Strategic Review of Penal Policy have made recommendations against mandatory sentences. However, this area of the law will be kept under review.

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REFORMED DRIVER BACK IN THE SEAT

While seated on the pews in the wood-panelled interior of Bandon Courthouse a few days ago, redemption arrived. Brian Hogan was back at the wheel.

The 39-year-old was cleared to receive a public service vehicle (PSV) licence, after successfully appealing against an earlier decision, by Chief Supt Con Cadogan, to refuse his application under the Taxi Regulation Act — specifically, that he was a right and proper person.

To win, Mr Hogan had to take to the stand to explain exactly where his life had been, and how it had now taken him from sledgehammers through doors and the pounding monotony of addiction to a new existence as a family man seeking to serve the community.

But, first, the background.

Chief Supt Cadogan told Judge James McNulty that he had received Mr Hogan's application on January 8, explaining how the powers to grant the licence have been devolved to officers of his rank, under the Taxi Regulation Act.

He told the judge that section 10 of the act sets out the various conditions that must be met, including the applicant's suitability to be granted a licence and any previous convictions that may be of relevance.

"I gave it serious consideration," the chief supt said. He refused the application and returned it on March 20.

Brian Hogan had not hidden any previous convictions. Written down on the form was a conviction from November 6, 2009, at Ennis District Court — aggravated burglary — for which he had received a two-year suspended sentence. A year earlier, he had been convicted for unlawful possession of drugs, at Ennistymon District Court. A decade before that, he had received the Probation Act, for intoxication and threatening and abusive behaviour in Ennis.

Mr Hogan admitted to all, but said in relation to the burglary, there were "mitigating circumstances", and he replied 'no' to the question of having any addictions and admitted he attended counselling.

Chief Supt Cadogan had trawled the records in relation to the aggravated burglary. At 2am on August 8, 2009, Hogan and two others entered an apartment block in Ennis, allegedly seeking a male who had earlier robbed two elderly people, with a view to retrieving those items.

"They went to the wrong apartment and the sledgehammer was used to put in the door," Chief Supt Cadogan said. Finding the right apartment, the man they were seeking was not there. The court heard the apartment in question was frequented by drug addicts and Judge McNulty noted that, given a conviction a year earlier, Mr Hogan "was not in a position to be chastising others."

Brian Hogan took the stand and said he had had a serious drink-and-drug problem from the age of 14 through to when he hit 30. The apartment-block incident, he said, was to retrieve what had been stolen from people he knew, an elderly couple who had been tied up by someone he also knew. "My motives were right, my actions were wrong," he said.

Not long after all this, Brian Hogan sought help. First, he went to the Rutland Centre, in Dublin, and then, after a few months, he moved to Fellowship House, in Cork, part of the Tabor Group. "When I went in there, my life turned around," he told the judge.

That is possibly an understatement. His last drink was St Patrick's Day, 2010. So successful was his stint at Fellowship House, and then, afterwards, at Sober House, that, in an unusual move, they gave him a job as a groundsman. He stayed there for four-and-a-half years.

Now married with children, he said he can't work on building sites any more and so set about acquiring a taxi licence. He has a job sorted since before last Christmas. He regularly attends his AA meetings and spent €1,000 on getting the licence. "I turned my life around," he said. "All I am waiting on is the clearance."

Sgt Paul Kelly queried why he had written 'no' to the question about persistent misuse of alcohol or any drug dependency.

Mr Hogan said: "That was my life 10 years ago. When I signed that thing, I don't class myself as an alcoholic or a drug addict anymore." He said he had a problem, but not an ongoing addiction.

As for the sledgehammer incident, he admitted, at the time, to trying to take the law into his own hands, something he regretted in hindsight.

"I was in a totally different frame of mind," he said. He'd also drunk a bottle of whiskey that day. There was no intention to rob anyone, he said, but to have what was robbed returned.

The judge asked Mr Hogan his views on An Garda Síochána and the work they do now. He reassured the judge: "They have a job to do and I respect that." Could the gardaí count on him going forward? the judge asked. "If I can help, I will help," he replied.

Then, Audrey Cullen, an addiction counsellor, previously with Fellowship House and now in private practice, took the stand.

She said that by the time she met Brian, on March 23, 2010, he was already showing "huge progress and, in fairness to him, he has never turned back.

"He was consistently determined to be in recovery."



He got an extended stay at Sober House, adding that he was “an asset on our own team.”

It was “fairly unprecedented” — “normally, we wouldn’t lean at all on clients” — and not everyone who enters Fellowship House progresses to Sober House. His extended stay became a job and he is still in very regular contact with the staff there, which Ms Cullen said was “fairly unusual.”

“He is so reliable, so dependable,” she told the court, adding that entry to Sober House meant having to be “sober of body and sober of mind.”

“He has been that for the past nine years,” she said. “He comes back to gratitude meetings religiously, every month.”

“Addiction is not curable, but it is arrestable,” she said.

As for his negative response to questions about drink-and-drug dependency, she said: “When you are in recovery, you are not an active addict any more.”

It was left to Judge McNulty to effectively rule on whether or not Brian Hogan had more road left in him.

He commended the work of the chief supt and said he understood entirely the objections that had been raised.

“He is doing what society would expect him to do,” the judge said of the senior garda.

That professional decision was made in good faith, he continued, but, in every civilised society, there is the right to appeal and Brian Hogan had availed of it.

Those previous convictions were 10 years ago and more. “The court must acknowledge all that has been said by Brian Hogan and on his behalf,” Judge McNulty said.

“The conclusion of the court is that this man has made a commendable and sustained recovery from serious addiction that affected him as a teenager and a young man.”

Among those watching this unfold was a young man earlier convicted of offences, including possession of cocaine, and about whom a report had been provided to court, outlining concerns that he may be prone to developing a drug dependency.

His father was seated beside him, everything sinking in that there might be another way.

Outside, later on, the solicitor common to both cases said, “I’m glad he was there to hear that.”

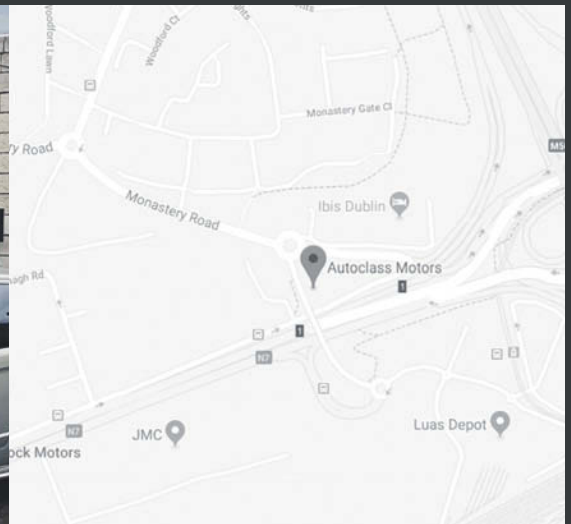
As for Brian Hogan, Judge McNulty said: “He has a history not only of recovery, but a history, after recovery, of giving back and coming back, giving back to others in addiction and coming back with an attitude of gratitude for recovery.”

“This is a day for celebrating his rehabilitation, his recovery, and his redemption. The court will be allowing his appeal.”

And with that, Brian Hogan, no longer of Ennis, Co Clare, but now with an address in Kinsale, Co Cork, was finally back on the right road.

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MAN AND WOMAN ROB AND BURN OUT ELDERLY TAXI DRIVER'S CAR IN TALLAGHT, SOUTH DUBLIN

A man and woman fled with the car before it was later found burnt out.

A man and a woman tried to stab an elderly taxi driver before stealing his car in a brutal late night attack in South Dublin.

The incident happened on Avonbeg Road in Tallaght with the man suffering minor injuries and his female passenger left terrified.

The thugs fled with the car before it was later found burnt out in Brookview estate, Dublin Live reports.

The 73-year-old victim was treated in hospital for his injuries.

The sickening attack was one of a number of incidents in Dublin on Friday night as another driver was attacked by three teenage girls in Coolock.

Gardai are investigating after three girls armed with a large knife tried to hold up a cab driver in north Dublin.

The driver had just dropped off a customer in the Clongriffin area shortly after 10:30pm when the three hooded thugs jumped into the back of his vehicle.

The cabbie demanded that the girls pull down their hoods, telling the trio that he wasn't going anywhere unless they did, Dublin Live reports.

At that point one of the women pulled out a large knife and threatened the man, who quickly got out of his taxi.

She then jumped in front of the car and a struggle ensued in which the taxi driver managed to get the blade off the girl.

However, the brave driver suffered cuts to his hands in the attack, while the three teens fled.

Gardai were called and immediately began hunting for the thugs.

They said in a statement: "Gardaí are investigating the attempted hijacking of a car on Bridge St, Clongriffin, Coolock.

"The incident occurred on the 4th April 2019 at approximately 10.30pm. Three females in their teens allegedly threatened the taxi driver and attempted to take the car.

"The females left the scene on foot and the man received a minor injury to his hand. No arrests have been made and investigations are ongoing."

The taxi man's distraught partner took to social media to warn other drivers that the three were at large.

Following her warning, one man said this terrifying attack highlighted the need for a garda station in the area.

"This is atrocious behaviour. We are campaigning for a Garda station for the Clongriffin area at the moment and these kind of incidents (if reported) only make a more compelling case to get something set up. I take taxis regularly and the Dublin drivers are an amazing bunch of people, really glad the driver got out okay and unscathed. Look after yourselves out there and stay safe," he said.



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GARDAI SWOOP ON FAKE LICENSE HOLDERS

Gardaí have revealed details of their operation targeting non-nationals operating taxis using fake licences.

Up to 90 officers carried out 10 raids on houses in Lucan and north inner city Dublin recently. The Garda National Immigration Bureau operation uncovered 134 cases where the immigration status of people who applied for or held a Public Service Vehicles (PSV) licence holder or PSV applicant is of concern.

They have finalised 64 investigations which have been forwarded to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service and this has resulted in the revocation of 55 immigration permissions.

Of those 55 cases, 25 people are subject to deportation proceedings to date. Four have been arrested on foot of deportation orders with two already removed from the country.

Gardaí said a further 15 people are being investigated for having marriages of convenience, another seven have been found to be present in the State without any immigration permission, and are now subject to immigration controls, with one arrested for immigration-related offences.

A previous Garda investigation had found that 180 non-EU nationals are operating taxis using fake licences.

According to the Irish Independent, the scam was uncovered after four drivers were found to be operating taxis through fraudulent SPSV licence applications.

Several searches were carried out at residential addresses in Dublin as part of Operation Vantage, a four-year investigation by the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

Addresses in the north inner-city, Lucan and Palmerstown were targeted due to suspicions that false documentation, including SPSV applications, were being produced.

In total, 180 individuals have so far been identified in the operation, which has included officials from the National Transport Authority and the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service.

Fianna Fáil's Transport Spokesperson Robert Troy says the scam exposes a severe weakness in the National Transport Authority's system for processing taxi licences.

"The majority of taxi drivers in Dublin and elsewhere around the country are operating fully in line with all law and regulation, and it's important to point out that this discovery is not a reflection on their hard work," he said.



"Rather, it exposes a severe weakness in the National Transport Authority's system for processing taxi licences.

"It's only reasonable for there to be concerns now for the integrity of the system in place to process taxi licence applications.

That this level of manipulation could have occurred is not only worrying for the public as a whole but for all other taxi drivers that pay a huge amount of money for a legitimate licence.

He thinks Transport Minister Shane Ross has serious questions to answer:

"The Minister with responsibility for the NTA has an obligation to provide clear answers on how this has happened, what's more, how long this illegal practice has been going on and failed to be picked up," he said.

In a statement, the NTA said licensing of taxi drivers falls under the remit of An Garda Síochána.

It said the Gardaí is the licensing authority for the issue and renewal of SPSV driver licences – the licence to drive a taxi.

"The NTA is assisting the Gardaí and did provide information to them which triggered part of the current focus of activity. As the licensing authority for taxi drivers, the revocation or suspension of SPSV driver licences for individuals currently holding such licences will be a matter for the Gardaí and will be dealt with by them."

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WORLD NEWS

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NEW YORK

‘Suicide Surcharge’ or Crucial Fee to Fix the Subway? Taxi Drivers Brace for Battle Over \$2.50 Charge The new fees were supposed to help fix New York City’s ailing subway by raising more than \$1 million a day from those who could afford to take taxis and Ubers in Manhattan.

But before the \$2.50 fees on rides could even go into effect as planned on Jan. 1, they were sidelined by a lawsuit brought by a coalition of taxi owners and drivers.

The opponents warn that the fee will add up for passengers, and will also deal a final blow to a taxi industry teetering on the brink. They say the surcharge will drive away customers when they are already losing business to Uber and other app-based services and struggling with enormous debt and bleak prospects.

Three taxi owners and five other professional drivers have committed suicide over the last year.

“If they put the surcharge on, that’s it, we’ve lost our whole life investment,” said Gloria Guerra, 62, who with her husband, William, owns a taxi medallion, the aluminum plate required to drive a yellow taxi in New York that once sold for more than \$1 million. “The business will be bankrupt. All the medallions will be bankrupt.”

The \$2.50 taxi fee was passed by state lawmakers last year along with a \$2.75 fee on other for-hire vehicles, including Ubers and Lyfts, and a 75-cent fee on shared pool rides. The fees are expected to raise more than \$400 million annually, according to budget projections.

Every day those fees go uncollected means lost revenue for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which runs the subways and buses. As a result, taxi drivers and owners have found themselves pitted against state officials, business leaders and transit advocates who see the new fees as crucial to the city’s

transit system.

“Transit riders, individual taxpayers and business are all contributing toward the cost of modernizing our transit system and it is only fair that the taxi industry and their customers do the same,” said Kathryn S. Wylde, president of the Partnership for New York City, a group of influential business leaders that supports the fee.

The \$2.50 taxi fee has also divided city officials and transportation advocates and complicated a renewed effort by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and transit advocates to push for a comprehensive congestion pricing plan for Manhattan that would charge all drivers a fee for entering the busiest neighborhoods at peak times. Mr. Cuomo and others have called the fees on taxis and for-hire vehicles the first phase of congestion pricing.

The \$2.50 fee will raise the minimum taxi fare to \$5.80 — which is still lower than an Uber ride. The cost for Uber, which has an \$8 base fare in Manhattan, will rise to a minimum of \$10.75, including the new \$2.75 fee.

Unlike the taxi industry, Uber and two other ride-app services, Lyft and Via, have supported the fees as a step toward addressing congestion and transit challenges in the city.

CANADA

It was impossible to get a taxi in one Canadian city as taxi drivers participated in a one-day strike recently. In Gatineau, Quebec, taxi drivers participated in a one-day strike. This move is in order to protest some major taxi changes that Quebec is making to the taxi industry.

The proposed changes from the Quebec Ministry of Transportation would likely deregulate most of the taxi industry. For example, they would get rid of taxi permits and territorial restrictions. The drivers and taxi companies in Gatineau aren’t



happy with this, so they attempted to send a message to the government with their strike.

A lot of the changes that the taxi companies in Gatineau are protesting are a result of Uber moving into the market in Quebec.

FRANCE

The national list of official taxi prices in France has been published for 2019, with the minimum price for one taxi journey now at €7.10, including all extras; plus new standard prices for Toulouse airport.

This brings Toulouse (Occitanie) in line with Paris, Cannes, and Nice, which already have standard airport journey prices imposed (see below).

The €7.10 minimum is calculated to include the amount already on the meter when the journey begins (€4.10), plus the amount due per kilometre, and the hourly rate when the vehicle is stopped, such as during waiting times or sitting in traffic jams.

From February 1 2019 at the latest, official taxi rates will increase by 1.4%, and are now capped at:

A minimum charge of €4.10 (the amount on the meter when the passenger first gets into the vehicle). There will be an extra fee of €2.50 (€4 in Paris) for loads of five people or more. The driver can also add a €2 charge per person if they have very

heavy or large luggage.

A minimum charge of €1.10 per kilometre travelled. This can rise by up to 50% for anti-social times, such as at night; and by as much as 100% for a journey that would force the taxi driver to make a return with no passengers; or in bad weather conditions, such as in snow or ice, and/or if the driver requires snow tyres to make the journey.

A maximum of €36.73 per hourly wait (in the event of a taxi booking), or in case of very slow journey progress due to traffic or other delays.

NEW ZEALAND

The owner of a Wellington taxi company that charged a Scottish tourist \$930 for a five minute ride, says the driver made a mistake. Tourist John Barrett was horrified at the taxi fare when he checked his bank balance last Monday after his was card declined at a supermarket.

He said he had since been contacted by taxi company Wellington Cars which arranged a refund.

Mr Barrett said when he contacted Wellington Cabs they said it wasn't one of their drivers.

However, the owner rang yesterday to say it was their driver, but they were using a different eftpos terminal.

Mr Barrett said he was still unsure why it took a week for the driver to come forward.

ROWE CALLS FOR REFORM OF ISSUING OF TAXI LICENSES



Tony Rowe, Chairman of the National Transport Assembly Committee and Spokesperson on Taxi's has reiterated his calls for a full review of taxi licensing at test centres in the interest of public safety.

This comes almost a year after revelations that some foreign national taxi drivers have used “sham marriages” to gain entry to Ireland, and to permit them to work here. As many as one in four foreign national taxi drivers stopped at recent illegal immigration checkpoints are suspected of having entered into sham marriages, gardaí believe.

During an operation in May, established to coincide with an Ed Sheeran concert in Phoenix Park, Dublin, some 110 drivers were stopped. Of those, 26 are believed to have paid to marry a woman from Europe they had never met so they could secure the right to reside and work in the Republic, according to gardaí.

All of the men are from outside the EU and gardaí have already revoked the immigration status they had secured when they married European women in the Republic.

Some of the drivers were found to be fraudulently claiming social welfare though working. In some cases, on-the-spot fines were issued to other for various breaches of PSV regulations.

However, it was the suspected involvement of a quarter of the drivers in sham marriages that caused gardaí most concern.

Sham marriages are marriages of convenience, normally between a man from outside the EU and a woman from a member state. The so-called brides are usually from Eastern Europe and are paid a fee to marry the men, who secure the right to reside and work in Ireland through their marriage. The Garda's Operation Vantage has been established with a view to cracking down on the problem.

Garda sources said there was concern within the force that such a high percentage of no-EU drivers stopped at three checkpoints during a one-hour operation were suspected of cheating the immigration system.

One man, from India, was about to attend a special citizenship ceremony but that has now been deferred on suspicion his marriage is a sham.

Garda sources said the decision to target taxi drivers specifically so their immigration status could be scrutinised was made after unusual patterns were detected in new public service vehicle (PSV) applications.

“We noticed a big increase in the number of men from outside the EU applying and it wasn't clear why this was happening,” said one officer.

Gardaí knew they could check a lot of taxis very quickly at the same locations before news of the checkpoint locations spread

Another source said 58 new applications for PSV licences were lodged with the carriage office in January, 40 of which came from men outside the EU. He described this as “way outside the norm”.

The same officer said the increases had been a feature for around 18 months. And when some of the applicants' immigration histories were checked it emerged they had previously tried to secure status in Europe.

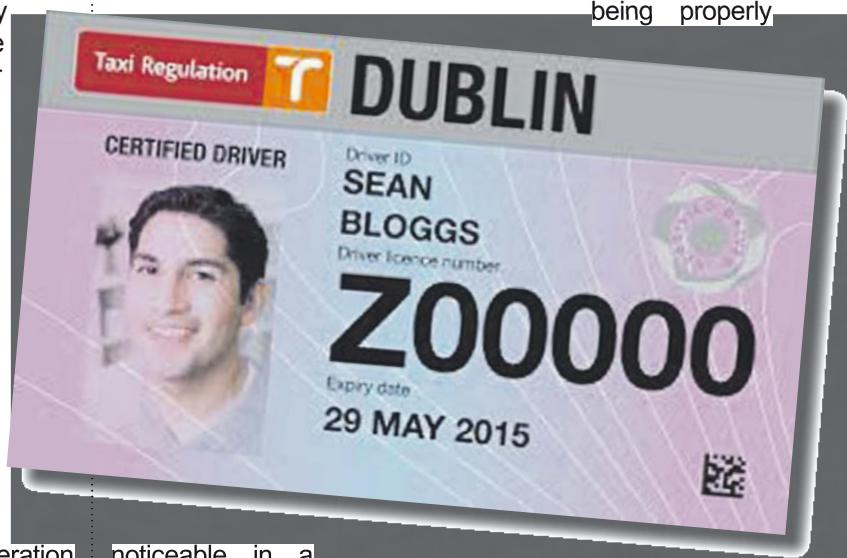
Following the checkpoint at the Phoenix Park, other checks have been carried out in Dublin City Centre.

Tony Rowe said: “We've had a recent check carried out in town on both sides of the city centre. The Garda Carriage Office, the Garda National Road Policing Unit, the National Transport Authority and the UK Common Travel Liaison

Committee and also the Department of Social Protection. In a one hour check in the city centre we have unearthed over 200 illegal drivers, a lot of whom are alleged to be in possession of sham marriages, which is the reason we've had the aliens department looking into it. We have received hundreds of complaints from taxi drivers, and a lot of them were non-nationals, and they were looking to have this thing investigated, and brought up at government level.”

He went on to say that the loophole which allows these suspected illegal aliens involved in sham marriages to enter taxis, as it could greatly jeopardise safety in the travelling public.

“Taxis are the only mode of public transport available 24 hours a day and seven days a week, and we have taxi checkers going around checking fire extinguishers and also checking bandages and they could do more by being properly



noticeable in a

proper uniform, which we're suggesting Minister for Transport, Shane Ross should introduce, just to be more professional on their part, and it would be a great deterrent, and boost notice on people impersonating taxi drivers,” said Rowe.

He paid tribute to the hard work of Gardaí in exposing this practice, but said that they want Minister, Shane Ross to act immediately on this issue.

“The Taxi Authority could do more than just going around checking fire extinguishers and fining people that have bandages in their taxis which are out of date. The Government must make a pragmatic decision here and be more pro-active on this issue. The concern over licenses must be addressed, otherwise the Gardaí are just wasting their time in having these great checks which are unearthing this illegal activity. There is a great need to focus on this now because Gardaí have exposed this practice, everyone knows about it. There is a real risk of this problem worsening if it's not addressed now. It's extraordinary that nobody has acted on this important issue. These people are actually contravening EU Law. The Gardaí have exposed this with their checks and this needs to be addressed sooner, rather than later. There are so many aspects here that haven't been addressed and we'd like to see these checkers who are going around checking fire extinguishers and bandages be more efficient in their present form. A change is needed here, everybody should be aware of what's happening in the industry and the government needs to act on that as a



deterrent now. This illegal activity is a nightly occurrence here, it can only get worse and it has to be addressed. Taxi drivers are brining around drunk people at night and we can't understand how these people have been given taxi licenses. The fundamental principle of a license has to be reviewed and has to be reformed. There needs to be a tightening up here, and these loopholes need to be closed," he said.

He went on to say that there needs to be a cleaning up of the industry by the Transport Minister and the National Transport Authority. He said that the fact that taxi drivers themselves are requesting this, shows that it is a critical issue.

"The Gardaí have unearthed this, it can't be contradicted, so it's up to the minister to act now along with the National Transport Authority to clean up the industry in the interest of public safety," he said.

He went on to say that he and the National Transport Assembly Committee are calling on the government to introduce new legislation to tackle the issues around the issuing of taxi licenses at source, i.e. from the test centres.

"I have raised this with Minister Shane Ross, and I have informed him that serious measures must be taken as a deterrent, and we want to know if anything is being done concerning the issuing of taxi licenses. We have been on to the European Commission, we have been on to the government, we have been on to [Minister of State at the Department of Health with responsibility for Health Promotion and the National Drugs Strategy] Catherine Byrne, we have been on to Deputy Colm Brophy, another leading politician for Fine Gael in Dublin South West, and we have highlighted that there are illegal immigrants driving

taxis and jeopardising the safety of the travelling public and we are calling for a complete reform of the issuing of taxi licenses at source. The guards that we have been talking to are doing a brilliant job and there was a joint meeting of the guards, the carriage office, the aliens department, the Inland Revenue and several other departments who have unearthed this issue," he said.

He went on to say that he and the National Transport Assembly Committee maintain that it is no good tackling the symptoms of the problem, and that they should be dealing with the cause.

"We want to know what is being done about these illegal immigrants driving taxis, the best part of whom shouldn't be in the country in the first place. The guards have unearthed this it is in the public domain, it has been well documented in the media and in several major newspapers so we are calling on Minister Shane Ross to act. I have asked him at a previous meeting to act effectively and efficiently on several issues, and this is one of them. We are calling on the government to act immediately because we are overrun with complaints. We are getting complaints every night, my phone is full of taxi drivers and the general public making these complaints," he said.

He went on to relate a very unsettling story of one such complaint in which a young lady had a very uncomfortable experience.

"There was one young girl who was in contact very recently who was saying that she got into a taxi and the driver was very inappropriate with her, and he tried to sell her drugs. She got out of the car and reported it to me through the National Transport Assembly Committee, complete with the registration, so I am passing it on. The problem at the moment is that it has gone from chronic to acute and it can't be allowed to go on because it has to be addressed and the sooner the better because it is getting out of hand. The guards know about it, we have highlighted it, and we are calling now for tighter controls on the issuing of taxi licenses. A lot of taxi drivers are very disappointed with the current handling of the situation. They have been reporting it through this App and they don't hear anything back. This is about public safety, and driver safety as well because a lot of these people become quite violent when they are approached by drivers and are very abusive and threatening. Recent cases that have been in the public domain and been in the papers have confirmed this. We have had numerous complaints here and the issue seems to be quite ongoing so we need to have proper reform here and we need to have it sooner, rather than later," he said.

He said the question that must be posed is: "How can people come into the country illegally, how can they sit in and drive a taxi, and how can they take part in a taxi test."

"We would like to see the garda carriage office doing what they have done greatly in the past. They were handling the test, and if you had any blemishes or any criminal record you were denied a license. As it stands here, it seems to be that you can get a taxi license willy nilly, we have confirmed all of this and we need to get it properly looked into. We don't want taxis to be seen by the government and the National Transport Authority, and the Minister for Transport solely as a cash cow for raising revenue and funds.

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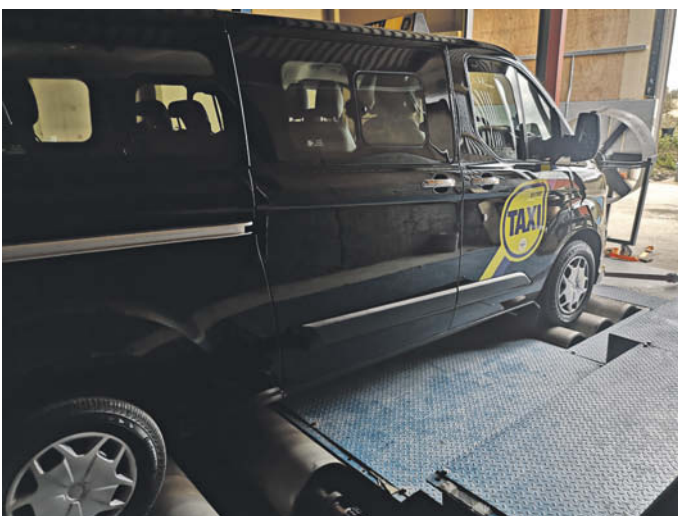
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NATIONAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

The NTA have been advised that the Dublin carriage office no longer operates a walk in or telephone service.

A

nyone who wishes to submit an application or speak to someone about their application or licence, must submit a request for an appointment via CarriageOffice.DMR@Garda.ie.

Appointments will be made available between

1400hrs to 1630hrs, Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays).

Attendance will be by appointment only. There will be no 'walk in' facility. Appointments can be made by emailing the Carriage Office at:

CarriageOffice.DMR@Garda.ie.

DEPT OF TRANSPORT

Last night the Dáil debated the Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport's Report on Accessibility of Public Transport for People with Disabilities

M

inister Ross thanked all employees in the transport companies, and their staff associations, including the NBRU and SIPTU, in helping to make public transport accessible for people with disabilities. He said, "I particularly congratulate Mr Dermot O'Leary of the NBRU for his sincere contribution. Working together to achieve better transport outcomes for people with disabilities transcends all political difference."

He also acknowledged the work of the Chair, Deputy

Fergus O'Dowd, and members of the Committee on their Report.

Minister Ross especially commended "all those people with a disability who have shared their experiences of using public transport which helped inform and shape the Report's recommendations to ensure better services".

The Minister looks forward to working closely with employees, public transport companies and other stakeholders in the future to ensure better accessibility for people with disabilities to our transport system.



TAXI BAN AT COLLEGE GREEN CAUSING HUGE TRAVEL DIFFICULTIES

The ban on taxis travelling through college green introduced on 12/3/2018 from 7am to 10am is causing huge difficulties to drivers and passengers alike.



The circuitous route taken is adding huge expense and increasing journey times making Taxis a less attractive proposition for customers. Taxis rely on the quick movement and carriage of passengers throughout the city. Recent media reports regarding the College Green Plaza and its detrimental effect to our business is causing huge concern to taxi drivers.

The removal of prime city centre Taxi Stands particularly on the city's main streets has lowered the profile of taxis. The current position of moving stands into side streets has seen a lowering of footfall for drivers plying for hire at these stands. Would be passengers simply flag down Taxis on the main thoroughfares, ignoring taxis queuing at taxi stands. A prime example is the removal of the Shelbourne Hotel Taxi stand which is now used by Hotel customers for private on street parking despite objections from Taxi representatives and operators.

The review of Taxi Stand Bye Laws 2014 made provision for DCC to implement Temporary Stands at major public events or gatherings. To date these measures have never been implemented despite our

requests. At concerts and venues taxi drivers can only watch as illegal operators take trade as taxi access is restricted. We would hope Councillors would support Taxi Drivers, with a view to having Temporary pick up and drop off zones at Major Events in the City.

As drivers are aware Local Council Elections are taking place in May 2019. We would ask all drivers to question these councillors looking to secure their votes the following

Will they support the removal on the restriction for Taxis travelling through College Green from 7am to 10am?

Are they in favour of supporting the College Green Plaza which will severely restrict taxi movements?

Will they support new Taxi Stands being placed in areas of high footfall?

At the time of writing we are still waiting on Transport Minister Shane Ross to implement the Legislation which will see a ban on motorised Rickshaws. We would also encourage drivers to get involved in the upcoming Industry Review which will go to Public Consultation in the coming months.

David Mc Guinness T.T.n.H.

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General Knowledge Questions

1. In the Christian calendar what is the Sunday prior to Easter called?
2. In which Irish county is the town of Buncrana?
3. Of which US city is Beverly Hills a suburb?
4. Who wrote the novel "Our Man in Havana"?
5. In which country is the city of Fez?
6. The Spanish football team RCD Espanyol plays it's home fixtures in which city?
7. In a game of snooker how many points are awarded for potting the black ball?
8. What is the SI unit of luminous intensity?
9. Into which body of water does the river Ganges flow?
10. Which organisation has the motto "Citius, Altius, Fortius" (Faster, Higher, Stronger)?
11. In computer terminology what is meant by the acronym DNS?
12. In which musical would you hear the song "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning"?
13. What is superhero Spiderman's real name?

THE TACSAÍ MAGAZINE BUMPER QUIZ

14. Who succeeded Winston Churchill as British Prime Minister in 1955?
15. What type of creature is an ocelot?
16. In a traditional Punch and Judy show, what is the dog's name?
17. The Apennines are a mountain range in which country?
18. What name is given to the central aisle of a church?
19. Who was the Roman God of wine?
20. Which animal's name literally means "River Horse"?

10. The Olympic Games.
11. Domain Name System.
12. Oklahoma!
13. Peter Parker.
14. Eden.
15. A Cat.
16. Toby.
17. Italy.
18. Nave.
19. Bacchus.
20. Hippopotamus.

1. Palm Sunday.
2. Donegal
3. Los Angeles.
4. Graham Greene.
5. Morocco.
6. Barcelona.
7. Seven.
8. Candela.
9. The Bay of Bengal.

ANSWERS



Knock Knock...

AN AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN goes to Japan on a business trip. He hates Japanese food, so he asks the concierge at his hotel if there's any place where he can get a pizza. The concierge tells him he will call for delivery to his room and takes his order. Thirty minutes later, the delivery guy shows up. The businessman takes the pizza and starts sneezing uncontrollably. He asks the delivery man, "What the heck did you put on this pizza?" The delivery man bows deeply and says, "Just what you ordered - pepper only."

THREE OLD LADIES sit in a restaurant, discussing their health. One lady says, "You know, I'm getting really forgetful. This morning, I was standing at the top of the stairs, and I couldn't remember whether I had just come up or was about to go down." The second lady says, "You think that's bad? The other day, I was sitting on the edge of my bed, and I couldn't remember whether I was going to sleep or had just woken up!" The third lady smiles smugly. "Well, my memory is just as good as it's always been, knock on wood," she says as she raps on the table. Then with a startled look on her face, she asks, "Who's there?"

A KERRYMAN drinks at the pub until they close. He stands up to leave and falls flat on his face. He tries to stand one more time and falls again. He figures he'll crawl outside and get some fresh air and maybe that will sober him up. Outside, he tries to stand up and falls flat again. He gives up and crawls the half mile to his house, crawls up the stairs and pulls himself into bed. The next morning, his wife stands over him shouting, "So, you've been out boozing again!" "What makes you say that?" he asks, putting on an innocent face. "The pub called - you left your wheelchair there again."

AN FM STATION HAS A COMPETITION where they ring someone up and ask them three personal questions. Then they ring their spouse or partner and ask them the same three questions. If the answers are the same, the couple wins a holiday to Bali. Last week the competition went like this:

Presenter: Hello, it's XXX-FM, do you want to play the game?

Brian: Yeah, sure.

Presenter: O.K., Question 1 — when was the last time you had sex?

Brian: Oh, mate. Well, about 8 o'clock this morning.

Presenter: And how long did it go for, Brian?

Brian: Oh, about 10 minutes.

Presenter: 10 minutes? Good one. And where did you do it, mate?

Brian: Oh, mate, I can't say that.

Presenter: There's a holiday to Bali at stake here, Brian!

Brian: Okay, okay...on the kitchen table.

Presenter: (much laughter). Good one, Brian. Now, is it okay for us to call your wife?

Brian: Yeah, all right.

Presenter: Hi Sharelle, how are you?

Sharelle: Hi. Good, thanks.

Presenter: (Explains competition again) We've got Brian on the other line, say hello.

Sharelle: Hi, Brian.

Brian: Hi, Sharelle.

Presenter: Now, Sharelle, we're going to ask you the same three questions we asked Brian and if you give the same answers, you win a trip for two to Bali.

Brian: Just tell the truth, honey.

Sharelle: Okay.

Presenter: Sharelle, when was the last time you had sex?

Sharelle: Oh, no, I can't say that on the radio.

Brian: Sharelle, it doesn't matter. I've already told them.

Sharelle: Okay. About 8:00 this morning before Brian went to work.

Presenter: Good, nice start! Next question. How long did it go for Sharelle?

Sharelle: (giggling) About 12, maybe 15 minutes.

Co-Presenter: That's close enough... Brian was just being a gentleman.

Presenter: Okay, Sharelle — final question. Where did you do it?

Sharelle: Oh, no I can't say that. My mum could be listening. No way, no.

Presenter: There's a trip to Bali on the line here.

Brian: Sharelle, I've already told them so it doesn't matter anyway. Just tell them.

Sharelle: Oh, all right. Up the a**e!

Radio Silence — Advertising

Presenter: Sorry if anyone was offended before, we're going live here, and sometimes these things happen. We've given Brian and Sharelle the holiday. Now we'll take a music break.

A MAN WALKS INTO A BAR, drinks a couple of beers, and prepares to leave. The barman tells him he owes 10 euros.

"But I already paid you. Don't you remember?"

says the customer.

"OK," says the bartender, "if you say you paid, then I suppose you did."

The man goes outside and tells the first person he sees that the bartender can't keep track of whether his customers have paid or not. The second man rushes in, orders a couple beers, and later pulls the same stunt.

The barman replies, "OK, if you say you paid, then I suppose you did."

The customer goes outside and tells a friend how to get free drinks. The third man hurries into the bar and begins to drink shots.

The bartender leans over and says, "You know, a funny thing happened tonight. Two men were drinking beer, neither paid, and both claimed they had. The next guy who tries that stunt is going to get punched in the..."

The man interrupts, "Don't bother me with your troubles. Just give me my change and I'll be on my way."

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