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EDITORIAL

What were they thinking? The bright sparks at Dublin City Council have opened a can of worms with their proposed pedestrianisation of the College Green area.

The plans will stop access for motorists to arguably the busiest intersection in the nation's capital. Dame Street, onto Westmoreland Street, will no longer be available. The new zone will cause untold chaos in the city centre and the taxi industry is in uproar!

The TTnH and Tony Rowe, of the National Transport Assembly Committee have both weighed in on the controversy. The ramifications of the plan are looked at with a fine toothcomb on pages 30 – 33.

Tacsaí Magazine has been inundated with calls over the rising cost of motor insurance. We had one very angry driver post a video to our Facebook page, and we spoke in great length to another driver who wanted answers as to why his premium has soared in the last two years. Some say the Celtic Tiger is back. To look at the rates insurance companies are quoting

now, the dangerous days of the Celtic Tiger may well be here again. Not the roar we were looking for...

The roar we were looking for is the one coming from France! Euro 2016 is here.

We have a two-page special on the Euros in this month's Tacsaí. We take a look back at the qualifying campaign and look ahead to the test that awaits us in Group E. Here's hoping the boys in green do us proud once again! You can test your Irish soccer knowledge in our quiz on page 57.

A recent NTA survey found that drivers are working an average of 25 hours a week, we look into that story on pages 12 & 13. Four out of five women say they would not feel safe in an UberPop car, as the controversial app looks to roll out the service here despite it currently being illegal in the Republic of Ireland. Pressure is coming on new Minister Shane Ross from the app giant, but he appears to be holding firm for now.

We hear from Noel Ebbs on Lynk's continuing success, plus a whole lot more in this month's edition. Safe travels and come on Ireland!

Stephen Young
Editor

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Brian McNeillis of the The Irish Brokers Association.



Conor Faughnan of the AA

“THE INJURIES BOARD HAS CONSISTENTLY RELEASED FIGURES DEMONSTRATING THE SAVINGS THEY HAVE MADE OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS. IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE FRANKLY LAME SUGGESTION THAT LAWYERS CAN BEAR ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCREASED PREMIUMS HAS ABSOLUTELY NO BASIS IN REALITY.”



AT PREMIUM LEVEL – INSURERS FEEL THE BACKLASH OVER RISING COSTS

It seems the recession is still only down the bottom of the stairs and already drivers trying to climb their way out of financial paralysis are being hit again - this time by the insurance companies.

Following a recent video left on the Tacsai Magazine Facebook page and very shortly after that, a call from a concerned driver, we delved into the often murky world of motor insurance.

This is an industry that has come out the other side of the recession unscathed. Quinn Direct, now Liberty Insurance, aside – and for that company’s own reasons – the brokers and kingmakers at the country’s top firms have been twisting the knife on Ireland’s drivers. The Government appear to be unwilling to step in and a crisis is unfolding.

In just two short years, many have seen their yearly premiums jump to over double the figures they paid in 2014. There were

rumblings on the doorsteps earlier this year to politicians who promised to ‘look at’ the problem once in office. The new Minister for Transport, Shane Ross TD faces an early challenge at his Kildare Street office.

We caught up with Peter Heavuy, who recently got in touch with Tacsai to hear his side of what is now a nationwide problem.

Peter said: “Taxi Insurance has jumped through the roof!

“I drive a 1.6 Toyota Avensis. In 2014 my premium was 780 euros. In 2015 it was 988 euros. In 2016 I’m paying 1,751 euros. I have a full no-claims bonus. And I want to know why my insurance is going through the roof?!

“I rang a around a few companies, they said “it’s all the crashes, you’re paying for crashes”. I said I haven’t had any crashes they said “it’s other people’s crashes!”

Peter added: “I don’t think that’s very fair. With a different crowd



I eventually got down to 1,550. But any driver I've spoken to, they've said the same thing, their insurance has sky-rocketed. A bloke I spoke to from one of the companies says the cost of insurance is going to continue to rise for another two years!

"There doesn't seem to be any reward now at the moment for drivers with full no-claims bonuses."

Experts are blaming lawyers for inflating the cost of claims, which is causing premium hikes.

The price rises will come on top of new figures from the Central Statistics Office showing that car insurance costs shot up by close to 12pc in the year 2015.

Higher insurance costs are countering sharp falls in petrol and diesel at the pumps. The average price of a litre of petrol has fallen by nearly 11pc since 2014 and now stands at 131.6 cent, AA Ireland said. The falling prices – although they have stalled and possibly risen by a cent or two recently – has also seen the price of diesel fall by 9.7pc to an average of 124.3 cent a litre.

But insurance experts have told motorists to expect premium hikes of up to 20pc this year.

Another 12pc rise in premiums this year would cost a family paying €800 for two cars close to an extra €100 on their annual premium. That would take the overall cost to almost €900.

Younger drivers are set to be hardest hit by the higher cost of getting cover.

Insurers are losing money on motor policies due to higher levels of road fatalities, more collision and injury claims, and the added expense of lawyers getting involved in injury cases, experts say.

The Irish Brokers Association's Brian McNelis said drivers should prepare for another round of sharp premium rises.

He said rises of between 8pc and 15pc were likely.

Mr McNelis said: "There is no doubt about it - motor rates have gone up, and will go up between 8pc and 15pc depending on the type of business."

And Conor Faughnan of AA Ireland said he would not be surprised if premiums go up by more than 8pc this year. He said

the increase in traffic volumes on the roads was leading to more accidents, while there was a rise in the number and cost of claims.

"We also have a situation where claimants are drifting back to solicitors instead of going to the State's Injuries Board. That is very unwelcome."

The Injuries Board was set up to remove the need for those making claims to use lawyers, which were adding up to 50pc to the cost of claims.

But increasingly insurers are settling claims when contacted by lawyers, ahead of the claim being dealt with by the Injuries Board. Part of these settlements involves fees and costs for solicitors, which is inflating overall claims costs.

The Injuries Board was set up in 2004 and has saved €1bn in litigation costs, a spokesman said yesterday. That €1bn would have been added to insurance premiums.

Managing director of CoverInAClick.ie Jonathan Hehir said motor insurers had been losing money for five years. "Unfortunately for consumers 2015 will see car insurance premiums increase - by anything from 10pc to 20pc before the end of the year.

Insurers lost a collective €254m in 2013 on motor insurance. Two of the biggest players, RSA and FBD, have issued profits warnings in the past few months, and raised premium rates.

Statistics published by the gardai show a rise in the number of fatalities last year and more collisions.

The Injuries Board has called for a probe into the early settlement of claims by insurers. Head of the board Patricia Byron says undue haste to settle cases may lead to "disproportionate legal fees".

But Stuart Gilhooly of the council of the Law Society, the body that represents solicitors, said it was "lame" to blame lawyers for higher premiums.

"The Injuries Board has consistently released figures demonstrating the savings they have made over the last 10 years.

"In those circumstances, the frankly lame suggestion that lawyers can bear any responsibility for increased premiums has absolutely no basis in reality."

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New research by the National Transport Authority has shown that drivers in Ireland work an average of 25 hours a week across five days.

However it has also been shown that this is anything but consistent, and the amount of time worked and wages earned in the sector vary greatly.

In Dublin, for instance, the number of days worked in a week varied from two days up for some drivers, up to a seven-day working week for others – with the average working coming out at 5.4.

On a different timescale; In Athlone and Cork – the other two areas covered by the research - drivers were shown to work an average of 3.7 and 5.4 hours a day, respectively.

The size of both of those working areas, of course, has to be taken into consideration.

The average metered revenue per week in the capital was found to be €635, but this dipped down to €98 at the low end of the scale, and stretched up to €1,189 at the high end.

Predictably, Dublin was found to have the highest average fare at €14.97, followed by Cork on €12.96 and Athlone on €10.72.

In terms of weekly earnings Cork came out on top, with drivers in the rebel county bringing in an average of €650, ahead of €635 in Dublin and €383 in Athlone.

The purpose of this study has been to try and get a better idea of what the average income for a taxi driver is. The methodology involved taxi drivers allowing the information from their meters to be analysed.

In total more than 50,00 journeys from 2015 were examined, accounting for more than €700,000 in revenue from 85 drivers. The readings were taken across a three-month period for each taxi. The research has been carried out as a follow on from the 2012 Taxi Regulation Review Report, which recommended the sector be examined to assess how much of a problem low incomes and low taxi usage are.

A Cork-based taxi is in service for 5.4 hours, on average, each day that a driver works. According to the study, a taxi is occupied 32% of the time that it is in service.

Taxis in Cork travel an average of 13.7km in each hiring cycle, with 5.9km of this accounted for by a fare.

The survey was conducted by the NTA, on foot of the Taxi

DRIVERS WORK AN AVERAGE OF 25 HOURS A WEEK

NTA RELEASE NEW FIGURES

Regulation Review Report, in 2012, which recommended the publishing of industry information to allow potential entrants to assess possible earnings in the sector.

In Cork, data was taken from 19 taxis in the city, which recorded 14,600 trips worth €183,000 in fares. Half of all trips were less than 5.5km.

The report found that drivers showed a bias towards unsocial hours, such as from 8pm-8am and on Sundays and public holidays, when premium fares can be charged.

A total of 65% of all trips were taken during these unsocial hours. The average fare for Cork taxi drivers was €12.96. Total weekly revenue for the drivers ranged from €80 to €1,153, with an average of €650. The amount was largely dictated by the amount of hours worked.

On average, the drivers earned €22.20 per hour.

“Driver work habits vary widely. Some work long hours, but on only a few days per week. Others work every day, but usually for only a few hours,” the report stated.

Meanwhile, There was a drastic reduction in the number of fines handed out to taxi drivers last year while there were also fewer

complaints against them, according to new figures.

Latest statistics from the National Transport Authority (NTA) revealed there were 928 grievances sent in by members of the public relating to public service vehicle drivers in 2015 - down slightly from 952 the previous year.

The majority of complaints related to the “conduct, behaviour and identification” of drivers, and there were almost 300 complaints to do with overcharging and disagreements over fares.

Despite a large increase in the number of checks and audits conducted by licensed officers - more than 40,000 in 2015 compared to 28,000 the year before - only half as many fixed penalties were handed out to operators.

Taxi drivers who fail roadside compliance and licensing checks are liable for fines of between €40 and €250, and there were just 692 fixed penalty notices handed out in 2015 compared with 1,369 in 2014.

Elsewhere, the statistics demonstrate a continued downward trend in the overall numbers of taxi driver and vehicle licences in Ireland since the post-deregulation highs seen in the late 2000s.

There were 27,440 active taxi driver licences held nationwide in



TAXI

2015, down from a record of 47,222 in 2009, and the number of active vehicle licences fell by 400 to 21,146 last year.

Some 450 new vehicle licences were issued in 2015, 269 of which were for limousines.

The proportion of wheelchair-accessible vehicles in the fleet remains low, according to the NTA, with just 1 in 20 public service vehicles wheelchair ready.

In other news, the Irish Times have reported that some 5,000 random checks a month are carried out on taxi drivers and their vehicles. Gardaí in the Dublin Metropolitan Region traffic corps arrested what called a 'bogus taxi' who was driving a woman home in March.

The driver had no tax, insurance or NCT and was also driving without a licence. The man, who is in his 30s, was arrested and brought to Kevin Street Garda station. He was later released and is due to appear before Dublin District Court later this month charged in connection with the investigation.

It is understood the driver in question had previously been Garda vetted and licensed as a taxi driver. The vehicle in question is also understood to have been previously licensed, but it was not

at the time of detection.

A spokeswoman for the NTA said it had significantly ramped up its compliance team after new legislation came into force in 2014. It carried out about 5,000 random checks a month, not just on taxi ranks or in cities, but all over the country. "It's pretty busy and it's pretty full-on," she said.

The NTA prosecuted 99 individuals last year where the vehicle, the driver or both were not licensed. This was normally rectified on detection, the spokeswoman said.

Joe Heron, President of the Irish Taxi Drivers' Federation, said taxi representative bodies did not like such stories "one little bit" but they were "totally unusual".

"This has happened so rarely I can't remember the last time that it happened," he said. "I know the Rape Crisis Centre issued a warning to women but I think that's very much over the top, to be honest.

"There are, I think, around 30 enforcement officers. Some of them work directly for the NTA and some of them are on contract. Between them and the guards, this doesn't happen – you're not going to get away with it."



TIME TO GO PRO!

NOEL EBBS ROLLS OUT LYNKPRO

A year and half since the Lynk launch, the largest taxi company in Ireland - Noel Ebbs, the founder of Lynk, has announce he is opening a new leg to his company – LynkPro.

“It’s been a whirlwind so far, since the launch of Lynk and we noticed holes in the market for companies and independent driver groups that wanted to expand into the app market but didn’t have the funding or software to flourish. We wanted to help them and create a joint front to compete both internationally and nationally so we created LynkPro,” Noel said.

Tacsaí caught up with Noel to find out what exactly LynkPro is and how it works.

Ebbs said: “LynkPro is the software development arm of Lynk Taxis. We have developed solutions for taxi companies and independent driver groups who want to advance their business. The LynkPro system is the most progressive cloud-based taxi system currently available. Our feature rich, automated dispatch system will allow independent driver groups and taxi companies alike to embrace technology they could otherwise have no access to and therefore future proof your business and operate with the strength of a huge group but remain independent at the same time – rather like a florist with Interflora.”

Noel continues: “This world-class software and apps allows companies and drivers to have the necessary tools to compete on a national and international level. It allows them to have partners in cities, towns and villages all over Ireland and UK – so your passengers can use your app wherever we have a partner. They don’t need to use a competitor’s app. So you can protect your customers – protect your business.

“The idea was to have companies and driver groups from all over Ireland and UK unite with likeminded taxi people to compete in marketplace as one huge group yet still maintain independence.”

It seems to be a fantastic concept; bringing drivers and

companies together, so how did Noel come up with this idea?

Noel says: “Well... we noticed traditional taxis companies were falling behind international standards in terms of technology and investment needed to fight for their place in the market. We wanted to give companies and driver groups the opportunity to advance without losing their identity. We knew how important keeping their local name and customers are.”

One of the most recent successful companies to join LynkPro was Blackrock Taxis, founder Eoin Doyle had this to say: “Technology in the taxi Industry is moving at an incredible rate and we didn’t have the resources to develop and market our own suite of apps. Partnering with LynkPro and updating our systems has allowed us to considerably increase our volume, productivity and efficiency.”

So, are there any other benefits people should expect from this solution?

“Yes of course” Noel added. “As a company or independent driver group there is no commission on your bookings – your business remains yours. The dispatch systems, professional suite of apps, and software we can offer taxi drivers and companies the means to cut your cost but it also allows you to grow. With the cloud, technology is made easy. And on top of saving you money the LynkPro will provide you with a fully integrated and branded online booking engine too - easily adapted to your existing site or as a stand-alone webpage, a cutting edge driver app and customer app and a superior booking system.”

What does Noel hope the outcome of LynkPro will be?

“Our aim is to give strength back to Irish Taxi companies and independent drivers groups by teaming up together under one umbrella, creating a super-strong and more united Irish taxi industry.”

If you would like to find out more, or join – please email the team on partners@lynk.ie.



Lynk Pro

Who is LynkPro?

Lynk taxis is the largest taxi company in Ireland. **LynkPro** is the software development arm of Lynk taxis.

What we do?

We develop technology that provides **taxi companies** and **independent driver groups** with top end software and apps so they have the tools to compete on a national and international level.

Our aim is to bring hundreds of taxi companies and thousands of drivers together under one international system, **Lynk**, to protect and expand your business and secure your future.

To do this we developed easy to use dispatch technology, driver apps and customer apps.

How we can help?

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What We Can Offer

Companies:

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- **Driver & Customer apps** – Superior feature-rich apps at your fingertips.
- **Build your Business** – Be a Maverick! Build your customer base and your business locally. Protect your future.

To learn more, contact our team at
partners@lynk.ie

TAXI DRIVER ARRESTED OVER HIT AND RUN

YOUNG MOTHER LEFT FIGHTING FOR HER LIFE

Gardai investigating an apparent hit-and-run incident which left a young mother, Siobhan Geraghty, fighting for her life have arrested a taxi man in relation to the incident.

Investigating officers from Blanchardstown Garda Station arrested a man aged in his 40s.

Sources have revealed that the individual was detained while driving his taxi in the Baggot Street area of Dublin city centre.

"An alert was issued to staff working in that particular area of the city, by gardai, with a description of the individual, his taxi licence as well as his registration number distributed.

"His vehicle was spotted by security staff at a premises who immediately contacted gardai," a source said.

Gardai also obtained CCTV footage from the Harcourt Street area where Siobhan hailed a taxi, as well as an ATM where she stopped to take out money.

The taxi driver was taken to Blanchardstown Garda Station where officers were last night



continuing to question him in relation to the incident last Sunday morning.

Ms Geraghty took a taxi to her home at the Lohunda Dale estate in Clonsilla from Harcourt Street at around 3.40am. However, the primary school teacher never made it home and was discovered lying unconscious by the road in the Lohunda area.

The road where Siobhan was found is a quiet road within an estate, and there would not have been any traffic at that time.

Neighbours reported hearing "a thud" and then a car speeding from the scene.

They discovered her lying unconscious on the road. She was rushed to Connolly Hospital and later transferred to Beaumont Hospital, where she remains in a serious condition.

However, it is believed that her injuries have not deteriorated in recent days and she currently remains stable.

Siobhan's brother Senan previously said in the wake of the incident that she had to undergo emergency surgery.

"Siobhan has had surgery to reduce the swelling and pressure on her brain, and the doctors said the first 48 hours are critical.

"She had three separate injuries to her head and the one causing the most concern was at the back of her skull," he said.

"It's hard to look at her now but if the doctors didn't operate, her injuries could have been fatal.

"There was no lamp glass or anything on the road where Siobhan was found, but gardai know the chances are she was run over by a car because her phone and belongings were scattered across the road and an aerosol can in her bag had been squashed."

A garda spokesman said that investigating detectives are continuing to appeal for anyone with information in relation to the incident to contact them at Blanchardstown Garda Station.



DRIVERS COUNT THE COST OF WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXIS

The cost of running and adapting a wheelchair accessible taxi is too much to cater for a very small portion of the market, President of the Irish Taxi Drivers Federation Joe Heron has said.

He was speaking after figures released by the National Transport Authority (NTA) showed that just 5 per cent of licensed taxis are wheelchair accessible. Despite efforts to increase the amount of accessible vehicles on the road, their number has decreased by almost 40 per cent since 2008.

Modifying a vehicle can add between €7,000 and €8,000 to the cost, according to Pat Fitzsimons of Parfit Limited, a Dublin company specialising in vehicle conversions.

The NTA says it has renewed its focus on increasing the proportion of wheelchair accessible vehicles “by restricting new licences to wheelchair-accessible vehicles (and) by easing the size specifications required for a licence to bring the entry costs down”.

The authority said grants of €871,000 added 134 wheelchair accessible vehicles to the taxi fleet in 2015.

Speaking on Newstalk Breakfast Mr Heron said: “It’s much more expensive to run a wheelchair accessible taxi than it is a saloon taxi.”

“I think the problem was exacerbated in 2008 when there was the highest number of wheelchair accessible taxis - that was at the start of the slump. Since then, when things started to pick

up in the economy, people got out of taxi work,” Mr Heron said.

Dublin taxi driver Denis Doyle has a Toyota Hi Ace mini bus which he bought already adapted for wheelchair use.

“It is a 2000 reg so I have to bring it for an NCT every six months. I then have to bring it for a suitability test. Those costs all add up.”

He has a son who is a wheelchair user and much of his work revolves around contacts who need to be brought to and from hospital, school and day care.

“I don’t take off street work anymore. People are reluctant to hail a mini bus or modified taxi as they think it is bigger and going to cost more, so you get less business that way.”

“Insurance is extra for wheelchair modified vehicles, some insurance companies will not even quote,” he added.

The taxi driver admits that driving a modified taxi is not of interest to many in the industry. He recently came across an elderly lady with her husband in a wheelchair, a taxi that had come for them could not put the chair in as it did not have ramps and there was no way she could lift her husband, fold the chair.

“I have this vehicle for personal as well as work reasons. There is an extra cost involved and not everyone wants to do that. There is also the extra VAT, so it can be quite expensive to go down that route.”

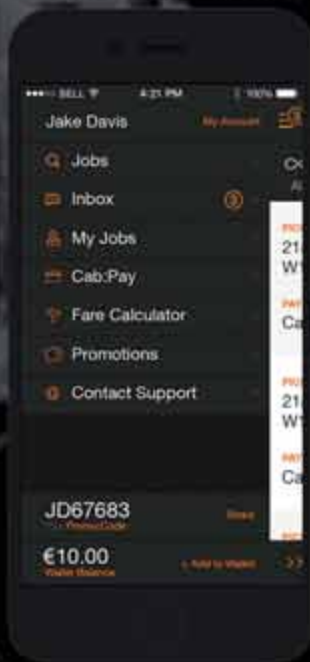
According to the Central Statistics Office, 13 per cent of the Irish population is currently living with a disability.



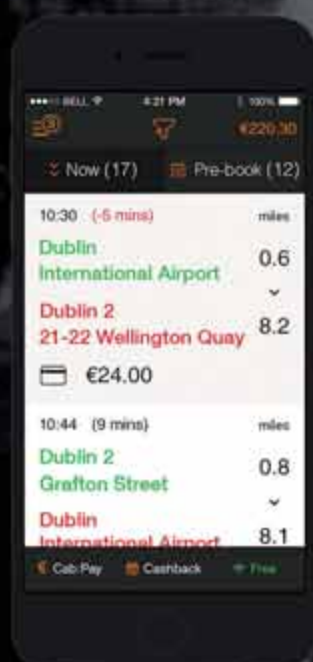
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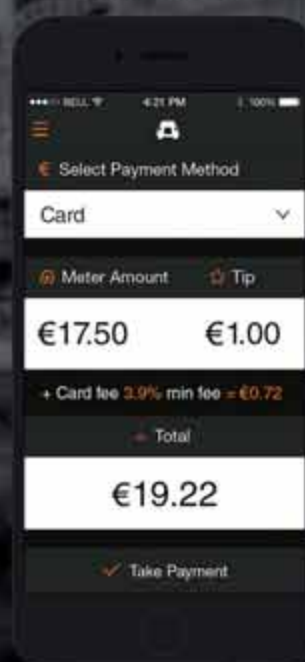
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IT 'SHAW AIN'T PRETTY

RICKSHAW ROW RAMBLES ON

The pesky peddlers are still causing havoc. We spoke to Tommy Barton of the DTA recently to get his thoughts on the ongoing kerfuffle over the infamous rickshaws.

He said: "In regards to rickshaws I'm sure drivers are fully aware now that they are definitely a problem, one which affects our business and our livelihood. The Bruce Springsteen concerts showed it all again as there were no Gardaí to enforce the Road Traffic Act. There were no Revenue enforcers around the concert area and even though the Gardaí were around Croke Park the night of the concert, I did not see one Garda pull over or stop one rickshaw for over having no lights, or dangerous driving or not having on due care and attention on the road.

"It's a total blatant disregard of any legislation that we as taxis fall under. I know that there was a meeting of the transport strategic committee with in Dublin city council and I'm waiting for information in regards of the proposals of that out meeting.

"I would also like to raise the very serious health and safety issues and lack of protection for the general public, taxi drivers, Dublin Bus drivers and Bus Éireann drivers by the use of these rickshaws, who we feel are operating with a total disregard for the general public.

"Taxi drivers have had door mirrors broken, their cars scratched. There have been collisions. Who pays for the damage? As these rickshaws have no insurance, we feel that our concerns are falling on deaf ears."

Tommy added: "Only on Saturday night I saw three rickshaws side by side in a row with people in them shouting and throwing bottles racing each other down O'Connell Street at 1am. This was

also witnessed by tourists. Not one of them had any high visibility jackets. One driver had a set of headphones on and broke a red light and, most importantly of all, they had no lights. What's really worrying is that nothing has been done by anybody who has the power to do something about this blatant abuse of unregulated madness and mayhem before somebody is seriously hurt or worse, killed."

The new Minister for Transport, Shane Ross, had this to say in the Dáil recently on the subject of rickshaws.

"Rickshaws are covered by road traffic law. Pedal-powered rickshaws come within the definition of 'pedal cycles' and powered rickshaws are classified as 'mechanically propelled vehicles'. They, like all other road traffic, are obliged to obey road traffic law. The measures which were introduced last year to allow An Garda Síochána to issue fixed charge notices to cyclists also apply to pedal powered rickshaws and provide an important tool for An Garda Síochána in enforcing the law.

"At present there is no specific legislation to regulate the carriage of passengers by rickshaws. Rickshaws by their nature operate at a local level. Local authorities regulate many activities at local level through bye-laws made under local government regulation.

"I understand that, in response to some concerns - primarily of a safety nature - both Dublin City Council and the National Transport Authority have obtained legal advices in relation to their respective powers to regulate rickshaws. Following consideration of those advices my Department will be consulting the Attorney General on the best way to proceed to provide for the appropriate regulation of rickshaws."



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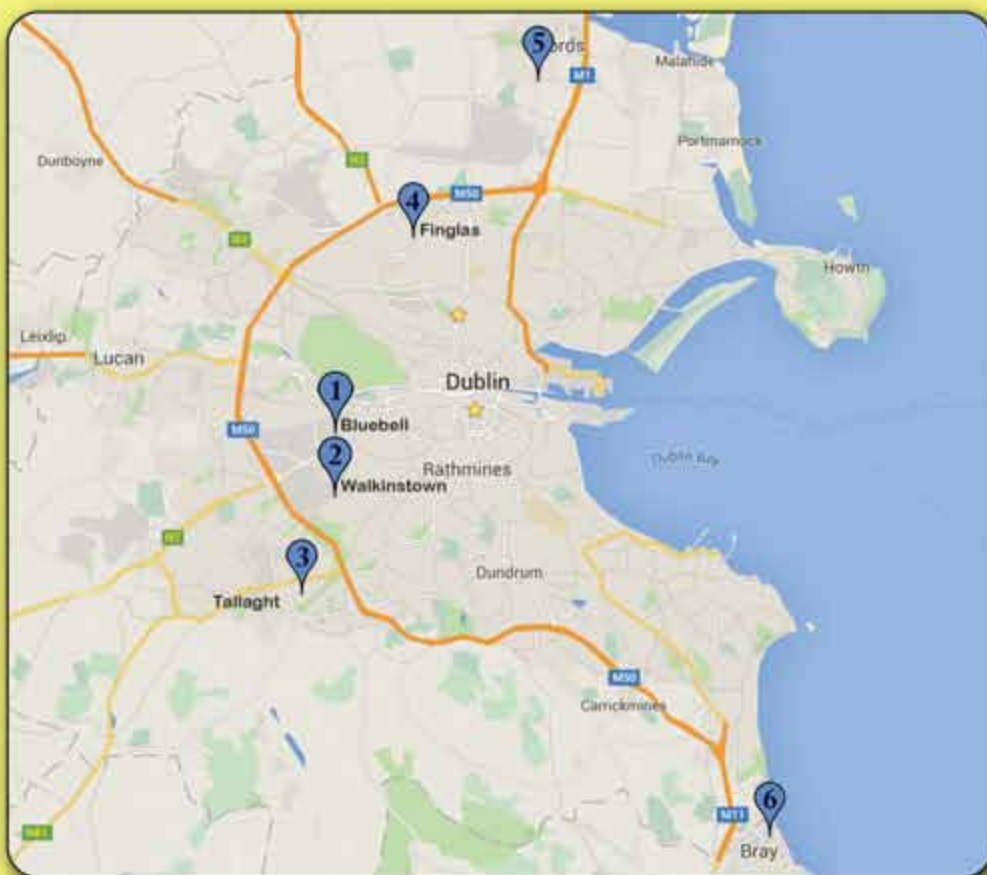
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Kieran Harte, general manager of Uber for Ireland and Northern Ireland.



Shane Ross TD, Minister for Transport.

UBER APPLY PRESSURE ON NEW MINISTER

SHANE ROSS WON'T ALLOW UBERPOP ON IRISH STREETS

Car-sharing firm Uber is a “reliable” and “safe” form of transportation, the head of the company has said following reports that the Minister for Transport was advised not to allow the company to operate services using ordinary drivers in Ireland.

Kieran Harte, general manager of Uber for Ireland and Northern Ireland, said he was looking forward to continuing an open line of communication with Shane Ross TD about the affordability, safety and regulation of the Uber car-sharing service which would use ordinary drivers rather than taxi drivers.

Uber, a substitute for taxi and limousine services, runs in most cities across the world.

The company, set up in San Francisco in 2009, signs up drivers to an online platform which allows them to accept bookings via an app to carry passengers. Drivers use their own cars, without being licensed taxi or limo drivers.

Briefing documents prepared by civil servants for the new minister for transport show that there is strong official resistance to facilitating the arrival of most Uber services.

UberPop, the service which allows ordinary drivers to carry passengers for money, has caused controversy throughout Europe, leading to protests from taxi drivers and has been banned in some countries.

At present, Irish law requires that anyone carrying passengers for money must have a taxi licence, and there is limited Uber service in Dublin run by existing holders of taxi licences.

“In order for Uber to operate a ride-sharing service for reward,

the legislation would have to be amended,” said a spokeswoman for the National Transport Authority back in February of this year.

“Our position is that it is in the public interest that any person offering a car service for reward should be subject to vetting and their vehicle’s safety should be checked on a regular basis, as happens with small public service vehicles and their drivers.”

Uber has been embroiled in a number of safety scandals, and on Friday offered nearly \$30m to settle a US lawsuit that argued its safety claims were misleading.

Harte insisted that regulation is at Uber’s “core”, adding that to get on to the platform drivers would have to provide a full clean driving licence, a criminal background check, the appropriate insurance and a certificate of roadworthiness for their vehicle.

“Pretty much they’re all the same standards of regulation that currently exist in the taxi market. We probably don’t think that there needs to be as many barriers to entry in terms of local entry tests, because technology these days really takes away that requirement to have to know every main street in the town,” he said.

“We’re talking about taking the cars that are already on the roads and utilising them better to serve the transport needs of the citizens.

“Ireland has huge pockets that are under-served by public transport, and that includes taxis.

“There are huge pockets where it just hasn’t made economic or financial sense for taxi drivers, so we strongly believe that ride-sharing is on its way. It just makes too much sense.”



THE GREEN MONSTER

TONY ROWE HIGHLIGHTS THE LOOMING AFTER-HOURS NIGHTMARE LURKING IN PROPOSALS

Motorists and bus passengers will face major changes to their daily commute to Dublin city centre, following the creation of the pedestrian and cycle plaza at College Green.

The new civic space, which will prohibit all traffic from crossing College Green to and from Dame Street, is expected to be in place by June of next year ahead of the beginning of operations of the Luas Cross City line the following September.

The council last November unveiled plans for the redesign of College Green, which included the pedestrianisation of the northbound traffic lane in front of the 18th century Bank of Ireland building opposite a two-way bus lane on what is now the south-bound traffic lane heading to Dame Street.

However, problems emerged with the design in relation to cyclists' safety and conflicts with buses and cyclists crossing the Luas line to access Dame Street from the northside.

The council's proposed solution is to extend the plaza, which would be reserved for pedestrians and cyclists, to the full width of the road, stopping all traffic travelling from Dame Street through College Green to Westmoreland Street, and travelling in the opposite direction, from D'Olier Street to Dame Street.

Buses would run along the same route as the new Luas tracks, north and south in front of Trinity College, and could use this route to access Nassau Street heading south, and Westmoreland Street heading north. On a trial basis, taxis would also be allowed to use the tram line route in front of Trinity.

However, buses and taxis would not be permitted to cross the plaza into Dame Street. Most buses currently using Dame Street to cross the city would be diverted onto other routes, while buses which continued to use Dame Street would turn around before College Green, in a new U-turn lane.

Cars travelling north on Dame Street will have to turn right onto Church Lane, where the current traffic flow will be reversed to allow traffic to loop back to head south on Dame Street.

Cars will be banned from Parliament Street, although there will be limited access for deliveries, but buses will be able to travel in both directions on Parliament Street and on Capel Street Bridge, both currently one way southbound streets. Cars will be allowed turn right from Dame Street to George's Street and cars and buses will be banned from Suffolk Street.

The changes are a "bold step" which will transform the city centre, the council's acting director of traffic Declan Wallace said. "We are showing leadership here. It's a bold step, and there's a danger we might all end up on the bold step."

Some 150 buses an hour currently travel through College Green. Dublin Bus head of operations Donal Keating said there were "pluses and minuses" for the service.

"If someone had said years ago there won't be buses going east-west through College Green, an eyebrow would have been raised," he said. Given the complexity of what has to be done here, I can see why this option was chosen."

Tacsaí Magazine had a revealing chat with Tony Rowe, the Chairman of National Transport Assembly Committee & Spokesman for Taxis.

Rowe pointed out that "it's going to affect an awful lot of people!"

The proposed move is drawing criticism from many quarters and Rowe added: "It has been described in the industry as a disaster with consequences. It's banning taxis from the city centre and it's isolating the whole area. Already there's been six ranks closed down there and there's going to be more now."

"So we're saying it could cost the exchequer revenue and it also jeopardises



safety at night. The region itself has become very volatile over the years – there was a man found dead in a laneway there only a while back. There seems to have been little thought given here to the safety of the public – and there are so many other factors to be taken into consideration.

“Public transport is needed in that area, and at night taxis are the only form of public transport available there. It’s going to make things very difficult for everyone.

“An awful lot of people currently use taxis in that region – whether it be shopping, a night out or whatever. This is something that has to be looked into.

“We’ll be bringing this up with various politicians as we normally do and we’ll be hoping to get some disclosure on it. It’s counter-productive to ban taxis from the College Green area! It’s a massive tourist area too, and now these visitors from abroad are going to be left searching for a cab, maybe late at night, and that’s not a good thing.

“There’s going to be droves of people kicked out of pubs and clubs all at the same time and it’s obvious for safety reasons that these people should be taken in transport as quickly as possible.”

The point Tony makes here holds a lot of water. Picture the scenario of weekend revellers all converging on one pedestrian zone in the middle of Temple Bar, the Dame District and Grafton Street... Chaos!

While the sunny-day mock-up images of smiling, happy shoppers perusing the College Green area without being bothered by motorists look great, the flipside of that image is the one we don’t see on the proposal drawings – the night-time hordes of the alcohol-fuelled masses loitering in what could very often become the biggest open-air boxing ring.

And what of the plans to allow or not allow vendors? The fast food hot dog

vendors will no doubt see the opportunity in this... Or the rickshaws? Will they be allowed to use this space?

There are too many questions that remain unanswered. There are many cities in Europe that have pedestrian-exclusive areas such as the planned College Green proposal, but none of those countries have the same kind binge drinking problem that we have here in this country.

Tony Rowe adds: “We’re calling for more taxi ranks, not less. Also bear this in mind too; there are six hospitals in the area, I sincerely hope that these proposed changes don’t affect the speed of the routes to and from those hospitals. Three of which are maternity hospitals! There are going to be massive diversions. We’d like to see the council acting in an effective and efficient way here.

“I think we can work together on this and hopefully we can avoid what could well turn into volatile situations at night.”

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- Kildare Street – feeder rank
- Westmoreland Street
- Foster Place
- College Green
- O’Connell Street

TTNH PRESENT COLLEGE GREEN PROPOSAL

WE HEAR FROM SPOKESMAN DAVE MCGUINNESS

With the College Green shutdown for motorists now just a year away, we got the views of the TTnH ahead what could be a massive blow for Dublin taxi drivers.

Spokesman Dave McGuinness said: "These proposals in their current format will see the removal of College Green Taxi Stand and Foster Place, with restricted access for taxis travelling east to west, from Dame Street to Westmoreland Street.

"It will see the removal of the right turn from O'Connell Bridge to Eden Quay, a no right turn from O'Connell Street to Cathal Brugha Street and no access to Bachelors Walk for taxis. Also, the proposed removal of the left turn from Westmoreland Street to Aston Quay.

"This further erodes the provision of taxi stands in areas of high footfall.

"A public consultation process was run by Dublin City Council from April 2016 to May 24th. Taxi reps immediately sought an extension to the process as the original draft document only mentioned taxis twice.

"A submission document was drafted by TTnH and the Taxi Alliance and presented to drivers at the ranks with a view to stopping this process. This proposal will see taxis travelling to the north of the city from the general College Green area having to travel to Christchurch, Winetavern Street to access the north quays."

Dave added: "This will lead to greater travelling times for

both customers and drivers and lead to added expense on taxi journeys.

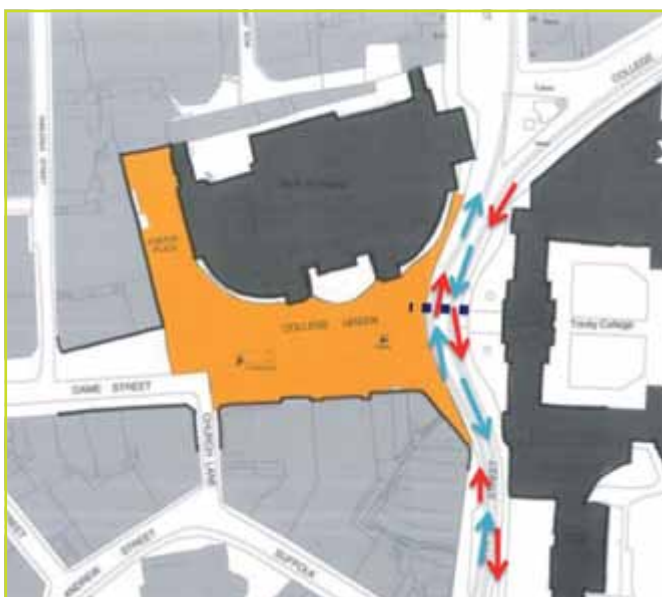
"Long term, we believe this will lead to a loss of business for drivers as passengers will seek alternatives to taxis for the reasons listed above. TTnH along with the Taxi Alliance presented to Dublin City Council the submission document on May 24th representing the views of taxi drivers. We will await the outcome of this process to view all available options for drivers. Many of the businesses in the immediate area affected signed our document and were firmly supporting drivers and customers.

The TTnH were also keen to talk about the system taxing of taxis. A process which they say could be, and should be, a lot simpler than the current system is.

McGuinness said: "The closure of a number of motor tax offices has left drivers restricted access to the service. This led to drivers being at a financial loss when what should be a simple process. TTnH has corresponded with the former Department of Environment and ex-Minister for Public Transport Alan Kelly with a view to using the Taxi Check App to allow drivers tax their Taxis online.

"The response from the Department was positive and they see no reason why this should not be available. TTnH have raised this issue with the Taxi Advisory Committee on April 28th and the NTA will contact the Department of Environment to see if online motor taxation can be made available for drivers.

The plague of rickshaws have been the bane of drivers' lives since they scurried onto Irish streets a few years ago, however it



seems as though there might finally be some good news on the rickshaw front.

McGuinness said: "As every driver is aware illegal transport (rickshaws) has become a huge problem. After years of campaigning to prohibit rickshaws, and being passed from Dublin city council to the NTA and the Department of Transport, finally Dublin City Council and the NTA agree that legislation is required to enforce any restrictions on these operators.

"We will be seeking a meeting with the Minister in the near future and presenting a strong case on this issue and other issues affecting taxi drivers."

"Meanwhile, A number of dispatch companies have proposed the following to the NTA - Dispatch Operators have been experiencing difficulties recruiting drivers – and request to:

Lower pass rate for SPSV Entry Test

Introduce a training course, possibly with FETAC accreditation
Consider a one-year probationary period where new drivers are aligned with a dispatch operator for that period
Consider an apprenticeship approach to the industry
Consider Garda vetting in parallel with SPSV Entry Test instead of subsequently

A number of dispatchers re; app companies are currently surveying drivers on hours worked, tips and numbers of fares taken and we believe the above is their agenda.

15 Dublin Airport Taxi Drivers are now potential life savers. The drivers recently trained with Dublin Airport's Fire Service over the course of two days and are now trained to the community level first responder stage.

McGuinness said: "Dublin Airport has partnered with TTNH (Tiomanai Tacsai na hEireann) to present 15 airport taxi drivers with a certificate in the use of automated external defibrillation. The taxi drivers, who were trained by Dublin Airport's Fire Service over the course of two days, are now trained to the community level first responder stage."

"This is the first time we have facilitated defibrillator training with our airport based taxi drivers," according to DAA Landside Manager, Anthony McGarry.

"I am delighted we now have 15 airport taxi drivers skilled in the use of defibrillation and we plan to build upon that number in the months ahead," he said.

Philip Kavanagh from the TTNH commended DAA for its commitment to the scheme. "Defibrillator training is a fantastic lifesaving skill for our taxi drivers to have and this initiative is a great example of what can be achieved through working together."

Dublin Airport's emergency response teams have saved the lives of 26 people since the introduction of its defibrillation programme in 2002. Dublin was designated a Heart safe Airport in 2007 by the Irish Heart Foundation in recognition of its success rate in saving victims of cardiac arrest at the airport with the use of public access defibrillation. "Dublin Airport has over 70 Airport Police Officers and 90 firefighters currently trained to use any one of the 45 defibrillators located throughout the airport campus."



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SEX ATTACK CABBIE WANTS TO DRIVE AGAIN

YOMI MATTI: “THIS IS MY LIVELIHOOD”

A taxi driver who admitted to sexually assaulting a female passenger has apologised to his victim, but has insisted he will drive again if he is allowed.

Yomi Matti (50) avoided jail after he was given a three-month suspended sentence in March.

Speaking to the Herald after the case, Matti explained he was unable to renew his licence due to the garda investigation into the crime. He confirmed he no longer holds a licence.

Matti has apologised to his victim - but insisted the incident was a nothing more than a misunderstanding.

In what the judge described as the “ultimate nightmare scenario” for an unaccompanied woman in a taxi, he was found guilty of repeatedly touching her thigh.

Matti said that he was very sorry for what had happened. “I didn’t mean anything,” he said.

“She said I touched her leg, I swear to God, I have a family of four kids, I have a wife and this is my livelihood. Why would I do something to jeopardise my life?

“I swear to God, I didn’t mean anything,” Matti said in an emotional plea to the court.

Matti said he would drive his taxi in future, if given the chance. However, current legislation will not allow this.

“This is my livelihood. I’m extremely sorry, I’m very sorry,” he

said. “She said I touched her about 10 times, each time about two seconds. I don’t remember doing such, but it’s her word against mine,” he added.

“If I fought the case and if I had lost, I go to jail. I don’t want to go to jail,” he said.

In court, Matti pleaded guilty to sexual assaulting the woman on November 1, 2014. A garda told Blanchardstown District Court the victim had taken the taxi from Harcourt Street in the early hours of the morning. She was sitting in the front passenger seat.

“On the way out, the driver touched her on the leg on a number of occasions, that is the crux of it really,” the garda said.

Matti - from Clonsilla, County Dublin - had no previous convictions of any kind. A victim impact statement was presented to the court. Reading this, the judge said it was a “very fair report” and the garda said he had agreed that the victim was a “very genuine young lady”.

“Her motivation was totally unselfish in reporting the matter,” Judge McHugh said. “She just didn’t want it to happen to somebody else.”

Matti, originally from Nigeria, has lived in Ireland for 15 years and had worked as a taxi driver for six years. He was ordered to pay €1,100, which he had brought to court, as a token of remorse to be given to the victim either to keep or donate to charity.



ŠKODA introduces new 1.0TSI petrol engine

There are many drivers in the fleet who have flocked to a certain car brand in the last few years. And for those who haven't yet made the switch there might not be a better time...

ŠKODA Ireland have announced that they will introduce a new 1.0TSI petrol engine in their Octavia model this July.

Not only will this be the first time a three cylinder engine will be used in the Octavia; ŠKODA will be the first brand in the Volkswagen Group to launch this particular engine on the MQB platform.

Turbo charging will result in a healthy 115bhp power output from this unit. Exact figures have yet to be confirmed however significant improvements in fuel efficiency and emission outputs are expected

when compared to the outgoing 1.2TSI engine.

ŠKODA have an impressive history of being early adopters of low capacity, high output petrol engines with the introduction of their first 1.0 petrol engines in 1997. Following on from this, ŠKODA then introduced TSI (Turbo Stratified Injection) technology in 2009 with their 1.2TSI petrol engine.

Speaking to Tacsai Magazine, Cathal Kealey, PR Manager at ŠKODA Ireland, said, "There is still a perception out there among motorists that engines need to be of a certain size in relation to the body size.

"Things have changed significantly in the last number of years. For example the new 1.0 TSI engine produces the same power output as the range topping 2.0 litre petrol engine that was fitted to the original Octavia back in 1998. The Octavia therefore develops the same power from an engine half the size!"

ŠKODA is one of the longest-established vehicle production companies in the world. In 1895, the Czech headquarters in Mladá Boleslav began producing bicycles, followed by the production of motorbikes and cars. ŠKODA currently has seven passenger car models; Citigo, Fabia, Rapid, Octavia, Yeti and Superb. In Ireland ŠKODA sold 7,816 passenger vehicles in 2015 (an increase of 24% on 2014) through a network of 26 dealers with a market share of 6.3%. ŠKODA has been part of the Volkswagen Group since 1993.



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UBER FREAKED!

***VAST MAJORITY OF
WOMEN DO NOT WANT
THE RIDE-SHARING
SERVICE IN IRELAND***

A recent story from the Irish Independent has questioned whether women would be happy to hop into an unlicensed car, aka UberPop, or will they stick to their beloved Hailo and other apps who use PSV-licensed drivers?

That's the question Uber heads will be asking the people of Ireland if they get the go-ahead to launch a pilot rideshare scheme here. A limited version of the Uber service is already available here - but only through licensed taxi drivers.

The rideshare service is currently illegal in Ireland as all drivers are required to have a PSV-licence. However, a lobbying committee is in the process of



trying to persuade the Government to allow them to trial a peer-to-peer ride sharing service in Limerick. Potential Uber drivers would need little more than a decent car and a Smartphone.

A rideshare service would significantly change the landscape of the Irish taxi industry: more cars, cheaper fares, less congestion... and a lot of disgruntled taxi drivers.

The National Transport Authority and the Department of Transport have filed submissions to Transport Minister Shane Ross regarding the possible change of rules.

Hailo, Uber's main rival in Ireland, has also filed a submission. Tim Arnold, general manager of Hailo Ireland, says they commissioned iReach research earlier this year and found that four out of five passengers feel safest in a licensed taxi - and a large majority of people would be against paying a stranger for a lift through ridesharing.

"The survey found very low levels of public support for ridesharing - a practice illegal in Ireland but operating in some parts of the US and Europe, which allows motorists to offer lifts to the public for payment," he adds.

It's not surprising that the view is most prevalent among women, with 88 per cent saying ridesharing is unacceptable.

The issue is safety.

Uber insist that they perform stringent background checks on potential drivers, but a number of cases in the US tell a different story.

Last year, Uber said they would improve their vetting procedures when an unregistered driver who had previously been convicted of assault was granted approval to drive for the company by mistake. He was later arrested in Dallas on suspicion of sexually assaulting a female passenger.

More recently, prosecutors in California alleged that Uber had failed to perform thorough background checks on 25 drivers with criminal records, including a convicted murderer, registered sex offenders and burglars.

Social Democrats Councillor Gary Gannon fears that Uber's vetting procedures will be similarly lacking if ridesharing is rolled out in Ireland.

"The safety of any person entering a service vehicle must be of paramount importance," he says.

"As it stands, taxi operators go through quite a stringent Garda vetting process and I don't believe that the same standards would apply if Uber were to bring in a ridesharing app."

The issue of the changing face of the taxi landscape is of particular concern to women travelling alone, who may be concerned about getting into a taxi hailed on the street.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the popularity of Hailo - a taxi app which features driver reviews and a GPS map showing where your car is - has much to do with women feeling more confident about the identity of their driver and that their whereabouts are being tracked, making them feel safer, although Hailo say they believe that their customer base is actually 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female.

Nonetheless, security is a big concern for women. Lorna Farrelly, from West Cork, is co-owner of The Brow Artist. She would be slow to use a rideshare service. "I don't think a woman should compromise on personal safety," she says. "Getting into a car with an unlicensed driver and strangers is definitely not worth the risk just to have a less expensive service."

Farrelly uses Hailo, which she considers to be safer. "I actually wouldn't use anything other than this service now. The idea that I have all the details of my driver and that they also have mine means I don't worry about forgetting anything in the car or getting into a dangerous situation."

Still, her experiences with Hailo have not been without incident. "A number of years ago, when Hailo was first launched in Dublin, I had a few unpleasant experiences with drivers using my phone number and contacting me personally," she recalls.

"Luckily, because all information of every trip is recorded, I was able to file a complaint easily."

Blogger Rachel Martin of 'The Insider Daily' is another app customer. She uses the service at least two or three times a week but would never use the Uber rideshare service. "I wouldn't get into a car with an unregistered taxi driver - not in a million years," she says.

Uber has moved into 450 cities in 70 countries since its launch in 2010, yet their plans for market domination in Ireland have so far eluded them. Meanwhile, Hailo's dominant market share in Ireland is largely due to their 18-month head start over their nearest rival.

Not everyone is against UberPop though, as Laura Walsh from Dublin would like the service to come to Ireland.

She said: "I'd be 100 per cent open to using it if it came here. I think it's a fantastic idea - cheaper fares and helping someone earn a few bob. Everyone wins."

Well, everyone except registered taxi drivers. There are already more than 16,500 taxis registered in Ireland and many experts say Ireland simply doesn't have the population or market liquidity to absorb a fleet of considerably cheaper taxis.

They also point out the service's reputation in other European countries. Regulatory roadblocks and taxi industry pressure groups instigated the banning of Uber's rideshare service in a number of countries including France, Germany, Spain and Italy, as well as many local municipalities in the US.

Uber eventually suspended the ridesharing service in France after demonstrations by drivers became violent and two European Uber managers were held by police and questioned.

"The company's attitude seems to be 'It's easier to seek forgiveness than to ask for permission'," says Gary Gannon. "We must not allow Ireland to be another playground for Uber's guerrilla tactics."

The 'sharing economy', as it is known, is slowly but surely disrupting the old guard.

Elsewhere, a number of emerging rideshare competitors are making female passengers their main priority.

Chariot for Women - a taxi service with exclusively female drivers and passengers - was recently launched by a former Uber driver in the US.

Meanwhile, Uber is working hard to implement better security procedures - no doubt prompted by the bad press received in recent years.

TripTracker is a new safety feature that offers "peace of mind" by giving Uber customers the option to share a real-time map that shows their route and arrival time to their loved ones.

"Whether you're riding in the back seat or driving upfront, every part of the Uber experience has been designed around your safety and security," says Kieran Harte, general manager, Uber Ireland.

Uber may not get the go-ahead to launch their pilot service in Limerick today or tomorrow - but it looks like they are preparing for a long journey ahead.

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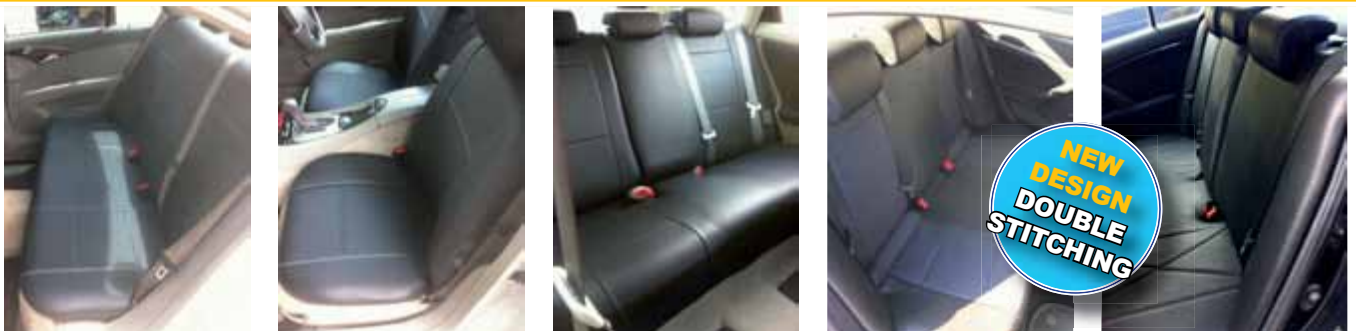
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You may notice a slight drop off in business between June 13th and June 22nd this summer.

Maybe not, for many will stay at home and flock to find some good seats in front of the widescreen TV down at the local. However a lot of people I talk to these days have plans to leave the Emerald Isle for the direction of France – in search of Euro 2016 glory!

I'm sure many of you won't even mind a few quiet days. The Boys in Green are back at a major tournament once more.

Our last foray to a European Championships in 2012 ended in ignominious failure. An embarrassment in footballing terms that not even rousing renditions of The Fields Of Athenry could save.

Humiliated, and with our tails between our legs, we returned home. But as science itself dictates – what goes up, must come down. Was the reverse possible? Could this Irish team – whom many have written off as 'the worst group of players we've ever had' – bounce back and could we reclaim our place at a top football tournament.

We needed a spark. We needed a manager who could re-instill the courageous heart long associated with Irish teams. We needed a saviour. And we got it. We got two.

Martin O'Neill and Roy Keane – an unlikely pairing aside from TV punditry – were handed the reigns of a flailing Irish dressing room.

The turnaround was slow but there for all to see. That famed Irish fight began to rear its head as Aiden McGeady popped up late one to give us three points away to Georgia in the first group game. A 2-1 win away to the Georgians proved a good result as the group unfolded.

Again, the Irish spirit was summoned as John O'Shea found himself in the opposition box away to Germany in injury time to earn a famous 1-1 draw with the World Champions. And the fans began to believe. The team must have begun to believe too because by the time we hosted the Germans at the Aviva Stadium we sent them packing with an astonishing 1-0 win thanks to Mr Shane Long.

It was a group we didn't look like coming out of at one point. A 1-0 defeat to Scotland earlier in campaign had many pundits writing off our chances and linking Martin O'Neill with a return to the Premier League. A disappointing 1-1 draw at home against the Scots left us 4th. 3rd place in the group and a play-off looked a pipe dream.

But there is something different about this Irish team.

We did reach the play-off, and handed a tough draw against Bosnia and Herzegovina, we went on the road for the first game. Although not a game for the spectators – with the second half shrouded under dense fog – we came away with a crucial away goal in a 1-1 draw. The Bosnians looked out of ideas against O'Neill's well-organised and dogged Irish side. The second leg went as well as it could have with Ireland winning 2-0. Progress secured. The celebrations began and the Carlsberg ads went into production.

So here we are – on the eve of Euro 2016 in France. The new 24-team format has given the tournament a jolt of life. There are a lot of new faces on the scene, some not seen at a major tournament for many years – Wales, Northern Ireland and Iceland chief among them.

The draw was going to be fascinating!

The Irish do not have the luck of the English it seems when it comes to qualifying or tournament draws. The English are almost constantly handed the cushy numbers while the Irish seem to

always find themselves in with the big boys. 2012 – Spain, Italy and Croatia. 2016 – Belgium, Italy and Sweden. But that's ok, despite England's annual gifts from UEFA and FIFA they still have not managed to add to their sole World Cup of 1966. Considering they boast "the best league in the world" that has to be seen as exactly what it is... a massive failure on their part.

But let's let the auld enemy do what they do best and worry about our own game. First up, it's the Swedes.

Sweden have a huge success rate in qualifying for tournaments with some great players to have worn the yellow shirt over the years such as Henrik Larsson, Freddie Ljungberg, Tomas Brodin and of course the current main man, Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Their footballing style most closely resembles a British style of play. High intensity and work rate, high pressing, using their wingers to full effect and very often using a target man up front who could be sought out with the occasional long ball. Sweden's main threat will be Zlatan. Obviously great in the air, but also blessed with great feet and pace. He will be the one that Martin will be talking to his defenders about. Seb Larsson is a talented winger who will be looking to find the head of Ibrahimovic as often as he can. Another player to watch out for is Celta Vigo's John Guidetti – a clever forward who feeds off the chances Zlatan creates. There's no doubt they carry a threat up front. But they can be nullified if Larsson is frustrated on the wing in particular.

The Belgians come into this tournament with one of the strongest squads on paper. Eden Hazard, Kevin De Bruyne, Romelu Lukaku, Christian Benteke and Divock Origi are some of the best of their attacking talents. The toughest part of facing Belgium will be trying to guess the line up.

With the striking firepower they have it is safe to say we should be worried. They may opt to line up with only one striker – Lukaku or Origi. Behind that they will probably go with a trio of Hazard, De Bruyne and Fellaini. Alex Witsel and Roma's Radja Nangigolan will hold the midfield. It doesn't get any better for the Irish when you look at their defence. Vincent Kompany is ruled out through injury. But Spurs duo Toby Alderweireld and Jan Vertonghen can very easily fill the void. With Thibaut Courtois in goal it doesn't make pretty reading. However, many of this Belgium team have been off form this season and may not be coming into the Euros full of confidence. Don't rule out a scrappy, dogged 0-0 draw in this game.

Italy have a great tournament record, of course, and have won this tournament before in 1968.

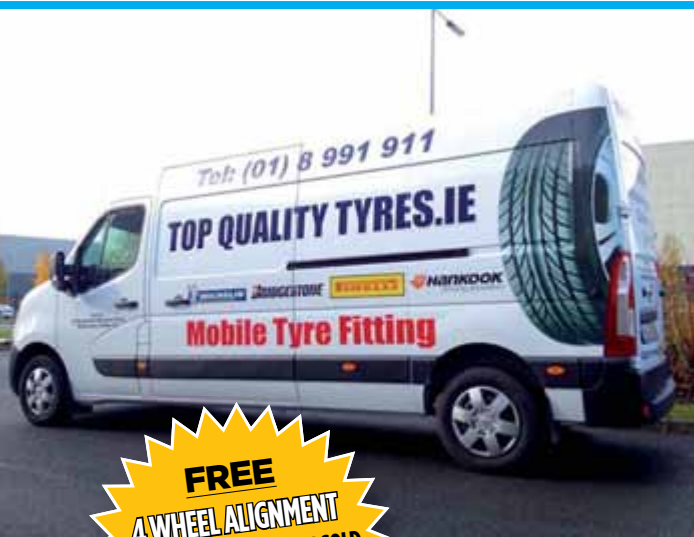
AC Milan's Stephen El Shaarawy is the dangerman up front. He has been in good form for Milan this season and with pace to burn our back four will have to be on their guard. Antonio Cassano is another who offers Italy a great attacking outlet, operating mainly as a winger, he will look to cut inside as often as he can. This may be one night where playing Robbie Brady at full back might not be the best idea. A defensive-minded full back may be called upon for this game. Stephen Ward's pace may be a concern, but with Marc Wilson injured, Ireland are a little short of options at left-full.

We have a decent record against the Italians though and this Italy team is far from vintage. They are notoriously slow starters at major tournaments. A draw is a good result, but another night like we had against Germany at the Aviva could happen here against the Azzuri. One of this current crop may feel they have a Ray Houghton in them. You never know...

Either way; we are sure to be entertained. The Boys In Green are Back! Ole Ole Ole Ole...

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BREAKING DOWN THE HAILO NUMBERS

Here at Tacsáí Towers we like to keep our days simple. Sipping on Cider as we lounge on the balcony. Pondering the great questions of life and rickshaws and, on the hour, throwing a few darts at Alan Kelly's smiling face on our dart board. What we don't like!! ... is maths. No sir!

So when this particular article landed on the Editor's desk we demanded answers. No, we demanded Cider. We got answers...

We recently spoke to a taxi industry worker who wanted to remain nameless but had a point to make about well-known app company, Hailo.

Mr T, as we'll call him (and come on, who wouldn't want to be called Mr T?) makes the point that drivers seem to be under the impression that "joining Hailo is good because it's free". Not so according to Mr T!

So let's begin. The average fare – says a recent survey –

recorded in Dublin is €14.97. The average metered revenue per week in Dublin is €635.00. The sample of drivers used earned between €98.00 and €1,189.00 per week.

Mr T says: "If you take the average income of €635.00 and divide it by the average job amount of €14.97, the average number of jobs done by the drivers was 42, if a driver earns all his income from Hailo his costs/reductions are - $42 \times €2.00$ (pick up charge they forfeit with Hailo) = €84.00 plus 12.5% commission Hailo charge on their earnings ($€635.00 \times 12.5\%$) = €79.00. The total reduction in drivers' income therefore is €163.00 per week.

"The driver earning €1,189.00 does 79 jobs at €14.97, plus 12.5% to Hailo so his reductions are over €300.00 per week ($79 \times €2.00$ plus €148.00 commission to Hailo)

"The average net payable on radio jobs (with us) is €21.00 and the average driver does approx. 35 jobs. The average base rental in Dublin with radio companies is around €90.00 to €100.00."

MURDER SUSPECT ARRESTED

On the eve of going to print, this story broke. Gardai have arrested a 22 year old man on suspicion of the murder of taxi-driver Martin Mulligan last year.

The body of Mr Mulligan (53) was found close to his taxi at Carnmore, Dundalk on September 28th, 2015. The man was arrested in Dundalk and is currently being detained at Dundalk Garda Station under Section 4 of the Criminal Justice Act, 1984.

Last month gardai thanked the public for their assistance and said that "significant progress" has been made in the investigation.

They also said they wanted to talk to two women who he picked up at the taxi rank on Crowe Street in Dundalk town centre at 12.22am less than 3 hours before his body was found.

The popular taxi driver and coal-man, was from Waterview, Lower Point Road in Dundalk, Co Louth.

At an inquest, the cause of death was reported as stab wounds to the abdomen and right thigh, with injuries to the right aorta and femoral artery.

The inquest was adjourned as gardai said their investigation was continuing.



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adaptation to suit their needs.

The National Disability Authority reports that between 10 and 20% of people in Ireland have disabling conditions; Freedom Mobility aims to support these individuals to ensure that transport is both easily accessible and affordable.

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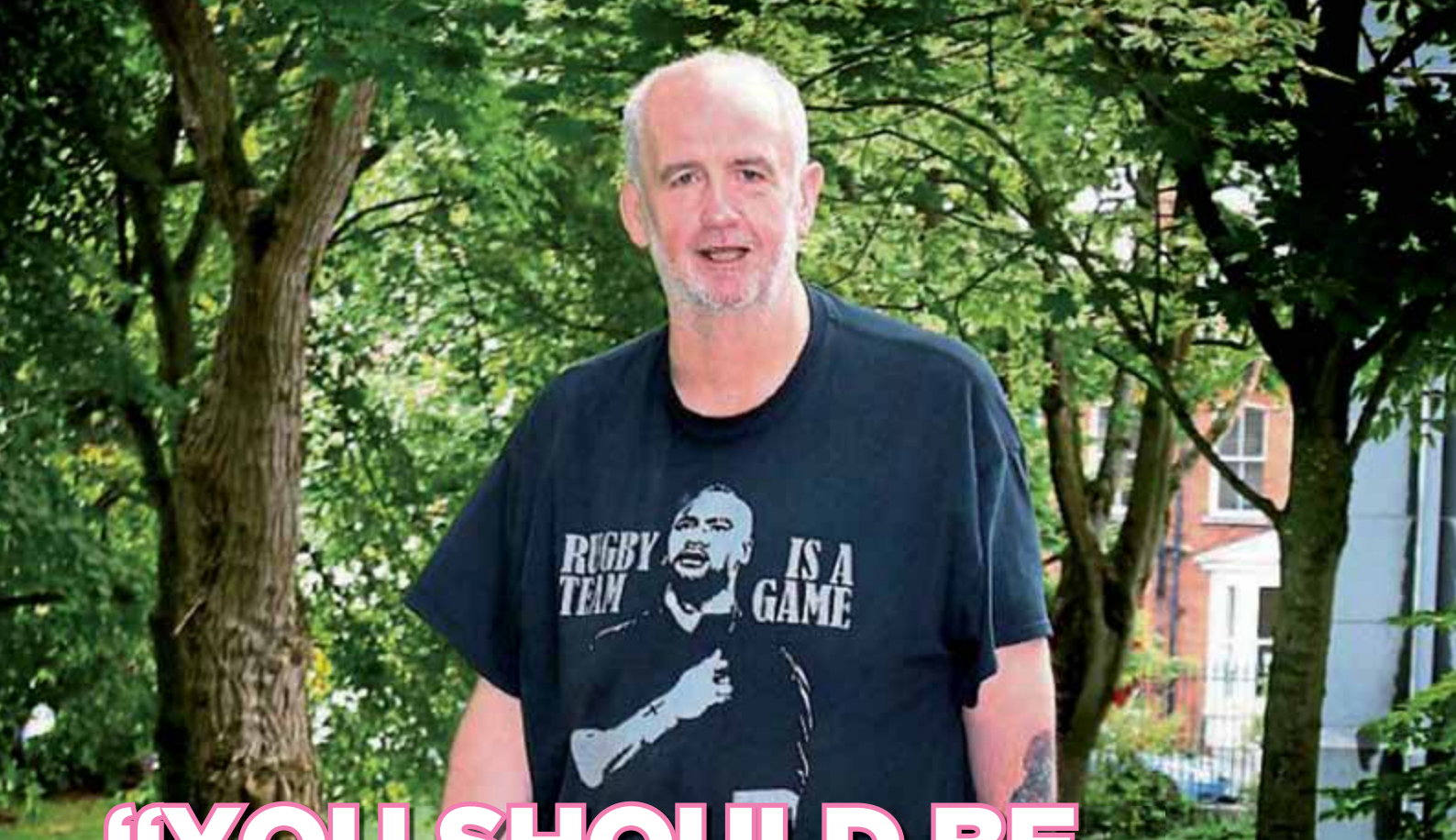
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“YOU SHOULD BE PROSECUTING THE BLACKS”

Convicted driver rants at Garda

A Limerick taxi driver who denied telling a garda that he should be “prosecuting the blacks” and not him has been convicted of breaching a taxi driver code of conduct.

A taxi driver of 10 years, Noel Pearse, 55, appeared before Limerick District Court on foot of a number of summonses including, failing to produce a driving licence; failing to behave in a civil manner while in charge of a public service vehicle; and failing to wear a seat belt.

Under Article 52 (b) of Road Traffic (Public Service Vehicle) Regulation Act, 1963, all drivers of public service vehicles (PSV) must behave in a civil, orderly, and respectful manner.

The court heard gardai signalled to Mr Pearse, and a number of other taxi drivers to move away from an unauthorised taxi rank on September 9, 2014 at around 12.22am.

Garda Jeffrey Kenny said all the drivers but Mr Pearse moved out of the area. After approaching Mr Pearse, and asking him to move on, he claimed the defendant “became abusive” and told him he was “waiting for a fare”. He also claimed that he threw his taxi card on the dashboard.

Garda Kenny said Mr Pearse told him he should be “prosecuting the blacks” and not prosecuting him, and told him to “f**k off” on a number of occasions. He then drove at “at speed”, without wearing a seatbelt.

A fixed penalty notice was issued for not wearing the seatbelt, which wasn’t paid.

Mr Pearse denied all of the allegations. He said he had been collecting a group of 15 Spanish students in two trips in his Volkswagen Transporter van and was waiting to collect the second group when stopped by gardai.

However, Garda Kenny said he checked Mr Pearse’s phone and the last call was at 4.50pm the previous day.

Taking to the witness box, Mr Pearse said he had been working since 7pm or 8pm that evening and that there were in excess of 5,000 students looking for taxis.

“I took half of the 15 Spanish students first and went back to collect the rest. I apologise unreservedly to him [the garda]. I got frustrated and used the F word when the taxi card fell down. I didn’t use the line about the blacks, but I asked him if he was going to move others on.”

Mr Pearse’s solicitor, Darragh McCarthy, said the defendant was “feeling unwell” on the night, and that this “may have accounted for his conduct and demeanour”.

He said his client is a person of good character and has no previous convictions. However, Garda Kenny told the court that he has two previous convictions – one for speeding and another for breaching a barring order.

Judge Mary Larkin convicted and fined Mr Pearse €250 for failing to behave in a civil manner.

She also fined him €120 for failing to wear a seat belt and took into consideration the driving licence summons. She warned him that he “needs to learn to keep a civil tongue”.

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A Spanish captain was walking on his ship when a soldier rushes to him and exclaims, "An enemy ship is approaching us!" The captain replies calmly, "Go get my red shirt." The soldier gets the shirt for the captain. The enemy ship comes in and heavy rounds of fire are exchanged. Finally, the Spaniards win. The soldier asks, "Congrats sir, but why the red shirt?" The captain replies, "If I got injured, my blood shouldn't be seen, as I didn't want my men to lose hope." Just then, another soldier runs up and says, "Sir, we just spotted another twenty enemy ships!" The captain calmly replies, "Go bring my brown pants."

Two tall trees, a birch and a beech, are growing in the woods. A small tree begins to grow between them, and the beech says to the birch, "Is that a son of a beech or a son of a birch?" The birch says he cannot tell, but just then a woodpecker lands on the sapling. The birch says, "Woodpecker, you are a tree expert. Can you tell if that is a son of a beech or a son of a birch?" The woodpecker takes a taste of the small tree and replies, "It is neither a son of a beech nor a son of a birch, it is, however, the best piece of ash I have ever poked my pecker into." Now wipe that smile off your face.

A man walks out on his front porch one day and sees a gorilla in the tree on his front lawn. He calls animal control and about an hour later a man shows up with a ladder, a pit bull, and a shotgun. The animal control employee tells the man, "I'm here to get the gorilla out of your tree. I'm going to use this ladder to climb up the tree and shake the branch the gorilla is on to knock him to the ground. The pit bull is trained to go after anything that falls from the tree and bites their balls which calms the animal down so I can put him in the truck." The man says "Okay, I see what the ladder and the pit bull are for but what is the shotgun for?" The animal control employee says, "Oh, that's for you. In case I fall out of the tree instead of the gorilla, shoot the dog."

At the doctor's office, Tom was getting a check up. "I have good news and bad news," says the doctor. "The good news is you have 24 hours left to live." Tom replies, "That's the good news?!" Then the doctor says, "The bad news is I should have told you that yesterday."

This is the true story of George Mahon of Killarney, County Kerry, who was going to bed when his wife told him that he'd left the light on in the shed. George opened the door to go turn off the light but saw there were people in the shed in the process of stealing things. He immediately phoned the Gardaí, who asked, "Is someone in your house?" and George said, "No," and explained the situation. Then they explained that all patrols were busy, and that he should simply lock his door and someone would be there when available. George said, "Okay," hung up, counted to 30, and phoned the police again. "Hello, I just called you a few seconds ago because there were people in my shed. Well, you don't have to worry about them now because I've just shot them all." Then he hung up. Within five minutes three squad cars, an Armed Response unit, and an ambulance showed up. Of course, the police caught the burglars red-handed. One of the policemen said to George, "I thought you said that you'd shot them!" George said, "I thought you said there was nobody available!"



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QUESTIONS

EURO 2016 SPECIAL TEST YOUR IRELAND KNOWLEDGE

1. Roy Keane started his professional playing career at which League of Ireland club?
2. Mick McCarthy guided Ireland to which World Cup, 1998, 2002 or 2006?
3. Name the four Serie A clubs Liam Brady played for?
4. What county is former Ireland goalkeeper Packie Bonner from?
5. The remodelled Aviva Stadium is third home of Irish international football after Lansdowne Road was demolished and rebuilt, name the first?
6. Name the club where Damien Duff first played football in England?
7. Kenny Cunningham made how many appearance for Ireland; 52, 72 or 92?
8. Kevin Doyle signed for Reading from which League of Ireland club?
9. Who owns Wexford Youths Football Club?
10. Ex-Ireland international Owen Coyle has how many caps for his country?
11. Martin O'Neill won the European Cup with which club?
12. Jack Charlton won the World Cup with England in 1966, in what position did he play?
13. Shay Given made the majority of his Premier League appearances with what club?
14. Name the player who scored the

late winner against Georgia in the first game of Ireland's 2016 Qualifying campaign in September 2014?

15. Name the Chief Executive of the Football Association of Ireland?
16. How many goals did John Aldridge score for the boys in green?
17. Shane Long currently plays for which Premier League club?
18. Former full back Steve Finnan played for which La Liga club after leaving Liverpool?
19. Kevin Kilbane started his playing career with Everton, Leeds United or Preston North End?
20. Who will you never beat?

14. Aiden McGeady
15. John Delaney
16. 19
17. Southampton FC
18. Espanyol
19. Preston North End
20. The Irish
6. Blackburn Rovers
7. 72
8. Cork City
9. Mick Wallace TD
10. 1
11. Centre Half
12. Nottingham Forest
13. Newcastle United

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2. 2002
3. Juventus, Sampdoria,
- Inter Milan, Ascoli
4. Donegal
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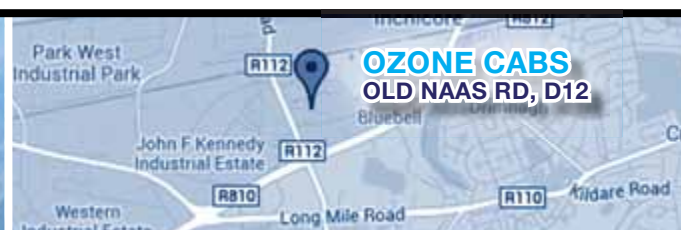


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