



SIMI

2022 ISSUE 5

IRISH MOTOR MANAGEMENT

THE SOCIETY OF THE IRISH MOTOR INDUSTRY



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2022 A YEAR OF UNCERTAINTY



2022 has been a year marked by major world events: the emergence from restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic, the outbreak of war between Russia and Ukraine, a high-risk global geopolitical environment, the ongoing Climate Change crisis, global supply issues, along with an energy and a cost-of-living crisis. All these events have led to the creation of a year of intense uncertainty, which will continue into next year and maybe beyond.

The invasion of Ukraine has created massive uncertainty around supply chains, impacting on the supply of food, energy and industrial materials, all of which have contributed to the surge in inflation. The global economy, which had been looking at a post-Covid rebound, is now experiencing a slowdown, with the likelihood of recession in many major economies. While the Irish economy has been remarkably resilient, with very strong tax revenues and record high employment levels, consumer confidence is fragile, and this caution has started to feed into retail spending. Despite a high level of personal savings, greater consumer caution is now likely with the cost-of-living pressures draining real disposable incomes.

The new car market to the end of November is in line with last year, but the continuing low levels of new car sales is undermining the drive to reduce emissions. Commercial Vehicles have been subdued, with Light Commercial Vehicle sales down 18% and Heavy Goods Vehicle registrations are down 9%. Supply disruptions wrought by Covid-19, Brexit, geopolitical uncertainty, the global chip supply shortage, combined with potential rare mineral shortages keeping battery prices high, have contributed to the delay of the availability of electric vehicles in 2022. Supply remains a massive constraint on the market, with both retailers and manufacturing hoping for greater certainty in 2023.

Despite the marginal increase in vehicle registrations, electric car sales continue to grow strongly, with 15,591 electric cars sold up until the end of November, an 83% increase on the same time last year and a nearly four-fold increase on 2020. Petrol remains the dominant engine type, however, market share is changing rapidly, with hybrid, electric vehicles (EVs) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) now accounting for over 41% of the market. To continue this momentum towards electrification, it is vital that Government and Industry work closely to create an environment where EVs remain not only a strong environmental choice but also a cost-effective choice for consumers and businesses. This includes targeted Government support in the establishment of a national charging infrastructure, and the extension of EV purchase incentives at current levels beyond June 2023. As any early removal or reduction in supports will only lead to less demand, increased cost to change, restrained consumer confidence, and place Ireland further down the manufacturers' lists in terms of EV supply availability.

The strong performance of the EV market can be attributed to the greater EV choice from vehicle manufacturers, particularly in the family segment, and the vital support of the SEAI grant scheme. The EV grants for the first half of next year provide some stability in a highly volatile retail environment and will hopefully encourage car buyers into dealerships.

The climate crisis poses a much bigger challenge than anything we have experienced in recent decades. It is fundamental that policymakers support their

(continued overleaf)



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(continued from page 3)

climate ambitions and invest in the electrification project. The forthcoming revised Climate Action Plan is an opportunity to continue the investment in the EV project, while at the same time dealing with our legacy fleet of older polluting cars. Those with the least economic capacity, will have to make the biggest change and should be helped, not punished. We have already seen the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, which is pushing people to the brink, with rising fuel prices, interest rates and inflation costs. The majority of motorists are used car buyers and Government must support all motorists to trade up to newer less polluting cars. There is an urgent need to create a second-hand electric vehicle fleet, which can only come from a vibrant new car market that will need to grow significantly over the next number of years. The national charging infrastructure must also remain ahead of demand if we are to provide consumers with confidence in the transition to electrification.

The decarbonisation of the transport sector requires a series of

measures, there is no one quick solution and we cannot simply rely solely on electric vehicles alone to achieve targets. Public transport and active travel have a part to play so commuters are provided with viable transport options.

While 2022 may be characterised as a year of uncertainty, I hope 2023 will be a year that will bring greater clarity, resilience, improved supply chains, a better economic outlook and investment in our climate goals. On behalf of the SIMI Management Board and team, I would like to thank you for your support throughout the year. We wish all who work with in the Motor Industry and their families a happy Christmas and a safe, healthy, positive, and prosperous New Year.

Brian Cooke
Director General, SIMI

DROGHEDA MOTOR SHOW SUCCESS



Drogheda Motor Show Dealers with sponsors First Citizen Finance and the Kast Productions crew.

The Drogheda Motor Show was held on Laurence Street, Drogheda in October, where nine local franchised motor Dealerships partnered up with the Laurence Street Businesses and Traders to bring this special motoring event to the general public. There were over 70 new cars on display from 18 motor brands. The theme of the event this year was 'My Car My Way', celebrating individuality in car ownership. Key messages of road safety and responsible driving featured strongly in the programme too with the organisers linking up with local dance and theatrical production company, Kast Productions, to put on a specially commissioned dance performance on the day for visitors. Robert Murray, Head of Marketing at First Citizen Finance and President of Drogheda & District Chamber, commented: "The Drogheda Motor Show is now an established annual event in the town and the Motor Dealers should be commended for their commitment to continuing with the show even through the most challenging of times. They've continued to deliver year on year. It really is a fantastic opportunity for the local car buyer to see and assess a wide range of vehicles from multiple brands and suppliers in one single visit."

The 2022 show was supported by First Citizen Finance, Drogheda & District Chamber, SIMI, LHK Group, Louth County Council and the Laurence Street Businesses and Traders.

LEO KEOGH

The Society fondly remembers Leo Keogh who passed away in November. The SIMI extends its deepest condolences to Leo's wife Kay, sons David, Leo, Gary and daughter Karen, his grandchildren and great grandchildren, extended family and friends. Leo served as SIMI's CEO for 25 years from 1967 to 1992.

May he rest in peace.



JACK CONAN JOINS WINDSOR OPEL

Irish rugby star, Jack Conan, has been appointed a Windsor Opel brand ambassador and presented with a new Opel Mokka-e. Opel is the official car partner to the IRFU. Since making his Leinster debut in 2014, Jack has made over 100 appearances for his province, where he has won four Pro14 titles and a European Champions Cup. Speaking at the presentation of his new Opel Mokka-e at the IRFU High Performance Centre, Jack said: "I'm thrilled to drive the new Opel Mokka-e and to become a zero-emissions EV driver."



Jack Conan, pictured with his new Opel Mokka-e.

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1

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3

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4

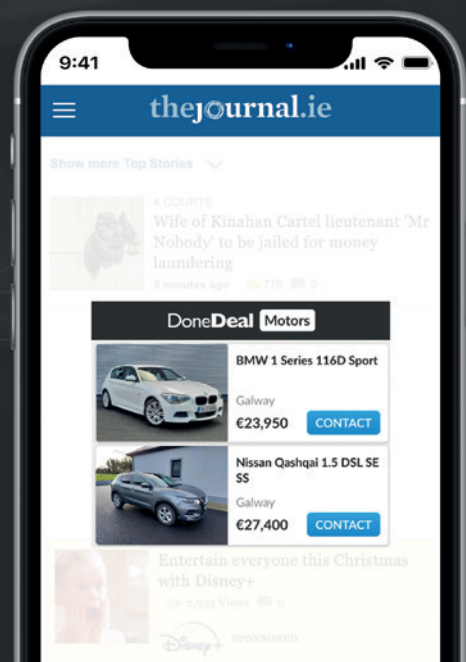
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VOLKSWAGEN ID. BUZZ TAKES ICOTY 2023 TITLE



The Volkswagen ID. Buzz has been named as the 2023 Irish Car of the Year (ICOTY). Pictured at the awards event were: Joe Rayfus, Chairman of the Motoring Media Association of Ireland (MMAI); Tom Dennigan of Continental Tyres Ireland; Kim Kilduff, Marketing Director, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles Ireland; and Alan Bateson, Brand Director, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles Ireland.

The Volkswagen ID. Buzz has been named the 2023 Irish Car of the Year (ICOTY) in association with Continental Tyres. Members of the Motoring Media Association of Ireland (MMAI), the grouping that brings together some 32 of Ireland's most experienced motoring journalists, hosted the awards event attended by Ireland's leading car brands, importers and distributors in the Westin Hotel in Dublin.

Volkswagen took the top award with its latest all electric ID. Buzz model and, the van version, the ID. Buzz Cargo, won the Irish Van of the Year title at the same ceremony, a first in the history of the awards. It is the third time that an electric vehicle has taken the award as the Kia EV6 and the Kia e-Soul also won the 2022 and

2020 ICOTY titles respectively.

Chairman of the MMAI, Joe Rayfus, commented: "The Volkswagen ID. Buzz is a really worthy winner of the Irish Car of the Year title, it is a truly stand-out vehicle. As the third electric vehicle to win the title, it really does confirm the onward march in Ireland towards an electric motoring future. Just look at our field of runners for this year's awards (see panel, The Irish Car of the Year Category Winners). More than half of the contenders are available as either partial or full electric vehicles".

Tom Dennigan of awards sponsor, Continental Tyres said: "After the Covid disruption that impacted on the Irish Car of Year awards over the past couple of years, we are delighted to be back with these awards for 2023. The MMAI jurors offer a great service to Irish motorists in providing a really helpful insight into the broad range of increasingly sophisticated car models that are launched here each year. No doubt, the Irish Car and Irish Van of the Year titles will be a huge boost to the popularity of the ID. Buzz in the new vehicle market in January and throughout 2023."

THE IRISH CAR OF THE YEAR CATEGORY WINNERS

1. Irish Small Car of the Year: Fiat 500e
2. Irish Compact Car of the Year: Opel Astra
3. Irish Compact Executive Car of the Year:
Mercedes-Benz C-Class
4. Irish Compact Crossover/SUV of the Year:
Kia Niro
5. Irish Medium Crossover/SUV of the Year:
Kia Sportage
6. Irish Large Crossover/SUV of the Year:
Citroen C5X
7. Irish MPV of the Year: Volkswagen ID. Buzz
8. Irish Luxury Car of the Year: Mercedes-Benz EQS
9. Irish Large Executive Car of the Year:
Mercedes-Benz EQE
10. Irish Performance Car of the Year: BMW i4 M50



The van version of the ID. Buzz, the ID. Buzz Cargo (above), also won the Irish Van of the Year title at the same ceremony, a first in the history of the awards.

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CELEBRATION MARKS SUCCESS OF ELECTRIC ELVES ATF TRAINING PROGRAMME

ELVES, Ireland's End-of-Life Vehicle compliance scheme recently welcomed Minister Ossian Smyth, Minister of State with responsibility for Public Procurement, eGovernment and Circular Economy to Plunket College, Dublin, to celebrate the success of the Electric ELVES training programme for authorised treatments facilities (ATFs or permitted scrapyards), who are involved in the collection and recycling of electric vehicle batteries.

The Electric ELVES programme was developed by ELVES and has been running since 2018. Electric ELVES provides free collection and recycling of electric vehicle batteries from ATFs in Ireland, as well as information supports and free training on the safe handling of electric vehicles when they reach their end-of-life.

A key success of the programme according to ELVES has been its ability to offer free training to ATF personnel from all around the country in nine locations so far: Dublin, Naas, Galway, Monaghan, Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Athlone, and Sligo, with more planned. This has been made possible due to the enthusiastic support of a number of different training establishments.

Minister Smyth together with Fiacra Quinn, CEO of ELVES, personally thanked representatives of the training venues who have supported and hosted the Electric ELVES programme since its inception. Minister Smyth also presented specialised electric vehicle toolkits to representatives of these training venues, as a small token of ELVES' thanks for their support. At the event, the Minister was provided with a short demonstration of ATF training by trainer Andy Latham of Salvage Wire Ltd.

Minister Smyth commented: "To see the Electric ELVES programme go from strength to strength is a reflection of



Karen Mahon, ELVES Board Chairperson; Fiacra Quinn, CEO, ELVES; Elena Wrelton, Compliance Manager, ELVES; Minister Ossian Smyth TD, the Minister of State with responsibility for Public Procurement, eGovernment and Circular Economy; and Brian Cooke, Director General, SIMI.

the enthusiasm for upskilling to meet the fast-changing requirements of this industry as well as an obvious industry commitment to the sound environmental management of these emerging battery technologies.

"To see the support that ELVES has received from the host venues underscores how a programme can grow with cross-community and multi-agency involvement."

Fiacra Quinn, CEO of ELVES, added: "ELVES really appreciates the support that the training venues have given to the Electric ELVES programme. When we initiated the programme in 2018, there was nothing like this in Ireland. In 2019, we implemented the training aspect of the programme with the primary objective of ensuring the safety of all ATF operators handling electrified vehicles.

"While this objective continues to be our top priority, we can see that the programme is delivering so much more: it has added value to ATF activities and conferred recognised qualifications on all participants. For the broader future, not only is it set up to meet the requirements of the forthcoming Batteries Regulation, but it is also well placed to drive the circular economy forward for EV batteries."

The training venues who have participated in the Electric ELVES programme to date include: Munster Technological University; Rally School Ireland; Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board; Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest; Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board; Waterford Wexford Training Services, Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board; Plunket College of Further Education, Dublin; Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, Hospital Campus; Nissan Academy; and the Atlantic Technological University.



Andy Latham (left) of Salvage Wire Ltd is pictured with Minister Ossian Smyth.



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 - Technical **support**

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ELVES is the 1st carbon neutral compliance scheme in Ireland

OPEL ADDS NAVAN DEALERSHIP TO NETWORK



Opel Ireland recently announced the appointment of Navan Opel to the Opel Dealer network. Pictured at the announcement are James Brooks, Managing Director, Opel Ireland; Alexis Moore, Opel Dealer Development Manager; and Dealer Principal, James Reilly, with his daughters Linda and Nicola Reilly.

AUTOVIEW AIMS TO BOOST DEALER PROFITABILITY



Dealerships have proven resilient in the last few years but serious challenges ranging from chip shortages to rising costs remain. Now is a good time for dealers to look at all aspects of their marketing approach and, according to a spokesperson for the leading DMS provider, Autoview, a modern dealer management system (DMS) is central to this. AutoView V7 can streamline a dealership's marketing, according to the spokesperson. "Modern electronic communication with your customer is vital in these competitive times. Apps allow dealers' customers to view marketing material such as photos and videos on their phones." The spokesperson continued: "Whether for upselling from an eVHC or to simply make it easy for a customer to upload a photo or video of their own car for appraisal purposes, multi-media communications capability is a central component of dealing with your customer. A dealer must make it easy for their customer to directly book appointments from their own smartphones or authorise additional work and even pay remotely." It's also a good time to look at costs: "A significant element of this is in IT, particularly if a dealer is using multiple and disparate systems to handle their administrative needs. Having multiple systems means having multiple, and usually non-integrated, databases, all of which force duplicate and triplicate keystroking. This is not the way forward. A better, more modern, more profitable, approach is to have one system to handle all requirements and streamline administration. AutoView V7 is such a system."

GRAND OPENING OF TADG RIORDAN MOTORS TALLAGHT



The new Tadhg Riordan Motors premises.

Tadhg Riordan Motors held the grand opening of its new premises on the Airton Road, Tallaght recently. It was an evening for family and friends to say thank you for all the support and to showcase the Dealership's new showroom and more than 200 people attended.

Eoighan Riordan, Dealer Principal and one of the Directors of Tadhg Riordan Motors commented: "It is very central with a large state-of-the-art showroom. The expanded parking area is a major advantage, representing a significant increase in capacity from our previous location."

Tadhg and Gaye Riordan opened their first Toyota car sales Dealership in Ashbourne, Co. Meath in 1983. In 2007, the business opened its second car sales Dealership in Dublin as Tadhg Riordan Motors Toyota Tallaght. Now this Dealership has expanded and moved to Airton Road, located beside the Harvey Norman premises in Tallaght.

The company currently employ 19 staff, all of which are from the local community, with plans to hire more as the company continues to expand and grow. Eoighan added: "By the end of next year we will probably be at 25 or 26 staff. It is a family-run business and we will be celebrating 40 years next year so that will be a special one for us."



The Riordan family: Timmy, Michelle, Tadhg, Gaye and Eoighan.



2022 SIMI TRAINING REVIEW

Notwithstanding the many tough challenges faced by the Motor Industry during the course of 2022, huge credit is due to SIMI Members for their commitment to the ongoing training and development of their employees

In the past, the bulk of SIMI short courses and training courses were classroom and workshop-based, however, since Covid-19, we have worked with our Industry training provider partners to successfully convert the majority of our training programmes into online learning events. This initiative was enthusiastically embraced by Members from the outset as it resulted in reduced time away from the business for trainees, attracted no associated travel and accommodation costs, and still delivered on relevant content and quality. However, in 2022, for the first time since Covid-19, SIMI Skillnet launched a new "Introduction to Vehicle Sales" programme, offering trainees the choice of attending the training virtually or in a classroom setting.

Substantial funding

Members will be aware that SIMI has, on their behalf, secured substantial funding from Skillnet Ireland, the business support agency of the Government of Ireland, but may not realise that this funding has allowed us to significantly subsidise the cost of close to 90 separate training events in 2022. The current funding cycle with Skillnet Ireland ends in 2022 but planning for the renewal of TNP for the period 2023-2025 is currently underway. Perhaps not surprisingly, in the light of the targets for electric vehicles (EVs) outlined in the Climate Action Plan and the significant growth we have already seen in sales of new EVs and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), this year the most popular Technical Upskilling training programme was the three-day certified SIMI Skillnet Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Systems course. As the Motor Industry continues on the journey towards electrification, with investments nationally by local retailers in their premises and their employees, it will be important that SIMI Skillnet continues to provide support to meet the training needs of Members particularly in the Independent Sector.

Bespoke training programme

Earlier this year, SIMI Skillnet launched a bespoke, comprehensive, Management Development training programme, specifically designed for Motor Industry

Managers who may not have specific managerial qualifications and aimed at enhancing their existing skills and competencies to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive market. The programme is split into two Phases: Phase 1 – Core Management Skills and Phase 2 – Motor Industry Management Skills and features the following:

- classroom-based modules;
- online, interactive group sessions;
- one-to-one online coaching sessions;
- an on-site visit by the trainer for further mentoring, to evaluate the impact of learning and to review measures implemented in the business; and,
- with the current 2022/2023 programme, successful completion of Phase 1 will lead to a QQI Level 6 Award in Managing People.

Skillnet Ireland recently welcomed new funding announced in Budget 2023, securing additional resources to expand the vital work they deliver in the areas of digital transformation, supports for small business owners and managers, regional development, skills to drive climate action and boosting FDI in Ireland through talent development. Budget 2023 sees the sixth consecutive year of budget increases secured by Skillnet Ireland – total Exchequer funding in 2023 is €55.5M and they expect this sum to attract an additional €26M or so in private sector match funding, both record levels for Skillnet Ireland.

We look forward to working with Skillnet Ireland Team in 2023 to support Members who face the challenges of upskilling their employees in order to remain competitive, by promoting life-long learning; management development programmes; technical upskilling and by ensuring that tailored SIMI Skillnet Motor Industry training courses are effective, relevant, delivered efficiently and offer value for money.

SIMI training courses in 2022 came under the following headings; Technical Upskilling for Automotive Technicians, Management Development, Sales and Customer Focused Training, Aftersales Training, Marketing and Finance and Administration.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Teresa O'Neill, Network Manager on email: toneill@simi.ie
or call + 353 1 6761690

Examples of training courses in 2022

Technical Upskilling

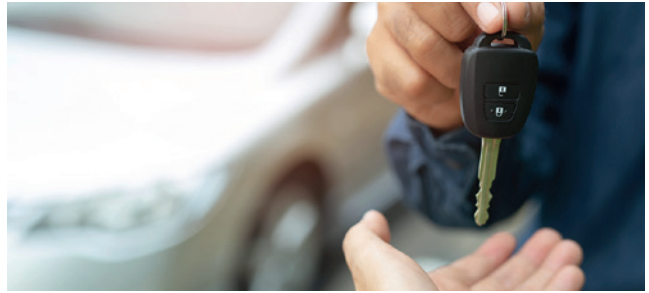
- Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Systems Training Combined Level 2 & 3
- New Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Systems Training Level 4
- Electrical Fault Systems Diagnosis
- Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS)
- Oscilloscope Operation and Signal Test Methods
- Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Systems Awareness Seminar
- Diagnosis of Universal Components

Management Development



- Used Vehicle Sales Management
- Parts Management
- New Time Management
- Automotive Retail Management Programme

Sales & Customer Focused



- Adapting Vehicle Sales to the Digital Environment
- Customer Service & Complaint Handling
- Customer Retention
- Telephone Sales Techniques
- New Introduction to Vehicle Sales
- New Consumer Law Training

Aftersales Training

- Aftersales Profitability Workshops
- Service Advisor Training

Marketing Training

- Digital Marketing in a Post-Pandemic World
- Facebook Training for Beginners & Advanced
- Making a Marketing/Sales Video for your Business

Finance and Administration

- Understanding VAT & VRT Training
- SIMI (Consumer Credit) CPD



KEY TRAINING METRICS 2022



Member Companies participated in Skillnet Training in 2022

275



493

Member Companies participated in Skillnet Training in 2022



750
Training days



73

Training courses delivered



Delivered

15

Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Systems Level 2/3 Combined Courses in 2022

Launched 3 New Training Courses in 2022:



Automotive Retail Management Programme



Introduction to Vehicle Sales Programme (both online & classroom)



Key Elements of Consumer Law

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SIMI Skillnet Automotive Retail Management Programme

The SIMI Skillnet Automotive Retail Management Programme was recently launched by SIMI President Antonia Hendron.



Back row: Teresa O'Neill, Barry O'Brien, Owen Wade, Johanna Keogh, Ken Long, Derek Daly, Ray Porter, Paul Lyttleton, Jack Tiernan, Michael Nugent, Paul Sharpe. Front Row: Rowena Dooley, Gary Matthews, Cathal Sheridan, SIMI President Antonia Hendron, Dan Roche, David Thorpe, Liam Martin, and Craig O'Shea.

The event, which took place in the Killashee Hotel, Naas, provided an opportunity for trainees to meet with each other and the training providers, Optimum Ltd and Navigate Solutions Ireland Ltd, before the programme commenced.

Inspiring commitment

Antonia Hendron, SIMI President, said: "I was delighted to officially launch the SIMI Skillnet Automotive Retail Management Programme. It was wonderful to meet the participants of the programme, who have made a commitment to their own personal development and to further their careers. This programme is hugely important to the Industry, as it moves towards the de-carbonisation of the national light vehicle fleet, while at the

same time keeping up to date with the acceleration of digitalisation.

"The programme will encourage and enable management to be better equipped to keep pace with and meet the challenges ahead. I commend all the participants for taking part and I hope that they enjoy and benefit from the experience."

Ronan Harrison from Optimum Ltd said: "We were honoured to attend the launch of the SIMI Automotive Retail Management programme in Killashee Hotel. It was a great opportunity to learn from our specialist trainers but also from each other. Peer learning is vital for the success of the programme and will be actively encouraged throughout. It was fantastic to meet everyone and to get the programme up and running."

Important initiative

Michael Nugent and Paul Sharpe from Navigate Solutions Ireland Ltd stated: "It was wonderful to be present at the launch of the SIMI Skillnet Automotive Retail Management Programme and to see this important initiative come to life. We are very proud to be part of this programme and look forward to hosting Phase II in 2023. We enjoyed meeting the participants who come from a wide range of roles in the retail industry, which will benefit everyone involved. We look forward to engaging with them in terms of their future development and that of their businesses."

SIMI wishes each of the trainees every success on the SIMI Skillnet Automotive Retail Management Programme (2022-2023).

Begin

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SIMI/VTN Annual Conference



The RSA senior team who made presentations at the conference were (l-r): Peter Hanlon, Ramona Lavelle, Noelle Meehan, Jenny McLoughlin, Justin Martin, and Brendan Walsh.

After an inevitable break due to COVID-19, the Killashee Hotel, Co. Kildare was host venue for the return of the SIMI/Vehicle Tester Network (VTN) Annual Conference on November 14, 2022.

Brian Cooke, Director General, SIMI, opened the proceedings, extending a warm welcome to speakers, SIMI VTN members and, in particular, Brendan Walsh, newly appointed Chief Operations Officer of the RSA who was attending the conference for the first time. He was accompanied by a team of key RSA personnel. Yvonne Sliney, Accounts and VTN Manager, SIMI, acted as MC for the day and outlined the agenda and speakers. Jim Power, the leading Irish economist, made the first presentation, outlining the current state of the Irish economy and what the Motor Industry might expect going forward into the coming year. His overall message was that Ireland will be lucky to remain immune to global economic difficulties and there are some tentative signs of a slowdown with greater consumer caution likely. Matthew Austin, Partner, Hayes Solicitors, followed with a presentation on cybersecurity. He said that cybersecurity issues still do not get enough consideration but they, nonetheless, could cause huge disruption if you are unlucky enough to encounter such issues in your business. Matthew made the point that it was not only big business that hackers went after and encouraged all business owners to take steps to make sure that their IT was as secure as possible.

Collaborative relationship

Brendan Walsh was the first of the RSA's panel of speakers to address attendees, outlining the importance to the RSA of

building a good collaborative relationship with SIMI in order to achieve the principle objectives of the RSA, particularly in relation to the Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030. He acknowledged the historic and ongoing good relationship with SIMI in this regard.

Brendan shared the RSA's Vision Zero Strategy, outlining its aim to reduce death and serious injuries on Irish roads by 50% by 2030. Continued consultation and collaboration were of key importance to the success of this strategy, he added.

CVRT authorisation

A key focus of this year's conference was informing members of what needed to be done in relation to applying for a new CVRT authorisation going forward with most current CVRT test centre authorisations expiring in March 2024. Ramona Lavelle, Manager of the CVRT Authorisations Team outlined the current status of CVR testing and the latest authorisation legislation and guidelines. Test centre owners were asked to contact the RSA as soon as possible, to get plans in place so that everyone could get everything done on time.

Jenny McLoughlin, AP, Contracts Management, RSA, presented on the latest CoVIS Information system and relatively recent developments including Fujitsu Ireland Ltd taking on the IT contract for the system. It is expected Fujitsu will bring forward a number of significant enhancements to the system over the next twelve months. Noelle Meehan, RSA, provided an in-depth look at how the



(L-r): VTN Committee Member Ray Gregan, Dublin Tunnel Commercials and John Forde, RSA Inspector.

CoVIS transformation project was addressed and discussed what test centres could expect over the coming months and into 2023, with a focus on minimising potential disruption during times of upgrades.

Peter Hanlon, ENG Consultant, RSA, gave an interesting presentation on the recent RSA Equipment Review and the ongoing consistency checking of equipment in the network. Peter went through, in detail, the various pieces of equipment in test centres and how they performed over time.

Finally, Justin Martin, Head of Enforcement, RSA, gave a comprehensive presentation on findings at the roadside in relation to the roadworthiness of vehicle and compliance trends.



(L-r): Gerard Finn, owner, Cavan Motors and Michael Mannion, owner, Athlone Test Centre.

Vehicle Test Operators AGM

In the afternoon, the Vehicle Test Operators AGM was chaired by Charlie Rogers, Director, Commercial Vehicle Sector, SIMI, in the absence of Michael Nolan, M & N Nolan Motor Co., Newtownforbes, Co. Longford who was recently elected VTN Chairman.

Charlie thanked the members for their support over the last few years, especially during the challenges arising from the pandemic. The commercial vehicle sector and vehicle testing had been designated as essential services with members going the extra mile to keep commercial vehicles roadworthy and on the road over that time.



(L-r): Margo Mitchell, Manager, and Colin McArdle from McArdle's Test Centre, Louth; and Stephanie Smith, RSA Test Inspector.



(L-r): Brian Cooke, Director General, SIMI and Brendan Walsh, Chief Operations Officer, RSA.

TOP 10 SELLING CARS 2022

Hyundai Tucson **6,406** 6.1%Toyota Corolla **4,230** 4.0%Kia Sportage **3,532** 3.4%Toyota C-HR **3,104** 3.0%Volkswagen ID.4 **2,962** 2.8%Toyota RAV **2,905** 2.8%Toyota Yaris **2,677** 2.6%Toyota Yaris Cross **2,265** 2.2%Hyundai Kona **2,123** 2.0%Škoda Kodiaq **2,092** 2.0%

NEW PASSENGER CAR REGISTRATIONS

Marque	01/11/22 - 30/11/22	01/01/22 - 30/11/22	Market share 2022 %
Alfa Romeo	0	15	0.01%
Audi	33	4328	4.12%
BMW	36	4080	3.88%
Citroën	16	1448	1.38%
Cupra	12	658	0.63%
Dacia	46	3382	3.22%
DS	2	118	0.11%
Fiat	2	356	0.34%
Ford	38	5054	4.81%
Honda	2	363	0.35%
Hyundai	70	12679	12.07%
Jaguar	1	166	0.16%
Jeep	3	41	0.04%
Kia	10	7939	7.56%
Land Rover	7	451	0.43%
Lexus	6	431	0.41%
Mazda	6	1112	1.06%
Mercedes-Benz	47	3749	3.57%
MG	4	514	0.49%
Mini	14	632	0.60%
Nissan	36	4101	3.90%
Opel	10	2854	2.72%
Peugeot	36	4609	4.39%
Polestar	10	117	0.11%
Porsche	13	268	0.26%
Private Import	2	81	0.08%
Renault	30	4037	3.84%
Seat	15	1644	1.57%
Škoda	63	7610	7.24%
Ssangyong	0	95	0.09%
Subaru	1	10	0.01%
Suzuki	25	1288	1.23%
Tesla	5	1316	1.25%
Toyota	255	16014	15.25%
Volkswagen	119	11704	11.14%
Volvo	7	1775	1.69%
Total November 2022	982	105039	
Total November 2021	1120	104545	
2022 Change 2021	-138	494	
% Change 2022 - 2021	-12.32%	0.47%	

TOP SELLING CARS NOVEMBER 2022

Position	Model	Units sold	Market share %
1	Toyota Bz4	122	12.4
2	Toyota Corolla	93	9.5
3	Volkswagen ID.4	46	4.7
4	Hyundai Tucson	45	4.6
5	Nissan Leaf	23	2.3

Position	Model	Units sold	Market share %
6	Renault Jogger	21	2.1
7	Škoda Kodiaq	18	1.8
8	Dacia Sandero	16	1.6
9	Volkswagen T-Roc	16	1.6
10	Toyota Yaris	15	1.5

NEW LIGHT COMMERCIAL REGISTRATIONS

Marque	01/11 - 30/11	01/01 - 30/11	% Share
Alfa Romeo	8	150	0.64%
Audi	0	6	0.03%
Citroën	15	1609	6.90%
Dacia	6	60	0.26%
Fiat	103	348	1.49%
Ford	300	5788	24.82%
Fuso	4	75	0.32%
Hyundai	0	151	0.65%
Isuzu	15	681	2.92%
Iveco	9	148	0.63%
Kia	1	206	0.88%
Land Rover	6	403	1.73%
Man	12	142	0.61%
Maxus	5	17	0.07%
Mercedes-Benz	52	1013	4.34%
Mitsubishi	0	39	0.17%
Nissan	13	434	1.86%
Opel	26	2161	9.27%
Peugeot	34	1716	7.36%
Renault	133	2221	9.52%
Ssangyong	6	82	0.35%
Subaru	0	0	0.00%
Toyota	51	2903	12.45%
Volkswagen	80	2922	12.53%
Private Import	1	45	0.19%
Total November 2022	880	23320	
Total November 2021	768	28428	
Change 2022 - 2021	112	-5108	
% Change 2022 - 2021	14.58%	-17.97%	

BUSES/COACHES REGISTRATIONS

Marque	01/11 - 30/11	01/01 - 30/11	% Share
DAF	0	2	0.78%
Higer	0	16	6.20%
Isuzu	0	22	8.53%
Iveco	0	33	12.79%
MAN	0	2	0.78%
Mercedes-Benz	0	21	8.14%
Scania	0	23	8.91%
Sunsundegui	0	0	0.00%
VDL DAF	0	2	0.78%
Volvo	9	23	8.91%
Wrightbus	0	0	0.00%
Yutong	0	1	0.39%
Private Import	2	113	43.80%
Total November 2022	11	258	
Total November 2021	67	417	
2022 Change 2021	-56	-159	
% Change 2022 - 2021	-83.58%	-38.13%	

NEW HEAVY COMMERCIAL REGISTRATIONS

Marque	01/11 - 30/11	01/01 - 30/11	% Share
DAF	19	282	12.98%
Dennis Eagle	0	12	0.55%
Fuso	2	23	1.06%
Hino	0	0	0.00%
Isuzu	4	105	4.83%
Iveco	6	69	3.18%
MAN	15	150	6.90%
Mercedes-Benz	20	208	9.57%
Renault	18	274	12.61%
Scania	19	559	25.72%
Volvo	16	447	20.57%
Private Import	0	44	2.02%
Total November 2022	119	2173	
Total November 2021	122	2245	
2022 Change 2021	-3	-72	
% Change 2022 - 2021	-2.46%	-3.21%	

The latest statistics are available online at:
<https://stats.beepbeep.ie>



MOTOR INDUSTRY AWARDS 2023

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

 Bank of Ireland

The most highly-anticipated Awards for the Irish Automotive Industry are open for online entries, via the members portal. The 2023 SIMI Irish Motor Industry Awards, in association with Bank of Ireland, is our way of recognising and celebrating the amazing successes achieved by these businesses over the last 12 months.

The Awards will take place in the Clayton Hotel-Burlington Road in conjunction with the SIMI Annual Dinner on Thursday, February 16th 2023.

THE AWARD CATEGORIES

- Franchise Sales Operation of the Year
- Franchise Aftersales Operation of the Year
- Independent Sales Operation of the Year
- Independent Aftersales Operation of the Year
- Vehicle Recovery Operator of the Year
- Bodyshop of the Year
- Commercial Vehicle Operation of the Year

HOW TO ENTER

YOU CAN ENTER NOW AT
<https://members.simi.ie/training-and-events/events>

The Awards entry forms are available on our website and entries can be submitted now.

DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS JANUARY 9TH 2023

AWARD WINNERS IN 2022



Derek McDermott, Managing Director, Bank of Ireland Finance; Brian Cooke, SIMI Director General; Gillian Fanning, SIMI President; and Brendan Keary, Kearys Motor Group.

**FRANCHISE SALES
OPERATION OF THE YEAR**
Keary's Motor Group



Derek McDermott, Managing Director, Bank of Ireland Finance; Brian Cooke, SIMI Director General; Gillian Fanning, SIMI President; James Foley and Hugh Sheehy, Cavanaghs of Charleville.

**FRANCHISE AFTERSALES
OPERATION OF THE YEAR**
Cavanagh's of Charleville



Derek McDermott, Managing Director, Bank of Ireland Finance; Brian Cooke, SIMI Director General; Gillian Fanning, SIMI President; and Eoin McGuinness, Auto Assure.

**INDEPENDENT SALES
OPERATION OF THE YEAR**
Auto Assure



Derek McDermott, Managing Director, Bank of Ireland Finance; Brian Cooke, SIMI Director General; Gillian Fanning, SIMI President; John Donnellan and Jude Donnellan, Donnellan Auto Services.

**INDEPENDENT AFTERSALES
OPERATION OF THE YEAR**
Donnellan Auto Services



Brian Cooke, SIMI Director General; Derek McDermott, Managing Director, Bank of Ireland Finance; Owen Cullen, Accident Repair Centre; and Gillian Fanning, SIMI President.

BODYSHOP OF THE YEAR
Accident Repair Centre



Brian Cooke, SIMI Director General; Derek McDermott, Managing Director, Bank of Ireland Finance; Derek Beahan, Derek Beahan Ltd; and Gillian Fanning, SIMI President.

**VEHICLE RECOVERY
OPERATOR OF THE YEAR**
Derek Beahan Ltd



COMMERCIAL VEHICLE OPERATION OF THE YEAR AWARD

Wicklow VTN *Wicklow VTN were unable to attend on the night.*



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1922-2022

Serving the Irish Motor Industry





Serving the Irish Motor Industry

Celebrating

100

1922-2022
Years



WHOLESALERS



VEHICLE SERVICING



MOTOR FACTORS



ENGINE RE-MANUFACTURERS



VEHICLE RECOVERY
OPERATORS



LCV HGV
COMMERCIAL
VEHICLE TESTERS



MOTORCYCLE
DEALERS



RETAILERS
FRANCHISE & INDEPENDENT



PETROL & OIL
DISTRIBUTORS



VEHICLE
DISTRIBUTORS



VEHICLE BODY
REPAIRERS



AFFILIATE
MEMBERS



WINDSCREEN
REPAIRERS

simi.ie



In 1922 The Irish Motor Agents Association (IMAA) was formed at an informal meeting of the Irish Motor Traders, held in the Clarendon Restaurant, London, under the chairmanship of S.L. Hutchinson. The IMMA would later merge with the Society of the Irish Motor Traders Ltd, and with that a change of name to the organisation we know today as SIMI (1968), The Society of the Irish Motor Industry, writes Brian Cooke, Director General, SIMI.



Brian Cooke,
Director General, SIMI.

Looking back to the beginning, the vision was clear to have one organisation that represented the Professional Motor Industry in Ireland. The ethos and beliefs of the organisation's early founders is enshrined in who we are and the industry which we represent today. Every member abides by our code of the ethics and professionalism when they join the SIMI. Members nationwide carry our logo on their premises, emphasising their commitment to treating their customers in an ethical and professional manner. The legacy of which started in 1922 and has been passed down through the decades, to maintain the highest standards of business ethics and integrity.

The real success of the Society is ultimately down to the members and their commitment to the highest standards and professionalism. The executives in SIMI are lucky in that we have a very active membership, who both support and challenge us to represent the Industry in a positive way. We do owe a debt of gratitude to all those members who have been active in the Society, giving up their free time to help the entire Industry. This includes all the Presidents and Board Members over the last century, and also those members who have given their commitment at local and national level. In addition, those of us in Pembroke Street today have been handed a legacy to be cherished, best embodied by the values that Bob Prole has passed on to us all who work in SIMI. The Society has grown and changed over the many years, while our ambition has remained the same, to represent and support our members. We believe in doing the right thing for our members, representing the views of the motor industry, at a political and European level, to various stakeholders, the media and the motoring public.

The desire to raise professionalism and improvements within our Industry is reflected through SIMI's various committees that have created several standard programmes which our members adhere to, in order to demonstrate their commitment to achieving top quality services. Examples of this include the VTN (Vehicle Testing Network) members

which are part of the wider RSA CVRT Network responsible for the Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Test (CVRT) for all commercial vehicles, buses and ambulances. Their standards based approach has seen them retain commercial vehicle testing within the professional Motor Industry. CSS (Certified Steel Standard) is the Irish national vehicle body repairers standards programme of SIMI. Vehicle body repairer members who complete structurally repairs to accident damaged vehicles, voluntarily undertake an annual independent audit to maintain the standard, while our vehicle recovery operator members also operate their own VRO standard. The Society has also been a strong supporter of the formation of ELVES, which is the government approved compliance scheme, devised and implemented by the motor industry, to make compliance for the scrappage of cars and vans easier while meeting our reuse, recycle and recovery rates EU targets for End-of-Life Vehicles.

Our Industry has seen many great advances in technology over the past century, by far the most rapid, crucial, and recent change is the transition towards electrification. Climate change is happening, with time and tide waiting for no man or woman. The decarbonisation of the national fleet is both a massive challenge and a great opportunity for our members. For real change to happen, policy makers and the industry must work together to facilitate the journey towards decarbonisation.

We have seen times of boom and bust, Brexit disruptions and, in the last two years, survival and emergence from a global pandemic but throughout it all, no matter what challenges have come our way this industry has shown resilience time and time again. We in SIMI have long held the view that it is the indigenous SME sector, including SIMI members, that are the real heroes of the Irish economy, providing vital employment and economic activity in every village, town and city in Ireland. SIMI and its members have been handed down a great legacy over the last century, and we will continue to carry this legacy for the next 100 years.

A multifaceted approach



SIMI President Antonia Hendron.

Sustaining a business and driving long-term success requires a multifaceted approach, including decisive leadership, a strong culture and value set, the ability to change, and the ability to listen to your customers, which in SIMI's case are our members, writes SIMI President Antonia Hendron.

The Society's longevity has been built on decades of developing a strong culture, one that embodies high standards of professionalism, business ethics and at its core serves the interests of its members and the industry we represent. The members are at the heart of the Society strategy, with various sectors working within SIMI to guide and implement projects that best serve the whole Industry, from standards to training programmes, to lobbying Government and working with various stakeholders. In all of this, SIMI strives to serve the members' best interests. Our businesses have faced times of growth to recession and recovery, during which time the Society has been the one constant always supporting members. To reach 100 years is an amazing achievement, a milestone worthy of a celebration and I wish the Society and our members another one hundred years of success.



AT SIMI, EVERYTHING WE DO, WE DO TO PROTECT AND SUPPORT OUR MEMBERS.

**We believe in going above and beyond to deliver on this promise.
We have a dedicated, professional, driven team who care
about your business and the motor industry.**

Taxation Advice	★	Employment Advice
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Training	★	Compliance
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Voices of the Irish Motor

The evolution of the representative organisation for the Irish Motor Industry saw three distinct phases, beginning with the establishment of the Irish Motor Managers Association in 1922. Then, in 1927, The Society of the Irish Motor Traders Ltd – The Irish Motor Traders Association was formed. Finally, the representative organisation as we know it today, came into being with the founding of the Society of the Irish Motor Industry in 1968. Listed on the facing page are the individuals who served as Presidents in these organisations



SIMI Past Presidents pictured at the SIMI Irish Motor Industry Awards and Annual Dinner 2022. Back row: Gavin Hydes, Gerard O'Farrell, Gerry Caffrey, Paul Flanagan, Jim Cusack, Louis O'Hanlon, and Des Large. Front row: Tom Noonan, Tom Kilroy, Brian Fanning, Gillian Fanning, Noel Deasy, Gabriel Keane, and James Brooks.

SIMI – speaking out for the Industry since 1968



Leo Keogh
Chief Executive Officer
1968-1992



Cyril McHugh
Chief Executive
1992 - 2008



Alan Nolan
Director General
2008-2019



Brian Cooke
Director General
2019-present

Industry 1922-2022

The Presidents listed below served with distinction.

The Irish Motor Agents Association

1922 Leo J. Callow	1923 F.M. Summerfield	1924 F.M. Summerfield	1925 R.W. Archer	1926 P.F. Quinlan
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The Society of the Irish Motor Traders Ltd - The Irish Motor Traders Association

1927	John O'Neill	1940	T.J. Cullen	1955	J. Aubrey Thompson
1928	Arthur J. Huet	1941	A. McDonogh	1956	Chas. Warren
1929	James A. Cross	1942	W.J. Henderson	1957	Cyril Count McCormack
1930	J.J. Reddy (SIMT)	1943	Chas. Warren	1958	J.J. O'Neill
	John O'Neill (IMTA)	1944	B. Cahill	1959	R.J. Porter
1931	P.S. Brady (SIMT)	1945	W.F. Poole	1960	J.T. Wood
	E. O'Hanlon (IMTA)	1946	S.M. Huet	1961	D.J. Clarke
1932	T.L. McGee	1947	A.P. Huet	1962	C.L. Dixon
1933	S.T. Robinson	1948	J.J. O'Neill	1963	J.T. Barton
1934	M.P. Mahony	1949	W.H. Cooper	1964	D.J. Lynch
1935	M.A.S. Dawson	1950	F.J.R. Cross	1965	H. de L. Crawford
1936	F.M. Summerfield	1951	F.M. Summerfield	1966	M.J. McQuaid
1937	R.C. Flanagan	1952	F.R. Hill	1967	W.G. Wilkinson
1938	Louis J. Lemass	1953	J.J. Traynor		
1939	P.J. Tracy	1954	T.C. Booth		

SIMI Presidents

1968	W.G. Wilkinson RIP	1987/88	Brian Murphy	2007/08	Ian Macneill
1968/69	R.W. Penrose RIP	1988/89	Brian Fanning	2008/09	Paul Flanagan
1969/70	Bagenal Fagan RIP	1989/90	Eugene Cranley	2009/10	Mike Finlay
1970/71	Lionel O. Booth RIP	1990/91	Arnold O'Byrne	2010/11	Eddie Murphy
1971/72	J.J. O'Hea RIP	1991/92	Noel Deasy	2011/12	Gerry Caffrey
1972/73	J.N. Sheridan RIP	1992/93	Tom Noonan	2012/13	Alan Lyons
1973/74	J. Forte RIP	1993/94	Gaetano Forte	2013/14	Paul Linders
1974/75	Brendan Reville RIP	1994/95	Paddy Corcoran	2014/15	James Brooks
1975/76	Ted Sheils RIP	1995/96	Tom Kilroy	2015/16	Mark Boggan
1976/77	Frank E. Mooney RIP	1996/97	Des Large	2016/17	Alan Greene
1977/78	James T. Barton RIP	1997/98	Victor Hamilton	2017/18	Gavin Hydes
1978/79	Denis Mahony RIP	1998/99	Jerr Nolan	2018/19	Gerard O'Farrell
1979/80	Owen Lemass RIP	1999/00	Tom Murphy	2019/20	Gabriel Keane
1980/81	Ron Sweeney RIP	2000/01	Michael Forde	2020/21	Gillian Fanning
1981/82	Brian Dennis RIP	2001/02	Paraic Mooney	2021/22	Gillian Fanning
1982/83	Edmond Goid RIP	2002/03	Tony Carey RIP	2022/23	Antonia Hendron
1983/84	Donal Hanrahan RIP	2003/04	Michael Herbert		
1984/85	G.A. Mackey RIP	2004/05	Louis O'Hanlon		
1985/86	Hugh Crawford RIP	2005/06	Noel Daly		
1986/87	Matt Fagan RIP	2006/07	Jim Cusack		

SIMI Honorary Life Member

Brian Murphy

Driving forward through decades of change



Since the Irish Motor Industry established a representative voice in 1922, it has evolved in the following decades to provide mobility to the individuals and businesses that have shaped the economy and the country. As Ireland has grown, so has the Motor Industry. Here, SIMI members, ranging from some of the Industry's longest-established businesses to more recent success stories, share their insights on the Industry, SIMI membership, and the future.



Aherns CVRT
Testers, Denis
Downey, Padraig
Doherty and
Conor Courtney.

AHERNS MOTOR GROUP (FOUNDED 1927)

Trading in Co. Kerry for 95 years

Dealer Principal: Pat Ahern; Head of Business: Paul Ahern

Aherns Motor Group in Kerry have been in business for 95 years and have developed a diversified operation that encompasses a large motorstore, which sells new and used cars, and an accident repair body shop, as well as its CVRT facility.

In regard to vehicle testing, Pat Ahern says that the testing network has been transformed in recent years: "With the guidance and direction of the RSA, there has been a rapid development and implementation of standards that have brought the overall vehicle testing network to a consistent and professional standard."

Those changes have been reflected in Aherns' operation with increased levels of investment in equipment and training. "All our testers undertake structured annual CPD training run by the RSA, and weekly bulletins from the RSA keep testers informed in relation to the latest updates on all testing issues."

The most significant benefit of the transformation of the VTN network has been its role in ensuring better safety on the roads: "Road safety is a core strategy of the RSA, and there has been a huge improvement in the quality and standard of vehicles on the road due to the testing standards implemented in all VTN centres." A track record of 95 years in business means that the Group has a heritage of resilience and Pat is cautiously optimistic about the future, while fully aware of the pitfalls that can lay in wait: "Right now the biggest challenge we face, going forward, is staffing and the lack of qualified testers. I think this is the most pressing concern for us and for the Motor Industry in general."



FLACK BROTHERS (FOUNDED 1929)

Trading in Co. Monaghan for 93 years

Managing Director: Noelle Flack

The Flack Brothers name is renowned in Monaghan, the dealership having been in business there for over 90 years. Noelle Flack comments: "The one constant in all that time has been change and we've had to manage through the ups and downs of economic cycles time and again. Resilience is a key attribute for a successful business in this Industry." Over those 90 years, Noelle believes that dealerships like Flack Brothers, and the wider Motor Industry, have made a valuable contribution to the Irish economy and to society in general: 'The Industry has made a difference to people's lives. Car ownership has given people greater freedom to

travel, access to jobs, a sense of independence.'

In Noelle's view, we are now in the middle of what will be the biggest change to date, the move to zero emissions and the electrification of the national fleet. "This is arguably the most fundamental transformation we have seen, with impacts for environmental sustainability that will reach beyond our industry. It's challenging but exciting too."

At times of change, Noelle says the value of a representative organisation is evident: "SIMI are always there when we need them, keeping us up to date with the latest regulations, technical advances and training."



LINDERS (FOUNDED 1938)

Trading in Co. Dublin for 84 years

Managing Director: Paul Linders

Linders is a name synonymous with Dublin motoring. Paul Linders' grandfather, Patrick (Sonny) Linders started the business in 1938. Paul's grandfather was a north Dublin boy from Portrane with a singular work ethic. "He lectured in engineering in Bolton St. at the same time as fixing vehicles from a shed in Stable Lane, Smithfield. He then began buying and selling what and when he could and, over the years, added franchises and grew both the business and our name. That determination was drilled into his children and grandchildren. It is part of our fabric. Silly as it may sound, we simply do not give up. He used to tell me 'Never take no for an answer, unless it comes from me.' His picture hangs in each of our garages to remind us where and who we come from."

Paul believes that a family business has its own particular strengths: "I think there is a level of mutual understanding and support that helps when things are especially tough. Linders has a culture of getting on with it, we celebrate our success, especially post-pandemic but also we are comfortable with a level of risk. We expect mistakes, and we try and take opportunities when the ball bounces our way. It's worked so far."

He has always felt that the Industry needs strong and vocal representation to ensure its voice is heard. "The guys in SIMI work pretty tirelessly and often thanklessly in our interest. I call on them regularly for help and always receive it when I need it. They are essential."



GILMORES KINGS COURT LTD (FOUNDED 1952)

Trading in Co. Cavan for 70 years

Director: Ken Gilmore

Gilmores Kingscourt Ltd has a dealership and VTN business based in Cavan. Ken Gilmore comments: "The way the vehicle testing network has progressed down through the years is probably the most significant change I've witnessed. There has been an intense focus on high standards and all test centres now operate to ISO 9001:2015. For us, testing became separate from workshop activities and became a separate part of our business in itself."

Ken adds: "On the testing side, since the RSA took responsibility for the test system more than a decade ago, they now run specific annual CPD Training for the 500 testers registered nationally in the system and this is delivered by Technological University of the Shannon

Midlands/ Midwest (previously AIT Athlone).

"Vehicle roadworthiness testing is part of the RSA's overall safety strategy of ensuring that operators maintain the ongoing roadworthiness of their vehicles and, ultimately, contributes to ensuring that all vehicles on the road are safe and, therefore, ensuring that road deaths and injuries are reduced to the smallest possible levels."

Looking to 2023 and beyond, Ken has a straightforward objective: "We want to keep our business moving forward both as a vehicle tester and as a dealership. I believe we are ideally positioned to keep up with the technological changes in the ever-increasing complexity of modern vehicle. We want to make the most of the opportunity this gives us."



SHEVLINS GARAGE (FOUNDED 1965)

Trading in Co. Mayo for 57 years

Director: Liam Shevlin

Shevlins has been an intrinsic part of its local community in Belmullet, Mayo, since the sixties. Liam Shevlin believes that in a small community the personal relationship between customer and business is very important: "They want to walk in have a chat and feel comfortable with the person they are dealing with. The thing that contributes most to success when it comes down to it is customer satisfaction." Liam says that there is great loyalty in a small community: "We often see a younger generation of customers come to our door simply on the recommendation of their fathers, mothers, grandparents and so on. In a small community, if you do a good turn for someone it is never forgotten and, by treating our customers well and prioritising them, we will hopefully continue to see future generations come to our business."

In Liam's view, we are entering a new era. "People are more cautious and with the cost of living they will be more wary of how they spend their money. Now more than ever, people will want to deal with a credible business and to know they are in the right hands. Delivering customer satisfaction, along with the help of the SIMI, is what will see us into the future."

Liam became a SIMI member because he believes the SIMI logo brings additional assurance to customers: "As SIMI are the official voice of the Motor Industry in Ireland, we wanted to offer that added credibility to our customers. SIMI also give a lot of regular information and practical advice which is beneficial to our business."



SERFAC LTD (FOUNDED 1978)

Trading in Co. Dublin for 44 years

Director: Gillian Fanning

The establishment and growth of leading Irish automotive hard parts supplier, Serfac Ltd, has coincided with an era of great change in the wholesale sector including the move to just-in-time fulfilment of orders, as well as dramatic improvements in logistics and delivery times, allowing

receipt of overnight delivery from suppliers in mainland Europe which, in turn, has enabled supply of out-of-stock parts to customers within 24 hours of ordering.

Gillian Fanning says: "Technology has transformed our business over the last 10-15 years, from sophisticated ERP and parts management systems to online sales tools that allow customers to purchase from us 24/7."

Serfac values its SIMI membership: "It's important to be a member of the representative body for our industry and the support that SIMI provides to its members is invaluable.

"From our own perspective as a wholesale parts business, SIMI's membership of FIGIEFA - the aftermarket lobbying organisation - is critical in terms of keeping the interests of our sector at the forefront in Brussels and ensuring that our issues are heard and considered by the European Commission."

Gillian doesn't expect the rapid pace of change in the wholesale sector to ease any time soon: "The proliferation of trading groups and large multinational corporations entering the sector will continue to have a strong influence in our area of the industry.

"Environmental issues and forthcoming legislation banning ICE vehicles will also have a significant impact as industry players adapt. It's likely that technology will play an even greater part in our sector than it does currently, with a more pronounced shift to online sales and resulting route-to-market transformations."



KILCOCK AUTOS (FOUNDED 1990)

Trading in Co. Kildare for 32 years

Proprietor: Gerard McGeeney

Determination and persistence have helped Kilcock Autos sustain a successful vehicle recovery operation in North Kildare for more than three decades. Gerard McGeeney says: 'Sticking to it is the quality that has seen us through. Taking the good with the bad, and dealing with both in a level-headed way has kept us on track. We have seen it all!' The biggest change that Gerard has seen in that time? "The influence of the insurance companies has increased substantially and we have had to adapt to deal with the consequent changes that has brought about."

Training has been a consistent commitment through the years, Gerard says, from basic training to yearly CPC. Gerard notes that recruitment is a challenge for the VRO sector at the moment and it's difficult to attract new people to the sector.

Looking at the direction the VRO sector will take in the future, Gerard hopes to see greater regulation to ensure that companies like his, who invest in and commit to their business in a sustainable and ongoing way, can benefit from fairer competition in the sector.



JAMIE LAWLOR CRASH REPAIRS LTD (FOUNDED 2002)

Trading in Co. Tipperary for 20 years

Director: Jamie Lawlor

Jamie Lawlor set up his company in Killenaule, Thurles in 2002, subsequently moving to Clonmel in 2008. The most significant change to the crash repair business that Jamie has seen is the fast pace at which vehicle technology is changing. He comments: "We keep up to date with all of the different changes, by investing in our equipment, knowledge and training to undertake these repairs. The level of investment in our business is a lot greater now than in previous decades and this must be done to sustain our business."

"More and more services are now done on site. Vehicle body repairers today have invested heavily in their equipment to ensure the highest quality equipment and the highest standard of repair methods. Our repair work is completed in-house reducing the overall time taken to complete the repair."

Jamie believes membership of SIMI is particularly important for crash repairers: "The Certified Steel Standard (CSS) is the first Irish national vehicle body repairers standards programme, for vehicle body repairers who undertake structural repair to accident-damaged vehicles. This programme was introduced by SIMI."

"As a member and vehicle body repairer it is important to have this accreditation and standard for our sector. The Society also provides a variety of training courses and, through supports from Skillnet Ireland, we have been able to benefit from industry specific training programmes."

Looking ahead, Jamie sees electrification of the fleet as the most significant change the Industry faces: "Repairs of electric vehicles (EVs) will require investment in equipment, charging facilities etc. However, the most important investment will be in the training required in order to work on this new technology."



M6 MOTORS (FOUNDED 2011)

Trading in Co. Galway for 11 years

Director: Alan Naughton

M6 Motors, the successful used car dealership based in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, was set up by Alan Naughton after he completed a BA in Business Studies at the University of Limerick. The original team of two has now grown to 18 employees. Persistence and perseverance have been crucial qualities for him and his team: "In our 11 years of trading we have built a lot of repeat business through a good reputation and good aftersales service. We learned to adapt quickly to deal with a forever-changing environment."

"It's a hands-on business with the owner and managers involved in the every day running of the business which allows for quicker reactions and quicker decisions when

needed. We have a well-managed team, all on one site, allowing us to be proactive rather than reactive in our decision-making. Low staff turnover has also helped." He sees the future as both challenging and promising: "A slowdown in the economy is inevitable at this stage and with the cost of living increasing, the level of disposable income will certainly diminish. People will still need cars but we may not see some of our customers changing their car as often. Regardless, I am positive that we can adapt like we did when Brexit happened and when Covid happened, and we will have many more successful years ahead."



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The year ahead: A Bumpy Ride



Andrew Park, Economist, Grant Thornton looks back on the difficult economic conditions in 2022 and assesses the prospects for 2023



As 2022 comes to a close many economists, like myself, will begin to reflect on the year past as well as look forward to what the next year has in store. Upon reflection over the past year, everyone, not just economists, will consider 2022 to have been a very challenging year economically, with supply chain constraints and the Russian invasion of Ukraine seeing inflation across the globe rise rapidly

Inflation

In the Euro area, as one example, inflation in the 12 months to October 2022 rose from 4.1% in October 2021 to 10.6%. Price increases haven't been uniform across all countries in Europe, however. Ireland has seen its inflation levels rise from 5.1% to 9.4% whereas the UK has seen its inflation rate rise from 4.2% to 11.1%, its highest levels in 41 years. Such rapid increases in prices were mainly driven by the increasing cost of energy and food prices, with these being a direct result of the Russian invasion of the Ukraine, as well as Russia limiting the level of its gas and oil supplies into Europe and beyond. The spiralling level of inflation has hence led to the current cost of living crisis which has overshadowed much of 2022 and influenced economic performance.

As a result, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) suggest that growth in modified domestic demand (MDD) - a measure for domestic demand within the economy - will be 5.8% for 2022, with falling consumer confidence, squeezed incomes and rising inflation weighing heavily on economic performance.

This does beg the question of how long the cost of living crisis and high levels of inflation will last. The simplest answer is we aren't too sure yet. Many of the impacts will be

dependent on the how long the conflict in Ukraine continues for. Mixed into this is whether the gas supply stored across the EU will be sufficient to satisfy demand through the winter and beyond. According to Reuters, 94.8% of the EU's gas storage was filled as of November 21. However, as the war in Ukraine drags on, demands on the EU's energy supplies will continue to place pressure on costs and exacerbate the cost of living crisis.

Despite the EU increasing its levels of gas supplies, many EU countries have begun extending energy supports to households to deal with the energy crisis. For example, the Irish Government committed to provide each household with €600 to cover electricity bills, and a one-off fuel allowance payment of €400, both aimed at helping alleviate energy cost pressures.

Dominant economic factors

Over the short-term, it's expected the economic outlook for the EU and Ireland will continue to be dominated by the cost of living crisis and falling consumer confidence. According to the European Commission, consumer confidence across the EU in 2022 has remained below the long term average and has only recently increased after months of continual decline. Reflecting such sentiment, the Commission has forecasted a much more subdued outlook for 2023. It anticipates economic output across the EU to grow by only 0.3% in the year. This outlook is in stark contrast to previous forecasts for 2023 which predicted growth of up to 2.5%. Initial outlook for 2023

The Commission put much of the revision down to the 'sharp erosion' of household spending powers and the significant shift in consumer sentiment, with this contributing to the

prediction of a 'technical recession' in the first quarter of 2023. While the initial outlook for 2023 looks downbeat, the recession is expected to be short. The Commission forecasts growth to return in the spring of 2023 as inflation pressures ease from 9.3% in 2022 to 7.0% in 2023.

Closer to home, there is a similar expectation for the Irish economy going into 2023. The recently published Economic & Fiscal Outlook contained in Budget 2023 noted the expectation for the economy to slow significantly over 2023. The Department of Finance forecasts MDD to be 1.2%, with this falling dramatically from the estimated 2022 level of 7.7%. Such a significant forecasted drop is, according to the Department, due to the 'decline in domestic purchasing power' as inflation continues to provide a significant drag on consumption and erodes any expected wage growth.

Forecasts from the ESRI reflect similar sentiments, with their Economic Commentary for Autumn 2022 indicating that MDD will grow by only 2.5% in 2023 as increased cost of living pressures exert downward pressure on domestic consumption. Overall, the economic outlook for 2023 looks quite subdued. The Department forecasts that a technical recession will occur in Q1 2023 as personal incomes continue to be constrained, inflation remains stubbornly high, and the energy crisis across the EU and UK is expected to extend to at least Q2 2023.

On-site green energy solutions

There is no magic formula that will allow businesses to absorb increased costs and potentially lower levels of sales without impinging on margins. However, there are steps that can be taken which might help ease the cost burden. Research undertaken by NatWest Group found that 7% of UK SMEs in 2022 had started to invest in on-site green energy as a way of moving away from their dependence on 'traditional' fossil fuels. NatWest only expect this figure to grow, with around 17% of SMEs stating they will undertake investment to generate and store their own on-site green energy.

This move highlights businesses thinking more strategically about how to cut their energy costs. Already, leading Irish dealerships have undertaken their own on-site green energy initiatives including significant investments in innovative green solutions such as solar photovoltaic panels. Unfortunately, with a drop in consumer sentiment, reductions in expenditure usually centre around 'big ticket' items such as new cars. There is no immediate tonic to reversing this trend, at least until the current cost of living crisis and squeezed income environment abates. In all, the outlook suggests the crisis will continue across much of 2023, dampening economic and business activity, before easing and returning to a 'norm' in 2024 – thus providing much-needed relief.

ADVERTORIAL



When it comes to stock funding, what are your options?

NEXTGEAR
CAPITAL
COX AUTOMOTIVE

Vicky Gardner, Director of Sales Development at NextGear Capital, discusses some of the things dealers should think about before making a decision.

Q: Why might a dealer want to consider stock funding vs other finance?

A: With stock funding, you only pay for what you use. With a stocking plan, you only borrow when you fund a vehicle, and for the duration of having that vehicle on your forecourt. You settle the outstanding sum plus the fee when you sell, you can do this as many times as you like, and with as many vehicles as your stocking plan facility will allow.

Q: There are various types of stocking plans, how do they differ?

A: Some products are 'captive'; in other words, they can only be used at a specific source. Some come with an expectation of reciprocal consumer finance, meaning the lender demands a volume of retail business in exchange for providing wholesale terms. Some only fund a percentage of the vehicle cost. It's important to understand the detail.

Q: What makes NextGear Capital different?

A: We've created a funding product that gives dealers freedom and flexibility. We provide 100% funding regardless of source. We're integrated with 70+ auctions and vehicle wholesalers where the full hammer price plus delivery and buyer's fees can be settled directly. If buying from another source, including part-exchange or a private sale, 100% of trade value or invoice price can be funded.

Q: How can a dealer use wholesale funding to grow?

A: Giving a dealer the ability to buy more stock, it fuels growth. We often see dealers who partner with us quickly start selling 10-30% more vehicles. It helps dealers be more agile by ensuring they are able to buy decisively when the opportunity arises. And it frees up cash to invest in the business in other ways.

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DAVID PHELAN

Head of
Commercial &
Business

dphelan@hayes-
solicitors.ie



MATTHEW AUSTIN

Partner

maustin@hayes-
solicitors.ie



LAURA FANNIN

Partner

lfannin@hayes-
solicitors.ie

Hayes solicitors LLP, Lavery House, Earlsfort Terrace,
Dublin 2, D02 T625, Ireland

T: +353 1 6624747 www.hayes-solicitors.ie

Cavanaghs innovates to retain competitive edge



Cavanaghs occupies a prime 3.5 acre roadside site on the outskirts of Charleville, north Cork.



Trading for well over 50 years, Cavanaghs of Charleville continues to adapt, innovate and set the highest standards in dealership management, winning the title of SIMI Franchised Aftersales Operation of the Year for 2022.

The business was set up by Dr Tom Cavanagh as a Ford Dealership based in Charleville on the Cork/Limerick border in 1966 along with Dealerships in Fermoy and Cork. The Charleville branch was taken over by Martin Condon in 1988 who, along with Liam Herlihy, remained the majority shareholders before passing on the reigns to then Sales Manager, James Foley, in 2021. James is now the current Managing Director and Dealer Principal.

Cavanaghs occupies a prime 3.5 acre roadside site on the outskirts of Charleville, north Cork, employing 60 people, as well as a smaller branch in Mallow, employing 10 people. The company is run by a board of directors which reviews accounts and strategic direction of the company while the month-to-month operations are looked after by a broader-based management team. James Foley comments: "We believe that our main competitive advantage is the management team we have assembled at Cavanaghs. We have some really senior industry people working in our company with deep sectoral knowledge and huge insights into the motor industry."

Cavanaghs and Ford

Cavanaghs has been with Ford for over half a century. "The Cavanaghs name in Munster is synonymous with Ford so we couldn't imagine being with any other franchise. In recent years, Ford has begun to make huge strides in electric vehicles with one passenger vehicle that is fully electric (Mustang Mach E) and one commercial vehicle (eTransit). Apart from that it has several PHEVs, the most notable being the Ford Kuga, and also several MHEVs, the most

Cavanaghs of Charleville: milestones

1966: Business set up by Dr Tom Cavanagh and becomes part of Ford network

1988: Acquired by Martin Condon in MBO

1996: Business incorporated as Cavanaghs of Charleville Ltd

2011: Awarded Franchised Dealer of the Year by SIMI

2016: Celebrated 50 years as Ford franchisee

2021: Primary shareholders Martin Condon and Liam Herlihy pass business on to James Foley

iconic being the Ford Focus."

James notes that Ford is recognised as having a strong motoring heritage in Ireland, dating back to the brand's deep roots in Cork. "Ford's strength is its reliability and steady evolution down through the years bringing its customer base on the journey with it."

The aftersales team

The aftersales department comprises two workshops – one in Charleville and one in Mallow – plus a bodyshop also based in Charleville. Charleville has approximately 30 staff within its aftersales department, which is headed by Gregg Darmody, who joined as Aftersales Manager in June of this year. The workshop in Mallow employs six staff and is



Cavanaghs' aftersales department performed well in 2021.

managed by Service Manager, Kyle Crotty.

2021 was a challenging year for the Industry, but Cavanaghs' aftersales department still performed well. "We have a large customer base and we work hard to ensure retention of customers is kept at high levels by maintaining a high standard of service each time they visit us. We also initiated a number of proactive programmes over the last number of years that have helped us to adapt our sales model to an ever-changing marketplace.

"Like all aspects of life at the moment, we appreciate that our customers are facing cost of living challenges which must be met with understanding and flexibility. In that regard, we expect to be relying on flexible payment systems even more in 2022/23 in order to help customers meet both expected and unexpected vehicle bills as they arise. We have payment options and flexible payment plans in place which allow our customers to manage their way through these bills and continue to give their vehicles the level of maintenance and care that they have become accustomed to."

Innovating to meet customer needs

Cost of living pressures and inflation are having an impact on the motoring public: "We have seen a marked change in our aftersales engagement over the last eight to 10 months with customers prioritising their outgoing payments and having to make difficult decisions on how to spend their available money right now. However, our decision a number of years ago to automatically include a three-year service plan with most new and used cars that we sell has really paid off, with a good number of customers now returning to us to avail of their service and, fortunately, not having to bear the cost of that service each time. This decision to make service plans a big part of our aftersales business has really paid dividends and is one of the primary reasons why customer retention and workshop traffic volumes have been maintained at satisfactory levels.

"We are able to offer customers flexible payment plans which help them to navigate the challenges that they face in meeting higher costs and juggle the various bills they are getting right now. Another effect we have seen is where customers realise they may not be in a position to change vehicle for some years, they undertake to ensure all

maintenance and servicing milestones are met to guarantee their vehicles remain roadworthy and won't let them down. In that sense, the current cost of living crisis can present a threat and an opportunity at the same time."

The Dealership has worked through similar challenging periods in the past, most notably the recession after the financial collapse in 2008. "The main thing a company like ours needs to be mindful of at times like this is the cost base.

"We have already put into practice a number of measures all aimed at lowering our costs and allowing us to deliver a similar level of service working off a lower cost-base. For example, we have just agreed a deal to supply 50kwh of electricity per day from our investment in solar panels on our roofing in Charleville. This will allow us to manage our electricity overhead more efficiently and maintain our costs at an acceptable level."

Staff retention is another vital part of Cavanaghs' business. "Holding on to well-trained staff and not incurring search and hiring costs is a key part of keeping control of payroll costs. In fact, we believe that a certain level of justifiable wage increases are far more desirable at the current point in time rather than replacing experienced and highly-trained staff, which is often counter-productive and more expensive in both the short and long run."

Outlook for 2023 and beyond

The Industry has weathered crisis after crisis since 2016 and, while no one expects other different crises not to arise, a positive by-product of these disruptions is that they have, in James's view, made companies more agile and responsive to market and environmental forces. He concludes: "We expect the outlook to improve over the next two years. Supply challenges should start to become less of an issue and, while domestic demand will suffer from the energy crisis and the cost of living increases, modern economics has shown that these cycles are now much less prolonged than they were during the 80s and 90s. Demand for EVs should continue to grow in the months and years ahead and, hopefully, it will be matched by an attendant growth in electrical charging infrastructure and also electricity supply. For these reasons, we would be quite positive about the economic outlook and the prospects for growth in the future."



Staying open to change - Derek Beahan Ltd

The Derek Beahan Ltd premises.

SIMI Vehicle Recovery Operator (VRO) of the Year, Derek Beahan Ltd, celebrates 40 years in business this year. Derek Beahan, its founder and owner, talked to Irish Motor Management about how the business has evolved and how it adapts to challenges and change.

When Derek Beahan founded his company in 1982, his business and the Irish Motor Industry were in a completely different place.

Derek recalls: "In 1982, it was just me and then, in 1984 my brother came on board. The first premises was roughly 300 square feet, with room for only one car."

Now, he has two far larger work shops; one of which is 4,500 square feet, while the other is roughly 15,000 square feet.

The business now employs 14 people.

With a business that has been running successfully for forty

years, it's not surprising that Derek has many clients who have been long-term customers. Indeed, some of today's clients are children of Derek's customers in the '80s and '90s.

A vision for the recovery sector

The recovery industry has grown substantially in Ireland over the last forty years, Derek notes. He believes that the cooperation between VROs around the country has been an important element in ensuring the sector has strengthened over the years.

In the early eighties, the businesses in the recovery sector had a vision for where it could go but, as Derek recalls, the VROs were looking for informed guidance on the direction they needed to take.

"People like Robert Prole of SIMI saw what was possible for the sector and helped us put in place the right kind of strategies and structures. So, guided by SIMI, individuals like John Fagan (RIP), Liam Kelly (RIP) Les Coogan, Damian Kidd and myself started our VRO group here in Ireland."

Training and certification

Maintaining an informed, qualified and resourceful workforce is important to Derek. The benefits go beyond having a competent team; maintaining an expert and knowledgeable team also offers assurance to existing and potential customers.

"We've always used IFRS [recovery specialists] and the IVR [Institute of Vehicle Recovery] for training," says Derek. "They have their own modules. There are different facets to recovering motor vehicles – I like to give our team a choice. Some like IVR, some like IFRS and vice versa."

Derek Beahan Ltd is also Certified ISO 9001 auto recovery agents. He believes that it's an additional source of reassurance: "We're audited twice a year which helps us to maintain rigorous standards. That gives my customers added confidence in the work that we do."

Change and resilience

Just about every business on the planet was impacted one way or another by Covid-19, and the recovery business was no exception. But while Covid, inflation and supply chain



A new addition to the fleet.



The Derek Beahan Ltd VRO team.

issues continue to present challenges for VROs, Derek believes the sector and his own business have proven, through many disruptions and economic cycles over the last forty years, that they have the resilience and the capacity to cope with the changes ahead.

The three key elements, in maintaining and growing a business, in Derek's view, are: staying open to change, enjoying what you do and having a strong team. "I would have never been able to do what I did without great support from both staff and customers. In addition, one of the most important factors in the success of the business, was a supportive wife and family. Like all VROs, I wasn't always there for special family occasions such as Christmas dinner, first communion, or confirmation. My next-door neighbour nicknamed me 'night and day'!"

Wise use of capital is also a critical aspect of running a successful VRO business, and the company has invested significantly in its commercial and car workshops. "The business is investing and reinvesting all the time," he says. "I understand the need for change, but I take it slowly. I have to be convinced in my own head that each particular change or innovation will work for the business. I have young and highly capable staff here, and I enjoy picking their brains. And I say this a thousand times – every day is a learning day."

The Future

Derek is optimistic about the future, and backs that optimism by continuing to invest in his business to keep pace with the latest technological innovations. "Cars have become lower to the ground. Also, with the growth in popularity of EVs, from a recovery perspective, it's important to take into account that many of them are heavier than standard diesel or petrol cars. Another consideration that has to be borne in mind is the multi-storey car park. They're more common now than they were 10 years ago. The ceiling heights of these car parks can vary significantly. The highest ones are 2.6 or 2.5 metres, the lowest is 1.9 metres."

The next significant expenditure for Derek Beahan Ltd is a super low approach (SLA) truck, specially designed to accommodate modern vehicles' weight and car park ceiling heights.

Derek's ultimate investment, of course, is in his team, who support him in the workplace and beyond. "I have great staff," he says. "I really do. During the tragic passing of Anne, my wife of 40 years, the staff have really looked after me. I really have to emphasise how great my team is."

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RECEPTION



Donnellan Auto invests in customer service



John Donnellan, Managing Director, Donnellan Auto

Donnellan Auto Services in Oranmore, Co. Galway was chosen as this year's Independent Aftersales Operation of the Year. Managing Director John Donnellan spoke to Irish Motor Management, discussing how he and his team have grown the business over the years.



Since its founding in 1999, Donnellan Auto Services has focused on a commitment to professional excellence and the highest quality of customer service. "I've always aimed to have a team that marries the highest standards of technical capabilities and qualifications with a genuine concern for customers and their requirements. Our team has an honest and expert approach, which has guided the business through every innovation and development over the last twenty-plus years. Our level of training and experience means that customers know they are in safe hands." Based in Oranmore Business Park, Oranmore, Co. Galway, Donnellan Auto Services is a full-service car and light commercial vehicle repair workshop. The business is fully registered with all major vehicle manufactures to use their diagnostic services and information and provides specialist services for Audi, BMW, Mercedes Benz and Volkswagen. It uses vehicle manufacturer tools such as BMW Icom, Peugeot Citroen PSA, VW Group's Odis and Volvo's Vida diagnostics.

Donnellan Auto Services also provides a fleet service: "No matter what repair a fleet customer requires, we always respond immediately no matter how small or extensive a service is needed. We offer a 24/7 call out and recovery service. Our base of fleet customers ranges widely – we have customers as far away as Dublin and Cork."

Master Technician

John Donnellan has a Master Technician qualification, a technical qualification that has been achieved by only 5% of all technicians in Ireland and the UK, he notes. To achieve Master Technician status, John undertook a programme of technical training with the UK diagnostic technical trainers, Technical Topics. After this training, John had to undergo an arduous assessment process at a regulated and approved assessment centre. The assessment process took three days and tested all of the skills and knowledge required of a Master Technician, including complex diagnostics, fault finding and customer liaison.

Customer satisfaction

The Donnellan Auto Services approach to running the business emphasises customer satisfaction, John says: "Our customers rely on us to get their vehicle back on the road quickly, cost-effectively and serviced to the highest level of quality. The vast majority of our business comes from word of mouth and repeat business, so building relationships based on trust and a high standard of service is key for us. "A key aspect in building trust with customers involves going the extra mile to ensure they are fully informed about the

work required on their vehicles. We have invested in the latest technology to ensure comprehensive and transparent communication. For instance, when one of our technicians carries out an inspection and identifies a fault with a vehicle, we make a video displaying the faulty parts and email a link to the customer for authorisation."

As a member of SIMI, Donnellan Auto Services also participates in its Autosure initiative promoting the importance of regular vehicle maintenance. "We only allow appropriately qualified staff to work on a vehicle so that customers can be confident that they are always getting the highest quality of service."

The workshop offers a diverse choice of key services to ensure both private and fleet cars can be maintained to the highest quality, safety and compliance standards. These key services include:

- preventative maintenance and vehicle health checks;
- periodic vehicle inspections to keep fleet customers RSA compliant; and,
- Hunter Elite computerised four-wheel alignments.

Donnellan Auto Services also provides light commercial and van servicing and repairs: "Our team of technicians can help prepare commercial vehicles for the CVRT, as well as completing any remedial work identified on the CVRT."

Sustained investment

Despite the challenges of the last few years, Donnellan Auto Services has continued to expand including adding an additional automotive lift bringing the total in the garage to eight: "This has given us the opportunity to expand our vehicle throughput capabilities, adding to our overall efficiency and productivity."

In addition to John himself, there are four other technicians on the team with a wealth of knowledge and experience between them. Two technicians have been with him for more than five years and one has been with the company for a decade.

John invests heavily in training both for his team and for himself (see panel, Master Technician). He sees the rapid pace of technological change as the most significant trend in the business over the last few years: "Vehicle technology is developing at an extremely fast pace, and to ensure that the business is most effectively positioned to manage the changes ahead, we need, as a team, to be constantly



Donnellan Auto Services has implemented a fully paperless garage management system that utilises the latest in digital and video technology to maximise transparency and clarity in all customer communication.

developing our skill sets. We have invested consistently in training our staff and we always upgrade our tools and equipment to keep pace with the latest innovations in the Industry.

"Our team trains with some of the leading trainers in Ireland and the UK, and we attend all major trade shows and training seminars, both in Ireland and the UK. We also partner with some of Ireland's leading companies so that we can offer our customers the knowledge and expertise that their vehicles need."

John believes that the nature of the transition to zero emission motoring will have a key influence in shaping his business and the wider aftersales sector. "The practical realities of the move to zero emissions and EVs over the next two to five years will have a critical effect on shaping our business. The reliability of the charging infrastructure and the supply of electricity will be important factors."

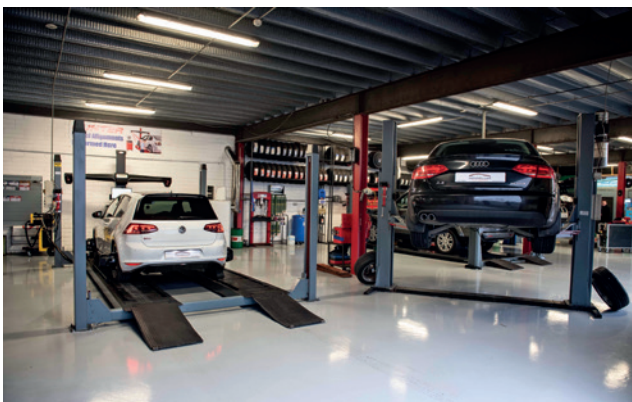
Managing economic pressures

Global supply chain issues and inflation have been pressure points for the Industry overall this year and it's been no different for Donnellan Auto Services. "Supply issues have affected us to a certain degree but we've managed to cope with the challenges and to minimise any delays for customers."

"Inflation has certainly had a significant impact with the cost of doing business rising considerably. We've examined every detail of our overheads, with the aim of making savings, big or small, wherever we can."

Regular customers have remained loyal despite the economic climate, John notes. "Our long-term customers have stayed with us. For our part, we've looked to come up with flexible payment solutions. Where necessary, we also work with a credit company to allow customers to spread payments."

Overall, customer demand has remained reasonably strong this year, John says, but he doesn't underestimate the challenges ahead. "The last few years have shown that we have to expect the unexpected. Resilience will be vital over the next year or two. Managing overheads, responding to customer needs and maintaining an adaptable approach to doing business will be key."



The Donnellan Auto Services workshop.



This year's Commercial Vehicle Operator of the Year, Wicklow VTN, specialises in a full range of heavy goods vehicle testing and light goods vehicle testing.



The company has grown exponentially since it was founded in 2006. "Testing in the beginning was not mandatory or enforced as it is today," says Tara Wilkinson, Centre Manager for Wicklow VTN. "The test centre operated at first with a single test lane with no drive through, each test was reversed out the lane when completed."

Tara recalls: "Testing went from one or two tests a week to 100+ weekly. In 2006, with new regulations and requirements in place, the test centre at the time was unfit for long-term future purpose and in 2008 moved from Whitegates service station into the newly purpose-built premises for commercial vehicle roadworthiness testing located on the outskirts of Wicklow Town."

Wicklow VTN has expanded not just in its volume of customers, but in the type of vehicles tested. "Up until early 2016 we were operating as a commercial vehicle testing centre only," says Tara, "and since July 2016 we have offered tachograph calibrations for both analogue and digital tachographs and road speed limiter checks. We can be found on the Port Access Road which is within walking distance of around 10 minutes from Wicklow Town and our location is easily accessible for all light commercial and heavy commercial vehicles coming from any direction."

Changing with the times

Like any business, Wicklow VTN has had to adapt to change with the times. In their case, this meant moving to a new, bigger premises.

"In 2008, moving from Whitegates service station into our newly purpose-built premises for light and heavy goods vehicle testing was a significant milestone. The addition of tachograph calibrations and speed limiter checks in 2016 was another major milestone which has hugely benefited ourselves and most importantly our HGV customer."

The premises is 576 sq. metres, and they use a wide range of suppliers to facilitate the breadth of vehicle types that roll onto its tarmac. "We have several equipment suppliers including MAHA, BM Flexcheck and Diagnostic Solutions," says Tara. "We use the RSA's testing network, CoVIS for all our testing purposes."

This means that Wicklow VTN can provide all types of vehicle testing (excl. ADR), as well as tachograph calibrations and RSL checks.

Tara accepts that investment is key to maintaining a successful business like Wicklow VTN. "Constant upgrades of equipment and technology is necessary to achieve a standard of quality and efficiency," she says.



Three of Wicklow VTN's full-time testers.

"We are currently in the process of applying for our CVRT Authorisation renewal which will require significant further investment in our premises and equipment including purchasing of new testing equipment/software. Technology is constantly evolving and therefore requires regular investment both in the short term and long term.

"There are high standards required for operators of commercial vehicles so we are always looking at what other services we can invest in to add value for our customers. One of these services we are looking at introducing is weight and dimension plating. With the increase in the number of imports and conversions, this is an area we are seeing more and more demand for."



Wicklow VTN consistently invests in equipment and technology to ensure its services meet the highest standards.

Prioritising staffing

In the current economic climate, staffing is a priority. At present, Wicklow VTN has three full-time testers (two LCV testers and 1 HCV tester), one manager who covers administration and a part-time cleaner.

"Recruitment and training would be a strong focus for us," Tara admits. "Alongside any changes or improvements we make in the business, corresponding levels of skills, expertise, experience and flexibility are needed to achieve optimal results."

While Wicklow VTN enjoys brisk business and a growing reputation, the team are aware that a period of cost increases and linked challenges lie ahead. "As with all businesses we have seen a significant increase in the cost of operating," Tara explains. "No reduction or levelling-off seems to be in sight within the near future. We are making small but significant changes as we go: we have upgraded to LED lights throughout the test centre and offices; we have streamlined all administration printing and testing printing to one central printer; and, where possible we email all invoices rather than print individually etc. Taken individually, changes like this are small but collectively and over a period of time, they can make a significant difference."

With so many moving parts involved in running a successful VTN, it's important to maintain perspective. And for Wicklow VTN, the customer remains their North Star. "While we will continue to seek efficiencies and cost-savings, we will also continue to constantly make improvements at all levels of the business," says Tara. "Quality and customer service are at the forefront of all our efforts."

AFTERMARKET



BATTERIES

Don't cut corners with batteries

- experts warn against short-term solutions

Battery innovation continues to be at the forefront of the latest technological developments in the Motor Industry. Here we look at the latest product offerings from some of Ireland's leading suppliers and get their insights on providing real value for car owners.

As the cost-of-living crisis continues due to soaring energy costs and rising inflation, Varta advises workshops not to cut corners when it comes to battery replacements. "There is a temptation for some technicians to take the 'easy route' and install a cheaper, standard flooded battery in their customer's start-stop vehicles" says Andy Cook, Technical Trainer at VARTA. "It seems like an easier 'sell' to deliver to the driver, but it's absolutely not the right approach – it will end up costing them more in the long-run."

Think long-term

Standard flooded or SLI (Starter, Lights, Ignition) batteries are not suitable for modern vehicles with fuel saving functions like start-stop on the car, he notes, and even entry-level models don't come without a start-stop system these days. SLI batteries will not last long if incorrectly installed in these vehicles. "It is vital, that if a vehicle has start-stop functionality, either an EFB (Enhanced Flooded Battery) or AGM (Absorbent Glass Mat) is fitted; trying to get away with a SLI will result in short battery lifespan and could even lead to features on the car not working properly."

The strength of the second-hand vehicle market also needs to be considered, Andy adds. "With vehicles in the three- to seven-year-old segment remaining a valuable asset, why would a car owner want to effectively de-value their vehicle by fitting the wrong parts, thus leading to problems? When it comes to re-sell value, you're potentially worse off if you fitted the wrong technology, instead of maximising your return on investment by



When it comes to battery replacement, Varta's experts recommend fitting like-for-like, or like-for-better.

installing the correct battery type." Varta always recommends fitting like-for-like, or like-for-better when it comes to technology – if you take an AGM off the vehicle, replace with an AGM. "I always say replace with the same technology and if you can, fit the same brand; if you see VARTA as the original equipment, why not ensure it's the exact same; then you know the vehicle will work like new."

Test every battery

VARTA also recommends technicians test every car's battery coming into the garage. With over half of vehicles on the road now having a start-stop system, it's vital that a workshop has an up-to-date tester, that can also accurately test AGM and EFB Batteries. If it's an older tester that doesn't have the capabilities to test AGM or EFB batteries, then it's worth upgrading the tester; otherwise the test results will likely be inaccurate.

Andy says: "It shouldn't take long to complete a battery test, not much longer than five minutes, but by explaining the results to the customer, you are giving them peace of mind that the battery is operating properly, or advising that it might be time for a replacement. By doing this you're ensuring they have a functioning battery and will be ready for upcoming journeys."

Another factor to bear in mind is that digital dashboards, in-built screens and parking cameras are now commonplace on most models, all placing additional strain on the battery. Andy commented: "Many drivers are also plugging in their mobile devices to charge them while on-the-move, again drawing power from the vehicle. This is why it's paramount to ensure the battery is in a condition to support all the comfort and safety features; it's the heart of the car."

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CLARIOS

Ecobat – here to help

As part of its ongoing strategy to assist motor factors to maximise their battery sales opportunities, multi-brand distributor, Ecobat Battery, has two branches on the island of Ireland to supply customers on both sides of the Irish border with a wide range of premium quality batteries, CTEK chargers, inverters and other power storage related accessories. In addition to the products however, Ecobat also has a long-standing tradition of providing additional support, advice and expert knowledge, to help not only its immediate customers, but the workshops that they in turn supply. "Although our primary role is to provide businesses with the batteries they need when they need them, we pride ourselves on being more than merely a supplier of replacements, instead we consider ourselves as a provider of power storage solutions," explains Sales Director Paul Payne.

"Clearly that starts with the ability to supply the right product, which is why we include premium original equipment brands such as Exide, as well as highly respected aftermarket names, including Lucas and Numax, in our product portfolio. However, these products stand alongside specialist brands like Odyssey, Optima and Sonnenschein, so that in addition to like-for-like replacements, we can provide the best in terms of upgrades, or solutions for a vehicle or equipment



Ecobat includes Exide batteries in its product portfolio.

that is more out of the ordinary." That's just the first tier of the services Ecobat provides, according to Paul. "As much as the 'any battery anywhere' strapline that we use, is vital, it's the added value benefits that really build the long-standing relationships with customers. So, subjects like environmental responsibilities must come into the equation, and here too, we have a proven track record.

"As part of the global Ecobat Group, we can draw on the support of sister companies that ensure that not only are these waste products collected and disposed of correctly, but they are also completely recycled,

safely and responsibly. There is an inevitable bundle of paperwork that accompanies the disposal of waste batteries. However, Ecobat can even help its customers deal with this time-consuming and confusing administration process by completing the Environment Agency scrap registration form and ensuring that it is then updated annually. For customers that supply a lot of batteries and therefore collect many scrap batteries, we can provide a scrap battery bin, which can be conveniently located on the premises. When the bin is full, a phone call is all that is required to have the full bin collected and a new scrap bin delivered. Smaller customers however can simply arrange for the collection of the old battery, when the new one is being delivered."

Paul adds: "Although our primary relationship is with the wholesaler, we are also active at workshop level and work with factors to provide training to help encourage best practice among technicians. This includes subjects such as battery testing, or the correct procedure to replace the AGM/EFB battery fitted to a start/stop equipped vehicle, for example."



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Automechanika showcase for GS range

GS Yuasa, recently showcased its industry-leading automotive battery range and previewed its updated online learning platform GS Yuasa Academy at Automechanika Frankfurt. This original equipment quality range is trusted by technicians and customers for its unrivalled quality, reliability and performance.

Distributed in Ireland by Serfac Limited, the GS range features attractive battery case designs and is designed to meet the needs of modern vehicles.



According to distributor Serfac, GS continues to grow in popularity, due to its high quality, extensive range and the online training opportunities offered by the GS Yuasa Academy.

Its SMF, EFB and AGM batteries all provide superior performance at competitive prices.

"In Asia, and many other parts of the world, GS is renowned as the leading automotive battery brand and has continued to grow in popularity in Ireland over recent years due to its high quality, the extensive range of references available plus the online training opportunities offered by the GS Yuasa Academy", said Gillian Fanning of Serfac.

The GS Yuasa Academy, a revolutionary online battery training platform is available online at academy.gs-yuasa.eu. Featuring over 20 detailed training courses, it covers every step of a battery's 'journey' – from leaving the shelf, through ongoing maintenance, to end of service life.

Additionally, the GS Yuasa Yu-Fit battery configuration tool recently received a fresh look to bring it into line with the brand's latest generation of workshop products and accessories. "The GS Yuasa Yu-Fit tool has been specifically designed to be one of the most user-friendly tools available and can achieve battery validation in less than 60 seconds," according to Liam O'Donohoe of Serfac Limited.



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NISSAN X-TRAIL

Second European Nissan model equipped with innovative e-Power drive system

Engines/batteries: high-output battery and powertrain integrated with 1.5L turbo petrol engine

Pricing: To be announced



TOYOTA YARIS CROSS GR SPORT

The new GR Sport is due on Irish shores in the first quarter of 2023

Engines/batteries: three-cylinder, 1.5L engine with hybrid assistance

Pricing: Indicative pricing starts from €36,830

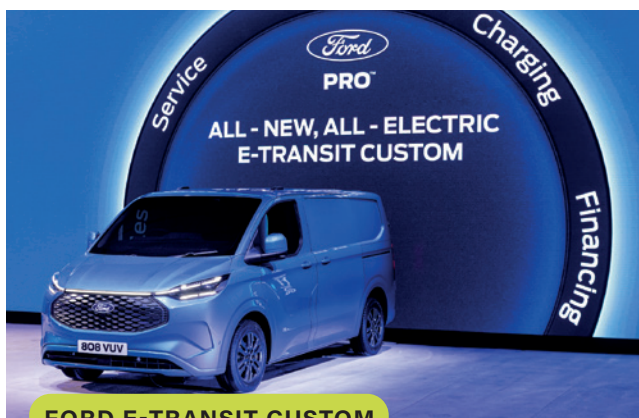


MERCEDES-BENZ EQE SUV

An all-electric, five-seater SUV version of the EQE saloon

Battery: lithium ion battery with outputs ranging from 180 to 300kW

Pricing: To be announced



FORD E-TRANSIT CUSTOM

All-electric version of Europe's best-selling van

Battery: 400V, 74kWh pack

Pricing: To be announced



RENAULT TRAFIC VAN E-TECH ELECTRIC

Renault promises best-in-class load length

Battery: 52kW battery with three charger options

Pricing: To be announced

MOYVALLEY HOSTS IMCTGA

Moyvalley Golf Resort was the venue for the September outing of the Irish Motor and Cycle Trades Golfing Association (IMCTGA).

During the formal dinner and prize-giving, IMCTGA President Paddy Magee thanked all members for participating and acknowledged the generous sponsorship from First Citizen Finance represented on the day by Sales Director Gerry Hargadon.

The major competition on the day was for The Palmer Cup with the winner Gerry Oakes from Dundalk taking top prize with a score of 46 points playing off a handicap of 18. The winner of the Goff Memorial Cup back nine competition was Paul Carroll playing off a handicap of 12 with a score of 22 points while the Seniors Competition Winner was Gerry Caffrey with his wife Siobhan taking the runner-up prize.



Jim Ring, Damien Smyth, Gerry Oakes, IMCTGA President Paddy Magee and Gerry Hargadon, Sales Director, First Citizen Finance, sponsor of the event.



Alex Smith, Peter Mongey, Terry Lilly and Matt Lilly.



Paul Carroll, winner of the back nine competition receiving the Goff Memorial Cup from IMCTGA President Paddy Magee.



Ciaran O'Brien, Gary Breen, Brian Downes and IMCTGA President Paddy Magee.



Gerry Oakes, overall competition winner on the day receiving the Palmer Cup from IMCTGA President Paddy Magee.



Siobhan and Gerry Caffrey both winners in the Seniors Competition with IMCTGA President Paddy Magee.

RANGE ROVER VELAR



Official Fuel Consumption Figures for the 23MY Velar in mpg (l/100km): Combined 11.9 l/100km – 2.3 l/100km. CO₂ emissions 233g/km- 49g/km. The figures provided are as a result of official manufacturer's tests in accordance with EU legislation. For comparison purposes only. Real world figures may differ. CO₂ and fuel economy figures may vary according to factors such as driving styles, environmental conditions, load, wheel fitment and accessories fitted.

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- 1) Tests carried out by TÜV SÜD on the request of Bridgestone in July-September 2020 at the facilities Bridgestone EUPG (Italy) for dry and wet tests with Audi S4 3.0 TFSI, on tyre size 245/40 R18. Potenza Sport compared to the performances of main competitors in the same segment: Continental Premium Contact 6, Michelin Pilot Sport 4, Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 5, Pirelli P Zero PZ4. Annex Report No. [713190691-PS].
- 2) Maintain vehicle stability when travelling both in a straight line and through a curve. Straight stability, rating: Bridgestone Potenza Sport (9.33), Continental Premium Contact 6 (9.00), Michelin Pilot Sport 4 (8.67), Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 5 (8.67), Pirelli P Zero PZ4 (8.56). Cornering stability, rating: Bridgestone Potenza Sport (9.21), Continental Premium Contact 6 (8.13), Michelin Pilot Sport 4 (8.67), Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 5 (8.33), Pirelli P Zero PZ4 (8.58).
- 3) Shortest braking distance on dry surface. Dry braking distance (100 km/h to 0 km/h), metres: Bridgestone Potenza Sport (33.4), Continental Premium Contact 6 (35.4), Michelin Pilot Sport 4 (34.5), Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 5 (35.9), Pirelli P Zero PZ4 (34.8).
- 4) Awarded EU Label Grade "A" for Wet Grip Index.

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