

SIMI Annual Report **2008 - 2009**





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President's statement

2008 was a year of many challenges within the motor industry. During my time as President, I saw many changes taking place not only within the industry but also in the country's economy and the wider global economy. With the new CO₂ VRT and road tax changes taking effect in July 2008, we saw a significant drop in new car sales as many chose to hold off on their purchase until after this date. In the long-term, these changes will benefit the industry, the Government and the consumer. While there are clear environmental benefits to the changes, and opportunities for manufacturers to produce more efficient vehicles that will generate increasing demand for these vehicles, the timing of the changes contributed greatly to the dramatic downturn in consumer activity in the market. In the months leading up to the changeover, the SIMI ran an information campaign through the media communicating the value that was to be had and encouraging the public to shop around before or after July. However, many consumers, with disposable income, in the market to buy a new car in 2008, made the decision to hold off on purchasing a new car until after the new CO₂ systems were introduced. When the changes were brought in, the global economic downturn had arrived and the country's economy had begun to fall. Consumer spending dramatically reduced and car sales, both new and used, fell accordingly.

In order to try to stimulate the used car market due to an overload of stock in dealers' forecourts, the SIMI ran a nationwide used car campaign. This TV and radio led campaign was the biggest national exposure of the SIMI brand in the Society's history. The campaign encouraged footfall into member garages and directed consumers to a dedicated website. Despite no visible increase in used car sales, the campaign saw a small increase in footfall in member garages and, in the long run, it will play its part in the development of the SIMI brand.

The inactivity in the market in 2009 was unsurprising and was evident across all industries in the country. In February the SIMI ran a press briefing outlining how the motor industry has been affected by the economic downturn and more importantly calling on the Government to implement a rescue package for the industry. The Society put a five-point plan together which included a change to the VAT system for used cars, the introduction of a scrappage scheme, increased availability of finance, the enforcement of illegal foreign registered cars and a change to the road tax system for unsalable cars. The press briefing brought awareness of the motor industry's dire situation to the Government and the public. Although much lobbying of the Government had already



Paul Flanagan, President of the Society of the Irish Motor Industry, pictured with his predecessor, Ian Macneil.

taken place from October of last year, from this point, the SIMI, along with its members, very actively met with TDs and Ministers around the country in an attempt to highlight the situation within the motor industry and to push for action to be taken to protect the sector and its 45,000 employees.

The main initiative called for was a change to the current VAT system for used cars whereby dealers essentially pay VAT on a loss when they sell on a car. This has had the most serious effect on dealers' bottom line.

The call for a scrappage scheme was on the basis that it was a win-win situation for the industry, the Government and the consumer. Already successfully implemented in many EU countries, a scrappage scheme would not have resulted in a massive amount of new car sales but would have given the industry a much needed boost; some increased cashflow which would help protect their business and jobs; and would have provided the State with additional revenue from VAT and VRT.

The lack of finance availability saw dealers experience large-scale refusal rates. It is very disconcerting for dealers to see consumers, with a good credit history, in the market to buy a new car, being refused finance due to tightened finance restrictions. The banks were bailed out by the Government yet they have not released funding for the motor industry for stocking loans, nor are they giving credit to customers. This has to change. We don't want to see reckless lending, but a return to normal lending needs to happen for both businesses and consumers. Without this, we will not get back to normal purchasing patterns for cars.

We outlined to the Government the potential revenues that could be generated from clamping down on Irish residents driving unregistered foreign cars. In relation to roadside trading, the visibility of this black economy is a serious burden to our members, legitimate business people who pay rates, insurance and other fees in order to comply and trade. Late last year, in order to highlight to the Government the scale of the problem of unregistered cars, the Society, thanks to the help of its members, ran a 10-day campaign providing Revenue with details of these illegal cars. Thanks to our members, this problem was further highlighted in the media. While this short crackdown is not enough, in March of this year, Revenue and the Gardai began an extended clampdown on these vehicles, especially those in the border counties where this is more prevalent and to date have seized a number of illegal vehicles. We await the results of this campaign. We also welcome the change to legislation that will be brought in next year which will see imported cars being tested at point of importation in order to reduce the number of illegal imports coming into the country.

Up to the very day of the Supplementary Budget on April 7th, the SIMI and its members extensively lobbied politicians on these issues and met with TDs and Ministers up and down the country. Unfortunately, on Budget Day, the industry did not get a positive result. We feel that the Government's failure to introduce a scrappage scheme was really a lost opportunity. It had the potential to generate €100million for the State in VRT and VAT but now, there will be a cost to the State of €100million, or more, due to the loss in revenue that will be incurred and the potential loss of jobs in our sector. The SIMI conducted a survey of its franchise dealers in October and again in March and the results showed that 4,000 had lost their jobs in this short period. Since January of this year, one dealer has gone out of business each week. A scrappage scheme may have given the industry a necessary boost to protect the 45,000 employed in the motor industry but now, these jobs are at risk. We are aware now that there were those in Government against the introduction of a scrappage scheme, claiming that it was environmentally negative, yet, we cannot see how they can justify this.

In his Budget Statement, the Minister proposed to move to a VAT Margin Scheme which will replace the current Special Scheme that exists. It appears that the Minister's intention to amend the anomaly in the current system with clawback was intended to be of benefit to dealers.

However, following further discussions on the detail of the proposal, it was felt that the proposal was not technically workable in the current circumstances.

We have, as a nation, all been personally hit in the Budget financially and nobody has been left out. It is at this time that we really need to maintain focus and work together

to achieve results. Most businesses have already shifted their business model to a focus on the aftersales side of their business and with people certain to hang onto their cars for longer, this presents opportunities for dealers to improve this side of their business. The marketplace is different. The April Budget is evidence of this. Promoting the benefits of regular servicing will be crucial this year. We will be working with the RSA to develop a campaign to highlight to car owners the importance of maintaining their cars at a time when they will be cutting back on other spending. Coupled with this, Car History Check will enable dealers to record a service history at point of trade in. This will benefit the next customer purchasing the vehicle and will increase the value of the car for the dealer. Car History Check now offers a very essential service in CAP valuations which will allow dealers to more accurately value trade-ins. The site now also includes write-off information and dealer management integration. More recently, a new pricing model was made available to members on a per-check model basis so that those checking fewer cars can do so at a significantly reduced cost.

The SIMI website has just been launched. A lot of time and effort has gone into its development and it will act as an important information portal for our members, the industry, the public and the media and, crucially, promote the SIMI brand.

From the Society's point of view, it is more important than ever to actively communicate with members and offer advice where possible. It has been shown in the past that when members come together and become actively involved in the Society's operations, solutions are found which will benefit all members and those in the industry.

Before signing off, I would like to thank the Chairmen and members of the various committees, the NEC and the Management Board for their time and effort in supporting my Presidency. In particular, I acknowledge the input of my fellow Honorary Officers: Deputy President Mike Finlay; Immediate Past President Ian Macneill; Honorary Treasurer Tony Maher; and also Director General Alan Nolan and his team in Pembroke Street. I am extremely proud to have served as President of our great industry in Ireland.

2009 will continue to be a challenging year but, as an Industry that is resilient and strong and comes together to find solutions, we must look positively towards the future to maintain what is such an important sector in the Irish economy.

Paul Flanagan

President of the Society of the Irish Motor Industry



Director General's report

2008 was a year of great contrasts, from a record high in January to some of the lowest monthly sales for decades in the last quarter. The CO₂ taxation changes in July resulted in only a slight lift that month followed by a steady decline down to -50%, month on month, by year end. Our dire predictions for 2009, issued to Government after the October Budget, have unfortunately been borne out with new car sales running at a third of last year.

Used cars have been a particular problem suffering from a combination of very serious factors; values collapsing due to the VRT and road tax changes, weakness of sterling, low consumer confidence and the credit squeeze. As dealers moved to clear these stocks, the problem of heavy VAT clawback penalties began to build up. The October Budget held no benefits for the industry other than the proposals on pre-registration examinations for imports and a penalty payment system for delayed registration. In the aftermath of the October 2008 Budget SIMI negotiated a deferral of clawback due until 19th May, 2009 although not all members availed of this option.

The first quarter of 2009 was dominated by bad news, markets down 65% in new cars, 78% in light commercials, 70% in heavy commercials, job losses numbering in the thousands and a dozen dealership closures. With this backdrop, SIMI commenced a very heavy PR and lobbying campaign in the lead-up to the April 2009 Budget. This focused on VAT clawback, scrappage and on enforcement against Irish residents driving foreign-registered cars. Our efforts were supported by the contribution of many members around the country who worked very hard to carry the message for us. These efforts on enforcement finally paid off with the implementation of a very strong Revenue/Garda task force which commenced a national roadside campaign in March which will be ongoing into the future. In the first month of the campaign almost 2,000 offending cars were either caught or were voluntarily registered as a result of the crack-down.

We were hugely disappointed that the April Budget again did not contain a scrappage scheme but the Minister did indicate his understanding of the problems in the sector by



SIMI Director General, Alan Nolan

including a proposal in relation to the VAT clawback that would have involved a move to the margin scheme. The proposal included the ability to clear current stock without clawback as well as deferral and phasing of VAT payments over the transition period. The Minister indicated that it would not be possible to write-off either reclaimed VAT or clawback. The impact of the proposals on cash flow and on funding requirements into 2010, however, was such that it was not felt that it would be feasible to implement this option. A poll of members on the change showed a 60:40 balance against implementing the proposal.

Notwithstanding that this VAT change was announced as policy by the Minister in the Budget and it would have generated increased VAT receipts over the period, the Minister agreed to its withdrawal as it was never the intention to impact negatively on business and employment in the sector. The Minister has agreed to ease the burden in relation to the due date for the deferred clawback and has commenced a process of discussion to see what alternative approaches might be available to assist the industry.

The past year has been a very difficult and traumatic time for us all in the motor industry. We have seen famous names disappear with the closure of too many businesses and we have seen some 4,000 people leave our sector through redundancy. It would be easy to become despondent. But we are a resilient, professional and resourceful industry and we have always been good at keeping the long view of what lies ahead for us. Cars will still be bought and they will require parts, servicing and repair. And, in time, volumes will recover and business will be good once again. Early in the year SIMI ran a series of seminars entitled *Surviving 2009* focused on cost savings and business development ideas. *Surviving 2009* is a significant challenge for all of our businesses but hopefully it is one that we will overcome, emerging in a position to benefit from an upturn when it does at last arrive.

Alan Nolan
Director General

OBJECTIVE 1

Motor taxation

- To seek to ensure the most favourable environment for members to conduct their business, in relation to taxation and the burden of compliance with other State requirements.
- To ensure that the Industry has a voice and influence in the future direction of CO₂ taxation and environmental strategy.
- To ensure that future changes to the current VRT system are implemented on a phased basis that takes account of the potential effects on the Industry and on the residual values of used cars in use in the State.
- To ensure that the State provides a stable and fair trading environment for the professional and compliant Industry and to ensure that there is no advantage to noncompliant illegal and fringe operators.
- To seek wherever possible to reduce any unreasonable cost or administrative burdens placed on Members' businesses by the State.

New car market

The last 12 months has seen an unprecedented fall in new vehicle registrations. This dramatic decline was caused by more than one factor, but undoubtedly the initial fall in 2008 was due not only to economic factors, but also to the confusion caused by the fundamental change in the VRT system from a cc to a CO₂ basis. While the industry does believe that these changes will be effective in the long term in mobilising the combined commitment of motorists, the motor industry and the State in the interests of the environment, these changes in the short term have caused serious difficulties and were exacerbated by the economic downturn in the second half of 2008. New car registrations for 2008 totalled 151,607, an 18% fall on 2007. However, worse was to come. Following a members' survey in December 2008, the Society warned the Government that without some supporting initiatives, 2009 would see a much bigger fall-off, with dealers' order books indicating a further 65% fall in 2009 compared to 2008. Unfortunately, these dire predictions have come true, with registrations for the first quarter of 2009 falling 65% to 32,589, which is an indicator of a very low figure for the eventual full year total. This will have disastrous consequences for businesses, employment and for Exchequer receipts. The motor industry in Ireland is based on

family businesses and is both locally based and locally supporting. The Industry is present in every town in the country and their businesses provide local employment, pay local business rates and support local suppliers and sponsorship. We are part of the fabric of local communities in Ireland.

Used car market

Allied to the fall in the new car market, there has also been a similar fall in the used car market, with many dealers carrying and financing high levels of slow moving stock. Arising out of the Budget 2008 change to CO₂ based VRT and Road Tax dealers have been faced with stocks of used cars that suffered a significant write-down in value and substantial losses in used car trading. This produced an additional burden of VAT clawback, resulting, not from poor valuation of used cars by dealers but arising directly from the VRT changes introduced by the State, an unfair penalty to inflict on dealers already in difficulty. The level of the potential clawback due has hampered the ability of dealers to clear out their used cars at significantly reduced prices and this is now seriously impacting on their ability to sell new cars as they cannot absorb any more trade-ins until current used car stocks are liquidated.

Industry in crisis

This double hit on the motor industry has left many businesses on the precipice. Already, a dozen dealerships have gone out of business this year at a time when sales activity should be at its highest. In both its Budget Submissions – October 2008 & April 2009 – the Society called for some stimulus to be given to the car market. Conscious of the precarious state of the Exchequer Finances, the Society sought only stimuli which would be broadly revenue neutral, or even revenue positive. The Society outlined their key issues in a series of meetings with Finance and Revenue officials and also with the Department of the Environment. The Society met with a number of Government Ministers and all backbench TDs, many of these meetings set up by local members. There was a final pre-Budget presentation in Buswells on April 1st. The Society met with Minister Lenihan in advance of both Budgets.

The solutions the Society sought were:

A change to the VAT system on second hand cars:

Following SIMI's negotiation of the agreement with Revenue to defer payment of VAT clawback until May 2009, the Society's April 2009 Submission included a proposal



whereby retailers would get full relief from clawback due and VAT on the sale of vehicles currently in stock to be calculated only on the margin over the pre-VAT amount in return for the motor industry agreeing to move to the margin scheme, from May 1st, 2009. Vehicles taken into stock from May 1st on would be taxable as per the normal margin scheme. It became clear over the period that the key issue for the sector was survival and the motor industry might have to agree to forego the future benefit of VAT reclaims on used cars for some assistance now. The Society believed that there is no cost to the State in offsetting the reclaimed residual VAT on used cars currently in stock. We made it very clear that the Margin Scheme was not attractive to the Industry but we would accept it if a concession was granted that was significant enough to assist businesses to survive the current year.

In his Budget Statement, the Minister proposed to change the VAT treatment of used cars, which was a genuine attempt to assist the industry at a cost of €20Million in State revenue receipts. Following further discussion with Finance and Revenue officials on the detail of the proposal, it was felt that the proposal was not technically workable in the current circumstances.

A scrappage scheme:

In conjunction with a VAT provision the scheme would help the industry to encourage additional consumer interest and would ensure sufficient scrappage and non-scrappage sales to deliver a market in excess of 75,000 new cars. The Society's proposal was to introduce a new scrappage scheme, based on a 50% refund of the VRT due on the sale of a new car subject to a realistic minimum level of refund, where a vehicle of 10 years or older is scrapped. The Society originally sought a Scrappage Scheme in its Submission for the October 2008 Budget, as it could have been implemented in advance of the peak buying time of the first quarter of 2009. While it was not included in October's Budget, its introduction in April would still have increased car sales, add to Government Revenues and increase footfall in dealerships. Past experience shows it works, and currently new car sales in Germany have recovered as a result of introducing such a scheme there. In addition, replacement of the car fleet with new vehicles would help improve Ireland's environmental performance.

The Society was hugely disappointed that the potential benefits of a Scrappage Scheme were ignored in the Budget and an opportunity was lost to generate extra revenue for the State and stem the rate of job losses in our Industry. It was undoubtedly an opportunity missed.

Road tax

Similar to VRT, the Minister for Environment implemented a new road tax regime for new vehicles registered from July 1st 2008, replacing the current cc-based system with a CO₂ emissions-based system, using the same bands as the new VRT system. However, this has led to a two-tiered road tax system, with vehicles registered prior to 2008 remaining on the current engine size basis. The new system, with road tax varying from €104 per year to €2,100 per year depending on the CO₂ output of the vehicle, has caused road tax to become a key



The Society's delegation who meet with the Department of Finance: Paul Flanagan, Gerry Caffrey, Ian Macneill, Brian Cooke, Eddie Murphy, Mike Finlay and Alan Nolan.

decision maker for consumers when purchasing a car. In light of this, the Society sought for cars in Categories F and G, that were either physically in Ireland before 30th June 2008, or had actually been ordered before that date for delivery, to be allowed to fall under the old cc based road tax regime. This is a limited number of cars and would not undermine the environmental benefits accruing from the new system. Without such a concession these cars face a wasteful end and those who have them in stock face significant losses to add to their current survival difficulties.

Although not dealt with in the Budget, the Society will continue to press this proposal directly with the Minister and his Department.

Other taxes

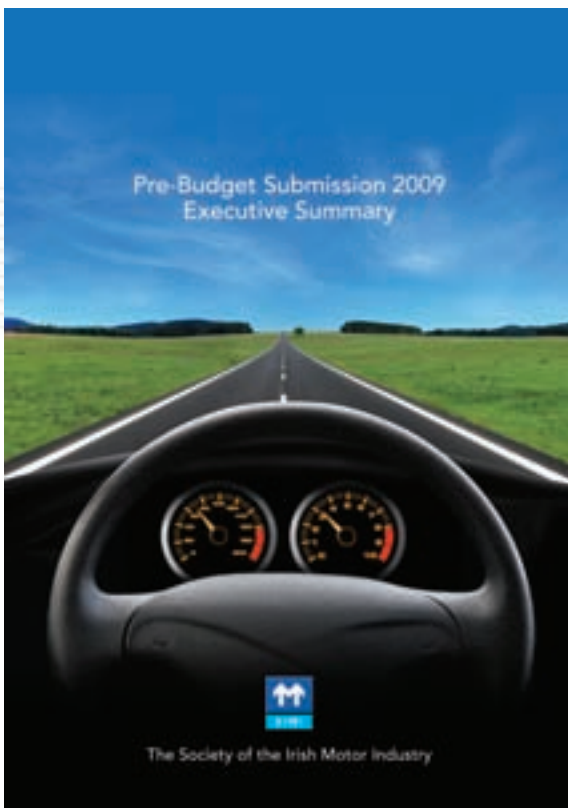
Benefit-In-Kind (BIK) is due to be increased for vehicles in Categories D, E, F and G later this year. The Society is disappointed with this increase, as these vehicles are already penalised by the VRT and road tax systems thus increasing their BIK, and felt there was no need to further burden these vehicles. There was also an increase in duty on petrol in October 2008, while diesel duty was increased in the April 2009 Budget, with the signal of a further carbon tax in the near future. Director General, Alan Nolan and Finance Director, Brian Coe met with the Commission on Taxation during the year to outline the industry's views on the future taxation on motoring, where they emphasised the importance of consultation with the motor industry on any fundamental changes to VRT, or other motor-related taxes, in the future in order to prevent a repeat of the massive turmoil caused by the VRT and road tax changes in 2008.

Imported vehicles – pre-registration checks

Following representations from the Society over the past couple of years, the Society was glad to see some progress on two fronts with regard to imported vehicles. The Finance Act No.2 in December included provision for pre-registration checks on imported vehicles not coming through the normal Distributor/Dealership channel. From January 1st, 2010, those vehicles will be required to undergo an expert pre-registration inspection by the new national car testing service.

Enforcement:

The key to the success of the new measures will be enforcement, and following prolonged inactivity by the authorities and extensive pressure and media exposure by SIMI, the State finally signalled its intention to act decisively in March 2009. This involved the launching of a high profile campaign aimed at catching Irish residents who were illegally driving foreign registered vehicles. These drivers were evading VRT, road tax, penalty points, tolls and fines. In the first two weeks of the campaign, of the 3,256 vehicles checked, more than 20% (658) were found to be non-compliant with VRT regulations amounting to a Revenue intake of €1.4 million. In addition, the Finance Bill included an interest penalty for vehicles which were imported and driven in Ireland but not registered until a significant period after the date on which they should have been.



OBJECTIVE 2

Links with Europe

- To ensure members are informed and consulted on relevant European issues, including Block Exemption and environmental developments.
- To participate in relevant European motor industry organisations with a view to influencing future European directives or legislation affecting the motor industry, including forthcoming Block Exemption and environmental developments.

Block Exemption

The last renewal of the Block Exemption Regulation occurred in 2002 with the current Regulation ending in 2010. A review of the impact of the 2002 Regulation has taken place with an EU Commission Evaluation Report indicating that while the current regulation has improved competition since its introduction, there will be changes with the likelihood of a more flexible regime as part of the general block exemption as opposed to a motor specific regulation. The SIMI will continue to be very active in this whole review process, along with its European representative organisations, in particular ACEA, CECRA and FIGIFEA.

CECRA – the European Retailers' Body

The Society has been represented by Director General, Alan Nolan, and Corporate Services' Director, Tom Cullen, who have attended regular meetings of the Car, Industrial Vehicle, and Legal and Taxation Committees of CECRA.

The Society's Training Manager, Margaret O'Shea, has worked with the Training Work Group of CECRA. In addition she is continuing the work on ECVET, a European training qualifications project, involving virtually all of the Member States and funded by the EU.

ACEA – the European Car Manufacturers' Body

The Society's representative on the ACEA International Liaison Committee is Director General, Alan Nolan, along with Finance Director, Brian Cooke. The Committee undertakes lobbying for realistic changes to car production regulations and the introduction of EU Directives in a manner favourable to the motor industry. ACEA provides a key resource for the Society, providing valuable support and information to the SIMI on an ongoing basis.



FIGIFEA – the European Aftermarket Body

Management Consultant, Paul Redmond, represents the Society on this body, which is an extremely active watchdog for the Independent Aftermarket in Europe. FIGIEFA is currently driving a very strong Europe-wide campaign on the right to repair newer vehicles.

EGEA – the European Garage Equipment Body

Management Consultant, Paul Redmond, represents the Society on this body, which aims to influence, seek out relevant information and provide strong support to the garage equipment industry. In conjunction with FIGIFEA, EGEA is involved with the right to repair campaign.

AIRC – the European Crash Repair Industry Body

The Society's representative on this body is Paul Redmond.

CITA

The European and World Vehicle Testing organisation, CITA, is the body, which advises the EU in relation to future vehicle testing developments and produces internationally recognised and accepted operating standards and procedures for the testing of vehicles. The Society's Careers and Training Executive, Yvonne Sliney, keeps in regular contact with CITA on behalf of the Society's Vehicle Tester members.



OBJECTIVE 3

The Environment

- To proactively develop policies and strategies that will contribute to the sustainability of private transport in Ireland.
- To effectively communicate to politicians, the administration and the general public, the importance of the motor industry as a partner in the development and implementation of practical environmental policies.
- To play an active part in education of motorists in relation to their potential to contribute to a reduction in vehicle emissions through eco-driving and other initiatives.
- To assist members to comply with their obligations under end-of-life vehicles legislation and to continue to work with the Department and other stakeholders to improve the operation of the system.
- To ensure that waste management and all other environmental legislation makes the required positive environmental contribution, without placing an undue burden on business, and that the legislation is enforced equally on fringe operators that currently seek to avoid their responsibilities.

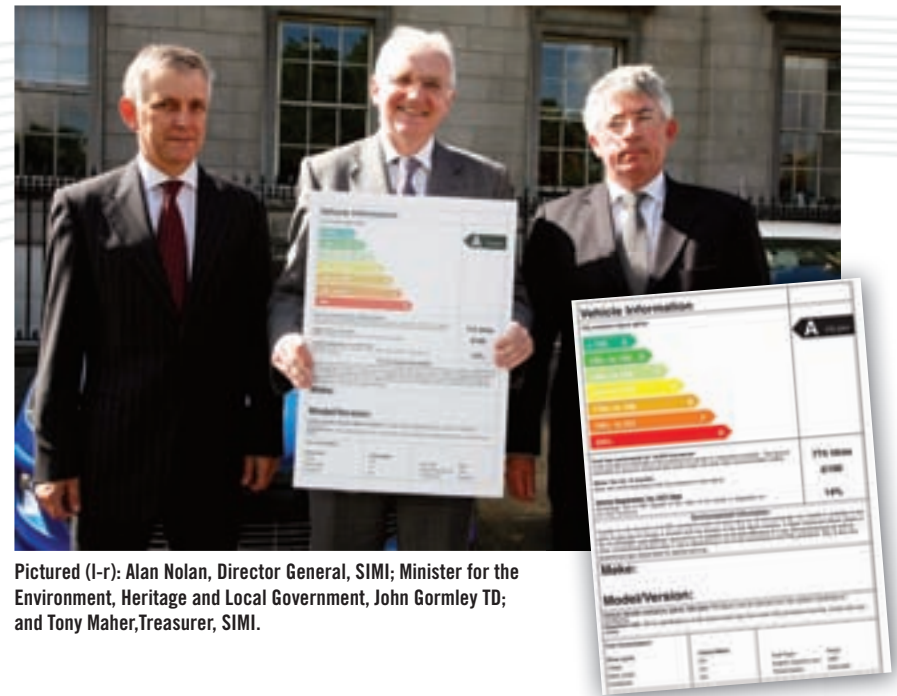
Environmental emissions from new cars

The environmental emissions from new cars have been reducing for some years. In 1995, the average CO₂ per kilometre for new cars in Ireland was 180g. By 2007, this had reduced to 164g, or by 9%. The CO₂ efficiency of new cars was improving even in advance of the changes to the CO₂ based VRT and road tax but these changes have greatly increased this rate of improvement.

For new cars registered since July 2008 the average CO₂ emissions figure fell to 142g/km and these CO₂ savings have continued into 2009. Used imports, which may overtake new car sales in 2009, emit on average 159g/km in 2009 and with new car registrations 65% down on last year; the potential environmental gains are being lost. In 2007 Ireland replaced 10% of the car fleet with new vehicles, while in 2009 it will be nearer to 3%. The replacement of the national fleet with environmentally-friendly new cars is a key factor in Ireland meeting its emission targets.

We were hugely disappointed that the potential benefits of a scrappage scheme were ignored in the Budget, and an opportunity was lost to ensure delivery on the environmental aims of the CO₂ based taxation. The environmental benefits of reduced CO₂ from a new car far outweigh the environmental cost of manufacture. Scrapping a 10 year old car producing 200Gms/Km and replacing it by a new one producing 130Gms/Km would save 1.5Tonnes in CO₂ in one year alone. 10,000 scrappage cars would save 15,000Tonnes of CO₂ in one year. The environmental cost of manufacture in some cases is less than 1Tonne per car so that there is a potential saving of a ½ Tonne per car in year one and 1.5Tonnes each subsequent year. A 20,000 car scrappage scheme would save 100,000Tonnes of CO₂ over four years, even accounting for the environmental cost of manufacture.

The European motor industry invests €20 billion (4% of turnover) per year in research and development, a great part of which goes to improved fuel efficiency and other technologies that enhance the environmental performance of cars. In fact, demands for lower CO₂ emissions are swallowing an astonishing 50% of R&D spend at European carmakers. Over the last decade, the industry has implemented more than 50 new, CO₂-cutting technologies into new vehicles. The past decade has also seen the introduction to



Pictured (l-r): Alan Nolan, Director General, SIMI; Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, John Gormley TD; and Tony Maher, Treasurer, SIMI.

the Irish market of new fuel-efficient diesel, petrol, “hybrid” and “flexifuel” vehicles, which produce much lower emissions than older vehicles. The motor industry will continue to improve its vehicles in terms of emissions, by introducing more technologies including, in the near future, more user-friendly electric vehicles.

Labelling

As part of the changeover to the new CO₂ based road tax and VRT systems, the Society cooperated with the Department of the Environment in the introduction of a new updated labeling system for new cars. The new vehicle labelling system applies to all new cars at point of sale. The new label system is a key part of the Governments CO₂ strategy and the motor industry was thanked by the Minister for our willingness to work with the Department to make the system work. This new national labelling system is very much in line with what is anticipated from the EU in the coming year and the seven colour-coded bands should be familiar to consumers from the energy labels already in use for certain electrical goods. The Society set up a system whereby members can easily produce the labels via the Society’s statistics service.

EU end of life vehicle Directive

The EU Directive on the Disposal of End of Life Vehicles (ELVs) has become operational in Ireland, effective from January 1st, 2007. The Department introduced primary legislation in July 2003 to transpose the Directive into Irish law and, in May 2006, issued the regulation for final implementation of the Directive in Ireland. The regulation placed an onerous burden on the motor vehicle importers, both financial and administrative. Over the last three years, the industry has made great effort to comply with the regulation, and in this short timeframe vehicle importers have contracted with treatment facilities in the vast majority of local authority areas. This work is ongoing.

EU batteries Directive

Waste battery regulations became law in 2008, and included automotive batteries. The motor industry has established an industry compliance scheme with WEEE Ireland, and is grateful for their assistance in setting up this scheme.



Paul Redmond, SIMI; Alan Nolan, Director General, SIMI; Gerry Caffrey, Chairman SIMI Franchise Dealers Committee; Leo Donovan Chief Executive WEEE Ireland; and Martin Hickey (WEEE Irl).

Waste tyre regulations

The waste tyre regulations were passed into law in 2008, and led to the establishment of an industry-based tracking system, TRACS, for waste tyres. The Society has a seat on the board of TRACS.

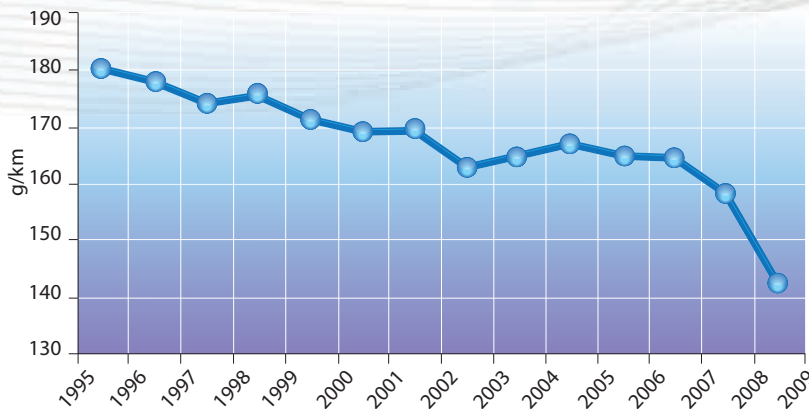


Figure 8: CO₂ Emissions from New Passenger Cars in Ireland 1995 – 2009

Source: Monitoring of ACEA’s commitment on CO₂ Emission Reduction from Passenger Cars (1995 – 1999), 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004; Monitoring of JAMA’s commitment on CO₂ Emission Reduction from Passenger Cars (1995 – 1999), 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004; Monitoring of KAMA’s commitment on CO₂ Emission Reduction from Passenger Cars (1995 – 1999), 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004.
 * Estimated Figures 2008 and 2009: Goodbody Economic Consultants



OBJECTIVE 4

Reputation of the Industry

- To ensure that SIMI has strong recognition in the media and with consumers, and that the benefits of dealing with an SIMI member are well-known and understood.
- To continue the development of entry standards and standards of membership, including code of ethics, for SIMI members to ensure that our membership is representative of the professional and ethical motor industry.
- To underline the industry's commitment to customer satisfaction through the operation of the Consumer Complaints Service and Standards Tribunal.
- To ensure members are made aware of their legal obligations, such as consumer law, competition rules etc.
- To maintain and enhance the reputation of the SIMI and its members.
- To seek to differentiate SIMI members from those who do not adhere to the same high standards.
- To work with other stakeholders, including the relevant State agencies, to eliminate unfair or illegal practices, such as clocking or roadside selling, that damage consumers and the legitimate industry.
- To work to ensure that the Society's Car History Check becomes the industry standard for consumer reassurance and that the value of the service to members and consumers is enhanced through further improvements in the system.
- To encourage members to display the Society's logo and signage as universally as possible on premises, advertisements and stationary and to ensure that, for consumers, the logo is synonymous with quality, professionalism and reassurance.
- To promote to consumers and the industry, the importance of regular servicing and the value of a vehicle having a strong service history, as a key reassurance for future buyers.

Consumer Complaints Service 2008 Review

The SIMI Consumer Complaints Service is a free service offered to members and their customers with the objective of resolving complaints without recourse to expensive and time-consuming legal proceedings. Clause 13 of the terms of the SIMI Order Form obliges customers to refer their complaints to the SIMI if the matter cannot be resolved directly with the garage.

Analysis of complaints 2008

In 2008, a total of 488 complaints were received by the Society of which 32% were ruled to be outside the scope of the service. Of these ineligible complaints, 16% were the subject of new vehicle warranties and 36% were related to non-member garages and were referred to the National Consumer Agency. Complaints received in 2008 represented an 8% increase in comparison to those received in 2007.

During 2008, 54% of the claims processed were received via the Society's website. The number of the complaints submitted online increased by 3%. A total of 333 complaints were registered of which 202 (61%) were resolved through the Society's intermediary efforts. It must be emphasised that a quick positive reaction or simple explanatory letter from the member often resolves a complaint. The 333 complaints were registered by customers of 202 member companies. Eleven different member companies had four or more complaints made against them. While the primary purpose of the Consumer Complaints Service is to help member companies resolve their customer complaints, it also represents a comparative measurement of customer service for Members, and we would be hopeful that the 11 companies with the highest volume of complaints will undertake a review of their customer service systems and procedures with a view to achieving improvements in 2009.

Deadlines

In many cases, there is a direct correlation with resolution of a complaint and the speed and manner in which Member garages respond to the Society's notification that a complaint has been registered. Members are expected to respond to this notification within two weeks. Ignoring complaints does not make them disappear but, in fact, often exacerbate the problems.

Standards Tribunal

In 2008, 95 complaints (28% of the total processed) were referred to the SIMI Retail Motor Industry Standards Tribunal. The Tribunal is chaired by a former Rights Commissioner and includes industry representatives and a leading consumer advocate. Members are obliged to implement Tribunal recommendations when they take effect.

In all, 57% of the 95 cases referred to the Tribunal resulted in a refund, free repair or compensation being paid to the customer. Of cases referred to the Tribunal, 41% were either rejected as unreasonable or the Tribunal found that garages' offer to resolve

complaints were reasonable. Of the remaining cases, 2% were suspended, pending the presentation of further information.

The Society's rules provide that a company's membership of the Society will be determined if it fails to implement a recommendation of the Standards Tribunal. Following a recommendation from the Standards Tribunal, the Society's NEC, at its July 2008 meeting, implemented the following additional requirements for members in their interaction with the Society's Consumer Complaints Service:

The SIMI Consumer Complaints Service is free to customers of member companies. A Member company will be charged at the discretion of the Retail Motor Industry Standards Tribunal, an administrative fee (€200) in respect of each complaint in excess of three, registered by the Society against that company in any calendar year.

Any member company that has had more than three complaints upheld by the Tribunal in a calendar year will be the subject of a recommendation by the Tribunal to the National Executive Council to determine or suspend a company's membership of the Society.

While the primary purpose of the Consumer Complaints /Standards Tribunal process is to help resolve customers' complaints when they arise, it is not designed to replace members' customer service responsibilities. We would remind members that resolution of complaints is their primary responsibility and the consumer complaints service should only be used as an alternative resolution process when their own efforts fail.

ORDER forms

The Consumer Complaints service observed the following problems during 2008:

- order form signed by the customer without the details being fully completed;
- the discounting figures not being clearly explained to the customer particularly as applied to trade-in allowances;
- customer not given a copy of the order form at the time they signed it;
- vehicle mileage not recorded;
- warranty terms not clearly stated;
- special terms like "subject to NCT" not clearly defined; and
- items excluded from warranty not stated.

VEHICLE history

The SIMI Standards Tribunal is concerned that an increasing numbers of members are being caught out by consumers trading in vehicles that have been clocked,





previously damaged or written off. The National Consumer Agency maintains that professionals in car sales should exercise due diligence and take reasonable steps to ascertain that the odometer reading on the vehicle is actually correct. In their view, if the Dealer takes steps to check this then he cannot be blamed, on the other hand if he does not take such steps, he will be deemed to have failed in his responsibilities. The checking of a vehicle through a service such as the SIMI Car History Check, www.carhistorycheck.ie, would be regarded as conforming to due diligence requirements. Similar due diligence is expected from Retailers with respect to service history, the number and type of owners (taxi) and crash history. Body damage discovered after the sale leads to concerns that the vehicle was previously crashed, even though the repairs carried out were cosmetic. Garages are advised that the nature of any body repairs should be clarified to the customer at point of sale.

Deposits

If it is your policy not to refund deposits please ensure customers understand that policy before they agree to a sale. If a sale is contracted on foot of an SIMI order form, then the conditions outlined in Clause 2 of the Terms & Conditions apply.

As is sales/sold as seen

There is no such thing as the sale of a vehicle to a private customer in which the customer does not have some legal rights. A company does not have to give a guarantee with a vehicle but a customer cannot sign away their legal rights to reasonable value for the money paid. A low value, poor quality vehicle can be sold provided it is not unsafe. Any necessary repairs, limitations or defects should be clearly explained, recorded and outlined on the SIMI Vehicle Sales Order Form.

“Trade sale” - these vehicles should only be sold to people within the motor industry who are able to provide evidence of VAT details or TAN registration numbers and under no circumstance be sold to the general public. New TAN regulations in 2007 require VAT registration, tax clearance certification and confirmation that the trader is actively engaged at legally suitable premises. Details of such sales should be properly recorded on an SIMI Trade Sales Vehicle Order Form. A garage will also have a special identity number provided by the Department of the Environment Heritage & Local Government, Shannon.

The selling of a vehicle by individual employees of a motor company, as their own private deals, should in no way involve the company premises/forecourt, documentation,

the company’s advertising facilities or any other links to the company. Please note that a consumer may conclude that the sale is with the company if any of the above are incorporated in some way.



In September 2007, the NEC approved a new design for the SIMI logo, which updated the Society’s corporate image. The Society rolled out this new logo, which is now on display in members showrooms across the country. The SIMI logo and SIMI order forms are strictly for the use of members only. A non-member company implying membership of the SIMI is in breach of the Consumer Protection Act 2007.

OBJECTIVE 5

Communications

- To develop the Society's profile with both the Government and public through press releases and public relations initiatives.
- To improve communications with members through visits to their business premises, local, regional and sector meetings and conferences, through telephone contact and through email updates and newsletters.
- To ensure that the SIMI Website provides an effective resource for members as a source of relevant quality information and that the public area of the site should enhance the reputation of the industry and assist in carrying the industry's key messages to the public and the media.
- To maintain Irish Motor Management Magazine as the official voice of the industry.

Political and public lobbying

The Society has over the past year increased the frequency of press releases on current key issues pertinent to the Industry in addition to the regular releases on vehicle registration statistics. The changes in the VRT and road tax regimes last July saw the Society heavily involved in communicating the changes and the benefits of buying both new and used cars. The Society's website was instrumental in this with the online VRT calculator. Over the last year, with the massive downturn in business and in the economy, communication with both political bodies and the public has been very visible. As part of the two Budget campaigns, the Society met with senior Ministers, including meeting Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan on three occasions. Local members' contacts proved vital in obtaining meetings with senior politicians. The Society's Budget lobby for the April 2009 Budget culminated with a Pre-Budget briefing for TDs and senators in Buswells Hotel on April 1st at which 70 members of the Oireachtas met the Society and many members from their own constituencies to hear the Society's Submissions.

SIMI used car campaign

In an effort to boost consumer interest and to stimulate used car sales in the autumn of 2008, an advertising campaign on a large scale was undertaken by the Society. This was funded by



Paul Flanagan, President SIMI launches the SIMI Used Car Campaign.

Distributor, Franchise and Independent Retailer members and was aimed at promoting the value and benefits available when buying a used car from an SIMI member. The nationwide TV and radio campaign ran over a six-week period and directed the public to a dedicated SIMI member-only website which offered the public a 'deal of the week' on a regular basis. The website received a very high number of hits and many dealers saw an increase in footfall in their garages as a result of the campaign.

Media

The Society has increased its focus on the media over the past year, with the appointment of a new press officer, Suzanne Sheridan, who interacts on a daily basis with the press in conjunction with the Society's PR advisors Market Match. Due to public campaigns such as the SIMI Used Car Campaign, the changes in VRT and road tax systems and the VRT campaign, there has been a significant increase in the amount of media coverage in 2008 and 2009 including more radio, TV and press interviews. Also, due to the downturn in the industry, its effects and the subsequent rescue package put to government by the Society, there has been regular contact with media contacts and journalists. Communicating important issues to the public through different media channels is of high importance for the Society and will be ongoing throughout 2009.



Press briefings

The Society held its first quarterly press briefing at the end of January this year in order to highlight the issues in the industry and possible proposals that the Government could implement in order to stimulate the industry and protect jobs. The Society's monthly statistics press release is now also tailored for regional publications. The Society plans on holding regular press briefings throughout the year in order to communicate and highlight important industry issues, and will have a specific focus on supporting local publication to benefit members locally in the various centres around the country.

VRT campaign

In order to attempt to resolve the problem of foreign-registered cars being driven by Irish residents on our roads, the Society ran a ten-day campaign late last year encouraging members to send in details of these illegal cars. The details were passed onto Revenue and as a result of fines and penalties collected from these drivers, €500,000





was generated for the State. The campaign was well covered in the media. Following sustained pressure from the Society, a nationwide, extended campaign against illegal foreign-registered cars on our roads, commenced in March, involving a joint Revenue/Garda task force. This clampdown has been well publicised and has delivered strong early results particularly in the border counties.

Communications with Members

The Society redesigned its newsletter to incorporate a fresher, more modern look. Email updates from the Society to members were more regular and detailed. We also began to email members with industry-related press coverage on a daily basis in order to keep them informed of the core issues reported on by the media. The Society also used other means of communicating with Members, such as text messaging, in order to remind them of important updates or meetings. Especially at this time, communicating with Members through various channels on an ongoing basis is vital both for Members and the Society.

Communications with other organisations

The Society's executives have been in regular contact with officials in all of the relevant Government departments and with the key state agencies including FÁS, National

Consumer Agency, RSA, Gardaí, Data Protection Commissioner, Taxi Regulator, Financial Regulator, Central Bank, etc. Contact was also maintained with the EU, local authorities and the many institutions and organisations which impact on the industry.

www.simi.ie

The SIMI website has undergone radical restructuring in the last 12 months, with the new site launched in April 2009. It is both a vital service and a fundamental communication tool with Members and the public.

Irish Motor Management

Irish Motor Management, published by IFP Media, has continued to set very high standards under new editor, Bernard Potter. This magazine is the public voice of the industry and sets out to highlight issues of serious interest to SIMI members. *Irish Motor Management* is a key communications channel for the Society and is distributed to the media, decision makers, educational establishments, public service and members of the Oireachtas. The magazine has also developed an educational role over recent years with increased technical, business and educational input. A new special Aftermarket Section has been added to the magazine. The magazine was redesigned during the year to take account of SIMI's new logo and corporate image.

OBJECTIVE 6

Traffic Flow & Road Safety

- To assist in the development and promotion of policies aimed at improving traffic flow and at removing unnecessary or unreasonable burdens from commuters and other motorists.
- To support initiatives to improve safety on Irish roads.
- To support initiatives aimed at improving vehicle standards.
- To seek to assist in reducing injuries and deaths on our roads.
- To develop and support safety initiatives through the work of the Society's Road Safety Committee.

Road safety

2008 was the safest year on Ireland's roads since records began. While 279 people tragically lost their lives on Irish roads in 2008, it is the lowest recorded number of road deaths in this country. The earliest recorded figure for road deaths is 1959 when 306 people were killed in road collisions. The figure for road deaths in 2007 was 338, meaning 2008 saw a 17.5% reduction in the number of fatalities over the previous year. In the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) review of EU Country Vehicle Safety Ranking, which looks at passive safety of new passenger cars sold in 2008 in 30 countries, Ireland finished second in the rankings.

The Road Safety Committee were delighted to see the introduction of the first Child Car Seat Fitting Workshop which was launched during the year in Cavan. The workshop was organised jointly by Border Edge Skillnet (based in Cavan), Innovation and Technology Centre and SIMI. The aim of the half day training workshop was



to provide participants with the skills and knowledge required to provide advice to customers/parents on selecting and fitting the correct baby seat to match their vehicle in order to give the baby or child the best protection available in the event of an accident.

Vehicle Testing

The Society continues to work, as always, on behalf of the motor industry and is in discussion on an ongoing basis with the Department of Transport, the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and the National Car Testing Service (NCT). The RSA recently announced that the contract for the provision of the NCT from 2010 to 2019 has been awarded to Applus+, a Spanish Company. Testing of passenger cars in Ireland has been provided by National Car Testing Service Ltd. (wholly owned by SGS Ireland Ltd.) since January 2000. Roadworthiness testing of passenger cars in Ireland first began in January 2000. At present, cars in Ireland are subject to periodic testing on reaching the 4th anniversary of their first registration and every 2 years thereafter. A total of 833,357 cars were tested in 2008. At present the fee for a test is €50 and a retest is €28.

Applus+ is a leading multinational company in testing, inspection, certification and technological services. It is present in all five continents and provides services in more than 25 economic sectors. In the field of vehicle inspection, Applus+ is the world's second largest operator. In 2009, the company will perform more than 17 million inspections in Spain, Denmark, Finland, the U.S. and Latin America, with a total of 2,200 employees devoted to this activity.

Meanwhile in the Commercial Vehicle Testing Sector the VTN Committee will continue to engage with the RSA and will use the PWC report as a basis for discussion on future developments within the sector. Recent figures for testing show that there are currently approximately 290,000 commercial vehicles to be tested every year, 73,000 of which are HGVs. Most common faults picked up on RSA HGV roadside checks during 2008 were in the areas of brakes, lamps and tyres. The RSA ran an audit on test centres in 2008 and were happy to say that over 90% of test centres had satisfactorily complied with the recent upgrade plan that finished at the end of 2008. The RSA will be increasing their roadside enforcement and monitoring activities during 2009. In addition, enforcement of the requirement for vehicle owners/drivers to have their cars tested, as required by law, has been stepped up with specific penalty point offences being introduced. This year will also see the Vehicle Testers Manuals being significantly upgraded with recent EC legislation in relation to speed limiters, blind spot mirrors and new vehicle markings all being taken into account. A sub-committee of the Vehicle Testers Committee has been set up to enter into dialogue with the NSAI with regard to the introduction of Type Approval into Ireland for the first time.

Traffic Flow

Reduction of traffic congestion is vital if we want to reduce our CO₂ emissions. Traffic congestion remains a key issue for members and car-owners and strong investment has continued in the national road infrastructure. Significant progress was made during the past year with the opening of long stretches of motorway. Work on the National Road Network is continuing and with work widening the M50 moving toward completion with a number of the completed sections and improved interchanges already open. We can expect further dividends from this level of investment in the coming year. The removal of the toll-barrier on the M50 bridge has unquestionably improved the flow of traffic, although the tolling system continues to cause serious problems for motor traders. The infamous Red Cow junction has at last been completed resulting in significant improvements in flow at this notorious traffic blackspot.

The Society believes that car owners would willingly choose to use good public transport if an acceptable system were available. It is crucial, even in these straitened times, that investment in the development of a modern inter-city rail system and in the delivery of the proposed Metro North to Dublin Airport remain as priorities for Government.

OBJECTIVE 7

Internal, Administrative & Financial Affairs

- To ensure that the Society is managed in the most efficient and cost effective manner, while ensuring that the service provided to members is of the highest quality.
- To seek opportunities to improve the finances of the Society, in order to provide a higher level of service to members.
- To review the Society's Strategic Development plan and draw up a new 5 year plan 2009-2014.
- To ensure all of the major projects undertaken are approved and delivered under the Society's Project Management System under which each project should be reviewed, as required, on a monthly basis.

Financial position

The financial accounts of the Society show the Society's finances to be in a favourable position. The Society is grateful for the time and effort provided by Honorary Treasurer, Tony Maher, in overseeing the financial position of the Society during the last twelve months. Due to the Society's strong finances, the NEC felt it appropriate in the current economic climate not to increase membership subscription rates for 2009.

Executive

The Society now has in its employment 14 people whose variety of skills and experience serve to enhance our services to members. The last year saw the appointment of a new Statistics Officer, Lisa Joyce, with the previous holder of this position Stephen Ussher promoted to the role of Membership Services' Executive. As part of the Society's increased focus on Communications, Marketing and PR graduate Suzanne Sheridan was promoted to the position of Press Officer.

Membership

At the end of the calendar year 2008 the total number of Members was 1,592, a decrease of 59 on the previous year. However, the Society's Membership, which spans all sectors of the industry, has increased by nearly 400 in number over the last 15 years. This is a

reflection of the importance and status of the organisation. In the last year, the Society has increased the standards of requirement for new applicants for membership.

2008 breakdown of membership by category

Franchise Dealers	549	
Motor Vehicle Distributors	30	
Wholesalers	66	
Non Franchise Retailers	534	
Motor Factors	43	
Petrol & Oil Companies	5	
Vehicle Body Repair Specialists	102	
Specialist Trade Repairers	139	
Petrol Filling Stations	27	(approx. 300 members of SIMI are involved in petrol sales and are classified in other categories, as they have dual membership)
Vehicle Recovery Operators	29	
Affiliated Members	41	
Associate Retailers	27	
Total Membership	1,592	

Trustees

The Society's Trustees are: Matt Fagan (Past President, 1986/87); Brian Murphy (Past President 1987/88); and Brian Fanning (Past President 1988/89).



Tony Maher, Treasurer, SIMI.

OBJECTIVE 8

Membership Support and Representative Committees

- To develop and deliver information and support for members in all aspects of their business as required based on consultation with the relevant representative committees.
- To ensure that all support provided by the Society to members is of the highest quality, relevant, timely and cost effective.
- To ensure members are kept informed and up to date on relevant issues and developments through regular emails and newsletters.
- To ensure that the Society's responses to members' queries or requests are delivered as soon as is practicable. As far as possible this should be on the same day, but, if research or the gathering of further information or advice is necessary, a realistic target response date should be confirmed and met.
- To ensure that each of the sectors of the Society is represented by its own Committee with a focus on the needs of that sector under the overall aims and objectives of the Society.

This objective is reviewed at internal meetings between the Director General and Executive Directors, monthly by the Management Board, and quarterly by the National Executive Council.

Membership support

Over the past turbulent year the Society's senior executives attended many National and local meetings of concerned members in the various sectors. In addition SIMI executives have been calling out to members at their own business premises to ensure that problems are understood and that assistance is on offer where required. Direct support, information and advice on general queries, and on company specific issues, was provided by the Society's executives. The Society promoted Stephen Ussher to the position of Membership Services' Executive during the year to help improve support to members.

The new SIMI website provides a valuable resource for members to access a vast array of information concerning for example, sector specific issues, legislative updates and statistical analysis. In addition, both electronic and hard copy newsletters were

circulated to members on a regular basis to keep them informed on important industry developments.

Report from the Chairman of each of the Society's Sector Committees

Details of the activities of the Standing Committees of the Society are outlined below, while progress on the services offered to members are reported under the relevant objective headings.

The National Executive Council & Management Board

**Chairman: Paul Flanagan, Castrol Ireland and President SIMI**

The National Executive Council (NEC) held four meetings during the year. The NEC, which is the policy making body of the Society, delegates the responsibility of directing the overall strategy and overseeing the financial, internal, administrative and membership affairs of the Society to the Management Board, which met nine times during the year.

Vehicle Importers'/Distributors' Committee

**Chairman: Eddie Murphy, Henry Ford & Sons (Ireland) Ltd.**

The economic downturn and the associated collapse in new vehicle sales were the key area of concern for Vehicle Importers in the last 12 months. With Distributor members committed to supplying ever more environmentally-friendly cars to the Irish market, the Committee was incredulous that two opportunities were missed, in October 2008 and April 2009, to introduce a new car scrappage scheme. The Committee was very active during the year assisting in the roll-out of the CO₂ Labelling Scheme and also in supporting the Franchise Dealers by helping fund the Society's used car campaign in Autumn 2008. Work is ongoing on the implementation of the extremely onerous ELV Regulations, with countrywide networks now in place, while the Vehicle Importers also supported the group compliance scheme for the new battery regulations established in conjunction with WEEE Ireland.



Pictured at the National Franchise Dealers Conference were (l-r): Dr Arthur O'Sullivan, Chairman National Franchise Conference and M D Sheehy Motor Group; Chris Hanlon, MD Permanent TSB Finance; Eunan McCaul, MD CEMAC Consulting; and Con Dalton, Manager Membership and Events SIMI



Pictured at the Independent Sales and Service Conference were (l-r): Brian Cooke, Finance Director SIMI, Paul Carty, Director & Head of Commercial & Private, Willis Ireland, Gaetano Forte, Chairman SIMI Independent Retailer Committee & Sweeney & Forte Motors and Con Dalton, Manager Membership & Events SIMI

National Franchise Committee

Chairman: Gerry Caffrey, Gerry Caffrey Motors

The last 12 months were the busiest since the establishment of this Committee over a decade ago. Committee Meetings, where every franchise is entitled to representation, were held on a monthly basis while general meetings of the sector were held in Tullamore and Wicklow in October 2008 and Mullingar in March 2009. In addition, local franchise meetings were held on a regular basis, where all franchises in a locality were invited to attend. With the support of the Vehicle Distributors Committee, the Committee launched a used car advertising campaign with TV and radio advertising and a website, www.buyyourcarnow.ie, which resulted in increased footfall in dealerships during the campaign. The Franchise Members co-ordinated meetings with local politicians and Ministers in advance of April's Budget.

October 2008 saw the 10th Annual Franchise Dealers' Conference, "The future in used car sales", which moved back to Killashee House Hotel, and saw an increased attendance over 2007. Chaired by Arthur O'Sullivan (Sheehy Motors, Naas & Carlow), speakers included Chris Hanlon of Permanent TSB, James McCormack (Western Motors Galway), Pentii Rantala, John Hargaden, with keynote speaker Ivan Yates.

At the request of the Committee, the Society's Training Manager, Margaret O'Shea organised a series of Franchise Seminars in February themed "Surviving in 2009". Over 200 dealers attended. The Committee also continued to support the CarHistoryCheck project and have undertaken a project analysis on establishing a SIMI members-only used car website. Other issues the Committee focused on included enforcement on foreign registered vehicles being driven by Irish residents and barrier-free tolling.

Independent Retailers' Committee



Chairman: Gaetano Forte, Sweeney & Forte Motors

The Independent Committee began having regular meetings in August 2008 and meets on a very regular basis to ensure the interests of the Independent Members are focused on. The first annual Independent Sales and Service Conference was held on the first day of the SIMI's National Convention in Killashee House in October. It was addressed by David Phelan, Hayes Solicitors; Alan Gissane, A & L Training Consultancy; John Fleming, Management Consultant; Owen Reddy, Owen Reddy Motors; Paul Redmond and Teresa Noone from SIMI. The first conference received great feedback from the attendees. During the year the Independent's fund was used to compile a poster to give Independent Dealers access to technical information for all brands. The Committee discusses issues facing both

Independent Sales and Service Dealers. During the year the Committee discussed a number of key issues including Government issues; the used car market ; the right to repair; upskilling training; and roadside trading. The Chairman of the Sector attended SIMI Board and NEC meetings and represented the interests of the sector.

Wholesalers' Sector



Chairman: Alan Lyons, Auto Diesel Electric

The Wholesaler/Motor factor sector is affiliated with the European organisation FIGIEFA (web: www.figiefa.eu) which represents the interests of 26 national trade associations of automotive aftermarket distributors from 23 countries worldwide and whose objective is to maintain free competition in the market for vehicle replacement parts, servicing and repair. A European Right to Repair campaign was launched in 2008 to improve the visibility and secure the future of the independent aftermarket. Motorist representatives joined the

campaign to defend not only their very right to repair – but importantly, consumers' right to have their vehicles serviced, maintained and repaired at a workshop of their choice. The sector conducted extensive lobbying at European level on component type-approval legislation and access to technical information for repairers and equipment and parts suppliers. A sector representative participated during 2008 in a workshop designed to determine key market statistics of the European independent aftermarket. The sector supported efforts for the renewal of a sector specific block exemption regulation in 2010 with enhanced protection for the independent aftermarket. The SIMI Wholesaler and Motor Factor sectors continued their financial support for the European lobbying effort during 2008.

New waste battery regulations were introduced in 2008. The Wholesalers sector was active in developing a national automotive compliance scheme under the auspices of WEEE Ireland and will participate in the ongoing management and direction of the scheme.

The sector liaised with the garage equipment organisation EGEA on EU legislative proposals and with the Road Safety Authority and Health and Safety Authority. Issues relating to CE marking of equipment placed on the Irish market and the level of compliance with NCT were raised by the Sector. The sector also liaised with the Automotive Distribution Federation and the SMMT aftermarket section in the UK on matters of mutual interest.

The Chairman of the sector attended SIMI Board and NEC meetings and represented the interests of the sector in the development of policies for dealing with public authorities on national legislative and taxation matters. The sector opposed lobbying for the introduction of a vehicle scrappage scheme as such schemes can impact the parts aftermarket for older vehicles.

Vehicle Testers Committee



Chairman: Charlie Rogers, Rolor Commercials, Waterford

The Representatives of the Vehicle Testers Sector are a very active Committee and meet on a regular basis to develop and implement strategies to ensure that the interests of Tester Members are progressed and developed at all levels under the brand of VTN. The Vehicle Testers AGM was held in October at the Society's National Convention and was attended by 120 delegates. The AGM was addressed by Denise Barry, Director of Standards

Enforcements with the RSA and two Technical Workshops were also held. Nicholas Clay of VCA , the UK designated Vehicle Type Approval Authority, gave a presentation on Type Approval followed by a presentation from David Phelan of Hayes Solicitors on legal compliance for Vehicle Testers. The AGM elected its new committee and reappointed Charlie Rogers of Rolor Commercials to serve as their Chairman for a further term.



Pictured at the Vehicle Testers' Conference were (l-r): Charlie Rogers, Chairman Vehicle Testers Committee & Rolor Commercials, Waterford, Paul Flanagan, President, SIMI, Yvonne Slaney, Training Executive SIMI and Alan Nolan, Director General SIMI.



The Chairman is a representative on the RSA Technical Advisory Forum, which was established so that the RSA can consult on an ongoing basis with stakeholders on all matters relating to Transport Policy and EC legislation and which includes in this process, Vehicle Standards and Testing in Ireland. The Chairman also attends NEC Meetings to ensure the interests of the sector are recognised.

The upgrade programme, as negotiated by the SIMI on behalf of Commercial Vehicle Testers with the Department of Transport, is now complete and so the VTN Testers Committee intends to move forward in conjunction with the RSA in discussions and action on the recommendations of the PWC Report on Testing.

The PWC Report contained twenty five recommendations for improving the testing and enforcement regimes. This detailed report will form the basis of discussions with the various stakeholders as to how the vehicle testing scheme will develop and improve into the future.

There are three main strands to the report:

- Strand One addresses the testing process to ensure that roadworthiness tests are conducted impartially and correctly at all times;
- Strand Two looks at the development of a program of roadside inspections to ensure continued compliance with roadworthiness standards; and
- Strand Three examines the introduction of Operator premises checks to ensure that Operators put measures in place to guarantee vehicles are maintained in a roadworthy condition at all times, as the annual test is not a guarantee that a vehicle will remain roadworthy throughout any given year.

The RSA has, in conjunction with NSAI, developed a structure for the implementation of the European Community's Type Approval Regulations into Ireland which requires a new testing regime relating to the construction and design of vehicles. This development has been supported by the Vehicle Testers Committee with more than 10 Vehicle Testers being appointed as Type Approval Centres. This scheme is being managed by the NSAI who are the National Standards Authority in Ireland. The NSAI are responsible for development and operation of the system including the appointment and supervision of the Test Centres required to carry out Type Approval Tests.

It will be mandatory for Test centres to achieve an ISO Quality Standard if they wish to carry out Type Approval Testing. It is also likely that ISO Standard will also be required shortly for VTN Vehicle Test Centres, in line with CITA standard originally proposed as part of the recent upgrade program. The VTN Testers Committee on behalf of the

Vehicle Testers are delighted to play their part as stakeholders in the Road Safety Policy in Ireland and welcome these initiatives that will deliver on improving the safety of vehicles in use on our roads.

Heavy Goods Vehicle Distributors Sector



Chairman: Bruce Archer, DAF Sales Ltd

The HGV Distributors Sector met on a quarterly basis during 2008. The sector participated in the consultation process associated with the proposed vehicle type approval regime for Ireland due to commence in April 2009. The sector also participated in the development of the national automotive waste battery compliance scheme. The HGV sector dealt with a range of regulatory items during 2008 and consulted with the Road Safety Authority on many of these issues. These included: retro fitting of blind spot mirrors

to the existing vehicle parc during 2008; commercial vehicle testing; Euro 5 emission standards; and proposals for changing weight regulations.

Vehicle Body Repair Specialists Committee



Chairman: Nigel Pratt, Pratt's Auto Bodyshop

The Committee was in regular communication with Glass's on GMX software issues, the introduction of TTS2 times and proposals to introduce GMX 4. The Committee met with representatives of Glass's and Thatcham and reviewed a wide range of estimating anomalies paint calculator issues and training arrangements. The Committee consulted with legal advisers with respect to insurers' practices in the market place and participated in an AIRC (the world organisation representing the crash repair

industry) submission to the EU Commission on the subject. The sector contributed to consultations on the implementation of new solvents regulations and accompanying inspection procedures. The impact on bodybuilding activities and vehicle conversions of the proposed type approval regime was reviewed by the Committee.

The sector was represented at the general assembly of AIRC and liaised with the Vehicle Builders and Repairers Association (UK). The Committee Chairman represented the interests of the sector at SIMI Board and NEC meetings.

Petrol Retailers' Sector

The Society continued to object to superstores opening petrol filling stations, with recent objections lodged to An Bord Pleanála in respect of a proposed station in Tullow. The Society continued to support individual members in relation to business training and staff issues, while Petrol Retailers continue to benefit from the discounted credit card fees under the Society's arrangement with Elavon.

Vehicle Recovery Operators Committee



Chairman: Eamon Kelly, Kelly Towing

Vehicle Recovery Operators Members within the sector continued to maintain the high level of professionalism and standards in performing their recovery role throughout the country. During the year a special meeting was held for Recovery Operators with guest speakers from the Road Safety Authority and An Garda Síochána, where an overview of tachographs, road haulage and waste legislation affecting vehicle recovery operators was discussed. The enforcement of this legislation is aimed at helping to accelerate the

development of a level playing field for the committed Vehicle Recovery Operator. The Vehicle Recovery Operator Sector welcomes tighter regulatory framework within the sector which should go a long way in reducing the scope for fly-by-night operators.

Also during the year Vehicle Recovery Operator members expressed some concern in relation to how vehicles are sometimes removed from road traffic accidents. Members highlighted the fact that attendance at road traffic accidents should be by recognised Recovery Operators. This matter was brought to the attention of An Garda Síochána, who took on board our views and concerns.

Sadly, during the year, a long-standing Vehicle Recovery Operator Member, John Fitzpatrick from Cork passed away. Recovery Operators throughout Ireland, and from as far away as Newcastle and Scotland, attended John's funeral in July 2008.

Related Associations

The Society in its role as provider of executive services for the Car Rental Council of Ireland, recognises the importance of those engaged in this sector of the industry. Members of the Car Rental Council of Ireland operated a combined fleet in excess of



Past Presidents of the SIMI gather at the SIMI Annual Dinner, with current President Paul Flanagan seated fifth from the left in the front row.



The CAR (contact after retirement) group on a recent visit to Motor Distributors Ltd.

20,000 vehicles during 2008.

The administration of the Irish Motor & Cycle Trades Golfing Association is carried out by the Society under the management of Con Dalton, Secretary of the Golfing Association. Outings took place during 2008 at Royal Tara, Navan – Hermitage, Lucan – Courtown & Seafield in Gorey, Co Wexford – Seapoint in Co Louth and Portmarnock Golf Links, Dublin. Members participated in these events and thoroughly enjoyed their golfing year.

The development and welfare of BEN – the Motor & Allied Trades Benevolent Fund was also fully supported by the Society and its members during the past year. Over €3,500 was also raised at the Raffle held at the Annual Dinner in February. Many thanks to all who supported BEN during the year. Particular mention once again to the SIMI Sligo Centre for their ongoing support with their 37th BEN Ball. The Chairman and Committee gratefully appreciate all support received throughout the year and also acknowledged the support received at the 57th Dublin Ball which was held last October.

The continued development of the industry active retirement group, CAR (Contact After Retirement) has continued during the past year under Chairman Jim Barton, Secretary Robert Prole and their very active organising Committee. The group organised a number of events during the year, including an Annual Lunch and visits to

such diverse locations as the National Marine Training College in Cork, Arigna Mines in Co. Leitrim and Stormont In Belfast. Robert Prole remains the first point of contact for people interested in becoming involved rdeprole@eircom.net

Annual Dinner

The Annual Dinner took place once again at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Santry in February. Members and guests attended this prestigious event for the industry. SIMI President, Paul Flanagan, extended a warm welcome to all present and delivered his pre-dinner speech to a captivated audience by outlining the many challenges facing the industry during this difficult economic period. On the evening there were 20 SIMI Past Presidents in attendance. They and all guests in attendance thoroughly enjoyed the event while mingling with their industry colleagues.

Annual Ecumenical Service

The Annual Ecumenical Service in remembrance of those within the industry who have passed away during the year will take place at the Church of Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Dublin Airport on Wednesday, May 13th, 2009. The service will take place prior to the Society's Annual General Meeting in the Radisson SAS Hotel, Dublin Airport on the same day.

Members are urged to make a special effort to attend this annual remembrance service. Invitations are also issued to families of Members who were bereaved during the past year.

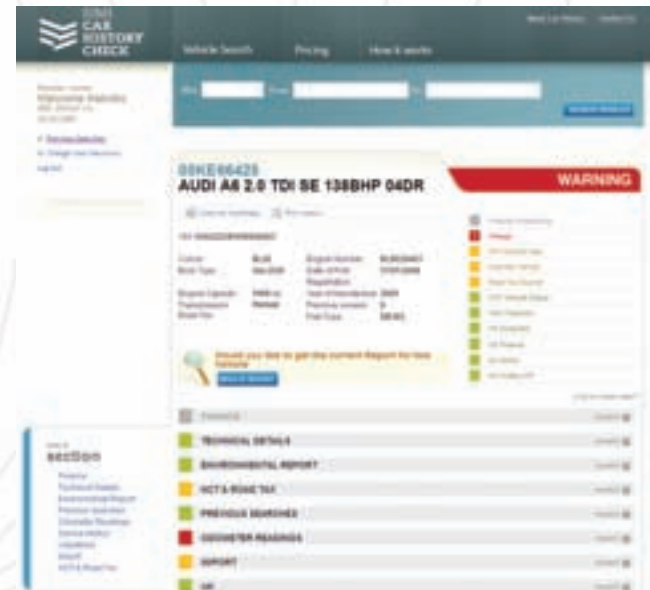
OBJECTIVE 9

Membership Benefit Services

- To ensure that the Society's membership is strongly representative of all sectors of the motor industry in Ireland by seeking to encompass all professional organisations in the motor industry who would qualify and are of appropriate standard for membership.
- To ensure that all services provided for members are of the highest quality and delivered in a cost effective and timely manner. To enhance these services and to develop appropriate additional services for the benefit of members.
- To develop new or additional projects or services that harness the combined purchasing power of members in order to reduce costs.
- To develop a strong income stream from membership services in line with the Society's Strategic Plan.
- To ensure the success of Car History Check as a benefit to members and to ensure its financial success.
- To ensure the continued competitiveness of the Society's Garage Insurance Scheme to the benefit of members and to explore the potential for members to sell driver insurance as a profit centre in the future.

www.carhistorycheck.ie

Car History Check was launched in March 2007 and has proved to be a vital service for the Motor Industry. This web-based service allows the motor industry to check the history of a vehicle in a matter of seconds, using only its registration number. This comprehensive check, based on a number of official sources, is designed to provide peace of mind in relation to the vehicle's history. Numerous members have been saved from buying vehicles with a dubious nature. Through research conducted in conjunction with our Car History Check partners, Experian, we have found that 21% of cars imported from the UK into Ireland in 2008 were stolen, or had issues with outstanding finance, insurance write-offs, or their odometer reading. Many had a combination of these issues. In 2008, 40% of Irish cars checked through Car History Check had outstanding finance. We continue to grow our odometer reading database. We now have over 700,000 readings collected, 90,000 of which were sourced from SIMI members. In 2008, insurance companies began to share write-off information with



the Department of Transport. Over 7% of vehicles that are registered on the National Vehicle File were found to be written off, 17,000 of which were 10 years or younger, and this information is now available on Car History Check.

SIMI continues to grow the data available on Car History Check. We have recently added the facility to check a UK valuation, and have teamed up with the UK market leader CAP to provide comprehensive used car valuation data. April 2009 saw the introduction of a more flexible pricing structure, with the annual fee still available for heavy users of the site, and a 'per-check' pricing for lower level users.

Commercial Garage & Risk Management Programme

The SIMI Insurance and Risk Control Programme in conjunction with our Insurance brokers Willis and with Hibernian Aviva has led the way in reducing costs over the few years and is now being availed of by an increasing number of members. The scheme is designed to fit the insurance requirements of a motor retailer, and provides the most comprehensive on the market cover for motor industry businesses.

Members have seen the benefit in recent years in the Government reforms of the insurance sector in which SIMI was an active participant. This benefit has been



manifested in the most practical manner possible with significant reduction in insurance premiums.

These reforms have seen the establishment of the PIAB (Personal Injuries Awards Bureau), which is having considerable success with the passage into law of the Courts and Civil Liabilities Act 2004. The PIAB is now known as Injuries Board (www.injuriesboard.ie), and, since its establishment, competition in the sector has intensified. Reductions in insurance premiums have been evident in recent years. According to the Injuries Board, they have “now made over 23,500 awards since we opened our doors in 2004, amounting to almost €530m in compensation. By delivering these awards four times faster and with a low administration charge, the InjuriesBoard.ie model has delivered direct and indirect savings of between €200m and €250m to the economy”.

Corporate services

The Society continues to offer value-for-money Corporate Services, tailored for members' requirements. These provide a number of services to the members at discounted rates based on the buying potential of the large membership.

Many providers of services within competitive markets are keen to work with the motor industry and this offers us opportunities. We can avail of additional benefits and better costs due to the considerable buying power of our sector.

As well as insurance, Carhistorycheck and training services, listed below are a range of additional services, which have been made available to Members.

Security systems

Security has always been a major issue within the industry, particularly in relation to the huge costs of insurance. The Society offers to members a security system that differs from many of the others that are available. Netwatch is the first company in Ireland to use both satellite and internet-based technology to provide remote visual security monitoring. It is widely used within the motor trade in the US and the UK, and has had a major impact in the reduction of theft and damage to property. This system is operated from a remote site and a free security audit is available from the suppliers on request.

Stationery

The Society offers members a discounted stationery scheme. This offer provides up to 35% off the recommended retail price of many stationary products. The Society is also promoting the use of an excellent on-line ordering system. Feedback from members using this scheme indicates that significant cost savings are being made.

Mortgages

This scheme offers members expert mortgage advice, together with the most competitive rates in the market and a highly professional service. SIMI has partnered with a leading independent financial advisor, Barker Financial, to bring this service to members.

Health and safety statement

We are all aware of the huge fines associated with non-compliance of health and safety regulations, with the recent coverage of High Court cases and the resulting punitive fines. Compliance with health and safety legislation has become a major part of business today. SIMI, in conjunction with JKM Solutions, has developed a Safety Statement Compiler in CD format, which will help bring your company into compliance with health and safety legislation. This piece of software will assist members to put together a comprehensive safety statement tailored specifically for their business. A huge amount of work from several companies and a number of our members went into developing this service.

Health insurance schemes

The Society provides group benefit facilities for members who wish to join VHI, Hibernian Aviva or Vivas. Not only can you avail of 10% discount, but also there are additional benefits available in terms of waiting periods. There will also be many of the Society's members who currently have health insurance but are not availing of the 10% discount.

Credit/Debit Card Fees

The Society has an arrangement with Elavon, one of the market leaders, whereby members can make savings on their transaction costs on credit and debit card transactions.

OBJECTIVE 10

People in the Industry and Human Resources

- To develop and implement policies to ensure that the motor industry continues to attract and retain the required number of quality employees.
- To develop, in consultation with the National Training Committee, and to implement training programmes designed to enhance the skills and professionalism of people in the industry, with funding support wherever possible.
- To work with FAS, Fetac, Hetac and various colleges and other institutions to improve the quality, availability and delivery of training in Ireland.
- To seek to address the challenges of cost, release and travel that can mitigate against training and development of employees in the industry through web-based training or other initiatives.
- To develop cooperation in Europe on training, standards and qualifications.
- To support members in all human resources areas, including staff induction, industrial relations and health and safety, and the provision of advice, consultation and representation.
- To develop a national strategy in relation to wages and conditions of employment through the work of the National Labour Committee.
- To highlight the development opportunities for young people in the motor industry through the promotion of career paths for employees in this sector, aimed at both attracting new entrants and at encouraging the retention of existing employees in the industry.

Industrial relations and human resource management service

The Society has continued to advise and represent members on employee issues over the past year including representation at Rights Commissioner and Employment Appeals Tribunal hearings.

The Society's HR Manager, Margaret O'Shea, continues to provide updates to members on legislative developments through newsletters and the website, providing members with practical HR advice. In the current economic environment, it is not surprising that there has been an increase in the number of redundancies in the motor industry since September last year, with an estimated 4,000 people in the sector losing their jobs, and with many companies also placing some staff on short-time work.

During 2008 and into 2009 many members sought advice in relation to wage freezes and wage reductions, a measure of the depth of the trading difficulties in the sector. The Society's National Labour Committee will shortly be meeting with the Motor Industry Group of Unions to review the Wage Agreement in the context of the current difficulties in the sector.

Training in the industry

Motor Industry Managers Programme

SIMI and the IMI (Irish Management Institute) have submitted an application to HETAC (Higher Education Training Awards Council) in relation to the SIMI Motor Industry Managers Programme. HETAC is the qualifications awarding body for third level education and it is hoped that the Motor Industry Managers Programme will be granted accreditation as a Level 7 Award on the National Framework of Qualifications. This process should be completed in mid 2009 and it is planned to re-launch the programme in September 2009.

The Programme was established in 1999 and since then over 100 graduates from all over the country have successfully completed this development programme. The feedback from the graduates has been consistently excellent and a special event is planned for 2009 to bring together past graduates for a management seminar and networking day.

The programme is aimed at managers in the motor industry who are newly appointed or managers who may not have had any specific managerial training or qualification. The programme commences with a series of four core modules presented by business specialists in the IMI concentrating on the role and skills of the manager. This is followed by four motor-specific modules that cover Motor Industry finance, legal issues and administration; Vehicle Sales Management; After-sales Management; and a general overview of the challenges involved in operating of a motor industry business in Ireland. A total of 19 days of training are spread over seven months.

Commercial vehicle tester training

Initial training

An ongoing need for qualified testers within the Vehicle Tester Network resulted in over 100 participants undertaking initial HGV or LGV Tester Training in 2008. This training is continuing in 2009. The HGV tester training programme is completed over

four days (two days Theory and two days Practical). The LGV training is a three-day programme (one day Theory and two days Practical)



VTN CPD Courses

The RSA/Department of Transport requires all registered Vehicle Testers to complete an annual CPD (Continuing Professional Development) courses. HGV Testers complete a full day course and LGV a half-day course. The objective of the CPD course is to outline new or changed procedures and sequences for testing vehicles and to ensure that all testers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to testing. Attendance at these courses is mandatory for all testers, those who fail to complete CPD may be removed from the Testers Register and no longer be able to test vehicles. Responsibility for the delivery of this training rests with SIMI.

During 2008, approximately 500 vehicle testers completed Update HGV/LGV training and approximately 100 trainees successfully completed initial training as HGV or LGV Testers.



SIMI Short Programmes 2008

This year SIMI held a wide range of short one and two-day training programmes at various locations around the country which were attended by over 400 participants. The programmes they completed included those in the areas of sales, vehicle appraisal, customer service, after-sales, management, finance and administration. The content and relevance of these programmes are reviewed and updated regularly, and new programmes are developed to meet the training needs of the Irish motor industry.

Training for selling finance

In response to an identified need arising from the requirements of the Financial Regulator in relation to the Minimum Competency (CPD) for individuals in the motor



SIMI President Paul Flanagan presents Colm Corcoran with his Apprentice of the Year Trophy.

industry who sell or provide advice on financial products, SIMI developed a CPD training plan which was included in the programme of short courses and which are accredited by the Institute of Bankers in Ireland.

SIMI Training Committee

Guidance and expert advice on industry training needs is given by the members of the SIMI Training Committee who have quarterly meetings and the Committee is currently chaired by Joe Clarke of Westbrook Motors Ltd. Dublin.

Apprenticeship

The motor industry continues to invest heavily in the training of young people, most notably through the apprenticeship system. The Society is represented on the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee by Director General Alan Nolan. They review on an ongoing basis such issues as Curriculum updates, structuring and format of Training, and Master Technician training, third level qualifications and recognition of prior learning.

Apprentice of the Year

After a closely fought national competition held in DIT Bolton Street last June, Colm Corcoran of Al Hayes Motors Ltd. Galway, was selected as the overall winner and was presented with the SIMI Automobile Apprentice of the Year Trophy by SIMI President Paul Flanagan at a ceremony in the Mansion House. Colm continued the recent successes of Irish motor apprentices in international competition, representing Ireland at the EuroSkills Competition in Rotterdam in September 2008 and winning a Gold Medal for first place in the Light Vehicle Technician category to his achievements. This year's Apprentice of the Year competition takes place in DIT in late May and the winner may be selected to represent Ireland at the next Wordskills Competition in Calgary, Canada in September 2009.

SIMI Management Board



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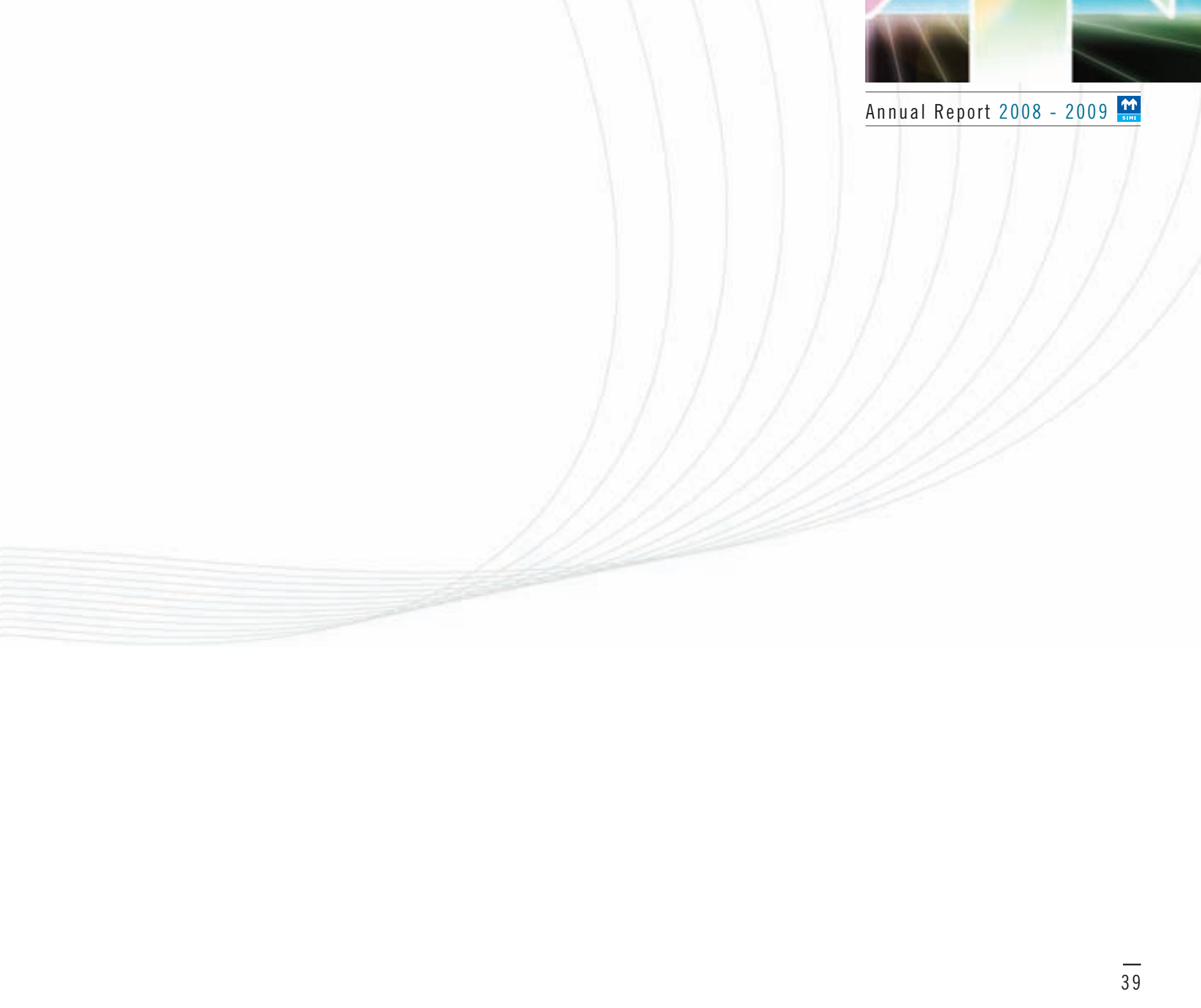


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