



SIMI

Annual Report
2011-2012

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President's Report

We normally start our Annual Report by looking back over the last 12 months. In a nutshell, 2011 was tough: Scrappage saved us up until June, but the second half of the year was dead. Moving into the start of 2012, January, helped by the good weather, was actually up on the previous year, but since then business has got tougher, with consumer confidence down, car sales down, and the decrease accelerating as the months pass. But the past is gone and we do need to look forward. This next 12 months are undoubtedly going to be very challenging for our Industry. The Motor Industry has a very important year ahead. The Government announced in the last Budget that it is 'reviewing' the current VRT and Road Tax system; unfortunately, a review means an increase. The Society has already commenced its work in this regard. Assisted by the Vehicle Importers', Franchise, and Independent Retailers' Committees, the Management Board has put in a strong Submission on members' behalf. We are grateful that this time round, the Minister has committed to fully consulting with the Motor Industry – this has been evident in the Departmental officials' willingness to engage with us in

recent months. The introduction of the CO₂ based system in 2008 didn't anticipate the huge buy-in by consumers and Car Manufacturers. The result was hugely successful from an environmental point of view, but, with the resulting fall in tax revenues, going 'green' has apparently put us into the 'red'. It's clear that the objective of this review is to find a way to deliver increased revenue at a time when additional Tax contributions are being sought from all sources. As an Industry which relies heavily on Consumer Confidence, Consumer Credit and Consumer Spending, more than anything else, we need the economy fixed. So we understand the need for such reviews and the need to increase tax revenues for the State. But this should never be at the cost of business failures and job losses. The Society's focus on this is very clear, the average rates of VRT and Road Tax have fallen significantly since 2008, but motorists have also paid increased carbon and fuel taxes over this period and the number of new cars sold over this same period has halved. In effect, this is where the biggest fall in State revenue has occurred and, whatever solution is reached, it must not be one that damages car sales next year and into the future. This whole process will not be an easy one for us in the

Motor Industry. While we welcome direct consultation, we are effectively being asked to select our preferred method by which our sector can be burdened by more tax. Is this really a choice? Even so, I'm convinced that, in this process, it is hugely important for our Industry to speak with one voice. If we do, we will have a better chance of delivering a solution that will not damage business and hopefully can provide some long-term stability to protect our Industry and our employees. The other issue we have asked the Government to look at is our registration plate system. The 2013 number plate is already out there in the media, and people are talking about it. On the positive side, it does give us an opportunity to highlight the need for an overhaul of the registration plate system. Seasonality in car sales is a big problem and getting worse year-on-year. Trying to budget for sales, cashflow and full-time employment is putting a huge strain on retail businesses that are so front-loaded. We have highlighted this to Government. I urge them to engage the various State Agencies to try and fix it for everyone's benefit. The proposal for a second registration period each year and our proposal for inter-county re-registration is a win-win-win: good for us, good for Government and

good for the consumer. It is not just car sales that have been impacted by the economic downturn. I know the service and repair business has been badly hit. Feedback suggests the number of cars being repaired has halved, which shouldn't be the case, given that we have an ageing car parc and 2 million vehicles on the road. Some people are dangerously putting off servicing and repairs due to financial constraints. But the longer it's left, the more expensive the problems will be to fix. I believe in this situation that Dealers and conscientious motorists will place an increasing value on a car's service history into the future. I often wonder why it is that people wouldn't dream of having their electricity or gas installed by an amateur, yet unqualified people are openly offering to service and repair cars that may become death-traps on the road. The RECI system has worked so well that we need to empower ourselves with a similar programme for cars. I have no doubt that this can add real value and reassurance for consumers getting their cars serviced with SIMI members. The Society has been working on a voluntary RECI-style scheme, to be supported by the RSA and Consumers Association and set for launch before the summer. This is a big issue for us, many of the 40,000 people working in this

Industry depend on this service and repair work for their livelihood. I am proud that this scheme is being launched during my Presidency, and I urge all members to give it their full support.

As an Industry, we have always tried to focus on self-reliance. In the current climate, we certainly need that focus more than ever. We have worked to support members by providing them with unique selling points, such as the proposed servicing project and our used car website beepbeep.ie and Car History Check. But it's not just the SIMI, our Members have also been working to drive their own businesses. The members in Kilkenny, Drogheda and Wexford deserve special credit for working together to deliver successful Motor Shows. Also deserving of special mention are the Sligo members and particularly the Committee of the Sligo Ben Ball, for reaching the incredible milestone of 40 continuous years of the Sligo Ben Ball. I would also like to highlight our Motor Industry Awards in association with Castrol. In these very difficult times I believe that it is even more important to recognise those in our Industry who strive to reach exceptional standards. While, in such awards there can only be one winner in each section, we must

also recognise that every one of the nominated finalists is a winner, each having reached a standard of excellence that made the job of the independent judging panel extremely difficult. Indeed the panel commented that "these companies bring honour not just to their own organisations but to the whole Industry". This year I served as President of our Society but I am also an ordinary Member and I really believe that we are very fortunate as Members to have such a great team in SIMI. Their experience, commitment and passion give us the ability to punch well above our weight as an Industry. I would also like to acknowledge the time and effort put in by the Honorary Officers, Management Board, NEC, the Sector Committees and local Centre Chairmen – it is only by working together collectively that we can deliver. It is a great honour to serve you as President, and I look forward to working with you all into the future. I have no doubt that when the dust settles and we emerge from this woeful recession, we will be leaner, keener and better equipped to deal with the next upturn in our industry.

Yours in motoring,

Gerry Caffrey
President, SIMI



The Motor Industry has been through a very difficult period since mid-2008 but the year since our last AGM has been one of the toughest we have faced. 2009 was perhaps the worst year with a fall to only 57,000 new car sales and with some hundreds of businesses closing and thousands of jobs lost. There are many in the Industry who would see the current market climate as every bit as bad. This year we don't have the huge hangover of devalued and unsellable used cars but in 2009 most businesses had built up reserves, which are now exhausted, and there was hope that the Economy would recover in a couple of years. Three years later there is little expectation of a major turn-around anytime soon.

The picture across the Industry has been very challenging with new cars falling from a Scrappage-supported level of 90,000 in 2011 to a forecasted 75,000 this year, but even that number hides a very high level of forced or supported sales over the first four months and a very low level of real retail activity. In reality, the underlying market may be a lot closer to the 57,000 level of 2009. But a reduction in business has been evident right across the sector, although used car values for post-08 cars have improved and there is some level of demand, with new car sales at such a low point for so long there are just not enough good quality used cars around. On the after-market side, the reducing

Director General's Report

number of cars in the under five-year old category, from 800,000 in 2007 to around 400,000 this year, allied to the lack of disposable income has really impacted on workshop and parts businesses. For Body Repairers, this has also impacted on top of the continuing issues posed by the Insurance sector.

For Commercial Vehicle members there have been further challenges; the steady rollout of Type Approval changes and, for Commercial Vehicle Testers, the target of reaching the standards for the new 10-year licence was confirmed in legislation. Indeed, the Society has been engaged in ongoing consultation and negotiation with Revenue, RSA and NSAI right through the year not just on commercial vehicles but other issues such as disabled driver and special purpose requirements. End of Life Vehicles is another area where SIMI has been working for members to ensure that a cost-effective and sustainable, environmentally sound system can be developed by the Industry. The Budget in December 2011 carried threats of VRT and Road Tax structural changes and significant increases but the Society lobbied effectively and it was announced that a review of the current VRT and Road Tax systems would not be finalised for implementation until January 2013. The Budget did deliver a Road Tax increase and a VAT increase which is impacting on sales, particularly when taken in conjunction with reductions in disposable income as a result of other taxation adjustments. And yet, through all of the difficulties of recent years, SIMI has endeavoured to be as positive as possible; people do not buy cars if they worry that the future is bleak or if there is a danger their dealerships are going to close. And, overall,

we need consumers to get back to normal spending patterns as soon as possible and this is the only way that the economy will recover. Over the past year, the Industry has continued to work on the positive side with Motor Shows in Kilkenny, Drogheda and Wexford and with the SIMI Castrol awards continuing to highlight the Industry's commitment to excellence. Over this period the Society has also been working with the Franchise and Independent Retailers Committees on the new Registered Service Professionals project, with the Vehicle Body Repairers on a Quality Mark and with the Commercial Vehicle Testers on the rollout of their VTN/CITA Standard. Our Industry continues to work at helping ourselves rather than expecting others to do it. And yet we would acknowledge that Scrappage provided really positive results for both the Industry and the Exchequer. The year ahead will see the review on Road Tax and VRT producing some changes to those hugely important areas for our sector. We have welcomed the consultation process and the Government's willingness to engage with the Industry. We accept that there is very little capacity for positive provisions in the next Budget but we really do need the Government to recognise the huge dangers in implementing any significant increase in either VRT or Road Tax. We would also underline the crucial contribution that a Number Plate change could make next year both for the Exchequer and for the Motor Industry. If the Government give us a system that we can benefit from, at no real cost to the State, then we can all be far more positive about the year ahead.

Alan Nolan
Director General, SIMI

2011-2012 The year in review

Vehicle Sales

- **33,581 scrappage cars (Jan 10 - June 11)**

- **Increase in car sales 1,441 (+1.6%) in 2011 to 89,927**

- **Government Revenue 2011 – €552m total revenue from new car sales**

- **Q1 2012 – new car sales down 4.38%**

- **Commercial Vehicles 2011 v 2010 – LCVs +8.4%; HGVs +9%**

Following on from a 55% increase in new car sales in 2010, 2011 saw consolidation of this gain rather than any improvement, with new car registrations for 2011 showing a small increase. The level of sales underlined the unqualified success of the new car Scrappage Scheme which ended in June 2011. As predicted by the Society in advance of the Scheme's introduction, Scrappage increased car sales, increased Government Revenues and increased Motor Industry Employment. From Scrappage-related sales only, Government Revenue benefited to the tune of €130m. Employment in the Motor Industry over the period of scrappage increased by 4,200 (12%) at a time when most other sectors were shedding employment. CO₂ per new car registered decreased by 16 g/km during the Scheme. The clear message from this is that the best way to increase the tax take from new cars is to increase sales – Scrappage proves that reducing the tax-take per car can actually increase total tax take. The expiry of Scrappage, however, tells a different story. The last six months of 2011 were exceptionally quiet for business, with new car sales down

39% on the same period in 2010. January 2012 was a surprise, with the good weather and customers concluding and paying for deals in December to benefit from the lower VAT rate, resulting in a small upturn in registrations. However, sales have fallen since January and this drop is becoming increasingly negative, with registrations for the months of February and March 2012 showing a decline of 9% on the same months in 2011. This rate of decline accelerated in April, with new car registrations down 22% on April 2011. All indications are that this decline will continue for the rest of 2012.

Both Light Commercial and Heavy Goods Vehicles showed an increase in 2011 of 8% and 9% respectively. While the increase is positive, this is on a very low base, with sales only a quarter of what they were a few years ago.

Budget 2012/VRT & Road Tax Consultation

- **Increase in Standard VAT rate by 2%**

- **Increase in Carbon Taxes on fuel**

- **Increase in Road Tax**

- **VRT Export Refund**

- **VRT & Road Tax Consultation**

On December 6, 2011, Minister Michael Noonan announced his Budget for 2012. A number of the measures announced impacted on the Motor Industry and its customers. The 2% VAT hike increased the cost of an average new car by €350, while the Carbon Tax increase, combined with the VAT change, saw fuel taxes increase

by 4 cent per litre. The Road Tax increases were also signalled as being only a short term measure, with all cars being subject to a minimum increase of 7.5% and with substantially higher percentage increases for Band A and B cars. After many years of lobbying, we will finally see the introduction of a VRT Export Refund System over the coming months. From a strategic viewpoint, however, the most important announcement in the Budget Speech was the VRT and Road Tax Consultation Process. This will see a change to both VRT and Road Tax, with a potential implementation date of January 2013. This time round, the Minister, in his speech, acknowledged that the Motor Industry would be fully engaged in this consultation. All sides will want to heed the lessons of the last change in 2008, and the unintended consequences of the fundamental nature of the changes back then. The Minister's Statement has been backed up by the willingness of Department and Revenue officials to engage with the Society since December last. The first part of the Consultation saw the Society submit a detailed Submission to the Departments of Finance and Environment on March 1, 2012. The Society is hoping that details on proposed changes can be decided by June to facilitate the Industry's ordering process. The Society is proposing that any VRT and Road Tax changes must be sensible in terms of structure, realistic in terms of amounts and implemented on a timely basis that protects employment and business. Added to this, the Society would like to see some amendments to the Registration Plate system that would help to alleviate the problems of excessive seasonality.



Servicing Campaign – SIMI Autosure Professional Register

- **Official launch May 9, 2012**

- **Big reduction in number of vehicles for service/repair since 2008**

- **Service/repair work should remain in professional trade**

The last year has seen the design of a programme for SIMI members, SIMI Autosure Professional Register (SIMI APR). This programme is currently being rolled out to members and it is hoped it will grow in the years to come. The aim of this new scheme is to encourage customers to regularly have their vehicles serviced, to ensure their car is safe on the road and to convince customers the best place to have their vehicles serviced is in an SIMI retailer. The biggest factor in the reduced service and repair business has been the massive drop in vehicles five years old or younger on Irish roads. As recently as 2008, these numbered over 800,000, but, by the end of 2013, they will have reduced by over 50% to below 400,000. Allied to this is the increased black economy activity further dampening service business for the professional trade. In this context, it is vital that the

industry offers clear added value to customers to have their vehicles serviced at regular intervals, and that the work undertaken is signed off by an appropriately qualified technician. In addition to added value, customers need to be reassured that their vehicles are safe – this safety aspect has been acknowledged by the RSA who will participate in the launch of this scheme.

Beepbeep.ie

- **New features**

- **Social media campaign**

- **TV exposure**



The profile of the Society's members-only car website, **Beepbeep.ie**, continued to grow over the last 12 months. New features on the site included the ability of customers to key in their car Registration number to get an outline of an average of what similar cars' asking prices are on the Site. Each dealer on

Beepbeep.ie now also gets a free dedicated mobile-phone website that works on all smartphones, while **Beepbeep.ie** itself is also available as a mobile-phone website. Last summer saw an extensive multi-platform campaign promoting **Beepbeep.ie** encompassing social media, press and radio, and succeeded in achieving good exposure for the site on a cost-effective basis. Other elements of the campaign included the **Beepbeep.ie** 'tweeting taxi', advertising on radio and in the print media, and an innovative video (**Beepbeep.ie** Trick Shots) designed to showcase cars available in an



Beepbeep.ie launched its first print edition early in 2012.

entertaining, imaginative format with online appeal. December also saw the appearance of **Beepbeep.ie** on the TV3 programme *The Apprentice*, which further enhanced the Site's public profile. In addition to all **Beepbeep.ie** dealers subscribing to the SIMI Code of Ethics, all cars on **Beepbeep.ie** must have a warranty and be history checked, giving the best possible reassurance to customers buying a used vehicle.



- **Testing Network gets ready for major upgrade**

- **RSA Publish Legislation on Commercial Vehicle Testing Regime Programme**

- **Roll out of ISO/CITA Programme**

The Testing of Commercial Vehicles in Ireland has been in existence for approximately 28 years and the present system is currently on the brink of a major Transformation Programme, which is one of the biggest changes to emerge in its history. It was always seen as the intention of the Government when they established the Road Safety Authority (RSA), in the latter part of 2006, to implement an ambitious reform programme to improve the culture of safety within the transport industry as well as for the public at large. Over the past year, the Vehicle Test Centre Committee has continued to keep SIMI VTN Test Centre Members informed of developments as they emerge and notify them of the requirements for Test Centres to achieve the standards set down in these reforms. The RSA (Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness) Bill 2012 has now been published. The Bill contains the proposed legal basis on which to deliver the commercial vehicle roadworthiness reform programme including the

transfer of the management of the testing function from the Local Authorities to the Road Safety Authority. The RSA's aim is to enhance performance management of the testing system, as well as the introduction of operator maintenance obligations and enhanced powers in relation to non-compliant vehicles at the roadside. The transfer of the management of the testing function from the Local Authorities to the RSA is anticipated to be completed by the end of this year. The RSA will then assume responsibility for the Vehicle Testing System, which will give them the authority in relation to the appointment and licensing of Test Centres and the introduction of the new 10-year licensing system; this transition period should take place over the next 18 months. Part of the reform of the testing system requires Test Centres to attain certification to ISO 9001/CITA Recommendation 9B Standard as this will be a mandatory requirement within the new Test Centre fixed-term licensing structure. The VTN Committee has developed a VTN Standard that is fully compliant with the RSA requirements, and is being delivered to members on a cost-effective basis. The fee set by the Committee covers Individual Consultant Support and the Audit by NSAI, as well as attendance at the VTN AGM/Annual Conference and the Contribution towards CITA membership (required for the CITA Standard).

The majority of Test Centres have now signed up to SIMI's VTN Standard; with a number of Test Centres having already achieved the standard, while the remainder are currently in the process of meeting the requirements.

The RSA will shortly award the contract for the IT (CoVIS) part of the reform project. This means that Test Centres will be able to avail of the benefits of a new updated computer system that will enable better monitoring, supervision and enforcement of the Testing system

and which, by definition, should lead to a better and more consistent standard throughout the network and to significant efficiency gains. Discussions with the RSA are ongoing regarding the Transformation Programme and the VTN Committee are committed to organising a general network meeting of members in the near future to keep all Test Centres informed of developments. The VTN Committee has welcomed the upgrade proposals and has worked tirelessly on behalf of members to ensure that the system will be practical and efficient in its operation. One of the core aims of the SIMI Vehicle Test Centre Committee in developing the VTN Brand for Test Centres, almost 10 years ago, was to enable the Test Centres to unite through SIMI and be identified under the VTN Logo as the body of professional testers for the Commercial Vehicle sector. It is the aim of the Committee that all Test Centres should be members of SIMI and thereby contribute their share to the development of the project and of the brand.

Consumer trends

- **Consumer Confidence remains fragile**

- **Direct correlation between new car sales and consumer confidence**

- **Savings remain high**

Consumer confidence in the economy has a powerful influence on the new car market, not least because car purchasers need to have confidence that their economic circumstances will enable them to service car loans. Consumer confidence had shown a general upward trend in the latter half of 2010 and into 2011; however, there was a general decline in the last quarter of 2011 and, by the end of 2011, consumer sentiment plummeted, with December

seeing the largest monthly drop since August 2001. The decline in consumer confidence can be attributed to continued concerns about household finances. Looking forward, uncertainty over the Eurozone, the forthcoming Referendum on Ireland's participation in the Eurozone Fiscal Stability Pact, and the anticipation of, at least, two more austere Budgets, means that consumer sentiment will remain fragile. In addition, the full impact of the 2% VAT increase on consumer spending has yet to be felt, again having the potential to reduce consumer confidence. However, by the end of March, there had been a small upturn, with this index increasing in January, February and March, albeit by small amounts. The conclusion derived from this by KBC is: "Consumer sentiment, although remaining cautious, has been steadily increasing so far this year, with less pessimism regarding employment prospects and the outlook for the economy driving the improvement. While their outlook for the future has improved, consumers have become more worried about their present conditions since the start of the year." It is vital to the Motor Industry that new car sales start to move upwards, and any excessive tax increases or changes in tax structure could potentially dampen sentiment for car sales even further. While the first quarter indicates some positivity, it is clear that any increasing sentiment is fragile.

Electric vehicles

- **Continuation of Government Incentives**

- **Establishment of EVAI**

While electric vehicle registrations were lower than anticipated in 2011, the Industry welcomed the extension of the SEAI grant for electric vehicles into 2012 as a vital component if Ireland is to make progress towards

meeting the targets it has set for these vehicles by 2020. Ireland continues to make strides in the ongoing implementation, by ESB, of an infrastructure of charging points. This has the potential to see Ireland as one of the leading lights in Europe for electric vehicles. In the last year, the Electric Vehicles Association of Ireland (EVAI) has been established, and recently became part of the Society. The EVAI made its own Submission on VRT and Road Tax as part of the consultation process announced by Minister Noonan in December's Budget. It is hoped that sensible incentives can be put in place for Electric Vehicles in the short term to help stimulate their sale over the next few years.

SIMI Events

- **Annual Dinner and Industry Awards**

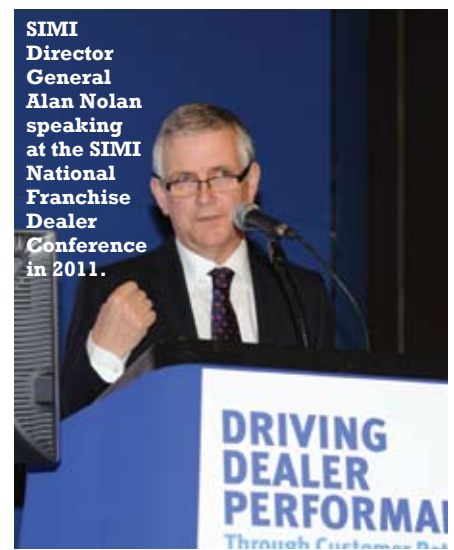
- **Franchise Conference**

- **VTN AGM**

- **Financial Controllers Seminar**

- **VBRS Regional Seminars**

Since last year's AGM, the Society has run a number of key business events for members, organised by the Society's Membership and Events Manager, Con Dalton. These events are key networking opportunities for Motor Industry Executives. The Society's Annual Dinner was held on February 23, 2012 in the traditional venue of the Burlington Hotel. With over 500 attendees, the numbers were up on 2011, no doubt helped by also having the SIMI/Castrol Motor Industry Awards take place on the night. President Gerry Caffrey's speech was focused on the importance of unity and the Industry speaking with one voice, which was very positively received. Sponsors on the night included: Permanent TSB, Willis and Suzuki.



The Annual VTN AGM and Conference was held on November 14, 2011, in Killashee House and, for the third consecutive year, saw nearly full attendance from Commercial Vehicle Tester Members during which the future of commercial vehicle testing in Ireland was discussed in the context of the forthcoming fundamental changes to the system. The same venue on the following day saw the 13th SIMI Franchise Conference, *Driving Dealer Performance*, which was co-sponsored by ADP Dealer Services and Grant Thornton. This was another successful event with over 200 dealers in attendance. These combined conferences continue to be the key business event in the Motor Industry calendar. Almost 400 members attended between the two events. A very successful Financial Controllers Seminar was held in Killashee House Hotel on July 20, 2011. Nearly 100 finance decision makers from across all sectors of membership were in attendance. Netwatch Security Systems provided the sponsorship. March 2012 saw the running of four regional seminars for SIMI Vehicle Body Repairers' members. Over 80 members from the VBRS sector attended and the key issue discussed was the independent survey on the costs of operating a bodyshop business in Ireland.



Awards celebrate Motor Industry resilience

Franchised Dealership of the Year

Audi North Dublin

In recognition of: its robust business model; its pace-setting performance in achieving outstanding growth and profitability in just two years; and its proactive investment initiatives, signalling its sector-leading ambition and confidence in the future of the Motor Industry.



The presentation of the Franchised Dealership of the Year Award (l-r): Gerry Caffrey President, SIMI; Geoff Walsh, Head of Sales, Audi North Dublin; Dave Watson, Head of Castrol Professional in Ireland; and Alan Nolan, Director General, SIMI.

Celebrating the Irish motor trade's resilience, successes and achievements of the last year, SIMI members convened at Dublin's Burlington Hotel on February 23, 2012 for the second SIMI Irish Motor Industry Awards, in association with Castrol Professional.

The awards ceremony honoured those businesses that have demonstrated excellence and best practice in spite of the extremely challenging financial conditions, with a total of six winners. The gala event was hosted by sports broadcaster, Des Cahill and legendary Irish footballer, Ronnie Whelan.

SIMI Director General Alan Nolan congratulated the winners and welcomed the unprecedented level of interest in the event from across the Industry: "These awards recognise the best-performing automotive companies from across Ireland and it was particularly difficult to single out individuals to be shortlisted for each award. Those businesses that won on the night, or were shortlisted, can be proud of what they have achieved over the last 12 months, but the reality is that

Franchised Retail Operation of the Year

Tony Burke Motors Ltd

In recognition of: its fresh approach to how a dealership should be run, incorporating agile use of social media; its carefully-nurtured internal culture prioritising delivery of high levels of customer satisfaction; and its inspiring achievement in successfully launching and establishing its business in a challenging environment.



The presentation of the Franchised Retail Operation of the Year Award (l-r): Gerry Caffrey President, SIMI; Tony Burke, Tony Burke Motors Ltd, Galway; Dave Watson, Head of Castrol Professional in Ireland; and Alan Nolan, Director General, SIMI.

the entire Industry deserves praise as it fights its way out of the recession."

The independent judging panel praised both the quantity and quality of this year's entries, with a number of businesses providing evidence of innovation across every area of their organisations. The judges believe that the willingness shown by many companies to re-address their business strategies will leave them in a stronger position as the Motor Industry battles through a tough economic period.

SIMI President Gerry Caffrey commented on the high standards achieved by the nominated finalists: "In these very difficult times, I believe that it is even more important to recognise those in our Industry who strive to reach exceptional standards. Unfortunately, there can only be one winner in each category, but I think we also recognise that every one of the nominated finalists here tonight is already a winner, each having reached a standard of excellence that made the job of the independent judging panel extremely difficult."

Franchised Aftersales Operation of the Year

Audi North Dublin

In recognition of: its attention to detail in the delivery of an enhanced customer experience; its commitment to the professional development of a highly-skilled Aftersales team; and its positive investment strategy, defining a new benchmark for Aftersales excellence.



The presentation of the Franchised Aftersales Operation of the Year Award (l-r): Gerry Caffrey President, SIMI; Adrian Gibney, Head of Aftersales, Audi North Dublin; Dave Watson, Head of Castrol Professional in Ireland; and Alan Nolan, Director General, SIMI.

SIMI Outstanding Achievement Award

The SIMI Sligo Centre and its BEN Ball Organising Committee

In recognition of: the resilience, resourcefulness and dedication to tradition shown by the Sligo SIMI Members and their remarkable BEN Ball Organising Committee.



The presentation of the SIMI Outstanding Achievement Award (l-r): Gerry Caffrey President, SIMI; Art Nicholson and Mary O'Dwyer, Members of Sligo Centre and BEN Organising Committee; and Dave Watson, Head of Castrol Professional in Ireland.

Bodyshop of the Year

Frank Byrnes Autobody Repairs

In recognition of: its passion for excellence across all its operations – including its investment in state-of-the-art customer facilities and leading edge technologies – driven by a pragmatic business ethos based on partnership with customers, employees, suppliers and its local community.



The presentation of the Bodyshop of the Year Award (l-r): Gerry Caffrey, President, SIMI; Frank Byrnes, Managing Director, Frank Byrnes Ltd, Oranmore, Co. Galway; Dave Watson, Head of Castrol Professional in Ireland; and Alan Nolan, Director General, SIMI.

Independent Retailer of the Year

Motability Ireland

In recognition of: its effective response to an underserved customer demographic through sustained investment in all aspects of its business, including R&D and manufacturing; its development of innovative new customer services; and its prudent financial management that made 2011 one of its most successful years since its establishment in 1999.



The presentation of the Independent Retailer of the Year Award (l-r): Gerry Caffrey President, SIMI; Malachy McElmeel, Managing Director, Motability Ireland, Ashbourne, Co Meath; Dave Watson, Head of Castrol Professional in Ireland; and Alan Nolan, Director General, SIMI.

Membership services update



Stephen Ussher,
Membership
Services'
Executive, SIMI.



Teresa Noone
Communications'
Executive, SIMI.

Membership service 'on the road'

A decision was taken in 2010 to return to basics regarding the Society's communication with Members and this was vindicated by the success of our countrywide, on-site Member visits. The past two years have seen SIMI Membership Services' Executive Stephen Ussher calling to Members in every Membership sector, in every county in the country. Informed by Stephen's broad industry knowledge base, these on-site meetings have been vital in updating Members on the issues being dealt with by the SIMI as well as advising them how best to utilise their Membership in order to maximise return on the annual subscription. Over this period, Members have been very willing to give SIMI executives the time to sit down and share their views on key issues. Feedback from Members from these visits has been positive and extremely useful in helping the SIMI Executive to keep a close relationship with Members and to remain fully briefed on their concerns. This traditional approach has been well received, so much so that the SIMI Management Board has agreed that increased resources should be put into this area of Membership support and, in the last few months, the Society's Communications' Executive, Teresa Noone, has taken on some of this workload and commenced member visits. This focus will continue into the rest of 2012 and 2013. Allied to this one-to-one direct communication programme is the Centre Structure, which hosts local AGMs every year. When the Society's Annual General Meeting

takes place on May 22, 2012, every centre will have held at least two meetings in the last 12 months. Stephen and Teresa are always on hand to visit your premises to try to assist with any issue you may have, so we would urge all Members to continue to avail of this valued service.

Communicating with our Members

Most notably in the last two years, SIMI's strategic communications initiatives have stepped up a gear and, with more and more Members online, we are finding that the quickest and most cost-effective way of communicating information of all sorts with our Members is by Email, E-zines, via text messages and online. Our Newsletter continues to be a vital way of keeping Members up to date with Industry news and fewer Members are opting to receive this news by post, with the vast majority receiving it by email. In addition, Irish Motor Management magazine, published by IFP Media, continues to be the public voice of the Industry and highlights issues of serious interest to SIMI Members. A recent addition to the magazine is that of the 'Members Update' section in which Teresa Noone and Stephen Ussher give an account of some of the member visits they carried out in the previous two months. This new section is proving very popular as it gives Members a real sense of key issues on the ground as well as providing countrywide coverage for those who take part. An online version of the magazine, www.irishmotormanagement.com, is proving popular with Members. The Society's website,

www.simi.ie, contains a password-protected Members-only section where vital business information can be accessed. It also provides an information source for the public and media. The site's homepage provides up-to-date industry news as well as the latest training courses available to Members throughout the country. Perhaps the biggest change to communication for both the Society and Members alike is the use of Social Media over the past year. Led internally by the Society's Press Officer, Suzanne Sheridan, the Society uses Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other online communications tools to engage with Members, the media and the public about events, news, opinions and a lot more. Be sure to follow us online to keep up to date with all things social. This has proved popular among Members, so much so that many of them have now started using social media themselves as a business tool and Suzanne has been available to assist Members with their social media developments.

Training

In response to Members' needs in the economic downturn, the Society has streamlined its Training Services and negotiated reduced costs from suppliers to allow delivery to Members of appropriate courses on a cost-effective basis. Last year saw the running of 'Bite-Size' Training Courses, which were three half-day seminars at a reduced cost that looked at three different aspects of car retailing. This was followed up in 2012 by full-day courses on Sales, Servicing, Customer Service and Managing Change, again delivered



at competitive delegate fees. The popular VAT Training Courses continue to attract great interest and these are now run as seminars, allowing for increased numbers and associated reduced delegate fees, without diluting the quality of content. Consumer Credit CPD Training, a statutory requirement for many Members selling finance, was again run on a seminar basis and slightly reduced hours, with Members availing of reduced fees. VTN Commercial Vehicle Tester Training remained the responsibility of the Society for 2011 and over 400 testers attended the CPD Training last autumn in respect of both Light and Heavy Commercial Vehicles.

Statistics Service

The Society's Statistics Service has undergone significant change in the last two years, with the upgraded system, hosted on **beepbeep.ie**, better servicing the needs of Members, the media and the public. The SIMI's service is the only official National Motor Industry source of vehicle statistics. It has been designed to be a one-stop shop for all Motor Industry information. Detailed statistics will be updated monthly and they can be accessed at www.beepbeep.ie/stats, while Members can access more detailed statistics information through their password protected log-in. Logged-in Members have access to more detailed data that allows them to analyse vehicle registrations by make, model,

segment, county, body type, fuel type, CO2, engine type and colour. In the first quarter of 2012, the Society added Commercial Vehicles, both LCVs and HGVs, to this service, so now the level of easy-to-use information and much of the more detailed facts and figures are also available for Commercial Vehicles. The SIMI also provides members with ad hoc statistical reports on demand. The Society is dedicated to constantly improving its Statistics Service, and the upgrade process is ongoing in order to provide members with the best possible management information.

SIMI logo enhances standards

For consumers, the SIMI Logo has long been a symbol of quality; somewhere they can buy their car or have their vehicle serviced or repaired with a high degree of confidence. The SIMI Logo and Code of Ethics are strictly for the use of Members only and the Logo clearly distinguishes Members as professional motor industry businesses, operating to the highest ethical standards. The bedrock of this is the Society's Investigation and Complaints Service. 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, damaging and time-consuming legal proceedings. Complaints processed in 2011 represented a 9% decrease

in comparison to those received in 2010. A total of 246 complaints were registered, of which 122 (49%) were resolved through the Society's mediatory efforts. A quick positive reaction or simple explanatory letter from the garage often resolves a complaint. The 246 complaints were registered by customers of 149 member companies.

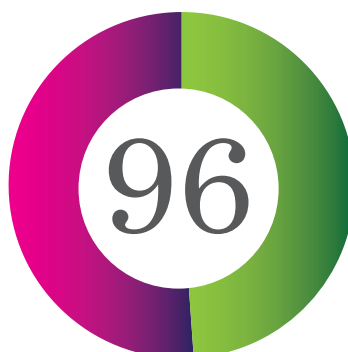
In 2011, 96 complaints (39% of the total processed) were referred to the SIMI Retail Motor Industry Standards Tribunal. The Tribunal is chaired by an Independent Chairman and includes Industry and Consumer representation. Of the 96 cases, 59% referred to the Tribunal resulted in a refund, free repair or compensation being paid to the customer and 41% were either rejected as unreasonable or the Tribunal found that the garages' offers to resolve the complaints were considered reasonable in the circumstances.

In 2011, the Society's NEC revised the Society's Membership rules with a view to emphasising the member's commitment to high standards. Under the new rule adopted by the NEC, failure to implement the recommendations of the SIMI Retail Motor Industry Standards Tribunal within 21 days will be considered a breach of the Rules of the Society and will be grounds for determination of Membership.

Cases referred to the SIMI Retail Motor Industry Standards Tribunal in 2011

59%

Resulted in a refund, free repair or compensation being paid to the customer.



41%

Rejected as unreasonable or the Tribunal found that the garages' offers to resolve the complaints were considered reasonable in the circumstances.

Free Services for our Members



As part of the subscription, Members receive services and advice at no cost, vital services which otherwise would be difficult to access and then only at significant additional costs to businesses.

Advice provided to Members includes:

Human Resources and Industrial Relations

In the challenging times for the Industry over the last three years, there has been a significant increase in the number of calls to the SIMI HR Service from Members in need of advice and assistance. The main issues of concern that the service has dealt with have been in relation to the restructuring of businesses and the resulting need to reduce staff levels, implement pay cuts or reduce working hours. The rise in the numbers of cases taken by former employees against Members on the grounds of Unfair Dismissal, Unfair Selection for Redundancy and in relation to non-supply of written terms of employment, appears to be continuing. The Society has continued to advise and represent Members at the Labour Relations Commission, Employment Appeals Tribunal

and Rights Commissioner hearings. The HR Service continues to provide Members with advice on all aspects of compliance with Employment Law, Health and Safety Legislation and Human Resource management. Through the SIMI Newsletters, website and the Irish Motor Management magazine, the Society will continue to provide updates to Members on relevant changes or developments in Employment regulations. Advice is always given in confidence, whether by telephone, email or in person on-site.

VAT and VRT advice

The Society offers Members Industry specialist advice on taxation matters which are specific to the Motor Industry. The level of queries on VAT and VRT remain high, particularly due to the move to the VAT margin scheme and the associated complications, and in recent months, there has been an increasing number of queries related to imported used vehicles. On VRT, developments in EU law will see changes in the coming months to the requirements on registering Special Purpose Vehicles (including the Disabled Driver Scheme) and incomplete vehicles.

The Society keeps in contact with Revenue, the RSA and the NSAI on these issues, seeking to find solutions in advance of problems actually arising.

Social media advice

A service that has become increasingly popular is the free One-to-One Social Media training for Members. Designed to equip Members with the practical knowledge and advice needed to kick-start a Social Media presence. This training is being delivered by the Society's Press Officer, Suzanne Sheridan, who has already brought the Society's own use of social media up to date. This training is for individuals or companies who either have never used Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and email marketing or those who may have some knowledge about Social Media but may need guidance. More and more Irish businesses are taking advantage of Social Media to communicate with their customers more effectively at a very low cost and are seeing the immediate pay-off.

Looking forward to 2013

The Society's continued focus in the lead-up to 2013 will be to assist in creating the best possible business environment for Members in the current economic climate, whether through enhanced business services and advice or through lobbying and public relations. Perhaps the biggest challenge for the next 12 months will be the proposed changes to the VRT and Road Tax systems scheduled for January next. The Society, following detailed consultation with Vehicle Importer, Franchise and Independent Retailer Committees, already furnished a robust, detailed Submission to the Departments of Finance and Environment and has already held meetings with Government Departments under whose remit these taxation headings fall. Part of this Submission includes our proposed review of the Number Plate System.

The Society's VTN Members will continue their engagement with the RSA and PwC over the transformation of Commercial Vehicle Testing. The recent publication of the RSA (Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness) Bill 2012 signals that the first stage of this project is nearing completion and the Society will focus on assisting VTN Members during this transition. As ever, the Society will continue to offer the best specialist advice to Members as part of their Membership, always looking to new areas where the Society's executives can lend their expertise. The SIMI Logo and brand is a symbol to consumers of high quality, a place where they can expect the highest ethical practices – the Society's PR will continue to focus on this issue over the next 12 months. From a Members' viewpoint this PR approach will be important as we roll-out our 'RECI style' Servicing Campaign aimed at encouraging motorists to have their vehicles serviced and repaired in SIMI garages. The focus on meeting Members in their own premises will be enhanced in the coming year, with additional resources being applied here, which will continue the strong work in this area over the last two years.



The SIMI logo and brand is the signal to consumers of high quality and of a business where they can expect the highest ethical practices.

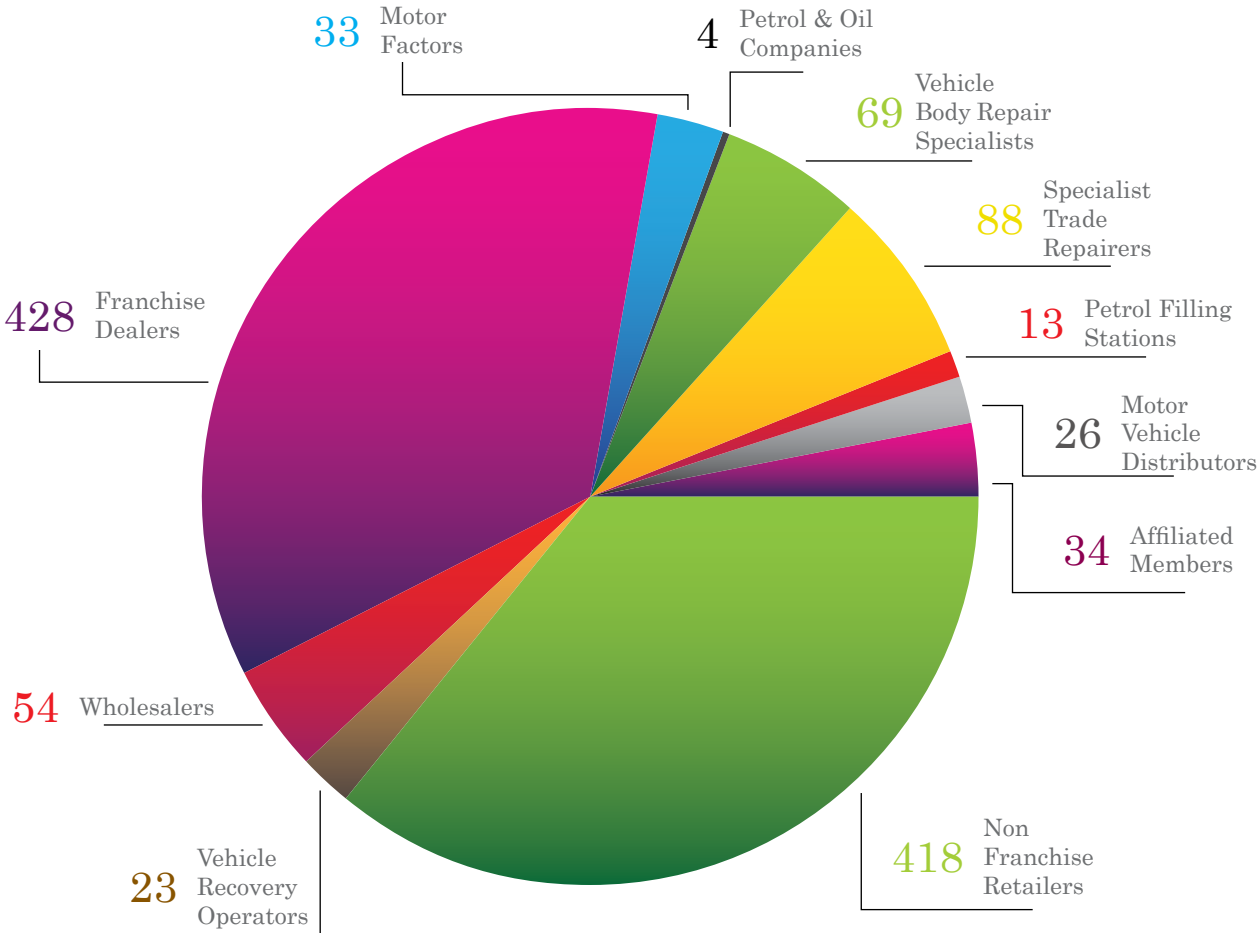
Members by numbers

Membership & Financial Position

At the end of the calendar year 2011, the total number of Members was 1,190, a decrease of 21 on the previous year. The Society's Membership has been impacted by the negative economic climate, but the reduction in 2011 was much smaller than the previous two years. A number of Members have reactivated their Membership since the Society's year-end of December 31, 2011.

1,190 Total Membership

Breakdown of membership by category – Dec 31, 2011



Due to the current economic climate and the reduction in Membership, the financial accounts of the Society show an operating deficit. The level of deficit has been reducing over the last three years and the Society's balance sheet and reserves continue to be strong. The Society is grateful for the time and effort provided by Honorary Treasurer, James Brooks, in overseeing the financial position of the Society during the last 12 months. The last year also saw the promotion of the Society's Finance Director Brian Cooke to the position of Deputy Director General.

The year in short

New car sales in 2011 consolidated the gains of 2010, and showed an increase over 2010 of 1,441 or 1.62%. This was despite the expiry of Scrappage in June 2011. However, new car sales in Q1 2012 show a decrease of 4.38% on the same period of 2011.

New Car Sales 2010	88,486
New Car Sales 2011	89,927
New Cars Sales Q1 2011	47,966
New Cars Sales Q1 2012	45,866



Sales of Light Commercial Vehicles

showed an increase on 2010 of 8.4%, but they continue to be weak reflecting the problems of the business community. This modest increase has continued into Q1 of 2012.

New LCV Sales 2010	10,440
New LCV Sales 2011	11,317
New LCV Sales Q1 2011	4,938
New LCV Sales Q1 2012	5,029



Sales of Heavy Goods Vehicles remained weak in 2011, with an increase of 99 on 2010.

New HGV Sales 2010	1,100
New HGV Sales 2011	1,199
New HGV Sales Q1 2011	401
New HGV Sales Q1 2012	509

CO₂ Emissions

Customers continue to be environmentally focused, with more and more customers opting for the two lower CO₂ Bands in 2011, with 42% opting for Band A cars and 48% opting for Band B cars, meaning 90% of new cars sold in Ireland in 2011 were in the two lowest Bands. This compared to 35% (Band A) and 45% (Band B), or 80%, in 2010. This has seen the average CO₂ emissions for new cars fall from 133 g/km in 2010 to 128 g/km in 2011. This downward trend has continued into Q1 2012, with over 92% of cars registered now in Bands A & B.

Government Revenues

Helped by the increase in new car sales and by increased duties on fuel, Government Revenues from the motorist rose again in 2011, to over €4.4bn. They continue to account for over one quarter of all Indirect Taxation and for 13% of the total tax take for the Exchequer. Despite this burden, further tax increases in the form of VAT and carbon taxes in December 2011's Budget will increase the relative take from the motorist.

Fuel type

Market share of Diesel Cars increased again in 2011, with diesel cars accounting for 71% of the new car market, up from 64% in 2010.

The year in pictures...

1 - Alan Lyons, newly elected Deputy President, handing over the Honorary Treasurer's pin to James Brooks at the SIMI AGM in 2011.



1

2 - Outgoing President Eddie Murphy presenting the Presidential Chain of Office to newly elected President Gerry Caffrey at the SIMI AGM in 2011.



2

3 - Pictured at an NEC meeting in 2011 (l-r): Alan Nolan, Director General, SIMI and Gerry Caffrey, President, SIMI.



3

4 - Pictured at the 40th annual Sligo BEN Ball were (l-r): Gerry Moore, President, Sligo Chamber of Commerce; Rosaleen O'Grady, Lord Mayor of Sligo; and Gerry Caffrey, President SIMI.



4

5 - Pictured attending one of the series of SIMI Vehicle Body Repair Specialist Regional Meetings, which took place around the country early in 2012, were: Liam Denning, Dennings Cars; Joe Donnelly Crofton Motors; and Aubrey Armstrong, Chairman, VBRS and Proprietor of Armstrong Autobody Crash Repairs.



5



6

6 - SIMI President Gerry Caffrey (left) is pictured putting up the SIMI wall sign with the help of Stephen Ussher, SIMI Membership Services Executive.

7 - SIMI President Gerry Caffrey at the launch of SIMI's joint campaign with the Irish Blood Transfusion Service to encourage more people to come forward to give blood.

8 - Some of Drogheda's leading car dealers who took part in the highly successful Drogheda Motor Show in March 2012.

9 - SIMI President Gerry Caffrey addresses the SIMI National Franchise Dealer Conference in 2011.



7



8



9



10



11

10 - Speaking to the 500 guests at this year's annual dinner, the 59th in SIMI's history, President Gerry Caffrey warned about the dangers presented by the government's planned hikes in road tax and urged reform of the registration plate system.

11 - Seated at the top table at the SIMI VTN Annual Conference and AGM in 2011 were (l-r): Yvonne Sliney, Careers and Training Executive, SIMI; Peter Vahey, Vehicle Testers Committee; Charlie Rogers, Chairman, Vehicle Testers Committee; and Alan Nolan, Director General, SIMI.

SIMI Management Board 2011/2012



Gerry Caffrey
President
Managing Director
Gerry Caffrey Motors Ltd



Alan Lyons
Deputy President
Managing Director
Auto Diesel Electric Ltd



James Brooks
Honorary Treasurer
Managing Director
Kia Motors Ireland



Eddie Murphy
Immediate Past President
Managing Director/
Chairman
Henry Ford & Son Ltd



Jonathan Meade
Chairman Franchise
Committee
Managing Director
Hutton & Meade



Steve Tormey
Chairman Vehicle Importers/
Distributors Committee
Deputy Managing Director/
Director for Sales and
Marketing
Toyota Ireland



Alan Greene
Chairman Wholesalers
Committee
Divisional Manager
Origo
Automotive Division



Chris Fleming
Chairman Independent
Retailers Committee
Managing Director
Chris Fleming Cars



Aubrey Armstrong
Chairman VBRS Committee
Proprietor
Armstrong Body Repairs



Hugh Quigley
Franchise Committee
Dealer Principal
Autostation Ltd



Dr Frank Bergin
Petrol/Oil Companies' Section
Chief Operations Officer
Topaz Energy Ltd.



Alan Nolan
Director General
SIMI

SIMI National Executive Council 2011/2012

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Dublin 10

James Brooks

Honorary Treasurer
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Calmount Rd
Dublin 12

Eddie Murphy

Immediate Past President
SIMI
Henry Ford & Son (Sales)
Ltd
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Boreenmanna Rd
Cork

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Michael Howe

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Chairman Wholesalers'
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Magna Business Park
Citywest
Dublin 24

Louis O'Hanlon

Past President SIMI
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Camac Close, Emmet Rd
Inchicore Dublin 8

Brian Fanning

Serfac Ltd
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Dublin 24

Fergus Murphy

Hella Ireland Ltd
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Woodford Business Park
Santry
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Paul Warren

Strongline Autoparts
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Tallaght
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Greg Howard

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Park
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Chris Fleming

Chairman Independent
Retailers' Committee
Chris Fleming Cars
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High Precision Motors
Products Ltd
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Tullow
Co. Carlow

Cavan**Cathal O'Reilly**

Jacksons Garage Cavan
Ltd
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Poles
Co. Cavan

Cork**Bob Clarke**

Bandon Motors
Clonakilty
Co. Cork

Dublin**Hugh Quigley**

Autostation
40 Heather Rd
Sandyford Business Estate
Dublin 18

Michael Tynan

Michael Tynan Motors
Newlands Cross
Dublin 22

Peter Mongey

Mongey Plunkett Motors
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Finglas
Dublin 11

Tom Murphy

Murphy & Gunn Ltd
Rathgar Ave
Rathgar
Dublin 6

Joe Clarke

Westbrook Motors
Parnell St
Dublin 1

Galway**James McCormack**

Western Motors
Ballybrit
Galway

Kilkenny**Seamus Farrell**

Railway Garage
Castlecomer
Co. Kilkenny

Limerick**Noel Daly**

Past President SIMI
O'Mara Motors (Limerick)
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Limerick

Longford**Frank Kane**

Longford Motors
Strokestown Rd
Longford

Louth**Eamon McCartan**

Rice & Roddy
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Dundalk
Co. Louth

Monaghan**John Bogue**

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Co. Mayo

Kevin Connolly

Kevin Connolly Car Sales
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Tipperary**Gerry Pierse**

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Tipperary Town

Joan Buckley

Liam Buckley Car Sales
Moneygall
Co. Tipperary

Brian Mordaunt Jnr

Brian Mordaunt & Sons
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Co. Westmeath

Wexford**Cormac O'Leary**

O'Learys Garage
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Enniscorthy Co. Wexford

Wendy O'Rourke

Ferrybank Motors
(Wexford) Ltd
Ferrybank Co. Wexford

Mark Boggan

Hugh Boggan Motors
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Gorey
Co. Wexford.

VBRS' SECTION**Aubrey Armstrong**

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Nigel Pratt

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Carlow

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Distributors' Committee
DAF Distributors
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COMMITTEE****Charlie Rogers**

Chairman Vehicle Testers'
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Rolor Commercials
Slieverue
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REPAIRERS'
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TION**

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Committee
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Sharavogue
Kilmacanogue
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Brian Murphy
Eugene Cranley

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Co. Westmeath

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