

SIMI Annual Report

2023-2024





Annual Report

2023-2024

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Mission Statement

SIMI is the national representative body for the Motor Industry in Ireland and is dedicated to:

- Driving a business environment that supports Industry growth
- Implementing consistently high standards among members
- Delivering quality information and added-value services to members
- Communicating effectively with members and being the voice of the Motor Industry

A Review of the Year

2023

MOTOR INDUSTRY APPOINTS NEW SIMI PRESIDENT

Paddy Magee, was elected President of the Society of the Irish Motor Industry at the organisation's AGM held in the Killashee Hotel, Naas, Co. Kildare on the May 26, 2023.



MAY



JUNE

"The Motor Industry remains fully committed to working with Government to help achieve their Climate Action Targets"

Paddy Magee, SIMI President

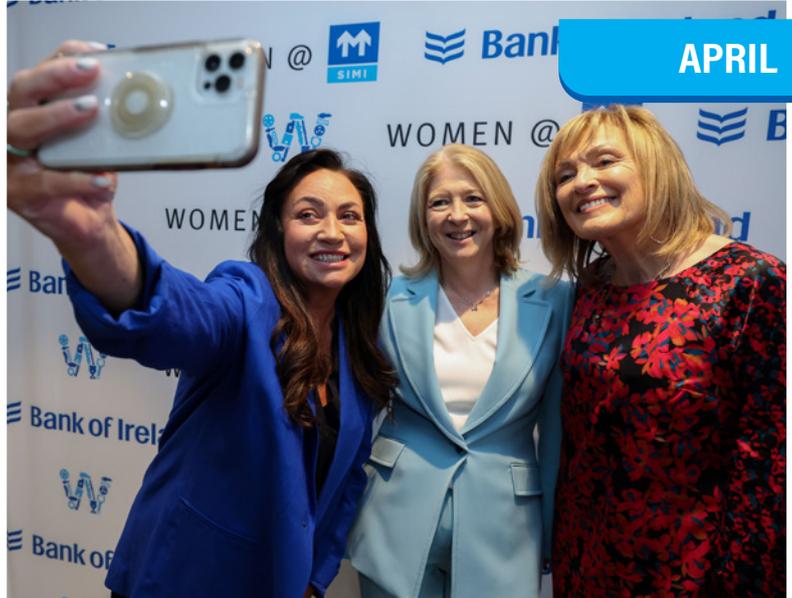
SIMI TRAINING | INDUSTRY NEWS | THE ROAD TO ZERO EMISSIONS

JULY

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH

232 - C - 12345

IRL



APRIL

WOMEN@SIMI

SIMI hosted its 8th annual Women@SIMI event in conjunction with its sponsor Bank of Ireland, in the Conrad Hotel Dublin 2. The event was attended by over 170 professional women from a variety of different sectors within the Motor Industry in Ireland. Delivering an impressive panel of guest speakers, Mary Kennedy, Master of Ceremonies (pictured above, right) welcomed Louise Grubb CEO of Trivium Vet (centre), a serial life science entrepreneur, with a track record in founding successful businesses, along with Norah Casey, award winning TV and broadcast journalist, entrepreneur, and human rights campaigner.

AUGUST



SIMI REGIONAL MEETINGS

In August, SIMI held several regional member meetings in Cork, Kilkenny, Westmeath, Sligo and Dublin. The meetings covered a range of topics such as the HMRC Second-hand Motor Vehicle Payment Scheme, Budget 2024, Technicians & Apprenticeships and much more.

SEPTEMBER



BUDGET 2024 INVEST NOW: SIMI CALLS FOR EXTENSION OF EV INCENTIVES AND INVESTMENT IN CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE

As part of our Budget lobby campaign SIMI called for the current level of EV supports to continue for the next three years, no VRT or Road Tax increases, and investment in the national charging infrastructure to stay ahead of demand, providing consumers with confidence in the EV project. SIMI held a Pre-Budget Briefing in Buswells Hotel, on Wednesday 13th and 27th September where we meet with TDs, Senators and Ministers to outline the Industry's requirements in Budget 2024.



WORLDSKILLS IRELAND 2023

More than 28,000 students descended upon the RDS Simonscourt in Ballsbridge for a three-day Worldskills Ireland event in September. SIMI was delighted to sponsor the Automotive & Heavy Vehicle Category once more and support the skills competitions within Worldskills Ireland, as this provides the opportunity for our technicians to compete on a world stage. The presence of the impressive Motor Village, supported by SIMI, VWGI, KIA, Toyota, Independent Motor Sector, Volvo, Gowan Auto, Scania and MSL, in the Careers Hall provided students, parents and career guidance teachers an opportunity to speak directly with Industry to obtain information on how to become an apprentice, and on the career paths that can follow.



Adlan Chebli and Sophie Mulligan representing SIMI at Worldskills.



Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD and Colin Walsh, Industrial Relations Manager SIMI.

SIMI Skillnet
Management Development
 SIMI Skillnet
 Automotive Retail
 Management Programme

Drive your Career Forward
 in the Irish Motor Industry

2023/2024 SIMI SKILLNET AUTOMOTIVE RETAIL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

SIMI Skillnet announced that Navigate Solutions Ireland and Optimum Ltd would deliver the 2023/2024 Automotive Retail Management Programme, on behalf of SIMI Skillnet. This bespoke Management Development training programme has been specifically designed for Motor Industry Managers who may not have specific managerial qualifications and is aimed at enhancing their existing skills and competencies to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive market.

NEW CAR REGISTRATIONS -10.3% IN SEPTEMBER; GOVERNMENT MUST CONTINUE EV SUPPORTS IN BUDGET 2024

SIMI WELCOMES SUPPORT FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN BUDGET 2024

OCTOBER 10 2023 "SIMI welcomes the measures announced in today's Budget, in particular the extension of the current VRT and Benefit-In-Kind (BIK) reliefs for Electric Vehicles. In addition, the retention of the current VRT regime allied with the EV reliefs provides stability and clarity to the Motor Industry and motorists at a time of great uncertainty. The EV supports underline the Government's commitment towards the electrification of the national fleet, which is of critical importance as we strive to meet our emissions' reduction goals. We still await clarification of the ongoing investment in both the charging infrastructure and the SEAL purchase grants, which are also vital to the ongoing success of the EV project."



Pictured (l-r) Brian Cooke, Director General SIMI; Rowena Dooley, Dealer Principal Dooley Motors, Enda Conefrey, Dealer Principal Brady's Dublin; Jim Power, Economist; Aoife O'Grady, Head of Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland; Greg Lynch, AIB Finance & Leasing; Dr Andrew Tongue, Research Director of ICDP; Colm O'Neill, AIB Finance & Leasing; and Ivan Yates MC.

SIMI FRANCHISE NETWORK EVENT

SIMI Franchise Network Event in partnership with our sponsor AIB Finance and Leasing, was held on Wednesday November 1, 2023 at The Iveagh Gardens Hotel, Dublin 2. Our guest speakers shared their thoughts and views on a range of Industry topics, including EVs, the economy, cyber security, sustainability, future market outlook and much more. The event provided numerous significant insights.

SIMI/VTN ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Pic (L-R) Jonathan Meade, SIMI Deputy President, Michael Nolan, SIMI VTN Chairman / Nolan Motors, Yvonne Sliney SIMI, Jim Power, Charlie Rogers SIMI.

The SIMI/VTN Annual Conference was held Monday, November 20, 2023, at the Killashee Hotel in Co. Kildare. The event featured a series of educational presentations by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) team, focusing on the Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Test (CVRT) system and its ongoing and forthcoming enhancements. The conference welcomed esteemed guest speakers, including economist Jim Power, Colm Hough from The AA Ireland, and Matthew Austin, a partner at Hayes Solicitors, who all shared their valuable insights.



Pictured at the announcement (l-r): Colin Walsh, Industrial Relations Manager, SIMI; Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris, TD; and Emma Mitchell, Operations' Director & Company Secretary, SIMI.

SIMI WELCOMES THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DEDICATED NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLE SKILLS

This positive development is a result of the collaborative approach that is being taken by the Government, SOLAS, the ETBs, the Industry and Stakeholders to address the current and future skills needed across the Sector. Electric vehicles (EVs) may look similar to petrol and diesel vehicles from the outside, under the bonnet they are very different and require a further developed skillset and much greater safety awareness. SOLAS and the Industry currently offer comprehensive electric vehicle training. The development of a national centre will accelerate the number of qualified technicians available to work safely on electric vehicles, which will go a long way to meet the skills needs for e-mobility into the future.



2024

JANUARY

**121,850 NEW CAR REGISTRATIONS IN 2023;
ELECTRIC CARS UP 45%**

Total new car registrations for 2023, finished at 121,850, +16% on 2022 (105,398) and up 4% on 2019 (117,109). A total of 22,789 new electric cars were registered in 2023, an increase on the 15,678 registrations seen in 2022 (+45.4%). New Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) registrations in 2023 saw an increase of 25.1% (29,403) compared to 2022 (23,510) and a 16.1% increase on 2019 (25,336). While New Heavy Commercial Vehicle registrations (HGV) saw an increase of 20.4% (2,655) in comparison to 2022 (2,205) and 19.9% on 2019 (2,214).



RTÉ NEWS

January 17, 2024, Will Goodbody, Business Editor, interviewed Brian Cooke Director General SIMI, on the new car market, trends and electric vehicles.

TECHNICIANS REMOVED FROM INELIGIBLE LIST OF OCCUPATIONS

SIMI has taken several approaches to address the difficulty faced by members in sourcing and retaining qualified technicians. One such approach was by making an application to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to have Technicians and HGV Mechanics removed from the ineligible list of occupations and added to the Critical Skills list of occupations.

SIMI made its application in August and engaged with the Department throughout and we are pleased to announce that our application has been successful, and Motor Technicians, HGV Mechanics and Vehicle Body Repairers have been removed from the ineligible occupations list and can apply for employment under a general work permit.

FEBRUARY

JANUARY NEW CAR REGISTRATIONS UP 15%

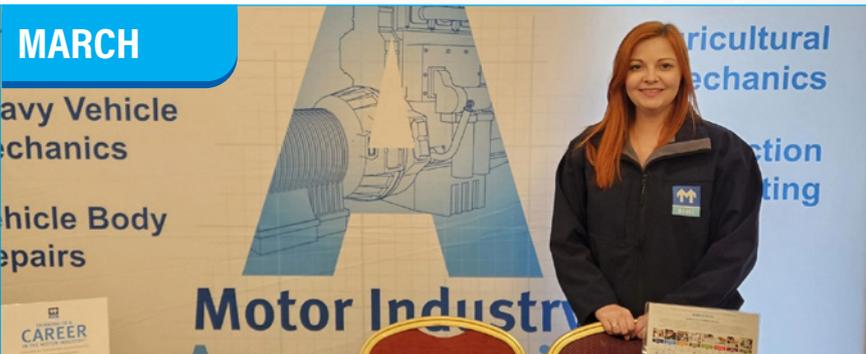


SIMI ANNUAL DINNER & IRISH MOTOR INDUSTRY AWARDS

The Society's Annual Dinner, which also included the SIMI Irish Motor Industry Awards, was held on Thursday, February 22, 2024, at the Clayton Hotel in Dublin. The event was sponsored by Bank of Ireland and featured Simon Delaney as the master of ceremonies. He presented the awards to an audience of more than 700 prominent figures from the Motor Industry.

MARCH

Heavy Vehicle Mechanics
Vehicle Body Repairs



Sabrina Forsyth, Careers & Data Manager, SIMI.

APPRENTICESHIP expo 21.03.24
9.30am - 4pm
County Meath Chamber
www.apprenticeshipexpo.ie
knightsbrook hotel, trim

APPRENTICESHIP EXPO 2024

SIMI represented the Motor Industry at the County Meath Chamber Apprenticeship Expo 2024. The next generation of apprentices gained valuable industry insights and learned about the opportunities available in the automotive industry.



APRIL

BRIAN COOKE
Director General, SIMI

RTÉ NEWS

April 10, 2024, Joe Mag Raollaigh RTÉ Consumer Affairs Correspondent interviews Brian Cooke Director General SIMI on the electric vehicle market and what incentives are needed to help with sales.

FRANCHISE & STAKEHOLDER FORUM

The Franchise & Stakeholder Forum took place on Thursday April 18 in The Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny, with thanks to our partners AIB Finance & Leasing. Our guest speakers shared their valuable contributions on various industry subjects, including electric vehicles, economic trends, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and future market predictions.



Pictured (l-r) Brian Cooke Director General SIMI, Ivan Yates MC, Niall Murphy AIB Finance & Leasing, Philip O'Brien AI Expert Walton Institute, Steve Young CEO ICDP, Jim Power Economist, Enda Conefrey Dealer Principal Brady's Dublin. (Front row) Tom Cullen SIMI, Aoife O'Grady Head of Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland, Ronan Flood, Managing Director Kia Motors Ireland.

The Society of the Irish Motor Industry is running a competition highlighting the benefits of an automotive apprenticeship.

€3,000
Computers for School Competition
Motor Industry Apprenticeships

We're offering 3 lucky secondary school students the chance to win a pair of Beats Studio Buds worth €180 and a €1,000 computer voucher.

➔ Know a student? Make sure they head over to www.simi.ie/en/schools-competition for their chance to win.
Closing Date: 1st May 2024

The competition is open to all secondary school students so let your local school know.

The questions that will be asked on the website are:

1. What are the 5 types of apprenticeships you can specialise in?
2. Can you list 3 advantages of an apprenticeship in the Motor Industry?
3. How long does it take to complete an apprenticeship?
4. What qualification do you receive when you complete an apprenticeship?
5. Where can you find out more information on Motor Industry apprenticeships?

SIMI LAUNCHES €3,000 COMPUTERS FOR SCHOOLS COMPETITION

SIMI launched its €3,000 Computers for Schools Competition, running from April 8 to May 1. to the 1st of May. The competition aims to highlight apprenticeship opportunities in the motor industry and guide students on starting an apprenticeship. To enter, students simply need to watch a short video on our website, simi.ie, and answer a few related questions.

Briefing Document

REGULATIONS FOR A.I AND SAMPLE POLICY

Many members use artificial intelligence (AI) as part of their business, and many are considering its use. SIMI have created a guidance note and sample internal policy to assist members consider the legal responsibilities that come with use of this ever-developing technology and amend policies to ensure compliance with relevant regulations.

Membership Services



SIMI provides a wide variety of business services and cost-saving schemes to Members.

Services to members:

- Information and advice on VAT, VRT and other Motor Industry taxation issues
- Advice on all issues in relation to staff management, recruitment, disciplinary procedures, employee handbooks, safety statements
- Legal advice on issues in relation to the handling and resolving of customer complaints
- Vehicle invoice order form books for retail and trade sales
- Vehicle statistical service
- Regular communication online, by email, weekly e-news, bi-monthly magazine and through our website and our members' portal on issues affecting the Motor Industry
- National and Regional seminars/conferences which give members the opportunity to network with other Industry professionals
- Motor Industry specific training courses
- Use and promotion of the SIMI logo to enhance the professionalism of the industry

Cost Savings:

- Motor Trade Group Insurance Scheme
- BeepBeep.ie, which also includes the Car History Check programme

SIMI Representing You:

- Access to Government through the Society to voice the opinions of the Industry
- Representing the different sectoral interests through dedicated committees
- Lobbying on behalf of the Industry to create a better economic and legislative climate for Member businesses

SIMI Management Board



PADDY MAGEE
PRESIDENT



JONATHAN MEADE
DEPUTY PRESIDENT



RONAN FLOOD
HONORARY TREASURER



ANTONIA HENDRON
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT



ENDA CONEFREY
CHAIRPERSON, FRANCHISE
COMMITTEE



DAVID RANGLES
FRANCHISE COMMITTEE



GILLIAN FANNING
CHAIRPERSON WHOLESALERS'
COMMITTEE & PAST PRESIDENT



ANNE MARIE MURTAGH
CHAIRPERSON, INDEPENDENT SALES
AND SERVICE COMMITTEE



LIAM DENNING
CHAIRPERSON, VBRS COMMITTEE



MARK WOODS
PETROL/OIL COMPANIES' SECTOR



BRIAN COOKE
DIRECTOR GENERAL

SIMI National Executive Council 2023-2024

HONORARY OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Paddy Magee

DEPUTY PRESIDENT

Jonathan Meade

HONORARY TREASURER

Ronan Flood

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT SIMI

Antonia Hendron

VEHICLE IMPORTERS'/DISTRIBUTORS' SECTION

Pierre Boutin

Volkswagen Group Ireland Ltd
Block C
Liffey Valley Office Campus
Liffey Valley
Dublin 22

Steve Tormey

Toyota Ireland
Toyota House,
Killeen Road
Dublin 12

Helen Westby

BMW Group Ireland
Swift Square
Santry Demesne
Dublin 9

Eddie Kavanagh

OHM Group
Baldonnell Business Park
Dublin 22

Stephen Gleeson

Hyundai Cars Ireland
Hyundai House
John F Kennedy Drive
Naas Rd
Dublin 12

James McCarthy/ Seamus Morgan

Nissan Ireland
Cedar House
Park West Business Park
Nangor Road, Dublin 12

Alan Cowley

Volvo Cars Ireland
Killakee House
The Square, Tallaght
Dublin 24

Ciaran Kinahan/Siobhan Shaw

Motor Distributors Ltd
Naas Road, Dublin 12

Des Cannon

Gowan Distributors
2007 Orchard Avenue, Citywest
Business Campus D24RW52

WHOLESALERS' SECTION

CHAIRPERSON WHOLESALERS' COMMITTEE

Gillian Fanning

Serfac Limited
Hilary House
Belgard Road,
Dublin 24

Brian Dennis

Qualvecom
Unit A1
Knockmitten
Western Industrial Estate
Dublin 12

Sean Holland

Finol Oils Ltd
3 Stannaway Drive
Crumlin, Dublin 12

Niall Murray

Tractamotors Ltd
Dublin Road
Cavan, Co Cavan

Tom Dennigan

Continental Tyre Group Ltd
Clyde Lodge,
15 Clyde Road, Dublin 4

RETAILERS' SECTION

CHAIRPERSON INDEPENDENT SALES AND SERVICE COMMITTEE

Annemarie Murtagh

MF Auto Services
Deansgrange Road
Blackrock, Co Dublin

CHAIRPERSON FRANCHISE COMMITTEE

Enda Conefrey

Braday's Dublin Ltd
Old Navan Road
Castleknock, Dublin 15

CARLOW

Rowena Dooley

Dooley Motors Ltd
Sleaty Roundabout, Carlow

CAVAN

Cathal O'Reilly

Auto Tech Bodyshop Ltd
Unit 1 Poles Business Park
Poles, Co Cavan

Tómas Brady

Brady's Cavan
Dublin Road
Cavan, Co Cavan

Padraig Brady

Brady's Arva Ltd
Arva, Co Cavan

CORK

Gerard O'Sullivan

Ardfallen Motor Care
Ballycurreen Industrial Estate
Kinsale Road, Co Cork

James Foley

Cavanagh's of Charleville
Limerick Road
Charleville, Co Cork

Bob Clarke

Bandon Motors
Clonakilty Road
Bandon
Co Cork

Robert Cogan

Cogans Garage Ltd
Cork Road
Carrigaline, Co Cork

DUBLIN

Ken Carey

Carroll & Kinsella Motors Ltd
Rock Road
Blackrock, Co. Dublin

Gerry Caffrey

Gerry Caffrey Motors Ltd
106/112 Terenure Rd. North
Dublin 6W

Michael Grant

Michael Grant Renault
153-155 Harold's Cross Rd
Rathmines
Dublin 6W

Andrew Dempsey

Naas Road Autos
Frank Fahy Centre
Nass Road, Dublin 12

Loughlin Murphy

Toyota Sandyford
40 Heather Road
Sandyford Industrial Estate
Dublin 18

Daniel Sheerin
Kingstown Motors
Lower Kilmacud Road
Stillorgan
Co Dublin

DONEGAL
Lawrence Harrigan
Highland Motors
Mountain Top
Letterkenny
Co Donegal

KILDARE
Hugh Pitt
Sheehy Motors Naas
Newbridge Road
Naas
Co Kildare

GALWAY
James McCormack
Western Motors
Ballybrit, Galway

Tony Burke
Tony Burke Motors
Ballybrit, Galway

LAOIS/OFFALY
Clive Adams
John Adams Car Sales
Ballymacken

Portlaoise, Co Laois
Richard Downey
Downeys Ltd
Dublin Road
Portlaoise
Co Laois

LIMERICK
Noel Kearney
Singland Motors
Dublin Road, Castletroy
Co Limerick

Frank Hogan
Frank Hogan Ltd
Dublin Road
Co Limerick

LONGFORD/WESTMEATH
Frank Kane
Longford Motors
Strokestown Road, Longford

Ed Tyrell
Grange Motors
Lough Sheever Corporate Park
Mullingar
Co Westmeath

LOUTH
Noel Stewart/Donal Waters
Blackstone Motors
New Grange Business Park
Donore Road

Drogheda, Co Louth
Nicky Smith
Smiths of Drogheda
North Road, Drogheda
Co Louth

MEATH
Noel Doran
Robertstown Motors
Ashbourne
Co. Meath

Marie Proudfoot
Nobber Motors
Nobber, Co Meath

MONAGHAN
Peter Marron
Marron's Garage
Monaghan Road
Castleblaney, Co Monaghan

MAYO
Kevin Connolly
Kevin Connolly Car Sales
Dublin Road, Ballina
Co Mayo

OFFALY
Keith Colton
Colton Motors Ltd.
Clara Road
Tullamore

Co Offaly
ROSCOMMON
Tommie Rafferty
Blueprint Autos
Golf Links Road
Roscommon
Co Roscommon

SLIGO
Kevin Egan
Kevin Egan Cars Ltd
Carrroe
Sligo

TIPPERARY
Gerry Pierse
Pierse Motors Ltd
Limerick Road,
Tipperary Town
Co. Tipperary

Eugene Ryan
Donal Ryan Motor Group
Limerick Road
Nenagh
Co Tipperary

WEXFORD
Mark Boggan
Hugh Boggan Mortors
Carriglawn
Newtown Road
Co Wexford

VEHICLE BODY REPAIRERS' SECTION

CHAIRPERSON VBRS COMMITTEE

Liam Denning
Denning's Cars
Bellavista
Spawell
Tallaght,
Dublin 24

Barry Ashmore
Ashmore Ryder Ltd
8 Fitzwilliam Quay
Ringsend
Dublin 4

Paul Plunkett
Ace Autobody Ltd
Convent Avenue
Fairview
Dublin 3

Jamie Lawlor
Jamie Lawlor Crash
Repairs Ltd
Unit 3A
Ard Gaoithe Business Park
Clonmel
Co Tipperary

Nigel Pratt
Pratt's Autobody Shop Ltd
Hacketstown Road
Bennekerry, Co. Carlow

HGV DISTRIBUTORS' COMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSON HGV DISTRIBUTORS' COMMITTEE

Bruce Archer
DAF Distributors, Baldonnell Business Park, Dublin 22

SPECIALIST TRADE REPAIRERS' SECTION

Adrian O'Dwyer
AAA Mobile Windscreens
Unit W1A Togher Business Park
Newhall, Naas, Co Kildare

Sean Kirwan
Keyvision Security Ltd (T/A Keyfast)
Keltar, Ballynoe
Whitescross, Co Cork

VEHICLE RECOVERY OPERATORS' SECTION

Derek Beahan
Derek Beahan Ltd
Rear 90-98 Emmet Road
Inchicore
Dublin 8

Jim O' Sullivan
J&S Motor Repair/ Meath Recovery
Navan
Co. Meath

VEHICLE TESTERS SECTION

CHAIRPERSON VEHICLE TESTERS' COMMITTEE

Michael Nolan
M & N Nolan Motor Co. Ltd, Newtownforbes, Co. Longford

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Sue O'Neill, ITIA
Michael Fennell, IMI, Irish Region

Brian Merrigan, IFHA
Peter Boland, CRCI
Dave Kavanagh, VLAI

TRUSTEES

Gaetano Forte
Tom Murphy
Paraic Mooney

PETROL/OIL COMPANIES' SECTION

Mark Woods
Maxol Limited
3 Custom House Plaza
IFSC
Dublin 1

Jonathan Diver
Circle K Ireland
Beech Hill Office Campus
Clonskeagh,
Dublin 4

RETAILERS - CENTRE CHAIRPERSONS**CORK**

Bob Clarke
Bandon Motors
Clonakilty
Co Cork

KERRY

David Randles
Manor West Reail Park
Tralee
Co Kerry

LIMERICK

Noel Kearney
Singland Motors
Dublin Road
Castletroy
Co Limerick

Frank Hogan
Frank Hogan Ltd
Dublin Road
Limerick

LOUTH

Nicky Smith
Smiths of Drogheda
North Road
Drogheda
Co Louth

WESTMEATH/LONGFORD

Ed Tyrrell
Grange Motors (Mullingar) Ltd
Lough Sheever Corporate Park
Mullingar
Co Westmeath

MEATH

John Malone
Malones Garage
Whistlemount
Kells Road
Navan
Co Meath

OFFALY

Keith Colton
Colton Motors
Clara Road
Tullamore
Co Offaly

TIPPERARY

Eugene Ryan
Donal Ryan Motor Group
Limerick Road
Nenagh
Co Tipperary

Membership by Numbers in 2024



Please note the membership numbers do not reflect that a company could operate in more than one sector.

TOTAL: 1,168

President's Report



PADDY MAGEE
PRESIDENT

Despite the challenges posed by a high-risk geopolitical environment, impacts on supply chains, the past turmoil of Covid and Brexit, a cost-of-living crisis, rising interest rates, and inflation issues, our Industry has shown remarkable resilience during these times, and we continue to remain committed to our climate change targets.

2024 has seen a solid start for our Industry with new cars and commercial vehicle registrations, both Light and Heavy, showing increases on 2023. While last year saw a welcome return to pre-pandemic new car sales levels, and with hopes for some further improvement in 2024, the new car market performance is still some way off normal trading levels. If we want to reduce the age of our legacy fleet and benefit from the reductions in emissions, we need to see a new car market in excess of 150,000 annually.

Manufacturers and retailers have worked diligently to grow the EV market, with over 82 different new electric vehicle (EV) models now available, demonstrating the dedication to consumers and the investment by the Industry in the EV transition. New EV sales continue to grow, with significant progress, from a standing start to creating a 13% market share. There are now over 117,000 EVs on Irish roads (as of the end of April), and we believe that we are on track to meet the 2025 Climate Action Plan interim target of 175,000 EVs. However, there are warning signs that it may not be all plain sailing, and it is now likely that the new EV market will contract in 2024 at a time when we need EV sales to increase. The new car market started strongly in January for EVs, however, the subsequent months have proven to be much more difficult for the EV segment with notable declines. This highlights the ongoing challenge of transitioning to electrification, as we move into the mainstream car market.

In the context of a softening market, Government EV incentives and supports continue to play a crucial role in this transition and simply must be extended. We have already seen the gradual phasing out of many of the supports for EVs, such as the SEAI purchase and home charger grants, the removal of the tolling incentives and the increase in BIK from 2025. While we accept that incentives cannot continue indefinitely, it is still premature to start phasing out supports, as the next cohort of potential EV buyers will inevitably be more sensitive to cost and charging infrastructure issues. The Government has been generous in its support of EVs to date; it is simply imperative that Government maintain their commitment.

To match the accelerating growth of EVs on the road, the roll-out of a fast-charging national infrastructure both publicly and privately, must be prioritised and what we need now is delivery.

While the momentum behind EVs is unstoppable, we must remember that for many car buyers their journey to an EV will take longer. For them, a traditional ICE or hybrid vehicle will, for now, fulfil their motoring requirements. SIMI continues to emphasise the importance of maintaining a fair and balanced taxation system that doesn't hinder the growth and development of the Motor Industry and allows motorists trade up to a lower emitting car. The Irish economy has remained robust, and the Motor Industry has played a significant role in its success, collecting over one billion euro for the Exchequer from car sales last year. When we add other motoring taxes, the annual tax take from motorists is close to six billion euro. Our taxation system should not impact on residual values of vehicles, particularly in the transition from ICE vehicles or in the creation of the used EV market, as this could prove a real barrier in driving down transport emissions.

While public transport and active travel are the key transport investment focus for Government, we must remind ourselves that the car continues to be the primary source of personal and freight transport in Ireland, particularly outside the main urban areas. The Government's Climate Action Plan acknowledges this, with nearly half the targeted reductions in transport emissions expected to come from fleet electrification. So, it's important we empower people to make the best environmental transport decisions. Any anti-car sentiment only serves to demonise the motorists, who rely on this mode of transport, sending mixed messages of a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" approach. We must not, on one hand, ask motorists to go

electric and, on the other hand, criticise them for using a car if they can't make the behavioural change. As I have stated already, the Motor Industry acknowledges our responsibility and we are committed to change. Our members are on the coal face, educating consumers, addressing their concerns, and actively promoting EV technology. We have a primary responsibility, and we are living up to this.

Our Industry, like many other sectors, is facing the challenge of staff recruitment and retention. There is an increasing demand for new skills and expertise in EV technology, while we also continue to maintain our existing fleet. SIMI's continued focus is the promotion of apprentices and careers within the Industry. Events such as Worldskills Ireland and Apprentice Expos, along with national engagement by members at school level, allow us to speak directly with students to advise them of the many career opportunities that are available in our exciting Industry. The upskilling of existing technicians is crucial and, with the support of Skillnet, the Industry currently offers comprehensive EV training along with many other courses which will go a long way to meet the skills needs now and into the future.

As an Industry, we remain committed to promoting road safety. We recognise that vehicles have a critical role to play in reducing accidents and improving overall safety on our roads. The increase in road deaths continues to be a major concern. As users of the road, we all have a shared responsibility to examine our own behaviour when travelling from A to B in a safe and efficient manner. As cars evolve, they have become more technologically advanced, and the introduction of additional vehicle safety features will assist drivers and result in greater safety for all road users. We will continue to support the RSA, not just in vehicle standards, but also in vehicle testing and in any other way we can help.

The Society has been very active over the past year and I would encourage members to get involved, be it by attending a regional or committee meeting, or actively helping during Budget campaigns, or at a local level, by promoting the Industry with schools or attending SIMI training events. There are many ways members can get involved. I have experienced first-hand, at the boardroom table, the work that is undertaken by the Society on behalf of members. SIMI, over many years, have developed close working relationships with numerous State and European agencies, the RSA, Revenue, and ZEVI, and while this work is not always seen by members, the results, and the willingness of these agencies to work with the Society, speaks for itself.

Our Industry has had more challenges than many over the years, but we are a resilient bunch and have all faced these challenges head on. We have a strong Industry; it's fair to say the strength of the society is our members, and it is our members that make this Industry fantastic, they never give up.

I would like to thank the SIMI Management Board and NEC for their advice and assistance to me during my term and also acknowledge the work of all the team at SIMI for the huge support consistently given to members.

Paddy Magee

Paddy Magee
SIMI President

Director General's Report



BRIAN COOKE
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Looking back over the last twelve months since last year's AGM, it was yet another year of challenges for both the Irish economy and the Irish Motor Industry. We saw continuing cost of living increases, rising interest rates, the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, the sudden drop in sales of electric vehicles, and political instability globally. In addition, we have a year of elections ahead of us with the likelihood of regime changes in many countries and in the EU parliament, which could lead to changes in policy directions, some of which will directly impact on the Motor Industry. It's not all bad news, with falling inflation, near full employment in Ireland, and the promise of some interest rate reductions in the months ahead. What all this means, good news or bad, is that members are operating in a very uncertain and volatile business environment, which increases risk for them and their customers.

Despite the exposure of the Irish economy to global economic headwinds, the growth environment in Ireland remained quite robust during 2023, particularly the labour market and the public finances. This momentum in the economy is reasonably solid so far in 2024, but there are risks and challenges. For businesses, particularly the SME sector, 2024 will likely be a more challenging year due to government measures and other cost pressures. For the personal sector, the difficulties posed by the escalation in the cost of living over the past two years and the sharp increase in interest rates are very real. While Budget 2024 was broadly supportive, household savings are at a record high, debt levels are well contained and incomes will grow quite strongly in 2024, real incomes are under pressure, and this will challenge consumer spending. In addition, we are still in the midst of a housing crisis with no end in sight, and all these negative factors for both the business and private sectors will constrain demand, impacting directly on high-ticket items such as motor vehicles.

With the unwinding of supply chain issues during the year, 2023 was a year of progress for the Irish Motor Industry, both in terms of new vehicle and electric vehicle registrations. New car registrations finished at 121,850 units, up 16% on 2022 and 4% ahead of pre-COVID 2019. The commercial vehicle sector, both light and heavy vehicles, also delivered a solid performance in 2023. Light commercial vehicles finished 25% ahead of last year, with 29,403 new LCVs sold, while Heavy Goods Vehicles saw a 20% increase on 2022, with 2,265 new registrations. Of course, the most notable feature of the market was the growth in electric vehicle sales, with 22,789 new EVs registered, an increase in market share from 15% in 2022 to nearly 19% in 2023.

The first four months of 2024 have been mixed for the new car market. While overall new car sales have increased by 6% and there has been growth in the sale of commercial vehicles, electric vehicle sales have disappointed. This slowing down in EV sales is not unique to Ireland and is reflective of other new car markets. It is typical of the life cycle in the adaption of any new technology, where there is a gap between early adapters and the early majority consumers. With the supply of new EVs no longer an issue, and with an increasing number of brands and models present in the EV segment, the drop in EV sales is demand driven. What this means is we need to do more. In Ireland, private consumers have been the key drivers of the EV market, and these buyers need greater reassurances to be convinced to make the change. This requires rapid investment by the Government in a reliable, convenient, and affordable electric charging infrastructure, while at the same time extending current incentives such as the purchase grant. In fact, as we are now back at 2022 EV sales levels, the Government should consider re-instating the SEAI grant back to €5,000. For businesses and their employees, extension of the Benefit-In Kind (BIK) relief and thresholds at current levels beyond 2024, will create greater confidence that an EV is the right choice for their companies. We also need to counter some of the inaccurate negative comment on EVs in the media, and SIMI is working with the senior marketing executives among the Vehicle Distributor members with a view to encouraging a more balanced public discussion on EVs.

Budget 2024 was, broadly speaking, positive for the Motor Industry, with no taxation increases. VRT relief for Electric Vehicles was extended until the end of 2025, while the temporary BIK measures announced in March 2023 were extended into 2024, with the EV BIK tapering also pushed back twelve months. The SEAI grant, which had been reduced in July to €3,500, was extended for all of 2024, while increased funding was allocated to the public EV charging infrastructure. On the negative side was the removal of the EV toll reliefs, and the halving of the SEAI home charger grant. The success of SIMI's Budget campaign, including the high quality of both the TSG and Budget Submissions, the year-round lobbying activity, and the PR and media approach, all helped convince both officials and politicians of the merits of the Industry's needs as well as emphasising the SIMI's view that a joint approach is the only way Ireland can optimise reductions from transport emissions. As always, the members' support, particularly at local level, proved invaluable.

Like many other sectors, the Motor Industry is facing a real challenge in attracting and retaining skilled employees and apprentices. We simply have to recruit new talent, while at the same time investing in training and upskilling current employees. This issue is at the forefront of the SIMI's thoughts. We have invested heavily, both monetarily and in terms of staff resources, in World Skills 2023 held last September. World Skills allowed the Industry showcase what it has to offer students in terms of careers. The levels of engagement, attendance, awareness, and interest in the Motor Industry increased on previous years, no doubt helped by the increased presence of both SIMI and its members, including Vehicle Manufacturers and our own Independent Committee taking stands. In addition, SIMI continues to support members at a local level, with increased presence at local Careers' fairs. Last year saw the negotiation of a new National Craft Wage Agreement, effective from July 2024, which will see over the three-year term of the agreement, increases of 22% in the craft rate, which will hopefully entice more people to consider Motor Technician as a career choice. The Society's own Training Service continues to play a vital role in developing employees. We are fortunate to have the support of significant funding from Skillnet Ireland, which allows us to subsidise the cost of training for members.

With COVID now thankfully in the rear-view mirror, the Society has been able to return to more in-person events. The highlight of the year is the SIMI's Annual Dinner and Awards, sponsored by Bank of Ireland, which celebrates the Industry and attendance in February was up on last year. The Society's Annual VTN Conference and AGM, with the RSA giving detailed presentations, again had a full attendance. At the VTN Conference, the RSA confirmed the implementation of the long-awaited test fee increase, to reflect the increased investment and running costs of a Commercial Vehicle Testing Centre. Women@SIMI, also sponsored by Bank of Ireland, is scheduled for June, and is reflective of the increasing presence of women in the Industry across all sectors. We also ran two separate Franchise Forums, in Dublin in November and in Kilkenny in April, with the support of AIB Finance. I've no doubt this new, exciting format for franchise members will become a regular event in our calendar. Last summer, we held Regional Retailer Meetings, while SIMI executives continue to meet members on their own premises on an almost daily basis.

The Irish Motor Industry certainly has had challenges over the last few years, but despite this SIMI members have shown real business acumen and continue to demonstrate their resilience. I have long held the view that the real heroes of the Irish economy are in the SME sector, which includes our members, who should be proud of their efforts in supporting their local communities. I can assure our members that SIMI is here to defend our Industry and support members during these uncertain times.

Brian Cooke

Brian Cooke
Director General, SIMI

SIMI Executives



BRIAN COOKE
DIRECTOR GENERAL



TOM CULLEN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL



EMMA MITCHELL
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
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TERESA NOONE
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR



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JANE O'SULLIVAN
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AMI FOX
TRAINING MANAGER



COLIN WALSH
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS MANAGER



SABRINA FORSYTH
CAREERS & DATA MANAGER



ADLAN CHEBLI
CUSTOMER SERVICES OFFICER



SOPHIE MULLIGAN
HR & TRAINING EXECUTIVE



MEGAN HANNON
ADMINISTRATION EXECUTIVE



AMI FOX
TRAINING MANAGER

SIMI Training



Since joining SIMI as the Training Manager/ SIMI Skillnet Network Manager in late 2023, it has been energising to see the interest and devotion members have in supporting their employees training needs. Members actively encourage their employees to undertake training and upskill courses so that they remain up to date with the latest technology and trends necessary to their role within the Motor Industry.

Over the past three years, a lot of work was undertaken in creating the correct training balance, through the establishment of a variety of online and classroom-based training for members. These courses have been created from the invaluable feedback from members and those who attend training events. This blended learning approach of both online and classroom-based training means reduced time away from the business (especially for short courses) which is key to ensuring business owners can allow employees take part in learning events throughout the year. The hybrid training approach is one which we will continue to provide and develop over the coming year.

In 2024, SIMI remains fortunate to receive substantial funding for training courses from Skillnet Ireland, the business support agency of the Government of Ireland. This funding has allowed us to significantly subsidise the cost of training for members. As SIMI was successful in its application to Skillnet Ireland for the renewal of funding from 2023 to the end of 2025 we continue to look forward to our partnership with Skillnet Ireland and to supporting members in 2024 and beyond.

During 2023, more than 235 member companies availed of SIMI Skillnet subsidised courses, with over 420 trainees participating in these training events. Courses included: The Automotive Retail Management Programme, Customer Service Excellence, Improving Customer Retention, Managing the Aftersales Department, Parts Management, Service Advisor Training, Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Systems Training and Other Technical Upskilling programmes, Digital Marketing and Facebook for Beginners and Advanced, to name just a few. New courses in Consumer Law/GDPR and Introduction to Vehicle Sales were also launched last year, which received positive feedback leading to their return in the SIMI 2024 Training Calendar.

One of the many benefits of the grant that SIMI receives from Skillnet Ireland, is that it enables us to offer most of these courses to members at a significantly reduced cost. Some of which were offered free of charge in 2023 and we will strive to do so in in 2024. The SIMI Skillnet Training Plan for 2024 is ongoing and the variety of courses offered for the latter half of the year will continue to be based upon feedback received from our members and from the reaction to Learning feedback forms that are completed following a training event. The variety of courses provided will always be member-led and it is our goal to ensure the training needs of the Motor Industry are suitably catered for.



ADLAN CHEBLI
CUSTOMER SERVICES OFFICER

Consumer 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 and time-consuming legal proceedings. The terms and conditions of the SIMI Order Form advises customers to refer their complaints to the SIMI if the matter cannot be resolved directly with the garage, provided the complaint falls within the scope of the consumer complaints service.

While the primary purpose of the Consumer Complaints Service is to help member companies resolve customer complaints, it also represents for Members a comparative measurement of customer service.

428 formal complaints were received by the Society in 2023 which represented an 20% increase on the 2022 figures of 349. This may be reflective of ongoing uncertainty in the market. Of the 428 complaints 36% were out of scope of the service, which is an increase of 9% compared to 2022. Of these outside scope complaints, 41% related to new vehicle warranties, 19% were related to non-member garages or lapsed members and 25% were related to a time frame. Commercial vehicles made up 10% and the remaining 5% were miscellaneous, e.g., previously resolved complaints.

The number of complaints formally registered saw an 7% Increase with a total of 273 compared to 255 in 2022. This represents a 5% decrease from the 2021 figure of 287.

73% of complaints registered were resolved through the initial mediation process, which is a 3% increase compared to 2022. The average length of time to bring a complaint to a resolution was 44 days, as opposed to 53 days the previous year. That figure in in 2021 was 51 days. As we can recall, the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruption to the operation of the industry, but we maintained a relatively quick time frame for resolutions.

7% of complaints were closed due to no engagement from the customer following the initial complaint. 21% of complaints in 2023 were resolved through the Standards Tribunal compared to 17% in 2022, which is in an increase of 3%.

The type of complaints registered are summarised as follows:

- 71% related to the condition of the vehicles sold (mechanical and electrical defects), repaired or serviced by members, warranty disputes or customer service issues involving members. This is a decrease from the 76% recorded in 2022.
- 22% related to alleged misrepresentation of pricing, documentation, finance, etc. This compares to 18% recorded in 2022.
- Change of ownership (i.e., logbook issues) remains at 2%, as it was in 2022 and in 2021. There was a stark increase in 2020, the figure was 7% which was due to the disruption caused to Revenue services due to the pandemic.
- 5% related to refund of deposits, which is a 1% increase from the 2022 figure.

The Tribunal noted with concern that a high percentage of complaints registered related to the condition of the vehicle sold and must once again stress the importance for members to understand that you can stand over anything you say about the condition of the vehicle, documentation, its age, number of previous owners, recorded mileage, whether it was involved in a crash, whether it was rented or leased or used for taxi work, etc. Remember your company or firm will be liable for any statement you make. You could also be liable to prosecution in the case of a serious misrepresentation.

As always, the Tribunal encourages members to continue their efforts in approaching complaints with a quick and positive reaction, as in many cases, a simple explanatory letter from the garage can often bring a complaint to a resolution, removing the need for the matter to go before the Tribunal. Such a straightforward approach can, on many occasions, save a lot of time and effort for those involved and, in addition, may result in members retaining more satisfied customers.



COLIN WALSH
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS MANAGER

Human Resource Management Service

The SIMI HR Management Service provides support to member companies with employment law & HR advice, representation in employment cases and industrial relations, support in union negotiations or trade disputes.

The employment landscape for the Motor Industry in Ireland is continuing to undergo radical change through rising standards and increased legislative obligations. Employers are required under legislation to put in place procedures and policies to deal with a wide variety of issues such as disciplinary action, dismissal, grievances, health, safety and welfare, terms of employment, dignity and work, pensions, protected disclosures, equality law and much more. These responsibilities have increased the burden on SME employers. However, given the size of many dealerships, the costs associated with employing a full-time HR personal is too great.

Access to the SIMI HR Management Service is included as part of membership and members are encouraged to fully utilise the service. The HR service aims to:

- Assist and advise Members in complying with equality legislation from advertising a role within the company through the entire recruitment process.
- Advise on recruitment, induction, performance review, training needs assessment, retention, succession planning, redundancies, grievance and disciplinary procedures.
- Advise and provide sample draft contracts and company handbooks to comply with the latest updates in legislation.
- Review all HR practices on an ongoing basis.
- Provide guidance on any employment matter that might arise.
- Provide representation at Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and Labour court.
- Assist at Union negotiations or Trade disputes.

Priorities by Sector

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE TESTING NETWORK (VTN)



The 18th of March 2024 marked a significant day for the greater majority of test centres with the last 2014-2024 authorisation period formally coming to an end. Test Centres that comply with the latest authorisation requirements as outlined in S.I. 475 of 2022 have now moved into the new authorisation period which runs until 18th March 2034. The focus now for those companies who availed of the three-year authorisation extension until 18th March 2027 (introduced as a result of the Pandemic) will be to attain a further authorisation up to March 2034, as soon as they have the work completed in accordance with the upgrade plan as outlined in the latest version of the CVRT Premises & Equipment Guidelines. The RSA are encouraging Members to push ahead with the necessary work as soon as possible with an end date for all work to be completed by December 2026. Many Member companies are well advanced in this work, and we expect to see a significant number of companies having the work completed during the current year whereupon they can then apply straight away for the balance of the currently offered maximum ten-year authorisation until March 2034. Currently annual test numbers are showing healthy figures with 600,000 LCV Tests being carried out nationally in 2023 showing a 40,000 (7.45%) increase on the number of tests carried out pre-pandemic in 2019. HCV Tests are also back to normal growth rates with 154,000 tests carried out in 2023. Of course, despite being busy, running a test centre today is not without challenges and the general shortage of qualified technicians nationwide in recent times has no doubt put pressure on companies in relation to rising labour costs. To this end, the implementation by the RSA of the fee adjustment for vehicle tests during the past year was welcome and very necessary in the current environment to help in meeting rising business costs incurred by test centres in the daily running of their businesses. As a result of stricter safety and emissions, legislation vehicles are becoming technically ever more complex. At present there is an EU

review in place in relation to how the main Directives of the Roadworthiness Package have performed since they were last reviewed ten years ago. It is expected that these directives will be updated in the coming years leading to new updated directives being issued, probably by 2026. The specific objectives of the new roadworthiness package will be (a) to ensure the functioning of modern safety components, Advanced Driver Assist Systems (ADAS) and automated functions during the vehicles lifetime, (b) to perform meaningful emission tests during vehicle inspections, and (c) to improve the electronic storage, read out and exchange of roadworthiness relevant vehicle identification data between EU Member States. Therefore, it is inevitable that vehicles systems will need to be accessed to recover information such as real-life fuel consumption data (OBFCM) and to ensure that many of the advanced safety features being introduced as per the ongoing implementation of the GSR 2 regulations will continue to work effectively throughout a vehicles lifetime. There have been many new vehicle technologies introduced over the last ten years and it is right that the Roadworthiness package of directives is brought up to date to accommodate these new safety and emission technologies. For example, there are significant challenges ahead in deciding how ADAS systems will be checked. All Stakeholders agree that they should be, but the method of testing and technology required is an ongoing discussion. New vehicle emission tests are currently being evaluated such as a particulate test (PN) and NOx tests. For example, some member states (Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany) have already started checking particulate numbers (PN) as part of their annual roadworthiness test. The main aim of these improvements in testing will be ultimately to improve road safety, better control of vehicle emissions and Businesses should also see a simplification of administration procedures by the further digitalisation of documents. The future for vehicle testing is very positive going forward but will require ongoing investment to keep pace with these technologies. The VTN Testers Committee will continue to review and absorb these new challenges as soon as they become available and continue to engage with the RSA which has been a very successful collaboration with SIMI down through the years and to date.

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SECTOR

With an eight-year average of 25,766 new vehicle sales per annum, after the supply chain difficulties post pandemic, the Light Commercial Vehicles (LCV) market rebounded in 2023 to 28,943 units making it a very good year for this sector. Indeed, for the first quarter of 2024, LCV sales were showing a further 34% increase on 2023 which will result in 2024 being a record year for LCV sales in recent times if these results are sustained into the second main registration period in July 2024. It has been a similar story in the Heavy Commercial Vehicle Market (excluding Buses) with new registrations at 2,655 units for 2023 and up 20% on 2022 and the best result in the past eight years. With sales up 15% in Q1 2024 Distributors are looking at a positive momentum although cautious about how the second registration period will run. The Bus market, a specialist sector, also saw a return to more normal volumes with 2023 new registrations up 18% on 2022 and this positive underlying trend has continued into Q1 2024 with notably significant investment by the NTA in renewing and converting the Dublin Bus fleet to electric buses. Although new vehicle registrations in the commercial vehicle sector of both vans and trucks are still dominated by diesel engine vehicles, the future is all about zero emission vehicles and how we are going to get there. Many in the Industry say that it is important that 'technology neutrality' is a guiding principle especially when it comes to Heavy Commercial Vehicles. It seems inevitable at this point that ICE engines will continue to play their part in HCV Transport for the immediate future. HVO diesel, for example, seems to represent a significant step forward towards more sustainable fuels and can substantially reduce CO₂ emissions. It is certainly worthy of consideration and is already available from leading fuel suppliers. The Commercial Vehicle Sector have pledged climate neutrality by 2050, meaning that all new vehicles sold should be fossil free by 2040. For lighter vehicles, given infrastructure considerations, electrification is the way to go. For the HCV segment, it is a more challenging decision with backers of a hydrogen powered solution saying hydrogen has a significant advantage over electrification. Many in the industry are still sceptical and point to the

significant cost of providing a hydrogen-based infrastructure.

The other big topic in relation to this sector this year is the advent of the new General Safety Regulation (GSR) 2 regulations which have a very significant stage 2 implementation date of July 7, 2024. GSR 2 is an “umbrella term” relating to a host of new safety features based on advances in vehicle technology which will become standard on vehicles going forward. All these features will contribute to a safer future on our roads for everybody, drivers and pedestrians alike.

For LCV vehicles there has been an update to emissions legislation. EU 2023/443 specifies amendments to EU 2017/1151 and this will see the introduction of the latest Euro 6e requirements which become mandatory for all new LCV vehicles registered from September 1, 2024.

Revamped weight and length rules will also help pave the way forward for zero-emission trucks and buses. Existing rules on weights and dimensions are currently under review so that, where possible, they do not actually penalise zero emissions vehicles which are typically heavier. SIMI will work with the Department and the RSA to ensure that every incentive is in place to encourage the take up of zero emission vehicles going forward.

There was also the introduction of Smart Tachograph 2 to be considered during the past year and following discussions between SIMI and the Department of Transport, a delay implementation date agreed, to allow supply to catch up with demand. SIMI have also engaged with Revenue in the past year in relation to upgrading the vehicle registration system. It is hoped that significant progress can be made in ensuring a faster turnaround in relation to “incomplete vehicles” that require the second stage approval process for the CV Sector.

The Commercial Vehicle Sector has seen very positive new vehicle registrations in recent times as customers continue to embrace the newer more environmentally friendly and safer technology on offer. Europe’s green and digital transformation represents the biggest challenge in over a century for vehicle manufacturers and this will result in new models and continuous work and discussions on behalf of this sector with Government to put the essential infrastructure in place to suit the new zero emission vehicles that the industry has committed to for the future.

THE CLIMATE ACTION GROUP

This Group was established in 2019 to collectively manage the transition to alternative fuel technologies. The Government has issued several iterations of their Climate Action Plan and the Motor Industry needed to present its view of the quickest way to transition the fleet to zero emissions transportation. The group, includes all sectors of the industry along with a panel of consultants and stakeholders. A Terms of Reference was prepared, and the group began work on these objectives:

1. Deliver 5-year Strategic Climate Change Plan.
2. Create a Climate Change Stakeholder Map with dependencies within sector directly affecting vehicles.
3. Create a set of Data Tools to support the Plan.
4. Engage in Consumer Insights.

The outcome was extremely successful, and SIMI launched its own Climate Action Plan, completed by Economist Jim Power and Internationally renowned Transport Expert Terry Lee Williams from ARUP. The report received wide acclaim, from the media, members, businesses and from consumer organisations. The plan remains a very accurate, and relevant document, with many commentators using it as a reference on how to achieve our Transport Climate emission targets.

The Working Group are now preparing the latest version of this Report, based on the Global slowdown in Electric Vehicles sales. The reduced suppressed demand for electric vehicles is attributed to the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and its Product Life Cycle Curve. This latest SIMI Climate Report will focus on how we cross the chasm from Early Adopters to the Early and Late Majority to reach the next phase of the transition to electromobility.

The current basket of incentives available for Battery Electric Vehicles and Hybrid Technology are some of the best incentives in Europe. However, ambitious targets for an electric vehicles fleet can only be obtained with continuous support through incentives, both financial and non-financial, until such time as the technology becomes affordable and comparable with the cost of internal combustion vehicles. This group are influential in deciding and delivering successful campaigns to achieve the continuation of these incentives. They also influence the strategic development of the infrastructure and the development of advertising and social media content to promote

alternative fuel technology. The group have been credited with many successful campaigns and the future development of this sector will be influenced by the thinking and drive of this creative and delivery-driven assembly.

PETROL/OIL SECTOR

The petrol/oil company sector continues to play a key role in the Irish economy, not just in the product it sells but also in the tax it generates for the Exchequer, €3.8 billion in 2023, and in the local employment and economic activity, resulting from over 1,700 retail sites in the State, employing in the region of 13,000 people countrywide. Fuel taxation is very high in Ireland, with circa 50% of the retail price of fuel returned to Irish Revenue. The cost-of-living crisis saw the Government reduce fuel duties temporarily during 2022 and into 2023, although the process of reversing these reductions has already begun, with the first increase on April 1st 2024, and the next one due at the start of August. Further fuel taxation increases via the carbon tax have been signalled between now and 2030. Regulations supporting a transition up to 10% bioethanol fuel blending in petrol came into force in July 2023 in accordance with Ireland’s Renewable Transport Fuel policy. This introduction of E10 is within the context of a planned annual increase in biofuel blending obligations on fuel suppliers, as set out in the Renewable Fuels for Transport Policy to meet Climate Action Plan targets. The sector is also pressing Government to take action to make advanced synthetic biofuels and other environmentally friendlier options, including HVO, more financially viable for consumers. Currently, consumers must pay more for HVO than diesel at the pumps.

FRANCHISE RETAILERS EXECUTIVE

This section of our Industry is extremely active within the SIMI structure, strongly represented at Board level and contributes vastly towards the policy and lobbying dossier of the organisation. The retail sector has had a strong financial return this year, even with a reduced new car market and a minimal supply of used cars from the UK and Japanese markets. There has been a reduction in demand, but robust used car values continue due to the limits on good quality supply. While this benefits the retail sector in the short term, the long-term viability of this model will be difficult. We need a strong new

car market to create a buoyant used car fleet, which is particularly important as we transition to alternative fuel technology.

The Retail Franchise Sector has had to manoeuvre its way through a unique trading environment. This has been achieved through an unparalleled set of external circumstances: Brexit, limited supply chain, semi-conductor availability, a cost-of-living crisis, and a reduction in consumer confidence. With electric vehicle sales increasing incrementally through the Early Innovators and Early Adopters stages of the Life Cycle, we now enter a more challenging transition as we move to the Early Majority and Late Majority of electric vehicle purchasers. Climate Change and promoting cleaner, safer, and more sustainable mobility is a critical objective for the Motor Sector and the Franchise network. The Motor Industry is ideally placed to meet the demands of sustainable transport, connecting our urban, suburban, and rural communities while reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and transitioning to alternative fuel technology. While this transition will come with many challenges, it also offers the Motor Industry a huge opportunity in moving all our customers to electric vehicles over the next few decades. The Franchise retailers are accelerating the move with many new options of electric and hybrid/plug-in hybrid vehicles. This together with changes in attitudes and behaviours will help with this transition.

The SIMI Climate Action Plan of 2021 and the latest edition in 2024, seeks to focus all stakeholders on the best way to transition, our fleet to zero emissions. The 4 Point Plan describes the simple solutions that are required to meet the Governments targets, backed with technical and financial data. The success of this project depends upon continued incentives, an efficient charging infrastructure, removing the most polluting vehicles off the road, investing in Public Transport services and instilling confidence into the consumers purchasing decisions.

Climate Change will be the biggest challenge for all stakeholders and a huge opportunity - if the policy decisions are aligned with International best practice, the result will be a move towards our zero emissions transport targets. This is seismic change that must be strategically planned, realistic and managed correctly by all of us. In that way, we all benefit including the planet. The market continues to be hinged on the dynamics of supply and demand. While used car values have remained strong, the supply issues are limiting the move to electric vehicles and the replacement of the fleet.

Consumer confidence and sentiment had dropped a little due to global unrest. An increase in energy prices and inflationary pressures will mean that consumer confidence will remain extremely cautious for the year. While the second-hand market performed well, as did the aftermarket, the need for a buoyant new car market has become more important.

The Finance Market has seen its own challenges, as inflation has led to interest rate increases and although the market is still extraordinarily strong, we may see the increased cost of finance as an issue into 2024.

The Distribution of new vehicles through the existing network channels will be a challenge for Franchise Retailers as we see many Manufacturers that are still grappling with new business network models such as Agency contracts. This will benefit some retailers and disadvantage others. How the industry plots its way through this period of huge change will be extremely challenging. Practical, pragmatic, and effective leadership is required to get the right result for businesses and their employees.

The introduction of the SIMI Franchise & Stakeholder Forum in partnership with our sponsor AIB Finance and Leasing was a great addition to the Franchise calendar. This high level informal briefing session brought Industry experts and a diverse group from all sectors of the distribution supply chain together. The big issues of Generative AI, Distribution, Electromobility and Finance were discussed, and it has certainly raised the level of communication and influence amongst these important sectors. As we go through this period of momentous change, we need to be clear about our direction and the need to innovate and develop change that can benefit our sector and allow us to thrive through the next decade - our customers will expect nothing less.

INDEPENDENT SECTOR

The Independent Retailers Committee grows each year; and this past year has been no different. The Committee continuously identify and highlight the obstacles faced by independent members and work towards addressing these issues through the committee. Delays in NCT appointments remains a key topic for the sector. Technician, Apprentice, and general staff shortages contributed to a difficult trading environment for independent retailers. Rogue operators and the shadow economy remain a standing item and priority for the committee.

Work by the committee continues in conjunction with all sectors of the industry and stakeholders to develop the Autosure programme to bring about licencing within the industry for vehicle repairs. The programme is primarily designed for safety and standards. The largest development in relation to this project in 2023 was the Government's announcement to build an EV/E Mobility Centre of Excellence in Mullingar Co. Westmeath. Attracting and retaining technicians and apprentice technicians is a key focus for the committee and the sector. Members of the Independent committee form part of the Apprentice Steering Group, which through the team at the SIMI are continuously working on ways in which the industry can attract and retain technicians. Training in EV/Hybrid technology is identified as crucial over the coming years, and this training is currently being provided through SIMI Skillnet.

SIMI and its members engage with career fairs, guidance counsellors and schools on a constant basis to promote the pathways and benefits of careers in the motor industry and apprenticeships. The Independent sector was represented at Worldskills Ireland 2023 to deliver the message to Students, Parents and Teachers about careers and apprenticeships within the sector. The committee are happy to report, that following the success of the 2023 event, the sector will have a presence at the 2024 event. The Independent Retailers Committee in conjunction with the Parts Wholesalers Committee are examining further Independent Aftermarket Conferences following the success of the 2023 event. The Committee would encourage any independent retailer or repairer to become involved in the committee. It is from independent members issues and experiences that the committee can identify key obstacles in our sector, which allows active members to work towards resolutions to these issues.

VEHICLE MANUFACTURERS/ DISTRIBUTORS

Supply constraints were a prevalent feature of the new car market until the end of 2023, delivery times for new vehicles have now returned to more typical patterns, parts delivery times have not yet returned to normal. The new car market is currently 6% ahead of the same time last year however, there has been a softening in demand for new cars in recent weeks. It is predicted that the new car market will be in the region of 130,000 by the end of the year. Significant price hikes in essentials such

as food, energy, and refuse collection have led to a cost-of-living crisis. Consequently, disposable incomes for certain age cohorts are severely constrained as wages have not gone up by anything close to these price increases. Incomes are under pressure which is challenging consumer spending and subsequently the new car market.

In 2023, the Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) market finished 46% up on the previous year and accounted for 18.6% of new car registrations. However, consumer and business sentiment for EVs has diminished significantly since November 2023. In November, the SIMI Vehicle Distributors forecasted that the 2024 new car market would be comprised of 20.5% BEV models and 10% PHEVs. In the latest survey (April 2024) the BEV market forecast has been revised downward to 11.7% for 2024 and it is now expected, (based on the latest survey) that this year's the BEV market will finish at 14,500 units, down 33% on 2023. 2023 saw several reductions in EV incentives: the SEAI Grant decreased by €1,500 to €3,500, the toll scheme was removed, and the home charger grant was halved. BEV Benefit-In-Kind (BIK) is also due to increase significantly in 2025, if appropriate measures are not implemented in Budget 2025. These reductions in incentives not only have a monetary impact on consumers, but they also have a disproportionately negative impact on their decision to purchase a BEV, when it appears that the Government are reducing their commitment in supporting the transition. When applying the New Technology Adoption Curve to the EV Transition, we are now moving from the "Early Adopters" stage to the "Early Majority". There is a credibility gap or a dividing "chasm" that separates "Early Adopters" from the "Early Majority". For EV sales to return to the trajectory they were on last year, this chasm needs to be crossed. Any new technology must have a substantial benefit to the "Early Majority" consumer. It must be better than the alternative and needs to be simple to use, whereas EV technology is relatively unknown to many consumers. Negative messages and EV misinformation and myths, which is currently very prevalent on social and mainstream media, have a stronger impact on this "Early Majority" consumer.

We are now at a turning point in the EV transition. Positive Government and Industry action can help Ireland regain the lost EV momentum, while inaction could lead to a situation where EV sales struggle for the next two or three years.

VEHICLE RECOVERY OPERATORS SECTOR



The Vehicle Recovery Sector over the last 12 months has seen significant challenges with the continued rising cost of fuel, insurance premium increases, wage pressures, increased business costs, while also attracting and retaining staff into the sector has contributed to making this a challenging period for all Recovery Operators. However, traffic volumes for both commercial and private journeys have seen a general steady business volume for Recovery members. The sector is facing issues and challenges with regards to the insurance companies and motoring clubs for the work carried out by our members.

The SIMI VRO sector members continue to promote the competency and professionalism of the sector to the other SIMI member businesses and to the motoring public both private and commercial. The SIMI VRO logo is continuously promoted and used by VRO members for use on their various company vehicles, websites and social media platforms. The logo was advertised and continues to be promoted to the general SIMI membership through the various SIMI communication portals.

VEHICLE BODY REPAIRERS SECTOR



There has been a rapid resumption of economic activity in recent times since the effects of the Pandemic have unwound, leading to a significant rise in business costs and consumer

price inflation. Business is busy for the VBRS Sector but that doesn't mean that there aren't significant challenges ahead.

The biggest challenge facing this sector is a shortage of skilled labour. With an aging workforce, the Industry must focus on attracting and investing in apprentices while also retaining the skilled workforce that this sector demands. Bodyshops can simply not afford to lose staff to other industries. There has been a general increase in business overheads in recent years for small to medium sized businesses, which all impacted on profitability. Energy costs have been a significant issue in this sector, and gearing up for new vehicle technologies such as EVs requires significant premises upgrades and investment in staff training.

The Insurance Industry has its role to play. They must work more closely with the crash repair sector and forge strong relationships going forward with better collaboration and understanding. The Insurance Industry as the main work supplier to this sector must recognise the investment that bodyshops must continually make in staff, training, equipment and facilities in order to be able to repair modern vehicles. Given the significant growth in market share of electric vehicles in recent times, SIMI will continue to provide training courses on EV systems for bodyshops, given that the likelihood when a VBRS member receives a crashed EV, it is essential to know how to deal with such a vehicle safely.

As with the nature of the crash repair business, any significant work carried out on an EV is likely to be designated hazardous work and it is essential that all personnel in the repair of such a vehicle have suitable training in relation to the potential hazards involved.

Parts availability is still a problem for some makes of vehicles with supply chain difficulties encountered in the pandemic still not completely resolved.

There is also the question of access to data for independent repairers and the possibility of remote services being offered by competent third parties in the calibration and checking of ADAS systems and various electronic components that may have suffered accident damage. These are all matters that need discussion and clarification for people in the business.

All in all, this sector has a very good future for those who are prepared to be proactive and invest in the business. Parts delays and a shortage of qualified people remain a challenge. We need to be proactive in enticing

young people into the sector and that will only happen if they are provided with an appropriate career path.

WINDSCREEN REPLACEMENT SECTOR

The Windscreen Replacement sector continues to focus on the importance of standards and the potential benefit of recognized qualifications and training for operators and operatives. Qualifications and accreditation support the ongoing needs of employee development. It will be necessary to benchmark minimum competency standards for existing operatives within the sector. We also need to provide new and better training with accreditation/qualification systems for new entrants into this growth area. The potential to develop continuous professional development for all operatives in this segment as well as a return to normal business is the priority for this group.

WHOLESALE SECTOR

Wholesalers throughout the year and the sector has been well represented at Management Board level by Chairperson and SIMI Past President, Gillian Fanning. SIMI, along with Gillian, have participated in a number of FIGIEFA meetings throughout the year, representing the Irish sector at a European level and engaging with ITGs and aftermarket organisations across different countries. Together with FIGIEFA, there has also been ongoing engagement with Irish and EU politicians, and the Road Safety Authority, to promote the interests of the Irish aftermarket.

The key issues for the sector are: Remote access to data, Data Act, Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation, T1 Parts not accessible.

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