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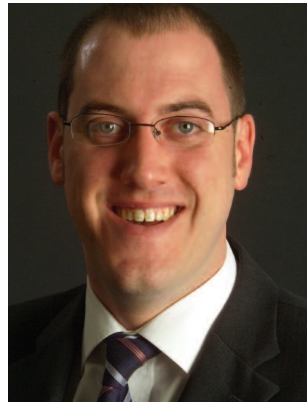
Europe Watch

**Merrion Fleet
Watch**

Also Inside:

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coming to a
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near you**



David Wilkinson
Sales Director
of Merrion Fleet

Welcome...

Many companies are now recognising fleet management as the more cost effective and time-saving solution to managing their fleet. Outsourcing fleet management results in a company saving money and saving on administration time while transferring the risks associated with vehicle investment to the fleet management company.

As Ireland's largest independent fleet management company this E-newsletter will give you expert motoring and fleet management advice and provide you with information to ensure that you are up to date with legislation regarding corporate compliance and health & safety issues. Feel free to give us a call about anything you read here.

Alternatively, if you wish to benchmark your existing provider, to ensure you are enjoying the best service and value available, contact us today.

- David Wilkinson

Safety Watch



“Are you a good driver?”

Recent Research on Irish Driving Habits in comparison with European Driving Practice

- 20% say they make at least one mobile phone call per day while driving (Ireland is in the top seven i.e. least likely to make a call – European average was 28% of drivers who make at least one call per day while driving)
- Only 3% of drivers had been checked for alcohol more than once by a Garda within the last three years (an extremely low figure – only Italy provided a lower figure at 1%– the best in class were Finland and Estonia with 38% and 33%)
- 18% say they enjoy driving fast (Ireland reported the lowest figure of drivers who like to drive fast – Poland was the highest with 45%)
- Only 13% of drivers were caught for speeding within the last year (either very few Irish drivers are speeding or there is very little enforcement on Irish roads? This result puts us in the bottom quarter as opposed to countries like Netherlands or Switzerland who had results of 36% and 46% of drivers who had been fined for speeding within the last year)
- 22% believe it is not necessary to wear a seatbelt if one drives carefully (a dangerously high number for Irish drivers who don't understand the basics of road safety. We are just above the European average; Finland, Denmark and Germany had the highest level of compliance with seat belt wearing with results for this question of 5, 7 and 8% respectively)

These figures on Irish driving were revealed in the Social Attitudes to Road Traffic Risk in Europe (SARTRE) which brings together the agencies responsible for road transport in 23 countries across Europe.

Mobile Offices a real safety threat...

...Merrion Fleet call for formal fleet policy for ALL drivers to be implemented.

Mass use technology is on the rise from gps systems, handsfree mobile kits, mp3 players, DVD players and blackberry's.... These devices distract attention from the road and increase the possibility and instance of accidents. Merrion Fleet calls on fleet managers to discourage the overuse of hi-tech gadgets in the car. Studies have found that all secondary tasks while driving – eating, drinking, grooming, talking on the phone, chatting with a passenger – resulted in some reduced driving performance. Some of the effects seen in driver behaviour included erratic steering and driving too slowly. A recent survey of motorists highlighted that one in five drivers acknowledged they had swerved out of lane when attempting to change a cd or adjust their instrument panel whilst driving.

The UK Taskforce on Occupational Road Safety believes that there is a need for companies to put road safety policies in place to ensure safer Irish roads. “Employees are now more likely to incur an injury or fatality during an at-work road incident than in an incident in a “fixed” work place.” An increasing number of those killed in accidents are reported to be on company related business when the accident occurs. David Wilkinson of Merrion Fleet encourages fleets to introduce strict guidelines as an increasing number of company car drivers turn their cars into “mobile offices”.

“Companies are responsible for the health and safety of their employees whilst driving, whether they are driving a company car or using their own car for company business. Employers need to ensure their employees are driving safely and have an adequate standard of driving skills. Companies should ideally introduce a thorough driver recruitment policy and provide training to improve driving skills of their driver-employees”

Many fleets still have no formal safety policy and even where they exist, the nature of them varies considerably. The main safety issues that should be monitored by companies are roadworthiness, mobile phone use, driving periods and safe driving practices.

Car Allowances

David outlined that straight “cash for cars” allowances make the very big assumption that employees will select the right vehicle for the job, then insure and maintain it properly. An increasing number of employers who have switched from company cars to cash allowances are seeking professional help as many drivers are buying and driving cars unfit for business use.

Small Firms failing drivers on Safety

A recent UK study of over 2,000 company representatives, including fleet operators, managing directors, finance directors and human resources managers demonstrated that almost half of the respondents did not have an individual within the company responsible for road safety (49%).

Despite legislation governing corporate compliance and duty of care many Irish companies have still to implement a formal policy with regard to their fleet; while larger organisations are getting to grips with managing occupational road risk, smaller companies, in general, still have a long way to go to implement meaningful policies. Larger fleets and those that have regular access to fleet information are reasonably well informed. However, the vast majority of operators of smaller companies are falling short of even basic requirements and it is this sector that we must educate further.

The costs of not managing work-related road safety include: Increased insurance premiums, possible legal action, poor vehicle residual values, hire car administration, claims administration, high tyre wear, high fuel consumption, towing charges, missed appointments, poor company image, late deliveries, lost staff time for injuries and stressed staff.

For organisations to comply with existing Health and Safety laws, they need to:

- Ensure their vehicles are roadworthy and comply with road traffic laws and regulations
- Ensure their employees and others are not put at risk by work-related road safety activities
- Take responsibility for managing work related road safety effectively
- Monitor and review risk assessments, and health and safety policies and procedures, on a regular basis
- Consult with employees on health and safety matters

Penalty Points

The Full List of Current Offences (M = Mandatory Court Appearance)

Title of Offence	Penalty Points on Payment of Fixed Charge	Penalty Points on Court Conviction	Fixed Charge	
			Amount paid in 28 days	Amount paid in next 28 days
Speeding (introduced 31 Oct 2002)	2	4	€80	€120
Driving without Insurance (introduced 1 June 2003)	M	5	Court Fine	Court Fine
Failure by Driver to comply with front seat belt requirements	2	4	€60	€90
Driver permitting passenger to occupy rear seat without wearing a seatbelt (under 17) or appropriate child restraint (introduced 25 Aug 2003)	2	4	€60	€90
Driver found to be driving carelessly (introduced 4 June 2004)	M	5	Court Fine	Court Fine
Using mobile phone while driving	2	4	€60	€90
Dangerous overtaking	2	5	€80	€120
Failure to act in accordance with Garda signal	1	3	€80	€120
Failure to stop a vehicle before stop sign/ stop line	2	4	€80	€120
Failure to yield right of way at a yield sign/ yield line	2	4	€80	€120
Crossing continuous white line	2	4	€80	€120
Entry by driver into hatched marked area of roadway, e.g. carriageway reduction lane	1	3	€80	€120
Failure to obey traffic lights	2	5	€80	€120
Failure to obey traffic rules at railway level crossing	2	5	€80	€120
Driving a vehicle on a motorway against the flow of traffic	2	4	€80	€120
Driving on the hard shoulder on a motorway	1	3	€80	€120
Driving a HGV or bus on the outside lane on a motorway	1	3	€80	€120
Failure to drive on the left side of the road	1	3	€60	€90
Failure to obey requirements at junctions e.g. not being in the correct lane when turning onto another road	1	3	€60	€90
Failure to obey requirements regarding reversing of vehicles e.g. reversing from minor road onto main road	1	3	€60	€90
Driving on a footpath	1	3	€60	€90
Driving on a cycle track	1	3	€60	€90
Failure to turn left when entering a roundabout	1	3	€60	€90
Driving on a median strip e.g. boundary between two carriageways	1	3	€60	€90
Failure to stop for a school warden sign	1	4	€80	€120
Failure to stop when so required by a member of the Garda Síochána	2	5	€80	€120
Failure to leave appropriate distance between you and the vehicle in front	2	4	€80	€120
Failure to yield	2	4	€80	€120
Driving without reasonable consideration	2	4	€80	€120
Failure to comply with mandatory traffic signs at junctions	1	3	€60	€90
Failure to comply with prohibitory traffic signs	1	3	€60	€90
Failure to comply with keep left/keep right signs	1	3	€60	€90
Failure to comply with traffic lane markings	1	3	€60	€90
Illegal entry onto a one-way street	1	3	€60	€90
Driving a vehicle when unfit	M	3	Court Fine	Court Fine
Parking a vehicle in a dangerous position	M	5	Court Fine	Court Fine
Breach of duties at an accident	M	5	Court Fine	Court Fine

Traffic Watch

Winter Driving Tips

Driving in bad weather cannot be avoided at times. Merrion Fleet advise drivers to ensure that their vehicle is roadworthy and to drive slowly, leaving plenty of time for the journey.

Some tips on driving in Winter:

- Never make any journey unless it is totally necessary
- Have a mechanic check your car thoroughly and check the anti-freeze
- Make sure your tyres (inc. spare) have plenty of thread depth, are in good condition & are inflated to the correct pressure
- Keep a windshield scraper and de-icer in the glove compartment
- Maintain at least a half tank of fuel during the winter season
- Plan long trips carefully
- Listen to the radio for the latest conditions
- Try to travel during daylight as much as possible
- Drive much slower keeping a larger safety gap between you and the vehicle in front
- Switch on your headlights, especially in dark coloured cars, during daylight hours
- Move away from a stopped position gradually with little or no acceleration
- Avoid unnecessary gear changing
- Avoid overtaking or passing if possible
- Always keep all windows clean and clear
- Always keep lights and indicators clear of packed snow as snow will reduce your visibility and ability to see and be seen

Planned Road Improvements



Government policy for the improvement of national roads, as outlined in the NDP, provides for:

- The development of five major inter-urban routes (Dublin to the Border, Dublin to Galway, Dublin to Cork, Dublin to Limerick, Dublin to Waterford) to motorway/high quality dual carriageway standard
- A programme of major improvement works on many other national primary routes
- Completion of the M50/Dublin C-Ring and the Dublin Port Tunnel
- Improvement of national secondary routes of particular importance to economic development
- The continuing assignment, in the design and construction of road projects, of a high priority to the safety of all road users

On the five major inter-urban routes, the aim is to achieve a level of service equivalent to a minimum of 96 kph average inter-urban speed from completion of construction through to 2020. It is estimated that this will result in total time-savings of 180 minutes on end to end journeys on the five routes combined by the end of 2006 compared with the situation in 1999.



Petrol Watch

Petrol prices are on the way down. The average price was €1.04 a litre in December but is expected to drop to around 99c this month. The rollercoaster price fluctuations that we have seen in the last year are caused by external factors beyond our control that determine the price of oil. This highlights the necessity to develop different fuel sources in Ireland.

Cars to Come Speeding into 2007

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
Alfa Romeo 8C Citroën Picasso Lotus Circuit Car Mini Cooper/S Noble M15 Peugeot 207 GTI Porsche 911 GT2 Seat Leon Cupra Spyker D12	Audi S3 Citroën C4 Picasso Honda Civic 3dr, CR-V Kia Cee'd Lexus LS460 Seat Altea XL VW Passat Coupé	BMW X5 Fiat Bravo Land Rover Defender Mercedes McLaren SLR Convertible Opel GT Toyota Auris, Yaris T-S Vauxhall Antara VW Golf Estate, Jetta Hybrid	Alfa Romeo Brera Spider Aston Martin DBS Audi TT Roadster BMW 1-series coupe, 3-series Cabriolet Cadillac STS-V Caparo T1 (Sports Car) Honda Civic Type R JeepWrangler /Wrangler Unlimited Mazda 2 Mercedes S63 AMG/CL63 AMG Mitsubishi Outlander Nissan Qashqai Volvo C30
MAY	JUNE	JULY	
Audi A5 (Coupé) Citroën C-Crosser (4x4) Dodge Nitro Fiat Bravo Peugeot 4007 (4x4) Renault Laguna Subaru Legacy Vauxhall Corsa VXR	Jeep Compass, Patriot Peugeot 207cc Porsche Cayenne Rolls-Royce Convertible	Audi R8 Lexus LS600h Mazda CX-7 Hyundai Arnejs (hatch) Mitsubishi Shogun Renault Koleos	
AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
Aston V8 Roadster Audi A3 cabriolet Fiat Cinquecento Maserati Coupé Mitsubishi Outlander	Fiat Punto Abarth Ford Mondeo Hummer H3 Lexus LFA Mercedes C-Class	AC Ace Cadillac BLS estate Kia Cee'd estate Volvo V70 VW Tiguan (4x4) Seat Ibiza	Renault Twingo
			DECEMBER
			Arash AF10 BMW M3 Dodge Avenger (saloon) Subaru Impreza



Fleet Synergy International

is a global alliance of leading fleet management companies, providing strategic solutions through locally based expertise.

Established in 1971, we have grown to a position where we now operate in 37 countries including Europe, North and South America, Australia and Japan with a combined fleet of 991.500 vehicles.

Fleet Synergy International represents a combined strength of leading fleet management providers, giving us a unique advantage when providing both prospective and existing customers with benchmarking comparisons and efficiency programmes.

Our headquarters in Brussels provides an international co-ordination centre, which has a mandate to negotiate, implement and manage international accounts.

Fleet Synergy provide a full range of international services to support local requirements including international account management, implementation programmes and global consolidated reporting.

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The European Car of the Year award was established in 1964 by a collective of automobile magazines from different countries in Europe. The current organisers of the award are Auto (Italy), Autocar (UK), Autopista (Spain), Autovisie (Netherlands), L'Automobile Magazine (France), Stern (Germany) and Vi Bilägare (Sweden).

The voting jury consists of motoring journalists from publications throughout Europe. Representation from each country is based on the size of the country's car market and car manufacturing industry. The jury for 2006 consisted of 58 members from 22 countries. There are no categories or class winners – the stated objective is to find a "single, decisive winner" among all competing cars.

Current rules: Eligible cars are new models released in the twelve months prior to the award. The award is not restricted to European cars, but nominees must be available in at least five European countries, and have expected sales of 5,000 a year. Nominees are judged on the following criteria: design, comfort, safety, economy, handling, performance, functionality, environmental requirements, driver satisfaction, and price.

A shortlist of seven cars is selected by a simple vote. For the final round of voting, each jury member has 25 points to distribute among the finalists. The points must be distributed to at least five cars, with no more than ten to any one car, and no joint top marks. The voting is open, and each jury member provides published justification for their vote distribution. Under these rules, the decisiveness of the victory has varied greatly. For example, in 2005, the Toyota Prius won by a clear 139 points, received maximum points from twelve jurors and was the top choice of 37. The next year, the Renault Clio won by a mere 5 points, received maximum points from only one juror, and was the top choice of 11.



Volkswagen's new Touareg

Volkswagen has revealed its new Touareg luxury 4x4 with a World public debut at the Paris Motor Show. Sporting a new 'face', revised rear styling, updated interior and seats as well as the Dynaudio sound system as an option, the new Touareg will go on sale in Ireland at the end of January 2007.



Porsche at the Paris Motor Show

Porsche presented four new models at the Paris Motor Show "Mondial de l'Automobile" (September 30 – October 15). The 911 Targa 4 (and 4S), the 911 GT3 RS, the Cayman and the Boxster (and Boxster S) with new engines made their debuts.



Nissan unveil new Qashqai SUV

Nissan have presented its new Compact Crossover, the Qashqai at an event hosted in Paris. The Qashqai is a C-segment SUV and will be part of a new range of cars that include the already-launched Note and 2007's replacement to the Almera - the Tida.

Merrion Fleet Watch

Ireland's largest Independent fleet management company announce appointment of new Client Relations Director.

Merrion Fleet, Ireland's largest independent fleet management company, are pleased to announce the appointment of Sarah Johnston to the position of Client Relations Director.

In this new role she will continue to lead the Client Relations team with responsibility for new vehicle purchasing, systems development within Client Relations, Sales and existing client retention & development. Sarah joined Merrion Fleet in 2001 as a Driver Services co-ordinator and held various roles before she joined Client Relations in 2003. Prior to joining Merrion Fleet, Sarah worked in the car finance division for GE Capital Woodchester for almost 2 years. She has made an important contribution to Merrion Fleet over the years but especially by her development of the Client Relations department and also more recently as a member of the Sales Team. Her success is evident in the strong customer retention that Merrion Fleet enjoy.



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STAFF PROFILE David Hurley - CEO of Merrion Fleet



What are the main challenges the industry has faced over recent years?

The confusion caused by taxation policy on cars, poor roads and car imports from outside Ireland.

What factors do you feel have contributed to the growth of Merrion Fleet since it was established in 2000?

A talented and dedicated team of employees and a low cost high quality personalised service differentiates us from our competitors. Added to that we have our team's in-depth knowledge and experience of the industry.

What is the future for Merrion Fleet regarding organic growth, acquisitions & mergers or have you ever considered selling the business?

We believe we are now well placed to continue to grow organically. We will always look at acquisitions or mergers if we believed that we and our customers could benefit from them and no, despite ongoing rumours, we are not for sale!

CLIENT PROFILE Stephen Pitcher -Hibernian Insurance



• How does Hibernian Insurance benefit from the services of a fleet management company?

Having over 200 cars on our fleet, managing our fleet internally would not only be extremely time consuming, but we would not benefit from the additional services and expertise available to us by an external fleet management company. The cost and time saving advantages we enjoy by outsourcing our fleet management are invaluable to us at Hibernian.

• How did you find the transition when changing over to Merrion Fleet?

When we decided to engage with Merrion Fleet, we spent some time before the changeover discussing with them how we would go about it. The transition process was seamless and while we had decided not to have Merrion Fleet physically in the Hibernian building, the process really worked as if they had been there. Merrion recognised the importance of our relationship with our internal customers and the emotional issues surrounding cars.

• How important is the reporting and the communications between Hibernian/Merrion?

Merrion have helped us identify, through regular reporting, exactly what our costs are involved with Fleet Management. This transparent availability of information and regular communication minimises what work is required on Hibernian's side. It also ensures we can use this information and feedback to add value to the end user.

• Why Merrion Fleet?

We spent a lot of time going through our own priorities and what we were looking for from a Fleet Management company. There were a lot of companies out there, but Merrion Fleet were able to meet all of our requirements and have continued to do so. They presented with a full team that covered all areas of their offer.



Merrion Fleet

Merrion Fleet is the largest Irish independent company specialising in the provision of fleet management services and vehicle funding for corporate, public sector and individual clients.

Founded in January 2000, Merrion Fleet currently employ twenty seven and are the chosen Irish partner for Fleet Synergy International, a Global alliance of International partners who provide European and Global fleet solutions. FSI operate in 37 countries with a combined fleet of 991,500 vehicles.

Merrion Fleet's services include the following:

Vehicle Finance Services:

Merrion Fleet offer a large choice of leasing and hire plans tailored to suit every business.

Contract Hire

This is the fastest growing form of off balance sheet vehicle leasing in Ireland in recent years. With Contract Hire, Merrion Fleet can offer a company a vehicle for long term hire at an agreed period and mileage at a fixed monthly cost.

Personal Contract Hire

Individuals who are paid car allowances can avail of a contract hire agreement with an agreed period and mileage at a fixed monthly cost. There is no balloon payment at the end of the term. Our innovative solutions will provide individuals with a higher class of vehicle than finance leasing.

Finance Leasing

With this form of leasing, the vehicle is shown on the customer's balance sheet. The customer retains title to the vehicle at the end of the contract. No excess mileage charges apply.

Sale & Leaseback

Merrion Fleet can arrange to purchase a customer's existing vehicle fleet through their finance partners and lease it back to them for a monthly repayment.

Other Services:

Fleet Administration

Merrion Fleet provide a complete administration service which enables companies to maximise their fleet's productivity while minimising related administration time, paperwork costs and capital expenditures.

Maintenance Management

Merrion Fleet can maintain a company's fleet and offers fleet drivers comprehensive support, 24 hours a day. Everything from preventive maintenance to tyre changes and emergency roadside assistance is provided by Merrion Fleet.

Vehicle Acquisition and Disposal

Merrion Fleet locate, negotiate, buy and deliver new and pre-owned vehicles for their clients. This service saves professionals' valuable time and money. Merrion Fleet are also able to provide the best value on fleet vehicles to their clients. Merrion Fleet can also manage the process of disposing of a company's vehicles.

Management Reporting

This service provided by Merrion Fleet is designed to reduce operating costs and simplify the time consuming administration needed to run a fleet. Fleet managers can easily access up-to-the-minute status reports in order to effortlessly initiate services and to analyze information.