

Changes to the driving licence service in the coming months.

The fee for the driving licence increased recently. This was the first effective increase since 1989 and recognises the need for state services to pay their way. Over the coming weeks, there will also be significant changes in the way licences are delivered in Ireland. From 12 January 2013, all applications for a licence will get a plastic card licence, produced in a format that is both standardised and recognisable throughout the EU. This new licence will be the 'best in class' from a security point of view and, as it will be credit card sized, will be easier to carry.

To assist with the transition to the new plastic licence, all applications received from the 12 January 2013 will issue in plastic card format. This licence will be produced in a standalone secure facility and therefore no driving licences can be produced in the Motor Tax Office. As such, over the counter licences will no longer be available after 12 January. Instead the licence or learner permit will be posted out to the applicant once he or she has applied to the Motor Tax Office.

The new plastic card licence will only be available to those who:

- have passed their driving test and are applying for their first driving licence
- are renewing their learner permit or driving licence
- are exchanging a foreign driving licence for an Irish driving licence

As all old paper licences are valid for a maximum of 10 years, so it follows that all old paper licences should be replaced with a plastic card licence by 2023.

In addition to the introduction of the new licence, licence delivery will also be centralised and the Road Safety Authority (RSA) will become the licensing authority in January. Motor Tax Offices will continue to deliver the service until September 2013; after that, licences will be delivered by the RSA under the banner of the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS).

From 12 January there are also changes to some driver licensing rules on foot of an EU Directive, the most significant of which is that licences for trucks and buses will now last for five years instead of the current ten years.

Over the coming weeks, the RSA will be commencing a concerted public information campaign to alert road-users to the new service. Elements of this campaign have already commenced, including briefings with key stakeholders and the distribution of leaflets and posters to key organisations.

You can get more information about the new plastic card and the licence changes at www.rsa.ie; alternatively, if you have a specific query you can email info@ndls.ie and you will get a prompt response.