

# **TAXI DRIVERS ARE IRELAND'S FIRST AMBASSADORS – MINISTER KELLY**

*Taxi Drivers being issued with Tourism Certificates*

**Speech by Alan Kelly T.D.**

**Minister for Public & Commuter Transport**

**At Presentation of NTA / Fáilte Ireland Certificates  
for Taxi Drivers**

**Tuesday, March 05<sup>th</sup> 2013 at 11:30am**

**Conrad Hotel, Dublin**

I am delighted to be here in the Conrad Hotel this morning to formally address taxi drivers and congratulate you all in person on completing the Customer Service Excellence course with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Fáilte Ireland. As this was a pilot course and it was so successful it is hoped to roll it out further in the coming year. I will be discussing this further with the NTA and Fáilte Ireland.

It is a wonderful achievement because you each took the time out of your working day to attend this course which I hope has resulted in you taking something away to assist you with your own business whether you're operating in Galway, Cork, Limerick and Dublin or in fact anywhere in the country.

The objective of the Five (5) Service Excellence courses was to create an awareness amongst Taxi Drivers of the direct influence and immediate impact that you each have on the visitor's experience of Ireland.

In essence, that makes all taxi-men and women ambassadors for Ireland and I am confident that you won't let us down in that regard.

6.2 million visitors from overseas arrived in Ireland in 2011 and many of those used a taxi service on arrival and departure. A first and last impression of our country can be so positive with the appropriate support of the taxi driver – similarly a poor experience from a taxi-man or woman (I'm sure you are aware of stories) can leave

a highly negative impression on a holidaymaker or a business executive that will stay with them right throughout their stay in Ireland and when they return home. The message we want to hammer home is that Ireland is a welcoming place and the people who interact and meet our visitors is that of “Cead Mile Failte”.

Today represents a coming together of my ministerial role and my life pre-politics. For many years I worked in the tourism sector as Failte Ireland's E-Business manager. When I proposed this to the taxi review, I knew it would be enthusiastically supported by tourism groups and by taximen and women alike.

The course that you each participated in covered customer service, tourism knowledge, how to generate more business by gaining recommendations from customers and the role that you all can actively play in informing passengers about the Gathering 2013.

I understand that the workshops also allowed for a unique opportunity for you all to share your own experiences and innovations in the service that you deliver 365 days a year.

This is my first opportunity to address the ordinary taxi driver in person and not the representative bodies. When I took up my position in government as Minister for Public & Commuter Transport, I set out to address the issues of concern to the Taxi industry so I undertook a detailed review of the industry which has resulted in many changes including a new Taxi Bill which is currently before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Essentially, I wanted to improve the levels of professionalism so that the legitimate guys would be rewarded better and would not have to compete with what you call Cowboys and what we know as Illegal Operators. In the same process and through many of the same measures we could improve the standards for consumers and have them more confident in the taxi sector. The “**check your driver**” taxi app is just one of the most recent developments associated with this agenda.

I know that changes are not easy but each change that I have helped introduce is to strengthen the taxi industry as I took the time to listen to the concerns of what was happening around the country whether you operated in a rural area of Ireland or a busy city.

One of the actions within the review has been completed today and it is great to see you here in person and I also understand that some of you travelled to be here from various parts of the country including Limerick, Galway and Cork which shows me your enthusiasm for making a difference.

Before you are presented with your awards, I would like to thank Gerry Murphy, Chief Executive of the National Authority and Paul Keeley & Tony Lenihan Director's from Fáilte Ireland for making this course happen and available to the taxi industry.

Each of you is committed to providing an excellent service so you can proudly display your Customer Service Excellence sticker on your taxi today showing customers that they will get more of an experience with you than a journey in your

taxi. I would like to congratulate you all on completing this course and I wish you every future success and to thank you for investing you time in this course.

**ENDS**