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World Boxing Champion Carl Frampton has joined the fight against sectarianism and racism with the launch of Good Relations Week 2024 which takes place in September.

## Freedom of Borough to be conferred on Fire & Rescue Service

Ards and North Down Borough Council is set to confer its highest honour - the Freedom of the Borough - on Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS).


This is in recognition and appreciation of the Service's unwavering dedication to duty and selfless service; its bravery in the face of danger; for saving lives and for protecting our community with great honour and distinction.

The formal ceremony to bestow the Freedom will take place on 14 September 2024 and include a public display of firefighting skills by firefighters from the local area at Bangor City Hall.

NIFRS respond to fires, road traffic collisions and specialist rescue incidents, including flooding, chemical incidents, collapsed buildings and other types of emergencies to make Northern Ireland a safer place. In addition, NIFRS delivers a range of community engagement initiatives and provides advice on how to

stay safe from incidents it responds to. Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, Aidan Jennings said: "We are honoured to accept the prestigious Freedom of the Borough from Ards and North Down Borough Council. This is a testament to our Fire & Rescue Service and in particular to all of our firefighters and support employees in the Ards and North Down area who serve the local community. It's a privilege for us to keep our people safe delivering a service that protects the community."

The Council has bestowed the honour only three times since it was formed in 2015 - to staff from Health and Social Care in September 2018, to the Irish Guards in 2022 and to Gary Lightbody, also in 2022.



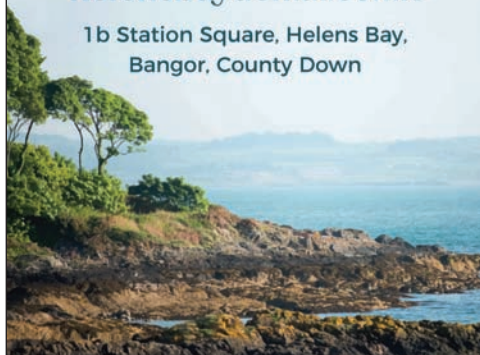
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## CALL TO SEIZE 'OPPORTUNITY' IN FIGHT AGAINST SECTARIANISM AND RACISM

Former world boxing champion Carl Frampton joined the First Minister and deputy First Minister recently to encourage local groups and organisations to get involved in Good Relations Week 2024.

Good Relations Week 2024, coordinated by the Community Relations Council, will run from Monday 16th September to Sunday 22nd September 2024 with an anticipated programme of over 200 cross community and multi-cultural events across the

region. The theme for this year's celebration is 'OpportUNITY' which will showcase the action, enthusiasm, and commitment of local groups and organisations across the Ards and North Down Borough Council

area in their daily efforts to foster positive community relations and promote cultural diversity across the region. The anticipated mix of workshops, theatre productions, exhibitions, debates, and musical performances will aim to


demonstrate the strength of communities in working together to break down barriers and seize opportunities to make a difference by promoting peace and understanding.

**Continued on page 4**

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# CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERS IN ARDS AND NORTH DOWN

Ards and North Down Borough Council hosted an event at the Queens Hall in Newtownards to celebrate volunteering across the Borough.



Members of the local Community Networks were invited and received certificates from the Mayor in recognition of their tremendous volunteering efforts. In recent years, several community groups in Ards and North Down

have been recognised with prestigious awards, most recently with Greyabbey and District Community Association receiving the King's Award for Voluntary Service. The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Jennifer Gilmour, said:

"The Celebrating Volunteering event provided an opportunity to thank those who selflessly give up their time for the good of their community. Volunteers are worth their weight in gold and are vital to the health and wellbeing of

the Borough. You can't buy their level of passion and enthusiasm, and quite often it is the same faces that appear with multiple hats on. Thank you to all those who attended the event as well as many others throughout Ards and North Down."

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# SPORTS FORUM GRANTS NOW OPEN

Sports clubs and aspiring athletes in Ards and North Down are being invited to apply for a Sports Forum Grant through Ards and North Down Borough Council.

A total of £45,000 has been set aside to help the Borough's affiliated clubs deliver quality sport in our area, while local athletes can also apply for funding to help ease the financial burden of travel and accommodation. They can also take advantage of a Goldcard which allows access to leisure facilities at reduced rates. Clubs and individuals can apply for multiple grants until they reach their yearly (April 2024 to March 2025) limits, provided they qualify under the guidance notes.

Rachel Nixon is a Sports Forum working group member and is also a member of both Donaghadee Sailing club and Ballyholme Yacht Club. Rachel said: "Being part of the Ards and North Down Sports Forum working group is so exciting - seeing the best of all sports within the Borough and the amazing standard so many of our Clubs are functioning at. Confirmation from the Council on the new budget for 2024-5 is just brilliant and will continue to allow us to support our athletes and clubs across a huge

variety of sports. "The grant scheme also facilitates and helps new Clubs get started up in the Borough. I would encourage all Sports Clubs in the Borough to connect with the Sports Forum and look at what opportunities are available. Whether it be developing your coaches or supporting your athletes at national and international level there are plenty of options." Grants include:
 

- Anniversary: Grant value up to £750.
- Coaching: Grant value up to £500.
- Equipment: Grant



"Enabling people to take part in sport is one of the key priorities for Ards and North Down Borough Council. We strive to ensure our local sports scene continues to develop through the Ards and North Down Sports Forum. It is through this Forum that local clubs and athletes have been provided with the opportunity to apply for grant funding that will support our sports clubs and athletes while also aiding sport development in our area."

For more information, including application forms and guidance notes, email [sportsdevelopment@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:sportsdevelopment@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk) or visit [leisureardsandnorthdown.com/sports-development/funding](http://leisureardsandnorthdown.com/sports-development/funding) for all information.

value up to £1000.
 

- Events: Grant value up to £1000.
- Goldcard: Access to Council Leisure facilities

at reduced rates.
 

- Seeding: Grant value up to £250.
- Club Travel: Grant value up to £500.

- Individual Travel and Accommodation: Grant value up to £500.
- Schools Clubs Pathway: Grant value up

to £500. The Chairman of Ards and North Down Sports Forum, Councillor Joe Boyle said:

## Continued from page 1

Carl Frampton MBE, the former two-weight world boxing champion, says: "I'm delighted to be supporting the launch of Good Relations Week 2024. This year's theme is a call to action for all of us to take the 'OpportUNITY' to

working towards a brighter, more inclusive future where every voice is heard and valued. "Throughout my boxing career, I've been incredibly fortunate to witness firsthand the unifying power of sport. I've seen communities come together, supporting one another regardless of background or belief, demonstrating that

working together can indeed forge positive community relations. "This experience has only reinforced my belief in the importance of celebrating the efforts of organisations and individuals that bring our communities closer together and help address important issues like sectarianism, racism, inequality,

health and well-being, poverty, and education. "I encourage every individual, community group, and organisation to seize this 'OpportUNITY' to make a difference by hosting an event during Good Relations Week 2024 and I look forward to seeing some of the amazing events and initiatives throughout the weeklong

celebration." The Community Relations Council is inviting local community groups, voluntary organisations, statutory bodies and businesses across the Ards and North Down Borough Council area to host an event that aligns with the theme of 'OpportUNITY' and showcase their outstanding good relations efforts.

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## Exciting Range of Tourism Experiences on Offer!

Ards and North Down Borough Council has announced an exciting range of Tourism Experiences for 2024. From guided tours to unique immersive experiences, visitors are in for a treat with a range of activities designed to highlight the diverse tourism offering right across the Borough!

The guided walking tours and boat trips promise to be captivating, with local experts taking visitors on a journey through time as they explore the rich historical sites in the area. The Newtownards Historical Guided Walking Tour (25 May) and The Comber Historical Walking Tour (22 June) will give visitors the chance to discover the hidden gems of these towns, while the Step Back in Time Tour (17 August) will take visitors on a nostalgic journey around Bangor through the years. If you'd rather take to the sea, you can learn more about the crucial role Bangor played in preparation for the D-Day Normandy Landings by enjoying a guided tour of Bangor Bay as we commemorate 80 years since this momentous time in history; Bangor Bay D-Day Boat Trips (1 and 2 June). For those looking for something more unique, a range of experiences are planned that are sure to leave a lasting impression. Visitors can enjoy a Posh Picnic in the Garden (18 May) in The Walled Garden Helen's Bay, or you can kick back and enjoy some traditional music while taking to the waves in the Trad & Tide Event (16 June) in Strangford Lough. For those who prefer to unwind and relax, a range of wellbeing activities are on offer. Helen's Bay Walled Garden provides the perfect location for Felting with the Bees (27 April). You can enjoy some locally produced honey mead and find out how to make your own garden a haven for bees, before creating some felted 2D bee-themed artwork with crafter Karen Stevenson. Wellness at the Wetlands at Castle Espie (9 June) will take you on a guided sound healing experience allowing you the opportunity to relax and unwind to the sounds of singing bowls, gongs, and drums. You will also enjoy a tour of the reserve, highlighting the unique sounds and calls of the sanctuary's wildlife. Bliss! Enjoy the water by joining The Summer Solstice Voyage of Discovery (20 June) where you will cruise between the islands and inlets on Strangford Lough while being entertained by stories of pagan folklore and enjoying traditional Irish music. Book Sunrise in the East (7 September) for a peaceful and unforgettable early morning trip to watch the sunrise from the most easterly point of the island of Ireland, departing from and returning to Portavogie Harbour. There is also a range of experiences all the family can enjoy, such as Tea with the Bees and Cake with the Cows (8 June) a unique farm experience hosted at Ballyboley Dexters, Orlock. You can also book Mrs Maker's Mucky Ducks (6 May) for little ones this Bank Holiday Monday at Castle Espie. Children will create a fabulous rubber ducky keepsake and be encouraged to go wild with paint pens, sticky gem embellishments, showers of glitter and so much more! Book your tickets now at [visitardsandnorthdown.com/experienceAND](http://visitardsandnorthdown.com/experienceAND)



# United Kingdom Pipe Band Championships come to Bangor!

The United Kingdom Pipe Band Championships will take place on Saturday 18 May 2024 at Ward Park Arras, Bangor.

The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association Northern Ireland Branch, in partnership with Ards and North Down Borough Council, will host what will be a superb day out. Come along and see the UK's best Pipe Bands and Drum Majors in action together with approximately 1,500 musicians in 75 pipe bands competing at this year's Championships.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Jennifer Gilmour, said:

"Ards and North Down Borough Council is delighted to host the United Kingdom Pipe Band Championships in Bangor this year. It is very exciting that we have managed to secure such a high-profile event in the Borough.

"The Championships provide a great day of entertainment that can be enjoyed by competitors and supporters alike. I wish all the competitors, sponsors, and organisers every success for a great championship."

Chairman of The Board of Directors of The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association, Bob Niven commented:



"We have worked extremely hard to continue the tradition of Northern Ireland hosting the UK Championship. We are excited to be working with our new host, Ards and North Down Borough Council who has made it possible. Our thanks also go to The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association Northern Ireland for their tireless effort to make this a reality."

The RSPBA Northern Ireland Branch Chairman, Alastair Patterson said: "It is a privilege to retain the UK Championship in Northern Ireland for our Bands and Drum Majors and we are delighted to be working with the RSPBA and Ards and North Down Borough Council in hosting the UK in such a great venue as Ward Park, Bangor."

The Championships promise to be a day of music, colour and

pageantry before the presentation of prizes.

So why not make a weekend of it and explore the area in and around Bangor.

Go shopping in the city centre which is filled with gift shops, clothes shops and cosy cafés - perfect for those who love to shop or simply browse.

For more information, go to [www.visitardsandnorthdown.com](http://www.visitardsandnorthdown.com) or [rspbani.org](http://rspbani.org)

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Go shopping in the city centre which is filled with gift shops, clothes shops and cosy cafés - perfect for those who love to shop or simply browse.

For more information, go to [www.visitardsandnorthdown.com](http://www.visitardsandnorthdown.com) or [rspbani.org](http://rspbani.org)



## Thank you to all our Staff, Suppliers and Customers.

We welcome Schools and Community groups to visit our farm.

Roy Lyttle has been growing vegetables in Ards and North Down for over 45 years. Scallions, and Leeks are the main crops with Scallions continuing to be harvested until October.

Roy and Sheila's son Alexander now takes responsibility for crop growing and maintenance. When ready, the vegetables are harvested before being trimmed, prepared, washed, packed and labelled in the farm's packhouse.

Products are delivered across Northern Ireland & South of Ireland to multinationals, independent retailers and processors.

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# SPORTS AWARDS: WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

The 2023 Ards and North Down Sports Awards were held at Clandeboy Lodge recently where all award winners were announced at the prestigious ceremony.

Reigning World and European Champion gymnast, Rhys McClenaghan BEM, has been named as Ards and North Down Sports Person of the Year. He was among

several individuals and teams recognised at the annual Ards and North Down Sports Awards, which was hosted by radio presenter Denise Watson at Clandeboy Lodge recently.

Former rally co-driver, Terry Harryman, secured a place on the prestigious Wall of Fame. The Bangor man enjoyed a motorsport career that spanned more than 50 years and was one of rallying's pace note making pioneers. He navigated for the world's leading drivers at the sport's highest level, including Ari Vatanen with whom he claimed victories

at the Safari Rally, Monte Carlo Rally, Finland's 1000 Lakes Rally, Sanremo Rally, Swedish Rally, and Britain's RAC Rally. In recognition of his achievements, a plaque will be erected in Bangor Aurora Aquatic and Leisure Complex, and Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex.

Bangor Bowling Club took the Sports Team of the Year title, Ards Ladies Under 18 Indoor Hockey Team were named as the Under 18 Junior Team of the Year, and Glenlola Collegiate Under 15 Elite Trampoline Team secured the Under 15 Junior Sports Team of the Year award.

More individual success came for Grace Davison (swimming) who won Under 18 Young Sports Person of the Year, and Haleigh Miskimmin (gymnastics) took the same title in the Under 15 category as well as the Special Recognition Award. Sports coach, Luke Carson, also achieved success as he was announced as Sports Coach of the Year.

The commitment and service of Alex Jones (football) was acknowledged with a win in the Volunteer of the Year category, and Lifetime Achievement awards went to Nan Allely (Bowling) and



Michael Spence (Rugby).

Speaking at the awards ceremony, the Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Jennifer Gilmour, said:

"Many nominations from across the sporting sphere were received for this year's awards and we can be in no doubt of the strength of sporting talent in Ards and North Down. Congratulations to all nominees and award winners, and thanks also to those volunteers who


dedicate their time and work tirelessly behind the scenes."

**AWARD WINNERS**  
Sports Person of the Year Sponsored by Mervyn Stewart  
Rhys McClenaghan (Gymnastics)  
Wall of Fame Inductee Sponsored by Ards and North Down Sports Forum  
Terry Harryman (Rallying) Lifetime Achievement Award Sponsored by the Mayor of Ards and North Down  
Nan Allely (Bowling) Michael Spence (Rugby)

Volunteer of the Year In memory of Alderman Menagh  
Alex Jones (Football) Special Recognition Award and Under 15 Sports Person of the Year Sponsored by Royal British Legion  
Haleigh Miskimmin (Gymnastics) Under 15 Junior Sports Team of the Year Sponsored by Dynes Residential  
Glenlola Collegiate Under 15 Elite Trampoline Team Under 18 Junior Sports

Team of the Year Sponsored by K9 Search and Rescue  
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Bangor Bowling Club Sports Coach of the Year Sponsored by RNLI  
Luke Carson (Gymnastics)

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**Local Food and Drinks Producers Recognised at TASTE AND Food Heroes Awards**

**Celebrating one of most successful years ever for the Borough's food and drink sector**

Local food and drinks producers have been recognised at the third annual TASTE AND Food Heroes Awards, hosted by Ards and North Down Borough Council at Bangor Castle. Individuals from across the food and drink industry attended the prestigious evening, including representatives from Food NI, the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association, and the renowned Blas na hEireann awards.

2023 was one of most successful years ever for the Borough's food and drink sector with a range of regional, national and international awards received by local producers, restaurants and independent food retailers. Ards and North Down currently ranks third among Northern Ireland's local authorities for the number of awards won by our talented producers.

This third edition of the Taste AND Food Heroes Awards celebrated 21 producer winners and eight restaurant winners, who secured 90 awards across a range of national and international standards from the most globally reputable competitions.

Award winners at this year's event included Nina Cristinacce from Lightfoot Kitchen won the Local Food Champion award and Wayne Adair Papas Mineral Company who secured the prestigious Lady Dufferin Producer of the Year award which was judged by representatives from the Clandeboy Estate, Clandeboy Courtyard and Clandeboy Estate Yoghurt Company.

Many other businesses were recognised for their achievements during the evening too, with a wide range of producers from across the Borough celebrating their successes.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Jennifer Gilmour, said: "These awards are a celebration of what has been the most successful year ever for our food and drink sector. Our Borough boasts an increasingly strong and impressive sector that continue to do us very proud and the Taste AND Food Heroes Awards show that innovation, tenacity, and resilience are the hallmarks of our local food and drink producers."

For more information, see Taste Ards and North Down - County Down, Northern Ireland (visitarandsnorthdown.com)

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# 18,000 trees planted in area during latest tree planting season

From November 2023 to March 2024, Ards and North Down Borough Council has facilitated the planting of 18,000 new trees across the Borough. This includes the planting of new woodland, native hedgerows, and community orchards.



Each of the tree planting events was made possible thanks to the help of community groups, schools and parks volunteers across the Ards and North Down area.

Council has an annual tree-planting programme which sees many trees of both native and interesting varieties planted during each tree planting season. The Council's STAND4TREES initiative aims to plant a tree for every person in the Borough, which is approximately 160,000 trees

by 2032.

Trees play a significant role in improving environmental conditions and people's quality of life. Trees act as carbon sinks and absorb carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas) and produce oxygen. In addition, trees filter, absorb and reduce pollutants. Trees can make our Borough a healthier, more attractive and more comfortable place to live and work. Trees provide food and shelter for wildlife such as birds, squirrels

and insects, as well as for people.

Below are the key aims of the Council's Tree and Woodland strategy and guide the Council's management of trees in the Borough.

**Community Engagement:** to actively engage and collaborate with the community and others in valuing trees as a vital community asset.

**Tree Planting:** to increase the native tree canopy within the Borough by planting more trees to ensure

a healthy balanced tree population that positively responds to the impacts of climate change and urban expansion.

**Managing Trees:** to ensure good tree care, through sustainable management of the tree population and reducing risk.

If you would like more information on the Council's STAND4TREES initiative or would like to get involved in some of our upcoming tree-planting events, please email [ANDparks@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:ANDparks@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

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Their sight is phenomenally good, in many respects superior to ours. They have composite eyes made up of thousands of lenses which enable them to navigate and maintain stability while seeking out food. And of course, flowers have evolved to attract bees and other flying insects through

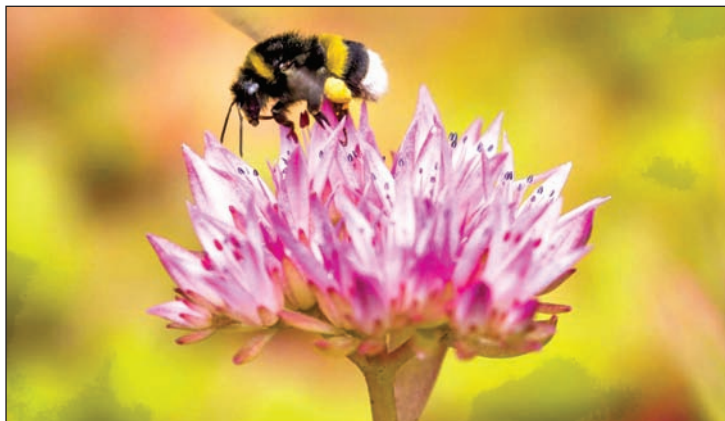
their shapes and, particularly, colours.

We base our colour combinations (how we 'see' colour) on red, blue and green, while bees base their colours on ultraviolet light, blue and green, but can see reddish wavelengths, such as yellow and orange. According to scientists, the most likely colours to attract bees are purple, violet and

blue, but, as we know, they're partial to yellow dandelions in spring.

Their colour vision is also the fastest in the animal world, five times faster than humans. So, while we might struggle to distinguish one flower in a group, bees don't. They see each individual flower.

With their incredible vision, bees can pollinate plants with pinpoint accuracy. They can see what we



can't, and because of that ability, they're the ultimate pollinators.

Amazingly, they are responsible for an estimated 80% of the pollination of all plants, and we humans are ultimately dependant on pollinated plants for food and our survival. Yet, sadly, bees are in serious decline around the world, including Ireland, because of the degradation and

poisoning of our environment.

People can help in their own gardens. Businesses can help, communities can help, housing developers can help, schools can help, farmers can help, the list goes on and on. If we all pitch in, we can save our bees. Have a look at the excellent All-Ireland Pollinator Plan for ideas and simple guidance: <https://pollinators.ie/> JVA

## Moving from Tax Credits to Universal Credit – important information

Over the past few months lots of working parents who have been in receipt of Tax Credits have received notification that they have to move onto Universal Credit instead.

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### Employers For Childcare

Universal Credit allows for higher financial support towards registered childcare costs than Tax Credits and so families using childcare can often find that they are better off moving to Universal Credit.

The Government has committed to ensuring no one is worse off by moving to Universal Credit by providing 'Transitional Protection' to make up the loss between what is received under the old benefits, and Universal

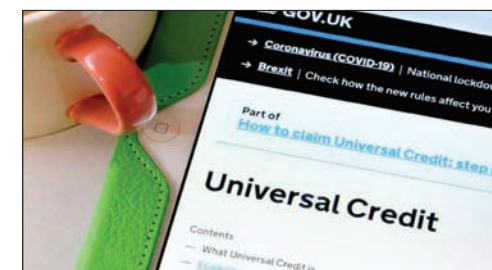
Credit. However, there are strict rules around the eligibility for Transitional Protection so you should always seek independent advice before applying for Universal Credit.

Other benefit changes in 2024

In addition to households being moved to Universal Credit as mentioned above, the amount that is being paid through all benefits,

including Universal Credit, Tax Credits, Housing Benefit etc, is increasing from April 2024 by at least 6.7%. So, if you receive benefits, you may be entitled to more money from April onwards.

For free, independent advice on the financial support your family is entitled to, including with registered childcare costs, call our Family Benefits Advice



Service on Freephone 0800 028 3008. Last year, where we did a 'better off' calculation for a family, we identified an average of £5,600 in additional financial support.

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# BELFAST HARBOUR WELCOMES NEW PILOT BOAT HIBERNIA TO ITS MARINE FLEET

**Belfast Harbour has this week taken delivery of its newest vessel, the Pilot Boat Hibernia, which represents a £1.5m investment in its marine fleet.**

Hibernia will be tasked with transporting pilots to and from ships calling at Belfast as part of the service provided by Belfast Harbour which helps ships safely navigate through the port, to and from their designated berth.

Belfast Harbour handles more than 23.9 million tonnes of trade every year and its pilot boat fleet needs to operate 24 hours a day 365 days a year, therefore it is vital to ensure downtime is kept to a minimum.

The new vessel, built by Holyhead

Marine Services, will replace PB4; the oldest pilot boat in Belfast Harbour's fleet, which is being retired after 24 years of service.

With a lightweight, resin infused hull and refined shape, the new Hibernia has a fuel-efficient hull design and engines that are able to run on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) helping to reduce carbon emissions from pilot boat operations. It is also believed that it will be the first pilot vessel on the island of Ireland equipped with a selective catalytic

reduction exhaust system, which reduces nitrous oxide emissions.

The name Hibernia has a strong history and connection with Belfast Harbour. William Ritchie started shipbuilding in the city in 1791, on the site of the future Harbour Office.

Within a year, the 300 tonne Hibernia was launched, which began trading between Belfast, New York and the Caribbean. Over 230 years later Belfast Harbour is proud to bring the new Pilot Boat Hibernia into



**Michael Robinson, Port Director and Dr Theresa Donaldson, Chair of Belfast Harbour and godmother of Pilot Boat Hibernia at a traditional naming ceremony**

service at the Port.

Dr Theresa Donaldson, Chair of Belfast Harbour, has been named as the godmother of Pilot Boat Hibernia at a traditional naming ceremony designed to bring luck to the vessel and keep the crew safe.

Michael Robinson, Port Director at Belfast Harbour, said: "We are delighted to welcome Hibernia to our fleet of pilot boats at Belfast Harbour.

We wanted to purchase a vessel that would advance and improve the resilience

of this mission critical service. Our crew and engineers worked closely with the boat builder, Holyhead Marine Ltd, from the outset, as the project progressed from design through to delivery.

"We're committed to becoming a green port and sustainability is a core element of everything that we do. We were able to incorporate environmental improvements into the design of Hibernia which will help us on this decarbonisation journey."

## Most popular times of the year to quit smoking

**New analysis has identified the months of the year when most people show interest in stopping smoking, with spring months of March and May ranking second and third.**

The study conducted by GoSmokeFree analysed Google searches for quitting-related terms made across UK regions over the last three years and scaled this against local populations to calculate the searches made per 100k residents.

Terms analysed include 'give up smoking', 'smoking cessation aids', and 'nicotine gum'. Searches for fitness-related terms like 'gyms near me' and 'exercise routines' were also compared to see if people prioritise fitness alongside their lung health.

The most popular time of year is January for both fitness and quitting smoking, with an average of 893,110 and 440,670 Google searches made related to each goal.

This spike can be attributed to New Year's

resolutions, where individuals set goals for the upcoming year that often focus on improving their health. The start of a new year symbolises a fresh start and motivates many to stop smoking.

March is the second most popular time to kick the habit, with 438,830 average monthly searches for quitting smoking made across the UK. However, fitness goes on the backburner with March sitting in 11th place with 643,030 searches.

As the weather begins to warm up, March could see an increase in quitting attempts - albeit not as high as January - as the beginning of spring might symbolise renewal and motivate some to restart their New Year's resolutions.



Like March, May marks the onset of spring; a time when people engage in outdoor activities and may want to quit smoking to improve their health and fitness levels.

The improved weather conditions can also enhance mood and increase motivation to pursue lifestyle changes. This is evident in the data, as May took third place as the best month to quit with 410,920 average Google searches

per month. May took fifth place for health and well-being related queries with 819,680 overall, meaning it's on people's minds, but not as prevalent as at the start of the year.

With 406,510 average searches for stopping smoking-related terms, October's increase in interest that places it in fourth may be due campaigns like Stoptober actively encouraging smokers to quit.

With November and December leading into and during the holiday season, they likely see reduced quitting attempts due to

social gatherings, holiday stress, and a general postponement of major lifestyle changes until after the festive season.

November takes fifth place with 402,570 quitting-related searches and December ranks last (12th) for smoking

cessation-related queries with 355,190. Article supplied by <https://www.gosmokefree.co.uk/>

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## Action needed to address the decline of iconic bird of prey - Muir

The restoration of nesting and foraging habitats is essential if we are to reverse the decline of one of our rarest birds of prey, DAERA Minister Andrew Muir has warned.

His comments come after a new DAERA part-funded survey reveals the Hen Harrier, a priority species in Northern Ireland, has declined by more than 26 per cent since 2016.

Minister Muir said: "I am concerned with the findings from the 2023 UK Hen Harrier survey that we have a declining population in Northern Ireland with a decrease from 46 pairs to 34 pairs, since the last national census in 2016. Factors in the decline of this raptor have been well documented and include the loss of suitable breeding habitats, habitat degradation, the climate, predation and wildfires.

"Action needs to be taken to stop the decline of this iconic bird, but it can only be achieved through working in partnership with landowners, farmers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and all other stakeholders, to restore and enhance

breeding habitats and appropriately manage activities which have the potential to cause disturbance and displacement."

Hen Harriers predominately breed in heather moorland and young coniferous forest plantations during their breeding season. Their prey includes small bird species such as Skylarks and Meadow Pipits. The Northern Ireland decline almost mirrors a decline of one third (33 percent) in the Republic of Ireland Hen Harrier population since 2022.

DAERA has listed the species as one of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity here and has designated two Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the EU Birds Directive to protect the Hen Harrier during its breeding season.

Minister Muir said he recognised the important work of the UK-wide survey which was organised by the RSPB



at a national level and locally by the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group (NIRSG).

"While the overall picture is not encouraging, I am pleased the survey showed that the number of Hen Harriers within the two designated Special Protection Areas, approximately half of the population, remained relatively stable since the 2016 census," the Minister

continued.

"My thanks go to all the voluntary fieldworkers and staff from NIRSG, RSPB, NIEA and other organisations, who took part in the survey so that we had excellent coverage of the Hen Harrier breeding range in Northern Ireland.

"I am pleased to learn that the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group has convened a Hen Harrier Working group

which will now consider measures to address the pressures, activities and threats identified during the survey.

"The pressures, activities and threats you identified during the survey will now be considered by Hen Harrier Working Group which will work to protect, preserve and enhance the population status of the Hen Harrier and all associated flora and fauna," Minister Muir concluded.

## Green As A Neutral

Green is transcending its botanical roots to become a versatile neutral. Neutrals create a timeless look, but that does not mean we're confined to only beige, ivory, taupe and grey. We visit EZ Living for inspiration!



Truman Oslo Pine Leather Power Recliner 2 Seater Sofa 1799 Euros

Axel Rush Green Velvet 3 Seater Sofa €1099

Green is just as universal as most classic neutrals and adds a sense of calm and harmony. Whether it's your main furniture pieces or added as an accent, varied shades of green will bring a touch of organic sophistication to any room.

Nature Green cultivates a nurturing environment that forms a soothing connection to nature. Especially at this time of year, a sense of calm and relaxation is welcomed into our homes. Green brings about reminders of renewal, with its connection to grass and plants budding

in spring.

The Truman Oslo Pine Leather Power Recliner Sofa is a stunning green centerpiece to add to your living room. It features lush leather upholstery that radiates elegance and is the perfect green hero piece to add to your living room.

New Neutrals Greys are being swapped for more earthy tones; green makes the perfect addition to this mix.

This is branching from the evolution of Scandi-inspired designs from minimalist and cool, to warm and cozy.

The usual greys are being changed out for warmer colours like off-white and taupe's, to create an overall more cocooning vibe in homes. Green adds the perfect amount of freshness to a new neutral ensemble.

If you're looking to dip your toe into this trend and incorporate a splash of green, accent chairs are the perfect choice. The Scandi inspired Copenhagen Green Fabric Chair captures a cool, contemporary look. Its compact footprint enhances any space without overwhelming your existing scheme.



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## Take the Plunge – Wild Swimming

For many, swimming in the ocean is reserved only for far flung locations where the water is more akin to a bath than a glass of icy water.

However, the benefits of wild swimming are manifold and doing so can have a long-lasting positive impact on your health.

The majority of the benefits associated with open swimming are based on the cold temperature of the water – something that those in Northern Ireland are familiar with. The cold water often found in the oceans is proven to stimulate your parasympathetic nervous system which promotes a sense of relaxation and can deliver a better night's sleep.

Whilst it might be a nightmare for some, submersing your body in cold water forces the brain to release certain endorphins which have

been shown to boost the mood and increase general happiness. Another consequence of the cold temperatures is the positive impact that it can have on ones metabolism. The cold water forces your body to work harder to keep warm, which in turn, increases the calories that you burn. As the temperature of the water decreases, the amount of energy that your body will burn to stabilise the core temperature increases, thus accelerating your metabolism.

For those seeking the secret to naturally youthful skin, open water swimming could be for you. The cold water is known to exfoliate the skin, removing impurities

and smoothing out blemishes. Alongside aesthetic benefit, spending one hour in cold water can shock your immune system and help produce more white blood cells as well as antioxidants – leaving your body better able to combat illness.

Finally, wild swimming is good for promoting better circulation. The cold water forces out body to rush blood to our organs in order to retain a core temperature, making the heart work harder as more blood needs to be circulated. The increased blood flow through your capillaries, arteries and veins promotes good health and enables the body to both better fight infection and repair damage.



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## Top tips to enhance your mental well-being every day!

### Reframe Unhelpful Thoughts:

Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interconnected. Sometimes, we fall into patterns of unhelpful thinking. Recognize these patterns and take steps to view things differently.

Reframe negative thoughts to improve your mental health and well-being.

Example: Instead of thinking, "I'm terrible at this," try, "I'm learning and improving."

Be Present (Practice Mindfulness):

Take time to be aware of yourself and the present moment.

Mindfulness helps you gain perspective and reduces stress. Pay attention to your

thoughts, feelings, and the world around you.

Try This: Practice mindful breathing or meditation to stay in the present.

Prioritize Good Sleep:

Quality sleep significantly impacts our mental and physical well-being. Ensure you get enough rest. Establish a consistent sleep routine and create a calming bedtime environment.

Tip: Avoid screens before bedtime and maintain a regular sleep schedule.

Connect with Others: Meaningful relationships are crucial for mental well-being.

Spending time with friends, family, or

thinking about your feelings can prevent loneliness and improve your mental health.

Action: Reach out to someone you care about today.

Live a Healthy Life: Physical health and mental well-being are intertwined.

Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and staying hydrated contribute to overall wellness.

Remember: A healthy body supports a healthy mind.

Self-Care Matters: Dedicate time for yourself. Engage in activities you enjoy, whether it's reading, painting, or taking a relaxing bath. Prioritize self-care to recharge

and boost your mental resilience.

Self-Care Idea: Take a nature walk or listen to soothing music.

Write a Letter to Future You:

Reflect on your goals, aspirations, and positive affirmations. Write a letter to your future self, expressing encouragement and envisioning a brighter tomorrow.

Try It: Jot down your hopes and dreams for the future.

Remember, good mental health is an ongoing investment. These simple changes can make a significant difference in your well-being. Start today and take care of your mind just as you do your physical health.

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Thread-lifts have been around since the 1990s, but innovations in the material used for Thread-lifts have led to an increase in popularity in recent years. The typical candidate for a Thread-lift is in their late 30s to early 50s. A person



who is generally in good health and is just starting to notice the signs of aging may benefit the most from the subtle impact of a Thread-lift.

Those who can't have

a Surgical Facelift because of medical conditions that make general anaesthesia risky may consider a Thread-lift as a safer alternative. To book a consultation with

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Unlock your child's potential at Dundonald's premier gymnastics academy, where we cater to enthusiasts of all skill levels in a secure, nurturing, and exhilarating environment. From the grace of artistic gymnastics to the dynamic moves of circus acrobatics, tumbling, and exclusive boys' groups, we've got something for everyone!

Pride and prowess define our competitive training programme, celebrating outstanding achievements and sculpting champions of tomorrow. Is your child the next gymnastics star? If they were born between 2018-2019, we're excited to meet them!

Step into our expansive, purpose-built facility — one of Northern Ireland's largest, equipped with cutting-edge gear designed to launch dreams into reality. And there's more! We're thrilled to offer newcomers a complimentary trial session and a special discount on membership fees.

This year, we're keeping the momentum going all summer long! Our recreational programme and highly acclaimed summer schemes are set to make this season unforgettable.

**Join the Rainbow Gymnastics family today and watch your child soar to new heights. Your adventure begins here!**



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# Introducing Padel54 – the new activity just down the road in Moira!

Ever thought about trying Padel for your next friends, family, team-building, customer or corporate event? Whatever your preference, we're here to make it happen.

Played by celebrities and sports -stars padel is the fastest-growing racquet sport across Europe. The BBC recently highlighted the sport and its growth across the UK & Ireland.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-68607780>

It's perfect for team building because it combines fun and physical activity in an easy-to-learn game suitable

for all ages, fitness levels, and skill sets. And, it's great for socializing and networking.

Situated in Moira, less than 20 minutes from Belfast with easy access from the motorway, Padel 54 has six indoor courts ensuring your team event takes place no matter the weather.

At Padel54, our primary mission is to ignite the passion for Padel by introducing

this sport to as many members of the community as possible. Our special focus lies in introducing the game to the younger generation, and we're actively seeking sponsors for our youth and local school programs.

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# Finding the Right Extracurricular Activity for Your Teen

As parents, we all want the best for our teenagers. While academic excellence is crucial, it's equally important to encourage them to participate in extracurricular activities.

These activities provide valuable learning experiences beyond the classroom and contribute to their personal growth. Let's explore why extracurricular activities matter and how parents can guide their teens in making good choices.

What Are Extracurricular Activities?

Extracurricular activities refer to any activities outside the regular school curriculum. They encompass a wide range of interests and skills, allowing teens to explore their passions beyond textbooks. Here are some common examples:

1. Sports: Joining a sports club or team helps teens stay active, build teamwork skills, and develop discipline.
2. Music and Arts: Whether it's playing a musical instrument, singing, dancing, or creating art, these activities

foster creativity and self-expression.

3. Volunteering: Engaging in community service teaches empathy, social responsibility, and the value of giving back.

4. STEM Programs: Exploring science, technology, engineering, and math through clubs or workshops enhances problem-solving abilities.

5. Reading and Writing: Encouraging teens to read widely and write (blogs, stories, or journalism) sharpens their communication skills.

6. Part-Time Jobs or Work Experience: Teens can gain practical skills, financial literacy, and work ethics by taking on part-time jobs.

The Importance of Extracurricular Activities

Identity and Confidence: Extracurriculars help teens discover their interests, build confidence, and find

their sense of identity.

Social Skills: Interacting with peers and adults in these activities improves communication and social skills. Academic Performance: Studies show that students involved in extracurriculars tend to have better grades and test scores.

Responsibility: Committing to an activity teaches time management and responsibility. Leadership and Teamwork: Many extracurriculars

require teamwork and leadership, fostering essential life skills.

Exploration: Teens can explore different fields and discover hidden talents.

Considerations and Tips

Balance: Ensure a balance between academics and extracurriculars. Avoid overwhelming schedules. Affordability: Some activities can be expensive, so consider budget-friendly options. Passion: Encourage teens

to choose activities they're passionate about to prevent burnout. Support: Be supportive and involved without exerting pressure. Variety: Encourage trying different activities to find the right fit.

Remember, extracurricular activities contribute to holistic development and prepare teens for life beyond the classroom. So, let's guide our teenagers toward meaningful experiences that enrich their lives!

# Dreams and Magic in Motion at Rainbow Gymnastics!

Rainbow Gymnastics is under the new ownership and management of Tamlynn Carlson.

Tamlynn started gymnastics at the age of 6 in South Africa, she quickly achieved – becoming National Tumbling Champion 3 times and was on the National SA team for artistic gymnastics.

She competed at events like Rosebowl and African Champs. In 2017 Tamlynn Coached gymnasts on the SA national squad and they competed at Olympic Hopes, African Champs.

In 2018 she moved to England where she served as Head Coach at a Centre in Stockport. One of her gymnasts attended the National Finals for the North West in 2019 for National 3.

In 2022 she produced the North West Compulsory 3 Champion and was on the team in the National Finals – the team came 3rd overall and Tammyln's gymnast was placed 1st on floor.

Tammyln has FIG Level 2 and BG level 4. She has completed training camps with Kelly Hill USA and Paul Hill GBR. She was also 1 of 2 gymnasts selected to represent Ireland at the European Gymnastics coaching course in Frankfurt, Germany in 2023.

Says Tammyln: "We



have an absolutely brilliant facility – one of the biggest and best in Northern Ireland. We are very proud of the gymnasts excelling in national level competition at present and we are equally pleased to bring the many physical and health benefits of gymnastics to children participating at all levels!"

Dundonald's premier gymnastics academy, cater to enthusiasts of all skill levels in a secure, nurturing, and exhilarating environment. From

the grace of artistic gymnastics to the dynamic moves of circus acrobatics, tumbling, and exclusive boys' groups which include Parkour, we've got something for everyone!

Pride and prowess define our competitive training programme, celebrating outstanding achievements and sculpting champions of tomorrow. Is your child the next gymnastics star? If they were born between 2018-2019, Rainbow Gymnastics is excited to meet them!

Step into the expansive, purpose-

built facility — one of Northern Ireland's largest, equipped with cutting-edge gear designed to launch dreams into reality.

This year, Rainbow Gymnastics is keeping the momentum going all summer long with a full recreational programme and highly acclaimed summer schemes set to make this season unforgettable.

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# WHY OUTDOOR PLAY MATTERS FOR KIDS!

Playing outside isn't just about fun—it's a crucial part of a child's development.

From newborns to toddlers, the great outdoors offers a wealth of experiences that contribute to their growth and well-being. Let's explore why outdoor play is so important:

**Better Sleep for Babies**  
Research shows that babies sleep better at night if they've had some fresh air and sunshine during the day. So, that stroll in the park or playtime in the backyard isn't just enjoyable—it also promotes better sleep for your little one.

**Fun Learning Opportunities**

Outdoor play is a brilliant sensory experience for babies and toddlers. The ever-changing nature of the outdoors stimulates their senses, allowing them to see, explore, and learn. As they touch leaves, pinecones, and puddles, they're gaining valuable experiences through all their senses.

**Motor Skill Development**  
Young children need opportunities to use their whole bodies and develop both gross and fine motor skills. Whether it's crawling, toddling, running, or jumping, playing outdoors provides the space for physical exploration. Picking up natural treasures like leaves and fir cones



also hones their fine motor skills.

**Encouraging a Healthy Lifestyle**

Outdoor play helps children burn off energy, promoting a healthy lifestyle. Physical activity supports better sleep, healthier eating habits, and overall well-being. These positive habits established during childhood can last a lifetime.

**Environmental Awareness**  
Being outdoors allows

children to connect with nature. They become aware of the environment, appreciate its beauty, and learn about the world around them. Kids who develop this knowledge and appreciation are more likely to become environmentally conscious adults.

**Positive Impact on the Whole Family**

Fresh air has a magical effect on parents too! Even a short walk outside can lift spirits, blow away the cobwebs, and improve eve-

ryone's mood. It's especially helpful after a sleepless night or during grumpy moments at home. So, the whole family benefits from outdoor adventures.

**Making Friends and Building Social Skills**

Outdoor play helps children grow socially. They learn to form friendships, respond to physical interaction, and use their imaginations to entertain each other. Problem-solving, relationship-building, and respect for nature all hap-

pen naturally during outdoor play.

In summary, outdoor play isn't just about swings and slides—it's a gateway to holistic development. So, grab those wellies, head outside, and let your little ones explore, discover, and thrive in the great outdoors!

Remember, the benefits of outdoor play extend beyond the playground—it's an investment in your child's health, happiness, and future.

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## Age NI 50+ Men's Health Programme

Men aged over 50 can benefit from Age NI's men's health programme, aimed at supporting the mental health and wellbeing of men across Northern Ireland.



Age NI's Good Vibrations programme has been funded by Mover and is one of only 16 projects selected across the world for its 'Scaling What Works' Mental Health Grant funding. The aim is to provide quality information, advice and support to men over 50, to help improve physical and mental health in the second half of life.

offers a men's health guide which focuses on key aspects of men's physical and mental health. It also includes an online hub where men can access a wide range of resources and the podcast series "How's the form?". Hosted by Joe Lindsay, it features chats with some of Northern Ireland's best-known older men. Men aged 50+ can also sign up for a

six-week online group wellbeing programme by emailing [good-vibrations@ageni.org](mailto:good-vibrations@ageni.org). Age NI's Good Vibrations is the result of a unique partnership which includes Business in the Community, mental health charity Inspire, and grassroots community organisations Northern Ireland-wide including Groundwork NI's network of Men's

Sheds. Other partners include Action Mental Health, Counselling for all Nations, NICSSA, Public Health Agency, CANS, Relate NI, Men's Health Forum Ireland and Ulster University. For more information on the Good Vibrations programme, or to request a copy of the Good Vibrations Men's Health Guide, visit [www.ageni.org/goodvibrations](http://www.ageni.org/goodvibrations).



### Free online health sessions for men over 50

Age NI's online Good Vibrations sessions are a chance for men over 50 to get together and learn how to improve their physical and mental health.

The sessions offer expert tips and practical advice to help men of a certain age deal with life's many ups and downs.

Register now by emailing [good-vibrations@ageni.org](mailto:good-vibrations@ageni.org)

[ageni.org/goodvibrations](http://ageni.org/goodvibrations)





# THE ORIGINS OF BALLOO IN BANGOR

Balloo, sometimes spelled as "Ballow," is a locality near Bangor, Northern Ireland. Its name carries echoes of centuries past, and its significance lies in its historical context.

Here are some key points about Balloo:

**Early Settlement:** The origins of Balloo date back to the early 6th century AD when Bangor Cathedral was founded. Bangor itself has a rich history, and Balloo became part of the Kingdom of Gwynedd.

**Nicholson Family:** Balloo has strong ties to the Nicholson family. The first Nicholson to settle in Ulster arrived in Ballymagee, near Bangor, during the reign of James I. William Nicholson (1587-1665) was one of the early family members associated with Balloo.

**Balloo House:** Balloo House, was a coaching house that the McConnell family acquired in 1893. It stood about half a mile east of the Bangor-Newtownards Road, approximately one and a half miles south of Bangor. The property had been in the possession of the Nicholson family since 1641, as evidenced by a stone inscribed "W N 1641" built into a quoin. The house itself was of 18th and early 19th-century origin.



**Steele-Nicholsons:** The Steele-Nicholsons owned 402 acres of land in County Down, including Balloo. William Nicholson-Steele-Nicholson (1772-1840) played a significant role in the family's legacy. He married Isabella Hancock and assumed the additional surname of Nicholson, as per his Uncle William's testamentary injunction. The family's influence extended through generations, with Balloo House at its heart.

**Balloo's Legacy**  
Woodland Reserve: Balloo Woodland Nature Reserve, managed by the Woodland Trust, is the last remnant of the gardens of Balloo House. The reserve features mature trees, including oaks believed to be over 300 years old.

**Mausoleum:** The grounds of Balloo House once housed a family mausoleum, known locally as "Nickys tomb." Built in 1792, it was later demolished in 1976,

and the remains of William Steele-Nicholson were re-interred in the family plot at Bangor Abbey.

In summary, Balloo's name echoes through time, intertwined with the Nicholson and Steele-Nicholson families, and its legacy lives on in the woodlands and stories of the past. Next time you pass by Balloo, remember the layers of history that lie beneath its name.

## Exploring Balloo Industrial Estate: A Hub of Business and Community Activity

Balloo Industrial Estate, situated in the picturesque town of Bangor, is a thriving hub for various enterprises. This industrial estate hosts a diverse range of businesses, each contributing to the local economy and community.

Let's delve into some of the notable companies that call Balloo Industrial Estate home:

**Denroy Plastics**  
Denroy is a world leading specialist in custom injection moulding, boasting expert in-house design and tooling facilities. Their commitment to quality and innovation has made them a trusted partner for clients across various industries from making hairbrushes to aircraft wing parts!

**Balloo Hire Centres**  
Balloo Hire Centres is a key player in the Northern and Southern Ireland Tool, Equipment, and Plant Hire market. They offer an extensive range of plant and tools for both business and DIY needs. From Chemical toilet hire for events to Spring Cleaning your home you will find all the essentials here.

**Other Notable Businesses**  
Beyond these Balloo highlights,



Industrial Estate hosts a plethora of other companies, including technology firms, manufacturers, and service providers. Some of these include:

**North Down Development Organisation Limited:** Operating from Enterprise House, Balloo Avenue, this organization plays a pivotal role in local development.

**Stonebrooke Kitchens Limited:** Offering kitchen solutions from

their unit in Balloo Industrial Estate.

**Rend Collective Experiment Ltd:** A creative musical group with a base in Balloo Avenue.

**Simply Mobile (Ni) Ltd:** Providing mobile services to the community.

**Community Impact Balloo Industrial Estate** isn't just about business; it's about community collaboration, job creation, and economic growth. As these

businesses thrive, they contribute to the fabric of Bangor, making it a vibrant and dynamic place to live and work.

So, whether you're seeking tools, property services, or artistic inspiration, Balloo Industrial Estate has something to offer. Next time you drive through its streets, take a moment to appreciate the entrepreneurial spirit that defines this remarkable corner of County Down.

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# EDDIE IRVINE: THE UNCONVENTIONAL RACER WHO LEFT HIS MARK ON FORMULA ONE!

Eddie Irvine, is a name that resonates with both triumph and controversy, graced the Formula One circuits during the late 20th century.

Born on November 10, 1965, in Newtownards, , Irvine's journey from a young karting enthusiast to a seasoned F1 driver is a tale of audacity, talent, and occasional turbulence.

**Early Beginnings**  
Irvine's fascination with motorsport ignited during family holidays spent at the British Grand Prix. His father, a recreational single-seater racer, fueled his passion. The legendary John Watson became his childhood hero, inspiring him to pursue a career on the track.

In 1983, Irvine transitioned from motorcycles to racing cars, initially dabbling in Formula Ford. His parents, wary of the dangers of motorcycle racing, encouraged him to embrace the four-wheeled world. Little did they know that their son would soon make waves in the racing

fraternity.

**Formula One Debut**  
In 1993, Irvine burst onto the Formula One scene with Jordan Grand Prix. His early years were marked by notoriety—both on and off the track. His involvement in incidents became a talking point, but it was clear that he possessed raw talent. A point-scoring debut at the Japanese Grand Prix set the stage for his F1 journey.

**The Ferrari Years**  
In 1996, Irvine donned the iconic red of Scuderia Ferrari. His partnership with the Prancing Horse yielded remarkable results. The pinnacle came in 1999 when he secured four victories and finished second in the World Championship, narrowly missing out on the title to McLaren's Mika Häkkinen. Irvine's 22 podiums during his

Ferrari tenure showcased his consistency and flair.

**Jaguar Racing and Beyond**

The new millennium saw Irvine move to Jaguar Racing. In 2001, he clinched the team's first podium, and in 2002, he stood on the podium for the last time. His retirement from competitive motorsport followed at the end of the 2002 season.

**Life After Racing**  
Eddie Irvine's post-racing life took intriguing turns. He became a media personality in Great Britain, lending his candid insights to F1 discussions. Rumors linked him to the takeover of the Jordan and Minardi F1 teams in 2005, but these talks fizzled out.

Beyond the racetrack, Irvine diversified his interests. His property investments flourished, reflecting his astute



business acumen. However, his life wasn't devoid of controversy. In 2014, an Italian court sentenced him to six months in prison over a nightclub brawl in

Milan. Eddie Irvine remains an enigmatic figure—a blend of speed, charisma, and occasional chaos. His legacy endures, reminding us

that Formula One isn't just about lap times; it's about the stories etched in tire marks and checkered flags. So, the next time you hear the roar of engines

and the smell of burning rubber fills the air, think of Eddie Irvine—a racer who danced on the edge and left an indelible mark on the asphalt.

Would you like to sample a piece of the F1 action behind the wheel? Visit Eddie Irvine Sport on Balloo Road where you can experience Wheel-to-wheel Karting, reputed to be the best indoor karting track in Ireland.

There's also racing simulators. Simply put on your Virtual Reality headset, grab the steering wheel and put your foot to the floor. Suddenly you're in the driving seat, pulling 'g' forces at a world-famous racing circuit.

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For more see <https://www.eddieirvinesports.com/about-us>

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## Bangor Boys Brigade and 14th Bangor Girl Guides at Stormont

North Down DUP MLA Stephen Dunne has welcomed a group of young people from the 10th Bangor Boys Brigade and 14th Bangor Girl Guides who have taken part in a four week Citizenship Programme in conjunction with Decorum NI. Mr Dunne added:



'I was very pleased to welcome a group of young people from 10th Bangor Boys Brigade (BB) and 14th Bangor Girl Guides who are based at Ballycrochan

Presbyterian Church in Bangor to Parliament Buildings for a tour and a chat.

It is always an honour to welcome and host local groups and I would like to commend

and thank everyone who volunteers in our unformed organisations across the local area throughout the year.

I would also like to commend Decorum NI based in Bangor

for their work in organising this citizenship programme for young people, a programme they have been running for a number of years with different organisations.'

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# BANGOR CARE HOME MANAGER NAMED CARE HOME MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Bangor native Catherine Rea, Residential Manager at Dunluce Healthcare's Oakmont Lodge, has been named Home Manager of the Year at Northern Ireland's Staff Nursing Awards.

Catherine, who began her career as a Care Assistant before her passion for delivering excellent care saw her being promoted to Senior Care Assistant, Deputy Manager, and now Residential Manager, was praised for her high standards of care and resident satisfaction, her leadership, and her drive to implement initiatives that improve practice.

Catherine commented: "It is an honour to be named Care Home Manager of the Year.

"Each of our residents deserves to feel respected, empowered, and taken care of, and it is a privilege to be entrusted with their well-being.

"In line with Dunluce Healthcare's values of providing person-centred care in beautiful surroundings, together with the team at Oakmont Lodge, I strive to create a nurturing environment where residents can thrive."

In addition to Catherine's accolade, Oakmont Lodge was Highly Commended as Care Home of the Year and its Administrator, Heather Parker, was Highly Commended as Administrator of the Year.

Ryan Smith, Chief



Emma Kerrigan collects Highly Commended for Care Home of the Year

Executive at Dunluce Healthcare, added:

"We are immensely proud to see the dedication and hard work of our team acknowledged at the Staff Nursing Awards, which recognise innovation and excellence across Northern Ireland.

"Catherine and Heather, and the entire workforce at Oakmont Lodge, exemplify our commitment to exceeding expectations, ensuring the highest standards of care and comfort for our residents

and their families."

Dunluce Healthcare was also Highly Commended in the Training Initiative of the Year category for its innovative career development programme, Dunluce Academy.

Ryan continued: "Our substantial investment into the ongoing training of our team reflects our dedication to personal growth and professional advancement, with the Dunluce Academy allowing us to go beyond what most healthcare

businesses offer.

"It builds on our reputation as an employer that goes the extra mile for our staff, resulting in outstanding care for our residents."

Dunluce Healthcare and Oakmont Lodge's success at the Staff Nursing Awards follows the recent news that Oakmont Lodge was ranked as one of Northern Ireland's Top 20 Care Homes by carehome.co.uk.

For more information, visit [dunlucehealthcare.com](http://dunlucehealthcare.com)

# CANCER SCREENING SAVES LIVES' LIVING WELL CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

As part of the Living Well service, community pharmacies are highlighting the importance of attending for screening when invited.

The 'Cancer screening saves lives' campaign will run in over 500 community pharmacies throughout April and May and aims to increase awareness of the cancer screening programmes available in Northern Ireland and to encourage all of those who are eligible to participate.

There are three screening programmes in Northern Ireland – breast, bowel and cervical – which aim to detect cancer, or risk of cancer, early. The programmes are aimed at those who don't have any symptoms of cancer.

Jeni Rosborough, Cancer Screening Programmes Manager at the PHA, said: "Pharmacists are an integral part of the community and they are well positioned to help inform the public of the types of screening

services available. This is an invaluable partnership and will really help us raise awareness of the importance of attending for screening when invited.

"While healthier lifestyle choices can help to reduce the risk of developing certain cancers, cancer screening is very important.

Regular screening helps detect certain cancers even before there are symptoms. When you receive an invite to take part in screening, don't ignore it as it could save your life.

"Screening is aimed at those without symptoms of cancer. If you do have any symptoms that concern you or you feel something isn't right, don't wait until your next screening appointment, please reach out to your GP."

It is estimated one in two of us will develop some form of cancer during our lifetime. However, due to the many advances in diagnosis, treatment and care cancer survival rates have almost doubled in the past 50 years.

Garrett Maguire, community pharmacist at Maguire Pharmacy in Bangor, added: "Community pharmacies are visited by nearly 123,000 people every day in Northern Ireland, providing the ideal setting to help people to look after their health. As trusted healthcare professionals at the heart of our local communities, we can help to raise awareness of the different types of cancer screening services available and the importance of attending these programmes.

"If you are eligible to attend for screening, don't ignore your invite. Call in and ask us any questions and pick up an information leaflet with useful links and contacts for support."

Living Well is a community-based pharmacy service offered in over 500 pharmacies across Northern Ireland. It is delivered in partnership by the PHA, Community Pharmacy NI, and the Department of Health, and provides key public health messages and advice through these pharmacies.

For information on the individual cancer screening programmes, please visit:

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# VAUXHALL CORSA IS THE UK'S BEST-SELLING SUPERMINI

Vauxhall continued its strong UK sales performance in March, ending Q1 as the UK's third-best selling brand in the overall car and van market, according to the latest new vehicle registration figures published today by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

Leading the way as the UK's best-selling supermini so far in 2024 is the Vauxhall Corsa, while in March the Corsa Electric topped the electric supermini segment. The Mokka Electric is the best-selling small electric SUV so far this year with 2,122 registered. Vauxhall's passenger car market share in March has increased by almost 0.7 percentage points compared to last year, rising to 4.89%. This represents 15,553 car registrations in the month.

In the first three months of the year, Vauxhall's share of the electric car market increased by almost half a percentage point to 4.67%, while in the overall car market its market share stands at 5.25% year-to-date - up from 4.62% last year. So far in 2024, the brand has sold 28,664 cars - 5,810 more than this time last year.

Vauxhall is the UK's third best-selling LCV manufacturer both year-



to-date and month-to-date, with 4,364 vans registered in March. This gives it a market share for the month of 8.08% (up from 7.84%), while its LCV market share year-to-date is 9.01% (up from 8.72% last year).

In total, 37,404 Vauxhall cars and vans were registered in the first quarter of 2024, which saw Vauxhall's overall market share increase by 0.57

percentage points compared to last year, rising to 5.82%. This reflects the success of the wider Stellantis group, which has a combined car and van market share of 14.64% year-to-date, up from 13.58%.

James Taylor, Managing Director, Vauxhall, said: "It's been a successful first quarter for Vauxhall, with the Corsa once again topping the supermini

segment and the Mokka Electric leading the way as the UK's most popular small electric SUV. Our continued sales growth shows that our commitment to offering practical and attainable vehicles is proving popular with customers, especially for those looking to transition to an electric vehicle."

For more information see [www.ballyrobert.co.uk](http://www.ballyrobert.co.uk)

# Abarth reveals the New Abarth 600e, the most powerful ever

The New Abarth 600e recently its first public debut in Milan, where the new commercial was shot. Ready, exciting, muscular, and aggressive, the first pictures instantly reveal the "evil" essence of the Abarth 600e Scorpionissima launch version, which will be produced in a limited edition of 1,949 units.

Designed to leave Abarth fans speechless, the Scorpionissima model is built around three main features: a design to reach maximum performance, a car structure to make it the most powerful Abarth ever, and a competitive spirit to attract motor enthusiasts. Thanks to its loaded equipment, the New Abarth 600e will be able to thrill enthusiasts, giving them the possibility to drive safely without giving up on the aggressive and muscular look of their car.

Equipped with 240HP, the New Abarth 600e Scorpionissima is fiercely competitive and powerful. There has never been a more powerful Abarth. In addition, the equipment of this new Abarth proves that performance is the mantra that inspired Abarth

engineers. Made to be unique in the field of electric cars, the Abarth 600e will feature a mechanical limited-slip differential that guarantees excellent driving stability, improved handling, and traction.

The exceptional performance of the limited-slip differential takes the car to new heights, especially when combined with its high-performance tyres, which were jointly developed with the supplier for Formula E to ensure maximum grip and guarantee excellent racing dynamics in all kinds of conditions.

A harmonious equilibrium is attained by balancing performance and limited resistance, ensuring an improved range in an electric vehicle.

From the exterior, it



is clearly an Abarth! The exclusive Hypnotic Purple, the launch color inspired by the post-puncture hypnotic effect, highlights its aggressiveness, while the aerodynamic rear spoiler is designed to maximize performance. It also features a large footprint, expansive wheels, a low profile, and 20-inch wheels designed to accommodate an extensive brake system. Moreover, the New Abarth 600e Scorpionissima will

come with an authenticity certificate. And of course, there is more to come. Stay tuned.

Abarth's goal - to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary - is once again achieved with the most challenging yet performing project developed in recent years. The new jewel in Abarth's house is a combination of knowledge, tradition, innovation, and performance coming from different expertise and partnerships.

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property and will always be on hand to answer any questions you might have.

Offering style as well as substance, Garolla electric garage doors are available in

21 colours and come in two different flat sizes to perfectly fit any opening.

Avoid any hidden charges with Garolla, where an instant quote

comes inclusive of measuring, fitting and VAT. For more information visit their website [www.Garolla.co.uk](http://www.Garolla.co.uk) or, alternatively, give them a call on 028 4243 0016.

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# THINGS YOUR HOUSEHOLD INSURANCE MAY NOT COVER

As your home is probably the biggest, most expensive asset you will ever own, it's a good idea to protect it in any way possible.

This might involve buying CCTV cameras, burglar alarms and in some areas even window shutters, and most certainly will involve signing on the dotted line on home insurance.

The right policy will help you to pick up the pieces should an emergency occur, but it's also important to be aware of the things that aren't covered, many current policies don't cover for accidental damage.

All too often, people forget to read the small print and only find out they don't have adequate

protection when they come to make a claim, so here are five things your insurance probably won't cover you for:

1. Fences, gates and moveable property

Believe it or not, fences, gates and other moveable property are not protected in most home insurance policies, so if bad weather is due it's essential to batten down the hatches to ensure extensive damage does not occur. All loose objects including outside furniture and gardening tools should be locked away and repairs to broken gates must be

made in good time to ensure they're not made worse in poor conditions.

2. Structural maintenance

Many homeowners presume that their insurance policy will cover any structural maintenance that needs to take place on their property – but this is simply not the case. Many insurers do not count standard or long-term wear and tear such as loose roof tiles or a crumbling wall as claimable, meaning you'll probably have to foot the bill yourself.



responsible for treating the damp.

4. Blocked drains

Not only are blocked drains stinky and annoying, they're also not usually covered by home insurance. This is because a blockage is often caused by people putting the wrong things down toilets and sinks, and therefore many insurance companies aren't prepared to pay out for such general maintenance.

The good news is there are many ways to unblock drains yourself from using a good old toilet plunger and a bit of elbow grease to throwing three large tablespoons of baking soda down the sink followed by several glugs of vinegar – the chemical reaction of which gets rid of any gunk that's built up over time.

your home are old they may rust and leak. If you notice water dripping from your water system, you might be tempted to jump on the phone to your insurance company, but it's wise to read the details of your insurance policy first.

This is because leaking pipes, which have simply deteriorated, are often just considered a generic maintenance issue and are not worthy of a pay out. That said, if the leak has occurred due to a floor, landslide, earthquake or other natural disaster, you might be covered.

Taking out home insurance is a great way to safeguard your property, but be aware that every policy has exclusions limiting what you can and can't claim for.

Disclaimer: This is a collaborative article and always read your insurance policy terms and conditions.

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Of course, if lightning strikes and damage is caused this would be seen as a definable event and one which most insurers would cover, but always read the fine print before make presumptions.

3. Damp

While many insurance companies will pay out in the event of a flood – although expect

to pay high premiums if you live in a flood prone area – they will not always cover the cost of damp maintenance. Regular damp caused by poor insulation, for instance, is one of the most common exclusions on insurance policies giving many homeowners a headache when they realise they're

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# SPRING/ SUMMER GARDENING GUIDE

it's time to embrace the gardening trends that will shape our outdoor spaces this summer.

Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, here's your guide to creating a vibrant and resilient garden in the United Kingdom:

**The Joyful Garden:**  
Last year's trend of serene, meditative spaces is evolving. Inject some playfulness into your garden this spring. Take inspiration from the RHS No Adults Allowed garden at Chelsea, designed by children – a Chelsea first! It features a den, carnivorous plants, and even a water slide. Channel your inner child with bold colours, playful textures, and whimsical elements that bring a smile to your face. Remember, plants impact our mood, so choose wisely – ornamental grass for movement, roses for scent, and more.

**Gardens for All:**  
Don't have a plot of

your own? No worries! This year, there are plenty of options for urban gardeners. Explore balcony container gardens, portable raised beds, and vertical gardens. Attend the RHS's first-ever Urban Show in Manchester this April for ideas. Guerilla gardening (planting in public spaces) is also gaining popularity. Check out the Garden Organic's Growing Buddies scheme, empowering housing association tenants to green up shared community spaces.

**Potty for Pots:**  
Container gardening saw a 200% increase last year, with more households engaging in it. Sarah Raven's book, A Year Full of Pots, offers endless possibilities for pot gardening. Get creative with containers – from terracotta pots to



hanging baskets. Plant colourful flowers, herbs, or even small vegetables. The versatility of pots allows you to experiment and create mini gardens wherever you like.

**Blossom Displays and Pruning:**

Spring is the perfect time to create stunning blossom displays. Plant flowering trees like cherry, apple, or pear for a burst of colour. Prune winter-damaged shrubs and trees to encourage healthy

growth. Remove dead wood and shape plants as needed. Remember to check specific pruning requirements for different species.

**Mowing the Lawn:** As temperatures rise, your lawn will start growing.

Begin regular mowing, but avoid cutting too short. Aim for a height of around 2.5 to 3 inches. Regular mowing encourages thick, healthy grass.

**Planting Bulbs:**  
Spring-flowering

bulbs like daffodils, tulips, and crocuses should be planted in autumn, but if you missed the boat, consider buying potted bulbs and planting them now. They'll still bloom beautifully.

**Weeding and Feeding:**  
Tackle weeds early to prevent them from taking over. Apply a balanced fertilizer to boost plant growth.

**Soil Preparation:**  
Improve soil structure by adding organic matter. Compost, well-rotted manure, or leaf mould will enrich the soil and enhance plant health.

**Wildlife-Friendly Gardening:**  
Create habitats for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Plant nectar-rich flowers and provide water sources.

**Start Sowing:**  
Sow seeds of hardy annuals directly into the soil. These include poppies,

cornflowers, and calendula. They'll bloom later in the season.

**Pruning Roses:**  
Prune hybrid tea roses and floribunda roses to encourage new growth and better flowering.

**Divide Perennials:**  
Divide overcrowded perennials like hostas, daylilies, and irises. Replant the divisions for healthier plants.

**Spring Cleaning:**  
Clear debris, dead leaves, and fallen twigs. A tidy garden looks more inviting.

Remember, gardening is not just about aesthetics – it's about connecting with nature, improving mental well-being, and contributing to a healthier planet. So, put on your gardening gloves, grab your trowel, and let's welcome spring with open arms!

## Interior design choices that are keeping from selling your home

A real estate expert has identified the interior decor choices likely to put off prospective homebuyers - with pastel colours named the biggest offender.

The findings, compiled by real estate experts Agent Advice, follow an analysis of decor-related Google searches nationwide over the last year to identify the most and least popular home features and design elements.

Anyone looking to list their property for sale may want to consider making simple changes to better suit buyers' preferences over the next few months, as spring (March through May) is generally considered the best time to sell your home.

Speaking on the importance of attracting buyers, Chris Heller - Co-Founder of Agent Advice - says: "When listing your home for sale, those that are decorated well are more visually appealing and therefore more likely to stick in buyers' minds. Many buyers will even be willing to pay more for an aesthetically pleasing property as it requires less immediate renovation or redecoration.

And it turns out that

sellers who incorporated pastel colours into their decor after they rose in popularity early last year may want to redecorate, as they're the least appealing colour palette to prospective buyers right now.

Pastel colours - especially pink, baby blue, and lilac - dominated social media over the last year due to things like the Barbie film release and an appreciation for retro hues, but their popularity has clearly waned as we head into the peak 2024 season.

The second design choice likely to turn buyers off your home came out as scalloped furniture, which also saw a rise in demand last year, especially among homeowners who favour a vintage, doll-like or 'mermaid-core' aesthetic.

Rounding out the five design choices that

sellers should rectify is incorporating industrial elements, the middle point between modern and farmhouse aesthetics.

However, the use of exposed metal, minimalist features, and bare bricks inspired by industrial spaces like factories may prove offputting to some who see it as 'cold.'

Also among the least desirable decor choices are Scandinavian elements - characterised by a minimalist approach and blend of textures - followed by botanical wallpaper, vintage decor, gold cabinet hardware, and geometric

wallpaper.

The ten most offputting interior decor choices in 2024

Interior Decor Choice  
1 Pastel colors  
2 Scalloped furniture  
3 Antique farmhouse decor  
4 Upcycled furniture  
5 Industrial decor  
6 Scandinavian decor  
7 Botanical wallpaper  
8 Vintage decor  
9 Gold cabinet hardware  
10 Geometric wallpaper

on the colour and design elements, which seemingly strikes a chord with buyers.

The most popular choice is pendant lighting, with oversized pendants predicted to be a 2024 trend, while

the second top choice came out as minimalist elements like monochromatic colour palettes, open floor plans, and natural light.

For more info see <https://www.agentadvice.com/>

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