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Cranfield, Murlough and Tyrella beaches are three of 16 sites across NI to earn the iconic Blue Flag Award.

## CRANFIELD, MURLOUGH AND TYRELLA BEACHES AWARDED ICONIC BLUE FLAGS

Northern Ireland's award-winning beaches and marinas have been revealed at a ceremony at Belfast Harbour Office.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, who manage the accreditations locally, announced 22 winning sites across five council areas.

Cranfield, Murlough and Tyrella beaches in our district are three of 16 sites across Northern Ireland to earn the iconic Blue Flag Award - one of the world's most recognised

awards for beaches and marinas.

Winning sites met international standards in criteria such as safety, accessibility, cleanliness, environmental education and, for beaches, water quality.

A further 6 beaches across NI received Seaside Awards, the UK's mark of quality

that ensures visitors are guaranteed to find a clean, safe, attractive, and well-managed coastal stretch.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne said, "The Newry Mourne and Down coastline is famous for its amazing sandy beaches, spectacular views, and

unique geology, ecology and communities. I am delighted that three of our most beautiful beaches, Tyrella, Murlough and Cranfield have once again retained the world-renowned Blue Flag accreditations.

**Continued on page 4**

## 'Nip it in the Bud' Cancer Campaign

NMDDC is working in partnership with the Farming Community Network (FCN) and Macmillan Cancer Support to raise awareness of cancer signs and symptoms among the farming community in the district.

The 'Nip it in the Bud' campaign encourages early detection and a proactive mindset towards getting checked regularly and aims at tackling cancer inequalities and helping to raise awareness of cancer among those living in rural communities.

Research from Newcastle University\* indicates that people living in rural communities often present with more advanced cancer when they are diagnosed and are 5% less likely to survive than those living in an urban environment.

Approximately 36% of Northern Ireland's population lives in a rural area\* and this can create unique challenges for accessing services and support. The evidence here is anecdotal; however, there is a firm belief amongst clinicians - who are increasingly

concerned - that farmers are hesitant to contact their doctor until the late development of the disease, the outcome of which is then generally less than positive.

Some of the signs and symptoms of cancer - such as prolonged pains, tiredness and fatigue - can be missed or overlooked as being 'part of the job' in farming, forestry, fishing and other rural industry. A lack of time or availability of services, particularly in rural areas, can also make it difficult to speak to a GP.

If you need support or just want someone to talk to, call the Macmillan Support Line for FREE on 0808 808 0000. For further information including downloads and information sheets please visit the Farming Community Network website: [www.fcni.org.uk/cancersupport/](http://www.fcni.org.uk/cancersupport/).



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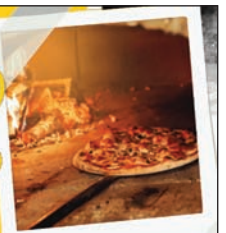
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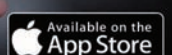
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# Camp Out for Someone! Get together for a Night under the Stars to Support Action Mental Health!

On Friday, June 20th, 2025, people across East Down and beyond will come together with friends and loved ones, to “Camp Out for Someone”, a unique fundraising event in support of Action Mental Health.

Whether it's wild camping in the great outdoors or setting up a tent in the back garden, participants will take part in an unforgettable night under the stars, embracing the power of nature and community.

Timed to coincide with the Summer Solstice on Saturday, June 21st, this event is designed to bring people together, encouraging them to wake up with the sunrise and make the most of the longest day of the year. Through participation, fundraising, and social media engagement, supporters will help raise awareness and vital funds for mental health services across Northern Ireland.

Participants are encouraged to set up their bespoke fundraising page when they register and then share their



experiences online using #campoutforsomeone and #iamsomeone, amplifying the message of mental wellbeing and community support.

Get together for an

unforgettable night under the stars and a chance to make a real difference.

Sign up today, camp out and raise funds to help us support someone who needs our services. Let's

welcome the longest day together and shine a light on mental health!

For more information about this event or to register, visit [www.amh.org.uk](http://www.amh.org.uk)

# Warrenpoint Extends a Warm Welcome to Le Boréal Cruise Ship and Guests

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, in partnership with Warrenpoint Harbour Authority and Warrenpoint, Burren and Rostrevor (WBR) Chamber of Commerce, was proud to welcome the luxury cruise ship Le Boréal to the port of Warrenpoint on Tuesday 20 May, as part of its voyage around the British Isles.

This high-profile visit marks a significant milestone in Warrenpoint's growing reputation as a premier cruise destination. It also showcases the rising popularity of the Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark, which continues to draw increasing numbers of international visitors to the region.

Operated by French luxury cruise line Ponant, Le Boréal brought over 200 passengers to explore the unique natural and cultural treasures of the district, including the majestic Mourne Mountains, the Ring of Gullion, and the scenic shores of Strangford Lough. Visitors enjoyed curated excursions and experiences that highlight the region's rich heritage, culture and warm local hospitality.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne said, "Newry Mourne and Down District Council was delighted to welcome



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne pictured with (L to R) Captain Malo Bessec, David Holmes Warrenpoint Harbour Authority Chief Executive and Michael Young Harbour Master Warrenpoint Port and Daniel Ramsey GAC Belfast Ships Agent.

Le Boréal and its guests to Warrenpoint and our spectacular Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark. The rising number of cruise visits to our shores reflects growing global interest in our unique landscapes, rich heritage and warm hospitality. This visit is another step forward in positioning our district

as a world-class tourism destination."

Warrenpoint Harbour Authority Chief Executive, David Holmes said, "It is a great pleasure to welcome Le Boréal to Warrenpoint. We have invested in making our port cruise-ready and are delighted to see those efforts paying off as more luxury vessels

include Warrenpoint in their itineraries. Cruise calls like this bring real value to our local economy and help us tell the incredible story of this region to the world."

For more information on local tourism experiences, please visit: [www.visitmournemountains.co.uk](http://www.visitmournemountains.co.uk)

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# Council Celebrates Positive Ageing in the District

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council alongside the Public Health Agency, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, County Down Rural Community Network, Volunteer Now and members of the Down Senior Forum came together to support the district's older residents by hosting a Positive Aging Expo in Downpatrick Leisure Centre.

The event was designed to mirror the successful and long running annual Positive Ageing Event. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of the services available across the district for older residents. It provided event attendees the opportunity to enjoy fun activities and demonstrations, whilst having a cuppa and a chat. Refreshments and lunch were provided for the 120 people that attended. The Council partnered with 25 community and voluntary organisations who attended the event to provide information stands, health and hearing checks, and the opportunity to participate in physical activity taster sessions including Line Dancing, Pilates and Strength and Balance. The event was an opportunity to recognise, highlight, celebrate and promote the many positive aspects of growing old and the very valuable contribution that the over 50s continue to make within our community.



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Deputy Chairperson, Councillor David Lee-Surginor officially opened the Positive Aging Expo with an opening speech, alongside Danny Sinclair, Head of Health Improvement at the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, and Alannah Brennan the Council's Health Inequalities Officer. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Deputy Chairperson,

Councillor David Lee-Surginor said, "Today is testament to our ongoing commitment to celebrating and supporting our older residents. Events like today are part of a broader effort to provide older people with opportunities to engage in activities and services that support their well-being and social inclusion. We and our partners are committed to fostering an age-friendly community where older

residents are celebrated and supported in a place where they can flourish as they age, and lead healthy, active and engaged lives." For more information on Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan, please visit our website [www.newrymournedown.org/health-and-wellbeing](http://www.newrymournedown.org/health-and-wellbeing) or contact Tara Smyth our Age Friendly Coordinator via email [Tara.smyth@nmadd.org](mailto:Tara.smyth@nmadd.org).





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# CASTLEWELLAN PEACE MAZE BENEFITS FROM INAUGURAL CROSS- BORDER HORTICULTURAL STUDENT VISIT

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council was delighted to welcome horticulture teachers and students from the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) and Teagasc College of Horticulture (Teagasc), Dublin, to Castlewellaan Forest Park recently.

The group of 30 students and staff worked in mixed teams alongside park staff to carry out maintenance on the Peace Maze and afterwards, the visitors were treated to a guided tour of the park and arboretum by former CAFRE students and Head Gardener, Alwyn

Sinnamon.

This cross-border initiative was driven by the educational leaders of both organisations, who have consistently championed collaboration in land-based education and training.

The colleges joined forces at Castlewellaan Forest Park, chosen for its internationally renowned arboretum.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne said, "As we embark on the 25th anniversary of the Peace Maze it is fitting that this cross-border group of students and staff came together to maintain the maze symbolising the harmony that has developed across the island of Ireland since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The maze itself was a huge cross-



community effort, with 4,000 school children participating in its design, and we are delighted that it is still enjoyed by visitors to the district every day. We are honoured that Castlewellaan Forest Park was chosen for this inaugural collaborative educational trip between the two horticulture colleges."

The maze was planted between 1999 to 2001 and comprises of 6,000 yew trees, many of which were planted by people from all over Northern Ireland. The maze covers 2.7 acres (11,000 square meters) with a hedge

length of over 2 miles (3,550 meters) a path length of 3,147 metres, which is a large area for management. The students were given an overview of the history of the Peace Maze and then worked in mixed teams to carry out maintenance work clearing brambles and weeding.

The Castlewellaan arboretum along with the Grange buildings are undergoing a significant restoration and renovation project funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The Castlewellaan Historic Demesne project is due to be completed by

September 2025. After their hard work, the students were rewarded with a tour of the site by Aidan and Marc, former CAFRE students, who trained at the arboretum as placement students and went on to secure fixed term contracts.

Head Gardener, Alwyn Sinnamon, said, "We currently have four degree students who are completing their work placements with us at the Annesley Walled Gardens and it is vital that we continue to educate others on the importance of Castlewellaan Forest Park. It is always a

delight to show the next generation of horticulturalists our unique collection here and to discuss its on-going care."

You do not have to be a horticultural student to help care for the wonderful trees and plants at Castlewellaan, there are volunteering opportunities suitable for all abilities. If you are interested in volunteering to help the maintenance of the maze or other aspects of the arboretum, please register your interest at [www.visitmournemountains.co.uk/castlewellaan-historic-demesne](http://www.visitmournemountains.co.uk/castlewellaan-historic-demesne).

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### Continued from page 1

The maintenance and development of these sites relies on the consistent hard work and care of countless Council teams, community groups and volunteers. I would like to personally thank and congratulate them all on their contributions toward these awards. I encourage all of our residents to safely and responsibly enjoy our coastline this Summer, taking care to follow 'Leave no Trace' principles and play an important part in upkeeping the high standards for which we are now being awarded."

Eric Randall, CEO of Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful said, "We are extremely pleased that 22 beaches and marinas are being recognised with either a Blue Flag or a Seaside Award. Northern Ireland can rightly be proud of the amazing beaches and marinas we

have to enjoy. Our offering is world class, and the public can be assured of an excellent experience when they visit one of these sites.

As we recognise these areas, we need to take steps to protect them for future generations. All parts of government and society must proactively adopt approaches that reverse the devastating impact of the climate emergency and ensure that these areas thrive into the future." Award-winning beaches will now have their respective flags in place for this year's bathing season. In the event that water quality is not safe for members of the public to swim in the water, Blue Flags and Seaside Awards Flags are lowered until the water is safe to swim in.

Blue Flag Marinas, which are not designated bathing waters, fly their flags all year round.

For more information, please visit [www.KeepNorthernIrelandBeautiful.org](http://www.KeepNorthernIrelandBeautiful.org).



# Volunteer Celebration

## Afternoon Tea to Shine a Light on Local Heroes

As his year in office draws to a close, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne has announced a special event to recognise and celebrate some of the dedicated volunteers and community groups he has been fortunate enough to engage with across the district.

The ‘Together We Shine’ afternoon tea will take place on Friday 30 May at the Whistledown Hotel, Warrenpoint and attending will be some of the incredible volunteers from organisations that champion inclusion, diversity and community support.

Throughout his term, the Chairperson has advocated inclusion and supported marginalised and vulnerable groups. He has highlighted the powerful impact of local initiatives, from inclusive youth programmes to community efforts such as the Green Spaces Growing Project and the Men’s Shed programmes, which promote wellbeing, connection, and opportunity for all.

Speaking ahead of the event, Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne said, “This past year, I have had the privilege of meeting some of the district’s unsung heroes—volunteers, community leaders and organisations who work tirelessly to support others. Their work is inspiring, and this event is a small token of appreciation for their



incredible contributions.” Councillor Byrne’s chosen charity for his term in office is Cuan Mhuire, which provides residential rehabilitation and support for individuals battling addiction. Speaking about the work they do, Chairperson Councillor Byrne said, “The work that Cuan Mhuire does is life-

changing—and, in many cases, lifesaving. Crucially, the organisation relies heavily on the generosity and dedication of volunteers. Without them, Cuan Mhuire simply could not function”. The ‘Together We Shine’ event will be an opportunity for volunteers and organisations across the district to come together,

reflect on their achievements and celebrate the strength of community spirit. He continued, “I am truly honoured to support and shine a light on the work being done by our local volunteers. I look forward to meeting many of you at this event and personally thanking you for your dedication and service.”

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# INCLUSIVE JOB FAIR OPENS DOORS TO NEW CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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Hosted by Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership, in collaboration with Cross Border Partnership Employment Services, the event brings together up to 60 local employers actively recruiting for a wide range of roles. The Job Fair is free to attend on a drop-in basis from 10am to 1pm and job seekers are encouraged to bring copies of an up-to-date CV to provide to employers.

Labour Market Partnerships, which create targeted employment action plans for council areas, are funded by the Department for Communities, and allow for collaboration at local and regional level to support people towards and into work.

Whether you are searching for full-time, part-time, flexible, or casual work, there are opportunities in manufacturing, hospitality, finance, transport, professional services, and many other sectors, with businesses ranging from global companies to local family-run enterprises.

Now in its fourth year, the Job Fair continues to be a key event for job seekers across the district, offering the chance to meet employers face-to-face, hand out your CV, and learn about job opportunities that match your skills and interests.

New for 2025, to create a more accessible and comfortable experience for everyone, this year's event will include a Quiet Hour from 11am to 12noon. During this time, lighting will be softer, and noise will be kept to a minimum

to support individuals with sensory sensitivities, anxiety, or anyone who may benefit from a calmer environment. A quiet room will also be available for anyone who wishes to step out of the Job Fair into a quieter environment. Employers and support services will still be available to engage during this time.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne, encouraged residents to take advantage of the opportunity, saying, "We are proud to support an event that not only connects job seekers with real opportunities but also prioritises inclusivity. The addition of a Quiet Hour at this year's Job Fair ensures a welcoming and comfortable



environment for everyone — including those with sensory sensitivities or who may feel overwhelmed in busy settings. I encourage anyone looking for work, thinking about a career change, or seeking advice to come along and take advantage of the wide range of support and opportunities available at the Job Fair."

In addition to meeting employers, attendees can receive free, one-to-one support on job searching, CV writing, and interview preparation from local support organisations including the NI Careers Service, Clanrye Group, and local Further

## Refurbishment Works to Get Underway at Kilkeel Leisure Centre

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is set to commence with the planned refurbishment of Kilkeel Leisure Centre.

This major refurbishment project, is due to commence in July 2025 and will see the modernisation of key areas of the facility, creating a more welcoming and up-to-date Centre for all users. The works are expected to take 12 months to complete.

Residents can look forward to enhanced facilities at Kilkeel Leisure Centre, including:

- Upgraded Reception area for centre users
- Extended state-of-the-art health and fitness gyms and equipment
- New studio space for group fitness classes
- Upgrades to pool facilities and new changing lockers
- Enhanced family wet and dry changing facilities
- Enhanced wet and dry accessible changing facilities
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including accessible spaces and cycle parking

Given the scale of works, Kilkeel Leisure Centre will be closed throughout the refurbishment, however, alternative facilities are available for residents in Newry Leisure Centre, Newcastle Centre, Down Leisure Centre and Ballymore Sports and Wellbeing Complex.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne said, "By investing £3.3million in first-class facilities, the Council is ensuring the people of Newry, Mourne and Down have access to the very best leisure facilities within our district.

"As a Council we are committed to continue to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district and reduce

## Mourne Gullion Strangford Welcomes Travel Professional to Discover its Hidden Gems

Representatives from the UK travel trade enjoyed a recent visit to Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark as part of a familiarisation (fam) trip organised by Tourism Ireland Great Britain and Tourism Northern Ireland.

These two leading organisations, responsible for developing and marketing tourism across the island of Ireland, joined forces to design the trip with the Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark to expand product offerings and increase

visitor spend to this unique destination, rich in natural beauty and outdoor adventure.

The outdoor activity and adventure-focused visit showcased the area's exceptional tourism potential through immersive experiences. From seaweed foraging, wild river dipping to electric bike rides, participants received hands-on insight into the region's diverse and marketable experiences.

This fam trip is a strategic step by Tourism Ireland Great Britain

and Tourism Northern Ireland to deepen travel trade awareness and equip agents with firsthand knowledge to better sell the region as a premier outdoor destination. The itinerary was designed to inspire new packages and itineraries, ultimately supporting local tourism providers and increasing footfall to the region.

On welcoming the group, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne said, "We are delighted to be involved in this fantastic initiative



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# Young Adults Shine and Celebrate Ireland's Fossil Heritage with Local School Children

One of the best ways for children to learn is from their peers, and the Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark Team saw this in action recently when they were on the road delivering interactive workshops about Ireland's Fossil Heritage.

Developed by The University College Cork, the workshops explored how fossils are formed, Ireland's ancient timeline and how mass extinctions occur.

Volunteer students from St Colmcilles, Crossgar, Assumption Grammar School, Ballynahinch, St Malachy's Castlewellan and Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry all went through training to deliver workshops to the local primary schools in their area.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Pete Byrne said, "Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark's rich ecological diversity is underpinned by its geological heritage, and we want to inspire the next generation of geologists, ecologists and palaeontologists.

I am amazed by the volunteer student's



enthusiasm and commitment to create a meaningful experience for the younger students. They made the workshops come alive and created fun and educational games around the topics they were teaching."

Jess Franklin, Senior Engagement Officer with Ireland's

Fossil Heritage, said, "Ireland has amazing fossil heritage that acts as a remarkable gateway science and a valuable source of inspiration and curiosity about the natural world and STEM. We are thrilled to share our new STEM activity kits with Mourne

Gullion Strangford Geopark! These kits allow local students to dive into thrilling hands-on activities, exploring everything from fossilisation to environmental change. We are honoured that the student volunteers gave their time to deliver our fossil themed activities."



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# WHY ‘GROWING WILD’ CAN BE A WIN FOR ALL!

**JV Allister outlines the ways in which Social Housing Landlords are helping conserve nature.**

I love nature, and have done since I was a child, and enjoy observing and writing about what I see and learn...from spiders to buzzards, from fungi to mighty oaks...but these days I'm also aware, indeed always aware, of what intrudes on my love and enjoyment: the serious damage to our natural world, right here in NI, and the consequential decline in wildlife.

It's not just that some birds or butterflies we took for granted a few years back are scarce or restricted to specialist habitats and protected places, but that there's an overall ongoing decline in the numbers of almost all previously common species, such as wild bees, moths at night and a whole range of flies.

It's important to emphasise that the decline or loss of species is not something to be mourned for itself, but the impact on other wildlife in our deeply connected natural environment, and ultimately on us and our food supply.

It's easy to despair about the situation, but my hope rises when I see positive change being led by people



Residents of Montgomery Manor in Bangor in their Conservation garden

and organisations that can make a difference, to help stop and reverse the decline.

Step forward social housing landlords!

With leadership from Alpha Housing, my landlord, and the Housing Executive, social landlords including many housing associations have committed to make their grounds maintenance practices nature-friendly... changes to mowing regimes to let native flowers flourish, for instance..., to

work with tenants on a wide range of habitat creation and activities, and ensure that nature is literally built into new developments.

Indeed, Alpha Housing is deepening its commitment by creating water features, so important to wildlife, including a beautiful pond at its Montgomery site in Bangor.

The commitment and importance of social housing providers to nature recovery can't be overstated, not least

because they are among the largest landowners in NI, but I hope that others will follow, for example health and education authorities, to at least sustain nature while we await positive change in rules on development and farming practices.

Maybe it's no longer despair but hope that many participants and partners will join in the fight... because it is a fight...to rescue nature in this lovely place we call home.

JVA

# HAVE YOU PLANNED YOUR SUMMER CHILDCARE?

**With brighter nights upon us, many working parents are starting to think about their summer childcare plans.**

## Employers For Childcare

Additional childcare costs over the school summer holidays can put a significant added strain on already stretched family finances.

Find out what financial support is available

There is help available with the cost of registered childcare, which can include some summer schemes, as well as year round providers such as registered childminders, out of school clubs and day nurseries. For example, parents may use Universal Credit, Childcare Vouchers or Tax-Free Childcare and the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme to help meet their bills. Ahead of the summer now is a good time to make sure your family is receiving all the financial support you are entitled to.

Increased support through Universal Credit and the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme In the Spring budget

the Chancellor confirmed an increase in support for childcare costs through Universal Credit that applies for families across the UK.

The maximum support that can be received towards childcare costs over this summer is £1,031 per month for one child and £1,768 for two or more children.

In Northern Ireland, the Education Minister announced a 10% increase to the maximum amount of support that can be claimed through the NI childcare Subsidy Scheme to £184 per month per child, or £376 per month of the child has a disability.

With these increases in support available, it is important to check that you are receiving the best form of support for your family's circumstances.

Finding suitable childcare The Family Support



NI website [www.familysupportni.gov.uk](http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk) is a useful resource for families looking for registered childcare and includes a search function for all registered childcare providers across Northern Ireland, including summer schemes.

Alternative working arrangements

Talk to your employer to see if they can facilitate alternative or flexible working patterns if you find it challenging to manage childcare over the

summer.

Flexible working arrangements can take various forms for example part-time working, compressed hours (working your agreed hours over fewer days), job sharing or term-time only working.

Further information To find out more about what financial support you are entitled to with your summer childcare, contact our Family Benefits Advice Service on 028 9267 8200 or email [hello@employersforchildcare.org](mailto:hello@employersforchildcare.org).

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sought at Resident meetings and actioned if appropriate. Tullywest Manor features a large lounge, dining room, entrance hall with seating area and a spacious conservatory, where residents can circulate and meet with each other and relatives. Each tastefully decorated bedroom, most with en-suite, offers complete privacy where residents are encouraged to express their own personal tastes. Tullywest recognises the need for a person-centred approach to care. Encouraging staff to learn



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## Northern Ireland Assembly Commission achieves Autism NI Impact Award

**The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission has recently achieved Autism NI's Impact Award, demonstrating the commitment of Assembly staff to inclusion for autistic and neurodivergent visitors.**

Staff have received tailored training from Autism NI and implemented a tailored action plan of adjustments across their services, to create a welcoming and accessible service. Autism NI's Director of Development, Christine Kearney said "We are delighted that the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission has achieved the Impact Award. The range of adjustments they have implemented, including quiet spaces, pre-visit information and improved signage, will support many autistic and neurodivergent visitors. By providing inclusive support, autistic and neurodivergent people can feel more comfortable, less anxious, and can access this service in a way that works for them. It's fantastic to see such a significant organisation in NI lead the way in building an inclusive society."

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# PLANNING FOR LATER LIFE AT HOME

A survey conducted by Home Instead revealed that many families find discussing care options challenging.

81% of people hesitate to talk about care with their parents, despite 33% expressing concern about their physical health.

Home Instead encourages people to start these conversations early to make the transition into care as smooth and stress-free as possible.

Here are some tips to broach the subject of care with your older loved ones:

1. Start Early: If your parents are over 70, begin observing their daily routines and any challenges they face. Casually introducing the idea of care as a way to maintain great quality of life in our 70s, 80s, and beyond. Having the discussion before it becomes an immediate necessity can help make the conversation less awkward later. By addressing potential concerns early, like vision issues or difficulties driving, you create a more comfortable environment for discussion when the need for care eventually arises. The support needed first may well be home help or dementia support, rather than for personal care.

2. Talk It Out: Foster open dialogue about your observations, focusing on your parents' wishes. It's important that Mum or



Dad feels heard and has the opportunity to share their thoughts and preferences in a respectful and productive conversation.

Collaborate to find solutions that work for them and use examples of where you are concerned about gaps in their current health and wellbeing. Use a tone you would appreciate

if the roles were reversed.

3. Maximise Independence: Look for solutions that support their autonomy. If they need assistance at home, consider options that allow them to continue engaging in activities they love, like cooking.

4. Attend one of Home Instead's 'Preparing

for Later Life at Home' workshops, which run quarterly either as a webinar or in Saintfield.

If you'd like to sign up for our next workshop, or if you'd appreciate some information or advice, please call 028 9560 9910 or email [info@downlisburn.homeinstead.co.uk](mailto:info@downlisburn.homeinstead.co.uk).

# Minister backs call to prioritise nature in social housing developments

The Environment Minister is backing Alpha Housing's calls for the social housing industry in Northern Ireland to make nature a priority with all current, and future, developments.

Andrew Muir MLA was one of several high-profile guests to speak about the importance of biodiversity and nature recovery at Alpha's 'Greening Social Housing' event in Belfast.

He has already seen first-hand the work that is being undertaken by some tenants, with the support of Alpha, during a special visit to Montgomery Manor in Bangor last October.

Tenants have set aside no mow areas, created raised beds for wildflowers, planted native hedging, strategically erected bird boxes and bug hotels, and reduced herbicide usage.

Similar work's been led by staff and tenants at Belfast's Alexander Court, with the gardens ensuring nature can thrive while offering residents a place to meet friends and family.

"It was great to be able to attend Alpha Housing's conference, to see the importance of nature recovery, and biodiversity being showcased, because it is important not only to Alpha, but also to my department and the people of Northern Ireland," said the Minister.

"We need to do more to support nature recovery, and

my department is working to bring forward a strategy in relation to that, but the action we can take on the ground is really tangible, and there are so many examples Alpha has across their estate which I am proud to be associated with. I even saw this work when I visited Montgomery Manor last year."

Held in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and AICO – the European market leader in the sale of home life safety equipment – other guest speakers included Grainia Long, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Chief Executive, recently-appointed Ulster Wildlife Chief Executive Officer Dawn Miskelly, Apex Housing's Director of Development Barry Kerr, Choice Housing's Sustainability and Energy Manager Brian Rankin, and Niche Environmental Services' found and director, Dominic Knower.

The underlying message was that time is running out if landlords, tenants, and industry stakeholders are to reverse the biodiversity crisis that is unfolding in Northern



Attending the Greening Social Housing conference in Belfast are, L to R: Avril Roddy, James Victor Allister (tenants of Alpha Housing at Montgomery Manor in Bangor), Alpha Housing Chief Executive Cameron Watt, DEARA Minister Andrew Muir MLA, and Northern Ireland Housing Executive Chief Executive Grainia Long.

Ireland. And by creating beautiful spaces and tranquil places, this can also benefit the health and well-being of residents, said Cameron Watt, the Chief Executive of Alpha Housing.

Cameron Watt, the Chief Executive of Alpha Housing, said: "Social housing providers like Alpha have a crucial role to play in not only addressing the needs of local communities, but also fostering nature's recovery in those communities and areas where we operate.

Ulster Wildlife CEO, Dawn Miskelly, said: "Nature is so important to our health and well-being as a society, and we can do so much more by taking small steps to integrate it more into social housing. We welcome the opportunity to work more closely with Alpha on all of these nature friendly initiatives and they have shown by holding events like a Greening Social Housing conference, they are leading the way in this space. It is fantastic to see."

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# New Big Green Egg Display at The Stove Yard

The Stove Yard in Newtownards has been Northern Ireland's leading Big Green Egg dealer for over eight years, supplying this iconic outdoor cooker to chefs, food lovers, and barbecue enthusiasts across the country.

Now, for 2025, they've taken things a step further with a brand new dedicated Big Green Egg display in their showroom — showcasing not only the full range of ceramic grills, but also the extensive collection of accessories that make the Egg a complete outdoor cooking system.

From roasting joints and baking sourdough to perfecting pizza and low 'n' slow brisket, the Big Green Egg is the ultimate all-in-one solution.

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The new display at The Stove Yard features fully built Egg setups, modular tables, and a wide selection of tools and cooking surfaces — from cast iron pans and pizza stones to specialist racks and rotisseries.

As the go-to destination for Big Green Egg in Northern Ireland, The Stove Yard offers expert advice, product demonstrations, and all the support you need to get started or upgrade your outdoor cooking game.



Visit the showroom in Newtownards to see the new display and experience why the Big Green Egg continues to set the standard for outdoor cooking.

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Century Electrical Wholesale (CEW) continues its growth with the opening of its newest branch in Downpatrick.

This expansion brings CEW's total network to eight locations across the region, reinforcing its position as a leading supplier to the electrical trade. Headquartered in

Belfast, the company also operates branches in Belfast North, Cookstown, Enniskillen, Lisburn, Newry, and Junction 14 Dungannon. This latest addition

in Downpatrick, located at 49 Church Street, signifies CEW's commitment to providing comprehensive service and an extensive product range to both trade customers and the public.

Backed by the buying power of the National Group, which also includes sister company National Electrical Wholesale (NEW) in the Republic of Ireland and NEW Electrical Distributors (UK), CEW offers a wide array of products. These include cables, wiring accessories, lighting,

heating, ventilation equipment, switchgear, smoke alarms, cable management, fixings, tools, and workwear.

Ross Hutchinson, Director, emphasizes CEW's dedication to exceptional customer service, in-depth product knowledge, and reliable advice, catering to projects of all sizes. The Downpatrick branch, like other CEW locations, is supported by a fleet of 15 delivery vans, ensuring efficient service across Northern Ireland.

Beyond its extensive stock, CEW differentiates itself

through offerings like a dedicated cable expert, technical support, and a cable cutting service. The company also houses a specialist Solar & Renewables division, headed by Peadar McCoy, providing a full range of high-quality solar PV equipment and EV charging solutions. Furthermore, CEW supports contractors through supply and upskilling, offering the NICEIC Level 3 Solar PV course at its branches, including the new Downpatrick location. This training equips electricians with



the necessary skills for solar system design, installation, and maintenance. The opening of the Downpatrick branch

underscores CEW's focus on personalised service and its ability to source specialised solutions, further solidifying its growth

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## Getting On the Property Ladder – Advice for First Time Buyers

As a first-time-buyer, the prospect of getting on the property ladder can seem daunting and complicated. However, by following our advice, the steps can become significantly easier.

The first thing that you will have to do is begin saving for a

deposit. Generally, you will have to save between 5% and 20% of the value of the property that you like – if the home is £150,000 then you will need between £7,500 (5%) and £30,000 (20%) depending on the property. It is important to note that saving more for your deposit will give access to a wider range of cheaper mortgages – so get saving!

It is important that you factor in the other costs associated with buying a property. These can add up to the thousands of pounds and can derail any potential budget when it comes to getting your first home.

Additional costs include survey costs,

solicitor's fees, buildings insurance and valuation fees to name but a few. It is worth asking your bank about these prices before making an offer and you can therefore factor them into your budget. First-time-buyers do have an advantage here as they will pay no Stamp Duty on the first £300,000 for properties valued up to £500,000.

When applying for your mortgage, the most important factor for your lender is to know that you will be able to meet your repayments. You will need to provide documentation of all of your outgoing costs, including, debts, household bills, or other costs such



as car repayments, childcare or travel costs. The amount that a lender will give you for a mortgage is directly related to both your income and outgoing expenses – so it is important to consider this when

looking into homes that you can afford.

There are a number of governmental schemes available to help first-time-buyers get on the property market such as affordable housing schemes, help to buy

schemes and shared ownership schemes. These are designed to assist those who are struggling to save their full deposit and might be exactly what is required to get you on the property ladder.

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# PLANNING AN OUTDOOR KITCHEN

## PLANNING THE SPACE

Think about the direction – in the UK a South facing situation is normally preferred to make the most of all that natural light during summer but also think about roof cover, especially over any appliances and your food prep area. You might also want to consider having ventilation for your cooking system installed just as you would indoors.

## FUNCTION AND FORM

Make provision for countertop space for cooking as well as serving & entertaining. For example an island with bar area and stools

could be considered or perhaps a lounging area as well

## GET COOKING

Traditional Barrell style Barbecue grill, ceramic cooker, rotisserie, smoker or even a (gas or wood-fired) pizza oven? Options can include sear burners, side burners and warmers. You can even integrated some smart technology options into your outdoor kitchen.

## KEEP IT COOL

It may not be too long a trek to the kitchen but an outdoor fridge can be beneficial if you are preparing salads and or cool desserts out of doors.

Also handy for keeping drinks cool



and within easy reach.

## WHICH MATERIAL

Stainless steel is a hot favourite for industrial look cabinetry however there are lots of powder-coated metals that

also work. Stone and tile are also options. Countertop materials are another thing to think about. They need to be both functional and durable. **HEAT IT UP**

If you want to use

your new outdoor kitchen well into Autumn consider installing heat sources such as patio heaters and a fire-pit.

## POWER UP

Be sure you have enough power on the

deck or patio, which could mean enlarging a gas line or adding electrical capacity to run appliances and lighting.

## LIGHT IT UP

You will need

functional lighting for cooking safely at night –so consider this at work surface level as well as ambient lighting.

## ENTERTAINING OUT OF DOORS

You can install built-in speakers and a even a flat screen TV, or choose only music and let the view from your outdoor kitchen and dining area entertain you and your guests.

# Inspiring conservatory ideas

**Whether you're building a new conservatory or looking to give your current conservatory a little TLC, get inspired for your next project with a mix of these fun and unique ideas!**

Questions to ask yourself include: What square footage am I working with? Which conservatory design will fit in with the style of my house? How do I want to use my conservatory? (i.e. For dining, sunbathing, botany, or reading etc.) Once you've answered these questions, it's just a matter of choosing your design and deciding how best to decorate it.

Glass extensions are a sleek and effortless way to upgrade your conservatory. Not only do they invite lots of light and warmth into your home, but they also work with almost any brickwork or cladding design. Double glazing and integrated doors offer a seamless transition into your garden, while landscaping your outdoor space gives you something beautiful to look at on a rainy day.

An orangery. Orangeries are another modern conservatory design idea. Bringing nature indoors with tall parlour palms and hanging baskets full of Mandevilla ('Rock-trumpet') is ideal. Better yet, if you're opting for an orangery, the world is your botanical oyster. For a fragrant oasis, attach Bougainvillea and Jasminum azoricum to trellises; decorate tables with Stephanotis floribunda-filled pots, and place giant Phoenix palms in

lonely corners. Succulent popularity is spiking in the world of interior design. If you're less green-fingered than the average gardener, having a selection of cacti displayed in terrariums, vases, and/or refined concrete pots is a (literally) effortless way of modernising your space

Sleek flooring. A stunning addition to any conservatory; wooden parquet floors are contemporary, stylish, and intricate. Whether you choose a walnut, oak, laminate, or even vinyl design, these floors will transform your conservatory into a tranquil retreat fit for royalty.

A coloured conservatory. Have you been

searching for conservatory colour ideas? Teal is a multifaceted colour available in a spectrum of shades – from pale celeste and aquamarine to rich evergreen and ocean blue. Choosing the right shade for your conservatory is just a matter of light. The brighter the room, the darker you can get away with. That said, to maintain balance, we suggest you stick to the middle of the palette.

A contemporary dining area. A great way to utilise your modern conservatory is to turn it into a garden dining room. Think quintessential picnics with jute decor and polished brass place settings. You can ei-

ther design a more formal dining area by sticking with a traditional dining table and chairs or opt for something a little more sociable and choose benches and relaxed floor seating.

Stackable furniture. When it comes to decorating a small conservatory, maximising your space and working with the light is essential. Stackable rattan furniture is perfect for keeping things neat and compact.

Mini greenhouse. Also known as sunrooms, lean-to conservatories are rectangular-shaped structures attached to the wall of your house. Perfect for growing herbs or filling with air-purifying

plants, lean-tos can house workbenches, banquet tables, or swing benches that look out into your lovingly landscaped garden. Practical furniture. Keep it simple and elegant with grey furniture and bright decor. Light grey floor tiles work well in sunrooms with lots of light, as do anti-bleach furniture choices like rattan sets or twisted metal love seats. Consider floor cushions and recliner chairs, and surround yourself with sun-loving plants for a lung-friendly and green-fingered oasis.

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# SUMMER BARBEQUE GUIDE

With the sun beating down and heat slowly rising, it is clear to see that barbeque season has finally arrived. However, if you are thinking of investing in a barbeque, there is a great deal to consider.

Prices for barbeques can range from £10 to the multiple thousands and the extensive range has something to cater for every possible need. Depending on the number of grills, number of additional features and quality of its production – there is a lot to consider when choosing your perfect barbeque.

The timeless debate which has been had over many a family barbeque once again

raises its head on this occasion – gas or charcoal?

In many cases your budget might well dictate your choice for you as charcoal barbeques tend to be significantly more cost effective. For those barbeque stalwarts, nothing will compare to a traditional charcoal barbeque and using a gas equivalent is as good as cheating. It is also widely held that the taste from cooking

on a charcoal barbeque is distinctive and cannot be reproduced by a modern gas counterpart.

Charcoal does, however, take a considerable length of time to heat up whereas with gas, you can begin cooking almost immediately – providing an obvious advantage. For the sheer convenience of instantaneous cooking, gas barbeques are hard to beat.

In terms of running

costs, with gas barbeques you will often 'rent' a cylinder and pay for each refill of gas that you require – a 13Kg canister costs approximately £35. With charcoal however, costs approximately £15 for a 10kg bag which will serve up to three medium barbeques.

Other factors that should be considered include if the barbeque has a lid, the number of people you are likely to be cooking for and what type of food you intend to be cooking.

Buying a barbeque with a lid brings a degree of versatility to your barbequing that is not otherwise available. It grants you far greater control over the heat and

allows you to cook food more thoroughly as opposed to burning the outside whilst leaving the inside underdone. If you are sticking to traditional burgers and sausages then perhaps charcoal is for you, however if you wish to branch out and cook chicken or pork then gas may be the safest option.

If you have a large family or intend on cooking for guests on a regular basis, it might be worth investing in a gas barbeque as it will give you the reliability and accuracy that is required when hosting for numerous guests.

It also brings unrivalled convenience that allows its owner to mingle freely



knowing that the cooking is fully under their control. More upmarket barbeques

will also come with various features such as heating racks that allow food to sit above

to the heat of the grill whilst still in the barbeque to ensure that it will remain warm.

## Driveway ideas for maximum kerb appeal

Your driveway serves more than one purpose.

While it's a convenient and safe place to park your vehicle, it also plays a lead role in creating a lasting first impression. Here's a round-up of some key types.

Gravel driveways. Gravel driveways offer a charming and cost-effective way to revamp your driveway. Gravel and stone come in a variety of colours and sizes, providing the opportunity to fully customise the look to suit your style. They also pair well with other materials such as stepping stones, block paved borders, and stamped concrete. In addition, gravel provides great natural drainage and is easy to maintain. You can cleverly combine gravel with block paving to stop the gravel from spraying across the pavement.

Resin driveways. Resin driveways have become increasingly popular with UK homeowners looking for modern front driveway ideas as they offer a contemporary appearance and incredible durability. The mixture of resin and aggregates creates a seamless surface that's resistant to weeds and cracking, with an array of colours and patterns available, you can easily match your home's exterior. Resin driveways naturally drain water and are environmentally friendly. Resin's neat and smooth finish is stunning all by itself or with a few key features. Consider the shape of your resin driveway and whether you'd like any cut-outs for plants, trees, water features, or decorative edging. Due to resin's versatility,

the sky is your limit.

Tarmac driveways. Tarmac or asphalt driveways are durable and long-lasting. Tarmac is a mix of aggregates and tar, whereas asphalt is a mix of aggregates and bitumen. The latter offers a better finish and smoother surface compared to tarmac. The finish of tarmac can be enhanced through 'chip sealing'. This is when tar is poured onto a gravel base, stones are added, and it's pressed with roller equipment. Tarmac and asphalt are cost-effective to install and pair well with a number of aesthetics: They look great alongside patterned bricks. Create a stunning look by contrasting tarmac or asphalt with lighter stone. Soften the dark tones by including a lush lawn or greenery in your tarmac driveway design.

Concrete driveways.

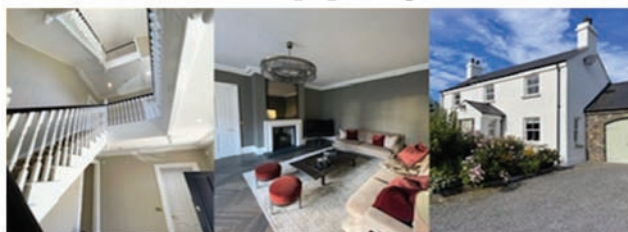
Poured concrete is one of the most common driveway materials on the market. It's used to create low-maintenance driveways that require minimal upkeep. Coloured concrete is great if you want to add dimension and interest, such as a cream border or chequered patterns. It's also malleable when installed correctly. For example, it can make patterns when poured into moulds and can be sectioned and paired with other materials, such as aggregate or slate. Stamped concrete can give the appearance of a different material such as stone or brick for a fraction of the cost. Block paving driveways. Block paving creates a classic and elegant first impression. It's usually made from concrete, which is engineered in a factory for consistency and accuracy. For this reason, block paving

is a durable and versatile option for your driveway. A popular design trend with block paving is using light grey blocks to border and 'edge' the drive and any central features, such as a roundabout, lawn, water feature, or pathway. A dark grey paving block is then used to fill in the remaining area, offering a great aesthetic that stands the test of time. Whether you use one type of block, two-tones, mixed, or a combination of materials, block paving is a decorative option that offers a lovely finish. Monoblock paving driveways incorporate two-tones of block paving to create patterns and interest. The two tones can be two different materials or two colours of the same material.

For more information see <https://www.check-atrade.com/blog/ideas/driveway-ideas/>

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# Great Beaches Around East Down

**Our local area boasts a captivating coastline along the Irish Sea and Strangford Lough, offering stunning scenery and unique coastal experiences. Here are some notable beaches and coastal areas.**

**Tyrella Beach:** Located near Clough, Tyrella is a beautiful sandy beach backed by impressive dunes, offering fantastic views of Dundrum Bay and the Mourne Mountains. Its designation as an Area of Special Scientific Interest highlights its ecological importance and makes it ideal for peaceful walks and birdwatching.

**Murlough National Nature Reserve:** Situated north of Newcastle, Murlough encompasses a vast, five-mile stretch of golden sands within a 6,000-year-old dynamic sand dune system. Managed by the National Trust, it's Ireland's first nature reserve and a haven for wildlife. The beach offers excellent walking opportunities with stunning views of the Mournes, while the dunes behind are rich in biodiversity. Seals are often spotted along the coast. Note that dogs must be kept on a lead within the nature reserve.

**Ballyhorney Beach:** Situated on the Lecale Peninsula, a short drive east of Downpatrick, Ballyhorney is a long, sandy beach renowned for its dramatic cliffs and caves at its northern end. It offers stunning views

out towards the Irish Sea and is popular for walking, exploring the coastline, and enjoying the natural beauty. The cliffs provide shelter in some areas, and at low tide, interesting rock formations are revealed. Be mindful of the tide if exploring near the cliffs and caves.

**Kilclief Beach:** Located on the western shore of Strangford Lough's Narrows, near the village of Kilclief, this picturesque sandy beach is overlooked by the historic Kilclief Castle. The calm waters of the Lough make it ideal for activities like paddleboarding, swimming, and kayaking. It's also a great spot for walking and enjoying a picnic with scenic views across the Narrows.

**Newcastle Beach:** Found in the lively town of Newcastle, at the foot of the Mourne Mountains, this easily accessible beach offers a mix of sand and pebbles. Its proximity to the town's promenade means easy access to amenities, amusements, cafes, and shops, making it a popular choice for families.

For Unique Coastal Features

Strangford Lough Shores: The diverse shores of



Strangford Lough, with their islands, mudflats, and rocky areas, provide a unique coastal environment rich in wildlife. Various access points around the Lough offer opportunities for walking and exploring this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**Kilclief:** A short distance from Kilclief, Cloghy Rocks are a popular spot for wildlife watching, particularly seals, which often haul out on these rocks as the tide recedes.

When planning your visit to these beaches, remember to check tide times and any local regulations.



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Kebab on Naan Bread | Gyros Kebab | King Kebab - All meat on chips

## KIDS MEALS

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Kids Burger & Side - Single patty with cheese on brioche bap with choice of side  
Kids Chicken Strips & Side - 2 x chicken tenders and choice of side

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# Glebe Equine: Enhancing Equine Well-being in Hillsborough

Glebe Equine is a dedicated centre for optimizing the health, happiness, and performance of horses. Established in February 2025, this relatively new venture has quickly positioned itself as a provider of state-of-the-art equine fitness and rehabilitation services.

Glebe Equine, Glebe Road, Hillsborough, offers a comprehensive suite of therapies and programs tailored to meet the diverse needs of equine athletes and companions alike. Whether a horse is recovering from an injury, undergoing fitness training, or simply requiring therapeutic care, Glebe Equine provides a supportive environment

and advanced modalities to promote their well-being.

Services Offered at Glebe Equine:

Glebe Equine boasts an impressive array of services, focusing on innovative and scientifically backed approaches to equine care:

- ECB Water Treadmill - The ECB Water Treadmill is a highly effective and fully customisable piece

of equipment designed to support each horse's individual needs. With adjustable water height, incline, and speed, we can tailor every session to target specific goals—whether it's improving overall fitness, rebuilding strength after injury, or addressing muscle weakness and asymmetry. The buoyancy of the water reduces concussion on the joints and limbs, making it a safe and low-impact way to develop topline, improve stride length, and enhance cardiovascular health. It's a brilliant tool for both performance horses and those in rehabilitation.

- InstantCryo - Instant Cryo is a fast-acting cold therapy that delivers targeted pain relief, reduces inflammation, and minimises swelling. It can reach difficult-to-access areas anywhere on the body, making it ideal for treating

acute injuries, managing chronic conditions, and aiding post-exercise recovery at Glebe Equine.

- K-Laser - The K-Laser is a high-powered therapeutic laser that uses specific wavelengths of light to relieve pain, reduce inflammation, and accelerate healing.

At Glebe Equine, we use it for effective pain relief and recovery in cases of tendon and ligament injuries, joint issues, wounds, and muscle soreness—supporting your horse's comfort, recovery and performance.

- Combi-Floor: This cutting-edge platform combines vibration therapy (for improved circulation and muscle relaxation), Pulsed Electromagnetic Field (PEMF) therapy (to support cell regeneration and reduce inflammation), and an optional weigh scale

to monitor progress. It aids in injury recovery, reduces stiffness, supports hoof growth, and is beneficial for pre and post-exercise recovery.

- BEMER Therapy: This technology enhances circulation and supports the body's natural recovery processes.

- Solarium & Wash Bay: Facilities to aid in muscle relaxation and general well-being.

- Private Treatment Room: A dedicated space for veterinary, physiotherapy, and other therapy sessions.

A Focus on Holistic Well-being:

Glebe Equine's philosophy appears to centre on a holistic approach to equine care, recognising the interconnectedness of fitness, rehabilitation, and overall well-being. By offering a variety of advanced therapies under



one roof, they aim to provide a comprehensive and convenient solution for horse owners seeking to optimise their equine partners' health and performance.

Glebe Equine is well-

positioned to serve horse owners in the surrounding areas of County Down and further afield. The facility's investment in modern technologies and its focus on tailored programs suggest a commitment to providing a

high standard of care within the local equine community. For those interested in learning more or booking services, Ella at Glebe Equine can be contacted 07801 448269 or see [www.glebeequine.co.uk](http://www.glebeequine.co.uk)



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- Combi-Floor with vibration, PEMF & weigh scale
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# Hillyard House Hotel:A boutique Hotel beside Castlewellan Forest Park

Hillyard House Hotel is an award-winning boutique retreat. Its prime location, adjacent to the entrance of the stunning Castlewellan Forest Park and a short distance from the picturesque seaside resort of Newcastle, makes it an ideal base for exploring the natural beauty and attractions of the region.

Hillyard House prides itself on offering a blend of modern luxury and warm hospitality. The hotel features 20 beautifully appointed, modern ensuite rooms, each designed to provide the highest standards of comfort. Guests can expect contemporary open-plan furnishings, including a dressing table, ample storage, and a table with chairs. Each room is also equipped with a TV, individual coffee machine, air conditioning, and a spacious bathroom, ensuring a relaxing and convenient stay. Thoughtful touches like complimentary spring water and local photography add to the welcoming atmosphere.

Beyond the comfortable accommodations, Hillyard House boasts excellent facilities to enhance the guest experience. The hotel is home to The Yard Restaurant, which enjoys an excellent reputation for its quality, locally sourced, and seasonal food and promises a culinary experience to remember. For those seeking a place to unwind and

socialise, Mrs Coleman's Bar offers a delightful setting. Guests can enjoy top-class cocktails, a selection of local craft beers, gins, and whiskeys. It's the perfect spot to relax after a day of exploring or to enjoy a pre-dinner drink. There is also live music every Saturday evening from 9pm.

Hillyard House's location caters perfectly to outdoor enthusiasts. As highlighted in their advertisement, the hotel is within a 30-minute drive of numerous top-class golf courses at A Golfer's Haven. Moreover, its proximity to Castlewellan Forest Park opens up a world of outdoor activities. Guests can easily access walking, hiking, and mountain biking trails, as well as opportunities for kayaking on the tranquil lake within the park. Castlewellan Forest Park spans approximately 450 hectares and encompasses woodland and a 40-hectare lake. Hiking in the spectacular Mourne Mountains is also just 5 minutes away by car.

Hillyard House Hotel serves as an ideal



gateway to experiencing the natural beauty and attractions of County Down.

Whether you're seeking a relaxing break, an adventurous outdoor escape, or a culinary treat,

Hillyard House provides a comfortable and stylish base for your adventure!

Find out more and book your next break by visiting [www.hillyard-house.co.uk](http://www.hillyard-house.co.uk) or phone 028 4377 1010

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HOUSE

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- quality locally sourced seasonal foods | excellent reputation

Mrs Coleman's Bar

- cocktail mixology | local craft beers, gins, and whiskeys

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# Castlewellan Show 2025!

**This year's Show takes place on Saturday 19th July in the beautiful setting of Castlewellan Forest Park, Co. Down.**

The Show offers a fantastic, fun day out for all the family, with something for everyone. It is a one-day celebration of local farming, food and rural life.

On the day there will be a variety of livestock classes, with thousands of animals being judged, including beef, dairy, sheep, horses, ponies, donkeys, pigs, poultry, rabbits and caviars. Attractions include the ever-popular showjumping, impressive dog agility, pony games and a family pet show. For younger visitors there is

plenty to see and do, with children's entertainment, bouncy castles, face painting and much more.

A great variety of trade stands means there is something to suit all tastes, with beauty products including B Perfect double decker bus, top clothes retailers Auld Forge Clothing, Edinburgh Outdoor Wear, not forgetting high end farm machinery to browse. In the impressive Craft Village visitors will find local, homemade arts and crafts as well as original artwork by acclaimed artists such as Nigel

Allison.

Other highlights include the Home Industries marquee, where local schools get involved with some amazing displays. Tuck into something tasty in the Food Village, proudly promoting local produce. There is also a larger Eco Village this year, promoting the environment and sustainability with many interesting additions inside.

Attractions this year include Mourne Alpacas, Sheep Shearing in the Fleece Marquee, Model Farm Displays, Spinners & Weavers, NI Stick Makers, Seaforde Vintage Club Displays, Displays from PSNI & NIFRS, Farming Families Health Check Vans, Castlewellan Integrated Choir and come and visit our vintage tea run this year by RLNI Lifeboats, Newcastle and show your support to a fantastic local charity.

Our Charity of the year this year is OG Cancer NI which was formed to benefit patients

and families affected by Oesophago-Gastric Cancer. They will be selling our show day catalogue. £1 of the sale of each catalogue goes directly to the charity. They will also be there with an information stand pop over and say hello to them.

New elements this year we have cookery demonstrations throughout the day from top local chefs promoting the very best of local agri-food.

We have County Harmony, Box Car Brian and Jodon McPolin on the main stage to delight the crowds. New to the show this year we have dancing displays from the fantastic Jiving Gym as well as introducing a Jiving Competition. To end the show we have tug of war from County Down Young Farmers. With all this and so much more to enjoy, It's a day not to be missed!

Castlewellan Show runs Saturday 19th July, from 9am-6pm.

Discounted Tickets can be available online now at [castlewellanshow.com](http://castlewellanshow.com)

## So Safari, So Good...

**Many who grew up in Northern Ireland in the 70's recall with nostalgia the Causeway Safari Park.**

Nestled in the scenic countryside near Ballymoney, this park, which operated until 1997, offered a unique experience. Drive through enclosures where you could come face-to-face with majestic lions and playful monkeys. Onsite fair rides and perhaps even getting your picture taken with a lion cub! It wasn't exactly Jurassic Park but then again who needs dinosaurs when errant monkeys are around to threaten your wing mirrors?

The closure of the Causeway Safari Park in the late 90's marked the end of an era however its legacy lives on in the stories shared across generations. The site's subsequent transformation into the Benvarren Animal Rescue Kennels signifies a continued commitment to animal welfare and a recent "A Causeway Safari Tale" exhibition at the Ballymoney Museum further underscored the nostalgic place this park holds in the community's collective memory.

Today, families still have a diverse range of options to immerse themselves in the wonders of the animal world. Here are some fantastic places where you can

create new memories!

Belfast Zoo (Belfast, County Antrim): A cornerstone of Northern Ireland's animal attractions, Belfast Zoo boasts a rich history and a diverse collection of over 130 species. From endangered primates to majestic big cats and playful penguins, a visit here is a journey through different habitats across the globe. The zoo's commitment to conservation and education makes it not only a fun day out but also an opportunity to learn about the importance of protecting wildlife. Keep an eye out for their regular events and feeding times for an extra engaging experience.

The Ark Open Farm (Newtownards, County Down): For a more hands-on experience, The Ark Open Farm offers the chance to get up close and personal with a variety of animals. Children will delight in feeding lambs, petting rabbits, and even encountering some more exotic residents. The farm also features play areas, making it a perfect destination for families with younger children looking for interactive fun.

Annaglinny Park and



Farm (Dungannon, County Tyrone): Combining the charm of a farm with the excitement of a park, Annaglinny offers a relaxed and engaging day out. Visitors can meet farm animals, enjoy play facilities, and even participate in animal feeding sessions. It's a great place to learn about rural life and connect with animals in a friendly environment.

World of Owls (Antrim, County Antrim): For those fascinated by birds of prey, the World of Owls is a must-visit. As Northern Ireland's only dedicated owl and bird of prey centre, it provides a unique opportunity to see these magnificent creatures up close and learn about their conservation. They often host demonstrations and educational talks, offering a truly insightful experience.

Streamvale Open Farm (Belfast, County Antrim): A popular choice for families

in the Belfast area, Streamvale Open Farm offers a hands-on experience with farm animals. Seasonal events and activities like milking demonstrations add to the fun, making it a regular destination for many.

These modern animal parks continue the tradition of providing opportunities for education, entertainment, and fostering a connection with the natural world. While the thrill of a drive-through safari might be a nostalgic memory for some, the current landscape offers diverse and engaging ways for families to create their own cherished animal encounters in Northern Ireland. The whispers of wild roars may have faded at Benvarren, but the joyful sounds of discovery and delight continue to echo across the many wonderful animal parks that thrive today.

## HANNON Coach & Sail is perfect for a city break in Glasgow!

**Direct Belfast – Glasgow Express now departing from the new Belfast Grand Central Station.**

An award-winning service offering hassle-free travel, HANNON Coach & Sail is ideal for a city break in Glasgow and the perfect antidote to flying and airport stress! Already hugely popular with those in the know, the Belfast – Glasgow Express Coach Service is rated 5-Star on TripAdvisor.

A shopper's paradise, Glasgow is recognised as having the best retail therapy in the UK outside of London. Consistently voted 'top of the shops', the city is Scotland's premier shopping destination. Not just shopping, Glas-

gow is also famous for its fantastic nightlife, and great choice of restaurants and bars. Glasgow is the perfect choice for your next city break away.

With a simple flat fare of £47 which includes the cost of the ferry and your bag, the Belfast – Glasgow Express offers a really attractive, convenient and low-cost alternative to flying.

The service is operated by HANNON Coach and leaves twice a day from Belfast, Grand Central Station (Stand 18) and drops visitors right in the heart of Glasgow's 'Style Mile'.

The simple flat fare allows passengers to pick and mix dates and times of travel to suit and with no luggage charges it makes a perfect travel option for a shopping trip. There are also a great



range of hotels just minutes from Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station.

Company director Aodh Hannon says people seem to really love the convenience of the service as we take you right into the heart of the city centre.

"People love the fact that it's so hassle-free compared to flying, no airport transfers and with no extra charge

for luggage it is a massive help with keeping the cost of a break down," said Mr Hannon.

The service can be booked online at [www.hannoncoach.com](http://www.hannoncoach.com) up to 1 hour before departure or by phone using the very friendly telephone booking service.

Call 028 9265 0700 (Mon – Fri) or visit [www.hannoncoach.com](http://www.hannoncoach.com)

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## Lick is Cream of the Crop

**Newcastle Gelato Maker, Lick, Celebrates 10 years with Major Wins at the 2025 Ice Cream Awards!**

The annual Ice Cream Alliance Awards, a prestigious event recognizing excellence in the nation's beloved frozen treat, took place recently. Amidst strong competition, a small, family-run enterprise from Newcastle made a significant impact, securing the Best of Flavour title for their Pistachio gelato, first place in the Flavour Class for their Caramelised Biscuit, another first for Best of Flavour overall, and ultimately finishing as the runner-up for the coveted Champion of Champions award.

Despite being established relatively recently in 2015, Food NI members Lick Gelato demonstrated their ability to compete successfully against more established names in the ice cream industry.

Founded by the Mourne family and handcrafted in Newcastle, Lick Gelato specialises in authentic Italian-style artisan ice cream. Their philosophy revolves around crafting innovative flavour combinations using high-quality ingredients to deliver exceptional taste experiences, offering a wide variety of options to cater to diverse palates.

Simon, who accepted the award for the Open Flavour Class, commented, "We are absolutely thrilled. We always hope for



recognition but never truly expect to win. To come away with three awards is unbelievable, and to be named runner-up Overall is just incredible. This success truly validates all the hard work and dedication we put into bringing the finest handcrafted artisan gelato to our customers."

Reflecting on their popular offerings, Lick Gelato noted, "Our Vanilla, Pomegranate, and Pistachio has really become a signature flavour for us. Pistachio has been a long-standing offering, and we consistently strive to add our unique touch to classic flavours. Recently, our interpretation of the popular Dubai Chocolate trend has been incredibly popular and sells out very quickly. Our customers have truly embraced pistachio."

This year's awards coincide with the family

business celebrating its 10th anniversary.

With a rich history spanning over eight decades, the Ice Cream Alliance Awards are a highly anticipated event in the industry calendar. The awards are renowned for their stringent judging procedures and their role in acknowledging the highest standards and groundbreaking developments within the ice cream sector.

As a cornerstone of the vibrant ice cream industry, the Ice Cream Alliance continues to encourage innovation and creativity, promising a bright and flavourful future for all.

In addition to the Lick Gelato café and shop on 27 Central Newcastle Promenade Lick Gelato is now also available from Eurospar, Kilkeel!

## MILNE ADDS TWO MORE SITES TO HOLIDAY PARK PORTFOLIO

**Milne Holiday Parks has recently expanded its portfolio with the exciting acquisition of two new holiday parks, now known collectively as Groomsport Bay.**

This significant development further solidifies Milne Holiday Parks' position as the leading provider of high-quality holiday destinations along the stunning Northern Irish coastline.

Milne Holiday Parks now boasts a collection of seven beach-front parks, offering an enviable selection of locations for those dreaming of owning a home by the Sea. The addition of Groomsport Bay complements their existing parks: Cranfield Bay, Mourneview, Silvercove, Pebble Beach, Cranfield House and Shanslieve All 12x month holiday parks. Each of these parks offers unique characteristics and access to the beautiful beaches and landscapes that Northern Ireland is renowned for.

The appeal of owning a holiday home at a Milne Holiday Park is further enhanced by the attractive financial options available. Prospective owners can step into their dream with deposits starting from as little as 10%. Flexible finance options are available at low rates, making holiday home ownership more accessible than ever. This allows families and individuals to invest in a lifestyle of relaxation and



Cranfield Bay Caravan Park

coastal enjoyment without undue financial strain.

Currently, Milne Holiday Parks offers an impressive selection of over 200 new and pre-owned holiday homes for sale. This extensive range ensures that there is something to suit various tastes and budgets. Adding to the appeal, Milne Holiday Parks is currently offering free site fees for 2025 & 2026 on new purchases, representing a significant £6000 saving for new owners. This limited-time offer presents a compelling reason to explore the opportunities available at their six beach-front locations.

Owners at Milne Holiday Parks can enjoy their holiday homes ALL Year Round, allowing for extended breaks and the flexibility to visit whenever they desire. This extended season maximizes the value

of ownership and allows for enjoyment across different seasons, from summer beach days to cosy autumn retreats and refreshing spring escapes with the added bonus of being able to rent out their holiday homes with great returns.

For those interested in learning more about owning a holiday home at any of the Milne Holiday Parks, including the new

Groomsport Bay, further information can be found on their website: [www.milneholidayparks.com](http://www.milneholidayparks.com). Additionally, individuals can text "HOLIDAY HOME" to 07860 617 616 to request a call-back and speak directly with a representative who can provide personalised assistance and details on available properties and financing options.



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## Brennan's Spar & Service Stations, Seaforde & Dundrum

**Brennan's Spar & Service Station is a well-regarded local business with a presence in both Seaforde and Dundrum.**

Brennan's Spar, Seaforde  
The Seaforde branch of Brennan's Spar, located on the Newcastle Road has recently undergone a significant investment, marking a new chapter for this established business. Conor McKibbin, who has been trading in Seaforde since 1998, oversaw the refurbishment, which aimed

to expand the store and enhance the services offered to meet the evolving needs of local shoppers.

The extensive upgrade has resulted in:

**Doubled Fresh Food Offering:** The store now boasts a significantly larger selection of fresh, locally sourced produce, catering to those looking for ingredients

for home-cooked meals.

**Expanded Grocery Range:** Beyond fresh food, the entire grocery range has been extended, providing a wider choice of products for everyday needs and for stocking up.

**New Job Creation:** The expansion has created 10 new full and part-time jobs for the local area, demonstrating Brennan's commitment to the community's economic well-being.

**Enhanced Services:** A key addition is the Post Office counter, conveniently located at the checkouts and open from 8 am to 8 pm every day. This provides a crucial service for the community, from sending mail to handling bill payments.

**Upgraded Food-to-Go:** The popular Brennan's Ice Cream counter remains a highlight, now complemented by a new-look Brennan's Deli and a comfortable seating area. Customers can enjoy breakfast, lunch, and an all-new range of milkshakes on-site or to take away. The introduction of a Barista Iced machine further expands their coffee-to-go offerings.

**Texaco Fuel Forecourt:** The four-pump fuel forecourt now operates under the Texaco brand and offers new pre-

pay at pump options for added convenience.

**Support for Local Producers:** Brennan's Spar in Seaforde proudly stocks products from local suppliers, including The Bare Pantry, SPAR Bakery, Brennan's Bakery, SPAR Enjoy Local, and The Kitchen ranges.

**Brennan's Spar, Dundrum**  
Located at 12 Main Street in Dundrum Brennan's Spar serves the residents and visitors of this picturesque village on a main route from Belfast and North Down to Newcastle and the Mourne area. It operates as a convenience store offering a range of groceries, including own-label products, beer, wine, and ready meals.

**Brennan's in Dundrum** provides essential services such as Everyday Groceries, Food to Go, Off-Licence, Barista Bar and Cuisine de France freshly baked goods.

The recent investment in the Seaforde store underscores the commitment of Brennan's Spar to adapt and grow, ensuring they continue to serve the needs of their customers in the best possible way.

By expanding their offerings, enhancing their services, and supporting local producers, Brennan's Spar & Service Station remains a vital and appreciated part of both Seaforde and Dundrum.



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## Unlock the Ultimate Outdoor Adventure: Top Camping Hacks for Your NI Getaway

**Northern Ireland, with its stunning coastline, rolling green hills, and mystical forests, offers a breathtaking backdrop for a memorable camping holiday.**

However, even the most seasoned outdoor enthusiasts can benefit from a few clever hacks to enhance their experience. Whether you're planning a family adventure in a bustling campsite or a tranquil escape into the wilder parts of the country, these tips will help you make the most of your time under the Northern Irish skies.

**Setting Up Like a Pro:**

**Pitch Perfect Every Time:** Before you even leave home, do a practice run of setting up your tent in your garden. This will familiarize you with the process and ensure all the necessary parts are present. When you arrive at your campsite, take a moment to assess the terrain. Look for a flat, even surface away from any obvious dips or rocks. Placing a groundsheet or tarp beneath your tent not only protects the bottom from damage and moisture but also makes packing up cleaner.

**Light Up Your Night Efficiently:** Instead of relying solely on a single lantern, consider using multiple smaller, battery-operated LED lights or headlamps. These are more versatile for tasks like cooking or reading in your tent and conserve energy. String fairy lights around your tent for a cosy ambiance and added visibility at night. Don't forget extra batteries!

**Organize Your Space:** Keep your campsite tidy and functional by utilizing storage solutions. Packing cubes are fantastic for organizing clothing and



gear within your backpack or tent. Consider hanging a mesh organizer inside your tent for easy access to small items like toiletries, phones, and keys. A collapsible washing basket can double as a storage container for shoes or dirty laundry and keep the inside of your tent clean.

**Comfort is Key (Even Outdoors!):**

**Sleep Soundly:** Invest in a good quality sleeping pad or air mattress to insulate you from the cold ground and provide cushioning. For added warmth on chilly nights, place a blanket underneath your sleeping bag. A travel pillow can make a significant difference in your sleep quality.

**Stay Dry and Comfortable:** Northern Ireland's weather can be unpredictable. Pack layers of clothing that you can easily add or remove as the temperature changes.

Waterproof jackets and trousers are essential, as is a good pair of waterproof walking boots. Keep electronics protected from rain and moisture in waterproof bags.

**Embrace the Natural Insect Repellent:** Midges and other biting insects can be a nuisance, especially during the summer months. Consider natural insect repellents like citronella candles or sprays. Wearing long sleeves and trousers, especially at dawn and dusk, can also help.

**Safety First:**

**Know Your Location:** Before heading out, research your chosen campsite or area and be aware of any potential hazards. Carry a map and compass or a reliable GPS device, and know how to use them. Inform someone of your camping plans and expected return time.

**First Aid Essentials:** A well-stocked first-aid kit is non-negotiable. Include essentials like bandages, antiseptic wipes, pain relievers, blister treatment, and any personal medications. Familiarize yourself with basic first-aid procedures.

**Leave No Trace:** Respect the natural environment by adhering to the Leave No Trace principles. Pack out all your rubbish, leave plants and rocks as you find them, respect wildlife, and be considerate of other visitors.

**Fire safety outdoors** - barbecues, camping, countryside Fire safety shouldn't stop when you leave your home. Carelessness outdoors can have fatal results. Barbecues, camping and caravanning all pose fire hazards which can destroy areas of countryside and delicate ecosystems. Dry ground in the summer adds to the dangers but care should be taken all year round!

By incorporating these camping hacks into your Northern Ireland holiday, you'll be well-equipped to handle the unexpected, stay comfortable, and fully immerse yourself in the stunning beauty of the region. So pack your bags, embrace the adventure, and get ready to create unforgettable memories under the Northern Irish stars!

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# CEILINGS, THE FIFTH WALL WITH SOMETHING TO SAY

The ceiling — sometimes referred to as a room's fifth wall — often gets short shrift in decorating schemes.

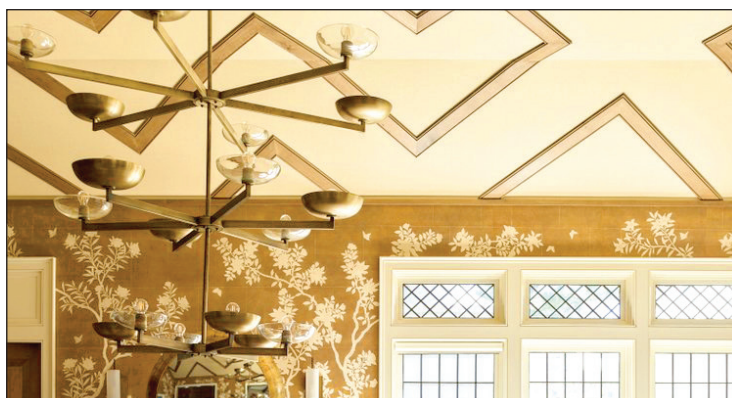
Walls and furnishings take centre stage while the acreage overhead receives a coat of neutral white paint, with perhaps a snazzy ceiling fixture.

That wasn't the case historically. Plaster ornamentation and murals were used centuries ago, and the Victorians really went to town on the ceiling, with elaborate mouldings and stamped tin sheeting. Ceiling medallions graced

more formal spaces like dining rooms and parlours, while timber beams and tongue-and-groove boards were popular in kitchens, bedrooms and common spaces. Through the early 20th century, curvy coving, panelled grids and ornate moldings were popular.

But with the advent of modernism after the 1930s, ceilings became the serene planes most of us are familiar with.

Now we're



looking up again. Designers are really getting creative with architectural

elements, as well as paint, wallpaper and lighting. "Statement ceilings

are a great way to bring detail and visual interest to a room," says Gideon

Mendelson, founder and creative director of his New York-based eponymous design group. "We see them as an opportunity to create something unexpected that adds to the space."

As well as millwork and wallpaper, Mendelson's done custom hand-painting on ceilings. "It sets it apart from the rest of the home, and gives the space its own personality," he says.

Smooth-finished ceilings make it easy

to apply whatever you can dream up: paint, peel and stick or traditional wallpapers, or even ornamentation like origami, decals, buttons, faux jewels, botanicals, twigs, garlands, ribbon, stencils or scarves.

Command strips will hold most lightweight objects firmly to a smooth ceiling, but if you're stuck with one of those textured ceilings, you'll either have to refinish it or opt for wood panelling or tin sheets.

Not ready to fully dress your ceiling? You can still add some excitement there with a light fixture.

"A ceiling statement doesn't have to involve complicated architectural details," points out Leigh Spicher, design studio director for the Atlanta-based homebuilding group Ashton Woods. "It can also be created by adding a chandelier that contrasts in either style or scale to the room."

## Balcony Gardens – What You Need To Know

With house prices rising year-on-year, many are finding themselves having to compromise for living accommodation with little or no outdoor living space.

For those in cities across the globe, apartment living is becoming more and more common as contractors have begun building towards the skies on account of the limited ground space.

A consequence of this drive towards urban living has been that apartment dwellers have had to be pragmatic in the use of their outdoor space — often limited to only a balcony area. This has allowed for the rise of balcony gardens, a feature that has grown in popularity over the last number of years.

These unique spaces are the ideal compromise for urban dwellers, providing a comfortable outdoor seating area surrounded by plants whilst limiting the amount of maintenance work required. Balcony gardens are very low maintenance on account of the fact that they do not have soil, weeds or pests

and yet still offer the openness and beauty factor of any outdoor space.

When planning your own balcony garden, you must firstly consider whether it is in the sun or shade. This tends to be relatively binary, either you have sun or you don't and can be a determining factor as to if a balcony garden is realistic option.

It is vital that you think about safety when considering balcony gardens. One of the main issues is the risk of something falling from a significant height and causing damage to a person or their property below. Be careful that adequate drainage is in place and that not too much weight is put on the balcony.

Pragmatism is also key. Work with what is on offer, if you have natural sun, think about providing shade and if it's windy then consider wind-breaks.



Even if the view leaves a lot to be desired, this can be blocked by plants or trellis. In such a confined space, the scent of

your balcony is an essential element of your space. Creating a scented garden can both create a magical area to relax outdoors, whilst also defusing throughout your home. Scented plants can reap rewards year round by providing beautiful scents.

Maintenance is of

the utmost importance for any balcony. Even with the most beautiful display, if left untouched it will begin to depreciate and lose the beauty factor that it once had. Even 10 minutes a week to water, clean and maintain your balcony can make a huge difference.

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# TOP CARS FOR SUMMER MOTORING IN NI THIS SUMMER!

As we shake off the last of the spring chill and longer, sunnier days beckon, many drivers turn their thoughts to enjoying the open road.

Whether it's coastal drives, countryside escapes, or simply making the most of the pleasant weather, the right car can significantly enhance the summer motoring experience. Here are some of the best and most recently released models that cater to various summer driving preferences:

For the Wind-in-Your-Hair Enthusiast: Convertibles

Nothing quite says summer like a convertible, allowing you to soak up the sun and fresh air. Several exciting new and recent models offer this exhilarating experience:

- **Mazda MX-5:** A timeless classic, the latest iteration of the MX-5 (launched in 2015 but continuously updated) remains a top choice for affordable open-top fun. Its lightweight design and engaging handling make it a joy on winding country roads. You can choose

between the traditional soft-top or the retractable hard-top (RF) version.

- **BMW 4 Series Convertible:** For those seeking a bit more practicality and luxury, the latest 4 Series Convertible offers four seats and a more refined driving experience. It boasts powerful engines, a premium interior, and a sophisticated retractable hardtop that provides good insulation when closed.

- **MINI Convertible:** If you're after a stylish and agile city car with open-top thrills, the MINI Convertible is a fantastic option. Its compact size makes it perfect for navigating urban streets, while its fun handling and distinctive design add a touch of summer flair. It's available with an automatic gearbox for relaxed cruising.

- **MG Cyberster:** A newcomer making waves as an all-electric

convertible, the MG Cyberster offers a futuristic design, powerful electric performance (up to 496hp), and impressive range. Its striking scissor doors and modern interior make a statement, offering a unique blend of open-top driving and electric mobility.

The Versatile Choice: Electric Vehicles for Summer Adventures

Electric vehicles (EVs) are becoming increasingly popular in the UK, and many of the latest models are well-suited for summer motoring, offering smooth, quiet driving and impressive range for longer journeys:

- **Tesla Model 3 Performance:** Continuously updated, the Model 3 Performance offers exhilarating acceleration and a sleek design, making it ideal for summer road trips. Its advanced Autopilot features enhance safety and convenience on long drives, while its spacious interior

ensures passenger comfort.

- **Renault Scenic E-Tech:** This new electric family car blends hatchback and SUV characteristics, offering a spacious five-seat interior and a comfortable ride. With a good range, it's well-equipped for summer family adventures.

- **Audi Q6 e-tron:** A recently launched electric SUV, the Audi Q6 e-tron boasts rapid charging capabilities, a state-of-the-art digital interface, and a generous amount of storage space, making it a practical and refined choice for summer travels.

- **Hyundai Ioniq 9:** Set to arrive in the UK, this large seven-seat electric SUV offers a long range and a spacious, futuristic interior. It's designed for comfortable long-distance travel, making it perfect for family summer holidays.

Features like efficient air conditioning, comfortable seating, and good



infotainment systems for enjoyable road trips are increasingly common. Keep an eye out for models with bright and airy interiors, large windows, and those that offer a smooth and comfortable ride for those longer summer journeys! Whether you prioritize

open-top thrills, SUV practicality with a view, or the smooth and efficient experience of an EV, the current market offers a wide range of exciting and recently released models to make the most of NI's summer driving season in 2025.

## THE RETURN OF AN ICON: NEW RENAULT 4 E-TECH 100% ELECTRIC NOW AVAILABLE

The new Renault 4 E-Tech 100% electric first seen at the 2024 Paris Motor Show is now available.

Just as the original Renault 4 was born in response to the challenges of its time, the new Renault 4 E-Tech 100% electric is a retro-futuristic reinvention that reflects Renault's commitment to accelerating the energy transition.

The front grille is the first aspect to catch the eye. Inspired by the original Renault 4, it is made from a single 1.45m-long piece and is unique in the industry, with its continuous and illuminated surround perfectly framing the

Renault logo at its centre. At the rear, the original's iconic three-part lights are given a new lease of life, with modern lines and a distinctive LED signature.

These are just two of the many nods to the original Renault 4's design; others include the bonnet lines that continue to the bottom of the grille, the shape of the rear quarter window, the three lines sculpted into the doors that bring to mind the plastic protectors of the original and the distinctive forms in the roof, now adorned with roof bars.

Larger than the Renault 5 (with which it shares 68% of its components), the Renault 4 E-Tech 100% electric offers impressive interior space thanks to its extended 2.62m wheelbase.

At 4.14m in length, rear seat occupants benefit from 16.4cm of knee room, while headroom of 85.3cm is particularly generous for a B-segment vehicle.

The dual horizontal screens give the cabin a contemporary look. The central 10-inch multimedia screen is standard, and can feature the award-winning OpenR Link system with Google built-in. It provides access to a range of Google services, including Google Maps, which offers charging-optimised route planning, even activating pre-conditioning of the battery as a charging stop approaches, as well as a variety of apps from the Google Play store. First seen on the Renault 5, Reno – the virtual travelling

companion – is also present on Renault 4 E-Tech 100% electric. An avatar with real personality, Reno supports customers throughout their ownership experience, both inside and outside the car. Reno can answer questions and perform tasks such as scheduling charging, helping to make everyday life easier.

Renault 4 E-Tech 100% electric features the new One Pedal function. By optimising regenerative braking, the vehicle decelerates smoothly when the driver releases the accelerator pedal, coming to a stop without the driver having to apply the brake.

It joins an array of advanced driving aids that enhance safety and driving comfort, many of which are rarely seen in the B-segment, including rear occupant safe exit alert, active driver assist combining adaptive cruise control with Stop & Go and lane centring assist, as well as blind spot monitoring and hands-free parking\*. Renault 4 E-Tech 100% electric will also feature My Safety Shield, a feature that can be found across the Renault product range, which allows drivers to activate their preferred settings at the touch of a button.

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# FEARS NEW CAR TRENDS WILL DRIVE UP YOUR INSURANCE

**Keeping up with the latest car trends could lead to drivers paying more on their insurance premiums, according to price comparison site CompareNI.**

In a survey of 800 drivers in Northern Ireland, CompareNI discovered that when it comes to growing car trends such as the increase in vehicle size year on year, it seems many local drivers are not in favour and fear the expense.

When asked why they were not a fan of bigger cars, 15% of those surveyed felt these types of vehicles use too much fuel, while a further 15% said they were too expensive to buy.

Meanwhile, 14% were put off by the potentially higher cost of car insurance, while 11% pointed to larger cars being more difficult to park.

Only 11% said they liked bigger cars, claiming they felt safer driving these vehicles. Despite all the 'upscaling' going on in the motoring world, it would appear the public seem to prefer a smaller option.

A resounding 85% of those surveyed admitted they thought that the bigger the car, the more the insurance is likely to be, this however, is not always the case.

Size alone is unlikely to affect insurance premiums. Chances are, bigger cars may be more expensive as they have more advanced technology on board, more powerful engines or in general, are more expensive to buy - all of which will likely have an effect on the price of the car insurance.

When it comes to other motoring trends, interest in the electric car option is starting to pick up pace, but drivers are being warned that unforeseen issues may lead to higher costs and higher insurance premiums. To replace an electric car battery for example, could cost from £4,000 to £16,500 depending on the type of car and the size of the battery. \*

There's also a danger of accidentally voiding the insurance altogether, some home insurance providers recommend that EV home chargers get checked annually by a professional, \*\*failing to do so may void the policy and leave people unprotected.

New technology in cars could also affect insurance premiums. Whether it's the very latest audio system or lane departure warning system, the more technology present, the more expensive the car is likely to be and the greater the risk of theft, something insurance providers take into consideration when determining risk.

Also, the larger the amount of software systems and the more online connectivity the car has, the greater the cybersecurity risk.\*\*\* Encryption and firewall systems can help control this but it's an additional risk insurance providers are likely to take into consideration.

AI will also leave its mark on the automobile revolution, with AI powered braking systems and advanced driver assistance systems. AI can look out for the blind spot and help with a smooth transition to a new lane. \*\*\*\*The sensors in the car can keep drivers a safe distance from the car in front, but be aware that the more advanced features a vehicle has, the higher the insurance cost is likely to be as they can be expensive to repair and replace and increase the overall cost of the vehicle.

The arrival of the hydrogen car could also mean a more expensive vehicle. While the hydrogen is converted into electricity and may indeed offer a cleaner option, the hydrogen fuel cell option is expensive to manufacture, costing much more than a gas or electric option. The fuelling points are not that prevalent, with only a handful across the

UK, which creates an added problem. BMW intend to unveil a hydrogen powered car in 2028, which will be expected to travel further than the current hydrogen fuel cell options and potentially further than any electric vehicle currently on the market.\*\*\*\*\*

Car ownership is also changing in 2025. The subscription-based model is becoming more popular, as motorists can pay a monthly fee to use the car for a set period.\*\*\*\*\* The insurance can be included in the subscription fee and drivers can change the car whenever suits them. Given the financial pressures currently facing the UK, this may pose an interesting proposition for many drivers.

CompareNI helps drivers compare and find savings on all sorts of motoring products, such as car, van and motorbike insurance.-

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