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This year the Council proudly secured six Green Flag Awards Kilbroney Park, Castlewellan Forest Park, Delamont Country Park, Slieve Gullion Forest Park, Newry Canal and Warrenpoint Municipal Park (Heritage)

GREEN FLAG SUCCESS CONTINUES FOR NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is celebrating the continued success of its parks and open spaces, which have once again been recognised through the prestigious Green Flag Awards

Managed locally by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, the awards are regarded as the benchmark for well-managed parks, heritage landscapes and community green spaces.

This year the Council proudly secured six Green Flag Awards Kilbroney Park, Castlewellan Forest

Park, Delamont Country Park, Slieve Gullion Forest Park, Newry Canal and Warrenpoint Municipal Park (Heritage). These awards highlight the Council's commitment to protecting and promoting high-quality spaces for residents and visitors.

This year's Green

Flag Award scheme has marked a record-breaking achievement across Northern Ireland. A total of 118 sites were honoured, including 82 traditional Green Flag Awards, 36 Green Flag Community Awards, 6 Heritage Awards and 4 Pollinator Awards. The announcement was

made at Bangor Castle Walled Garden recently, with sites recognised for their exceptional standards of management, biodiversity and community involvement.

**Continued on
page 4**

Communities Minister Lyons launches Historic Environment Fund

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons recently launched the Northern Ireland Historic Environment Fund (HEF)

The grant programme, delivered by the Department for Communities, supports the repair, research and regeneration of Northern Ireland's heritage assets including listed buildings, scheduled monuments and community heritage projects.

The Fund encourages action by third parties to realise the Department's aim of empowering communities to enjoy and realise the wider value of our historic environment. Those that can apply to the Fund include owners of listed buildings and monuments, community and heritage organisations and district councils.

Minister Lyons said: "I am pleased to announce this year's funding

availability for Northern Ireland's Historic Environment, in particular, financial assistance for regeneration, research and revival activities.

"I have allocated a total of £810,000 with £500,000 already earmarked for capital repairs to 86 listed buildings. My Department is now inviting applications for regeneration, research and revival projects.

"This funding will provide vital support to work which realises the Department's aim of helping communities to enjoy and appreciate the wider value of our historic environment."

Applications for capital repair projects were invited in autumn 2024 and that £500,000 funding has been allocated.

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TURNING OLD INTO GOLD: HOW ROBINSON GOLDSMITHS ARE REDESIGNING HEIRLOOMS SUSTAINABLY

What do you do with a broken chain that belonged to your mum? Or a gold ring that’s not your style but holds a lifetime of family stories?



Jennifer and Gillian Robinson Goldsmiths.

At Robinson Goldsmiths in Bangor, the answer is simple: melt it down and begin again without losing what matters.

This isn’t just recycling. It’s memory-making, reborn.

In their family-run workshop, old jewellery is given a second life through a thoughtful and skilled process. The gold is melted down - a mesmerising sight - not to erase its past, but to prepare it for a new chapter.

“Working with customers to design and create unique jewellery is a real privilege,” says Jennifer Robinson, partner at Robinson Goldsmiths. “Often, inherited jewellery is just sitting in a box somewhere, unseen and unused, as it’s not the right style or size. By using these items to create something new, the customer gets a custom piece of jewellery which is all the more special knowing the history behind it.”

Once molten, the gold is poured into a mould, cooled, then carefully rolled, shaped, and crafted into something entirely fresh.

Whether it becomes a sleek new ring, a modern pendant, or a bespoke design co-created with the team, each piece is reimagined but still deeply rooted in your story.

“Over the years we’ve turned broken and unloved jewellery into rings, necklaces and brooches,” adds Gillian Robinson, shop manager. “These pieces are lovingly designed and created in our workshop from our family to another. By reusing these precious metals and stones, we’re also offering



a sustainable option for eco-conscious shoppers.”

This is sustainable jewellery at its most meaningful: no new mining, no waste just precious materials already rich with history, transformed into something you’ll wear every day and perhaps pass on one day yourself.

So if there’s old gold tucked away in a drawer, maybe it’s time to bring it in, melt it down, and start a new chapter.



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New Visitor Facility at Tyrella Beach

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is delighted to announce the official opening of a new, purpose-built visitor amenity building at Tyrella Beach – marking a major milestone in enhancing visitor experiences, promoting accessibility, and protecting the area’s unique natural environment.

Located within Tyrella Beach car park, the modern facility offers male and female toilets, an accessible WC and storage space. As part of the works, the old beach building was removed, helping to restore valuable sand dune habitat and support Tyrella’s designation as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). Appointed contractors, Bell Contracts, worked in partnership with the Integrated Design Team led by Gleeds Belfast including Design ID (Structural Engineers) & Beattie Flannigan (Building Services Engineers)

This project is part of a wider conservation effort at Tyrella. Alongside the upgraded facilities, the Council has introduced a conservation grazing programme following a DAERA ecological assessment, which identified excessive vegetation and litter as threats to biodiversity. Rare Irish cattle breeds are now grazing the dunes in winter at low densities—an environmentally sensitive approach that supports plant diversity, reduces fire risk, and protects native wildlife such as the Common Lizard. These improvements help maintain Tyrella



Beach’s prestigious Blue Flag status while laying the groundwork for an exciting future development—an Inclusive Beach, opening in 2026. Delivered in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation, this initiative will introduce a Changing Places facility and a range of accessible beach equipment so people of all ages and abilities can enjoy the beach together. The specialist equipment will be available to users through the Foundation’s free loan scheme, which already supports an inclusive beach at Cranfield. The beach equipment

at Tyrella and additional equipment at Cranfield was provided with the support of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). Following the success of Cranfield since 2019, the Inclusive Beach at Tyrella will be the second of Newry, Mourne and Down’s beaches to become fully accessible. These beaches feature pathways, parking, Changing Places toilets with hoists and adult-sized changing benches and specialist beach equipment. The Mae Murray Foundation also hosts inclusive activities such as beach fun days, surf

sessions, and litter-picking events. With two kilometres of golden sands and 25 hectares of mature dunes, Tyrella Beach remains one of the district’s premier visitor destinations. Holding Blue Flag and Seaside Awards since 1997, it is recognised for excellence in cleanliness, safety, water quality, and environmental management—while preserving its rich biodiversity for future generations. For more information about Tyrella Beach, visit: www.visitmournemountains.co.uk

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UKSPF PROJECTS BOOST COMMUNITY SPIRIT, ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY

From enhancing green spaces and public amenities to supporting local culture and strengthening community transport, the funding has delivered on its promise to make the district a better place to live, work and visit.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central government funding programme

that supports local communities, businesses and skills across the UK. Local councils and partnerships decide priorities for how this funding is used. One of its key strands is called 'Fostering Community Spirit, Enhancing Local Pride', which focuses on supporting projects and activities that make places better to live in, strengthen

connections between people and encourage residents to feel proud of their local area. The Council has embraced this approach, ensuring that each project contributes to building stronger, more vibrant communities.

The impact of the funding has been seen across the Council's seven District Electoral Areas. Open green spaces

were improved through biodiversity planting, removal of invasive species, landscaping, installation of seating and new interpretative signage. This work was carried out in Crossmaglen Square, Kilbroney Park in Rostrevor, Donard Park and Islands Park in Newcastle, Castlewelling Forest Park, The Grove in Downpatrick, and Delamont Country Park, creating welcoming spaces for recreation while also strengthening the district's Nature Recovery Network and supporting the restoration of natural habitats.

The Council also invested in new facilities and public infrastructure to improve day-to-day life for residents and visitors. In Dundrum, public conveniences were refurbished and made fully accessible, while in Newry and Downpatrick, ten solar-powered compacting litter bins were installed in busy areas. Alongside this, a district-wide environmental campaign was launched encouraging residents to play their part in creating a cleaner and greener

environment. New refuse lorries featuring striking designs promoting sustainability are now a familiar sight across the district.

Accessibility was another focus of the programme. In partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation, significant improvements were delivered at Cranfield and Tyrella beaches. New pathways, specialist matting and equipment now allow people of all abilities to enjoy the district's stunning coastline, making these popular destinations more inclusive.

Community celebrations and cultural initiatives were supported through the funding, helping to foster pride of place and bring people together. St Patrick's Day events in Newry and Downpatrick attracted more than 25,000 spectators combined with colourful parades, traditional music and dance, family activities and food markets. These celebrations not only showcased Irish heritage but also strengthened the sense of belonging and community spirit. In



March, a three-day Arts and Cultural Festival was held in Downpatrick, Newcastle and Newry, attracting more than 1,500 attendees. Through music, storytelling, dance, film and bilingual performances, the festival celebrated the creativity and cultural diversity of the district.

The Council also took steps to support local businesses and promote the district as a place of opportunity. A 'Make it Local' spring campaign highlighted 14 independent businesses

across towns and villages, encouraging residents and visitors to shop local and recognise the value of supporting small enterprises. On 31 March, the Council hosted the 'Empowering NMD – People, Place and Prosperity' Investment Symposium at the Slieve Donard Hotel in Newcastle. This major event brought together community members, businesses, funders and partners to share success stories, explore investment opportunities and highlight regeneration

projects aligned with the Belfast City Region Deal.

Community transport was another important strand of work, aimed at reducing social isolation and ensuring that people with mobility challenges or those living in rural areas could take part in community life. In partnership with the voluntary sector, the Council funded new accessible minibuses and employed two full-time drivers, expanding services for people with disabilities and mobility needs.

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	Supervalu Crossgar 1 Downpatrick Road, Crossgar, BT30 9EW

**Continued from
page 1**

Sinead Murray
Local Environmental
Quality Manager
at Keep Northern
Ireland Beautiful, said
“Our parks are local
treasures that help our
environment and our
well-being. This year’s
awards have rightly
focused on the social
value that our green
spaces deliver for all of
us in Northern Ireland.
As we have seen
over the summer, our
parks and open spaces
play an essential
role in strengthening
community ties
and supporting our
wellbeing. The Green
Flag Awards serve
as a timely reminder
that environmental
sustainability and well-
being are inextricably



Environment Minister Andrew Muir added, "It's hugely encouraging that this year a record-breaking number of sites have been awarded Green Flags in Northern

Ireland. This is a respected accreditation recognised across 18 countries, and I want to thank Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful for their efforts in bringing international recognition to

Northern Ireland's beautiful parks, green spaces and schools. These spaces are for the benefit of the whole community, and it is great to see so many achieving the standards required."

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Community retailers SuperValu and Centra, part of the Musgrave Group, are once again inviting local groups to take part in their sustainability initiative, offering free packs of native trees through their continued partnership with Trees on the Land – a charity and not-for-profit project dedicated to reforesting the island of Ireland.

The initiative, which is entering its fifth year in 2026, has already seen 20,000 native trees planted across nearly 70 locations in Northern Ireland, including schools, community gardens, sports clubs, and farmland. With a long-term pledge to plant 50,000 trees by 2032, SuperValu and Centra are calling on community groups to help reach this ambitious goal.

Applications are now open for the next round of trees, with groups located within a five-mile radius of a SuperValu or Centra store eligible to apply for up to 250 free trees. Successful applicants will receive their trees in early 2026, ready for planting season.

Interested groups can apply by visiting: www.treesontheland.com/supervalu-centra-tree-project.

This initiative reflects SuperValu and Centra's ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement – empowering local groups to make a lasting impact, one tree at a time.

Desi Derby, Director of Marketing for SuperValu and Centra in Northern



Ireland, said:

“M u s g r a v e ’ s sustainability strategy is firmly rooted in caring for the planet and creating vibrant communities and, through our ongoing partnership with Trees on the Land, we’re delighted to support local groups in bringing their own green projects to life. The trees will deliver lasting benefits including improving air quality, soil protection, supporting biodiversity and absorbing carbon. We invite community groups to get

involved and apply.”

Among the groups to benefit earlier this year were Alpha Housing in Portadown, Ardmore Cricket Club, Culloville Blues GAC near Crossmaglen, Irvinestown Primary School, Kevin Lynch Hurling Club in Dungiven, Limavady Grammar School and St Malachy's High School in Castlewellan.

Imogen Rabone, Project Co-ordinator and Founder of Trees on the Land, added: "Our ongoing

collaboration with SuperValu and Centra continues to flourish, and we are delighted to continue to give community groups across Northern Ireland opportunities to plant another 5,000 native trees next year. Trees play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance, and our vision is to establish enduring tree cover and woodland in both rural and urban settings - creating valuable natural resources and a meaningful legacy for generations to come."



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Pop along to Saintfield Saturday Market

Step into the heart of Saintfield any Saturday morning and you'll find a bustling hub of community spirit and local enterprise.

From 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., the Saintfield Saturday Market transforms the town into a vibrant showcase of the best that local producers, artists, and makers have to offer. It's a feast for the senses, with stalls brimming with an incredible variety of goods. You can

pick up fresh, locally grown vegetables straight from the farm, ensuring your meals are as healthy and sustainable as they are delicious. The air is often filled with the sweet scent of beautiful floral displays, while a diverse range of handcrafted goods and unique creations from talented artists and makers catch the eye. The market is more than just a place to shop; it's an experience. It's a chance to meet the people behind the products,

hear their stories, and understand the passion that goes into everything they create. Supporting these local businesses is a wonderful way to invest in the community and help keep the town special. So, if you're looking for the perfect way to spend a Saturday morning, come browse the stalls, chat with the vendors, and discover a treasure or two. It's an easy and enjoyable way to #ShopLocal and feel a part of the vibrant Saintfield community.

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Council Funding for Initiatives to Support Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

Sixteen local community and voluntary groups have been awarded funding by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to help deliver work in support of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategy.

The EVAWG Strategy aims to tackle violence, abuse and harm experienced

by women and girls which continues to be a serious issue that affects many in our society.

The funded groups will deliver a variety of activities, including workshops promoting education on healthy and respectful relationships, sessions challenging harmful behaviours and attitudes, and youth-led projects providing safe spaces for young women and girls. A local Shared Learning event will also bring all the funded groups together, giving them the opportunity to connect, share ideas and explore ways to collaborate. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor



Philip Campbell recently visited the Crisis Café in Newry to meet young people involved in the delivery of one of the successful projects and said, "Violence against women and girls has no place in our communities. I am proud that the Council is working alongside local and regional organisations to support real, positive change. This EVAWG funding provides a vital opportunity for the Council to play a proactive role in supporting communities to raise awareness and offer vital support where it is needed most." Funding for the EVAWG Local Change Fund has been provided by The Executive Office and is managed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. For more information visit <https://www.newrymournedown.org/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls>

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MINISTER CONGRATULATED STUDENTS RECEIVING GCSE RESULTS

Education Minister Paul Givan has congratulated GCSE students across Northern Ireland who received their results in August.

Results, awarded to over 32,000 GCSE students, reveal that 83.5% of students received grade C/4 and above (82.7% in 2024) while 31.6% received grade A/7 and above (31% in 2024). Commending students during a visit to Saintfield High School, Paul Givan said: "Congratulations to all the young people receiving their GCSE results today. Their hard work and determination have truly shone through in the grades they have achieved. "Pupils in Northern Ireland have once again delivered exceptional results and are continuing to outperform their peers in England and Wales. The percentage of students achieving top grades A/7 and above and those securing C/4 and above, has risen



Education Minister Paul Givan pictured with pupils at Saintfield High School.

compared to 2024. This success reflects both the dedication of the students and the commitment and professionalism of teachers across Northern Ireland. I commend all our pupils as they take their next steps into further education,

employment, or training." Paul Givan continued: "This represents an important milestone in each student's journey. For those feeling uncertain about what comes next, there are many valuable pathways to explore.

"I encourage anyone seeking guidance to take the time to consider the wide range of opportunities available and to reach out for support in making informed and confident decisions about their future."

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Eats and Beats Festival Showcases the Best of Food and Music in Newcastle

Thousands gathered in Newcastle at the weekend for the Eats and Beats Festival, set against the stunning backdrop of the Mourne Mountains.



Despite the mixed weather, spirits were high as festival-goers enjoyed a vibrant blend of delicious local food, artisan drinks, and live music across two stages. From cookery demos by top chefs to unforgettable performances from homegrown and international acts, Eats and Beats once again

proved why it's one of Newry, Mourne and Down's standout summer events. Visitors were treated to a superb showcase of artisan food and drink from local and Northern Irish producers, complemented by experiences and producers who brought a true taste of the region to

the festival. The Mourne Flavours Pavilion added to the excitement with a packed schedule of cookery demonstrations featuring well-known names including Jenny Bristow, Melissa McCabe and Jonny Murphy (The Hungry Hooker), who inspired audiences with delicious dishes created from local ingredients.

Music lovers enjoyed an eclectic line-up spanning genres and styles, with Newcastle alive to the sounds of The Boo Radleys, Boye PapaGee & Colours Afrobeat, The Four of Us and many more. Gemma Bradley and Ripton Lindsay kept audiences entertained as expert hosts across the weekend.

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perfect place to make a day of it : shop for your home,

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North Down and Ards Women's Aid work with women, children and young people affected by domestic and sexual abuse.

We currently have funding to deliver our Safe Relationship Awareness Project which works to educate young people about the dynamics of healthy relationships and the warning signs of abuse to develop a project committed to ensuring young people have the tools to navigate relationships safely.

The project is delivered over a six-week period, comprising of weekly hour-long sessions, each delving into various aspects of relationship dynamics. There are a multitude of topics covered across the six-week period, all chosen to align with the needs of young people as well as the current societal issues that can impact our understanding of relationships.

We explore what a healthy and unhealthy relationship can look like, educate on forms of abuse and coercive control, tackle the influences of social media and technology abuse, discuss the lines of consent all while ensuring the space is kept safe and open for discussions. This project is completed in groups, which can be a



great advantage for learning but also creating a safe space for attendees to share experiences. We have received fantastic feedback from students and teachers about their experience of the Safe Relationship Awareness

Project to date and we look forward to continuing on this work in the months ahead. We hope to continue the education of our young people as when it comes to relationships, knowledge truly is power and through this work we

plan to continue the empowerment of the next generation. If any school, youth group or community organisation are interested in The Safe Relationship Awareness Project, please contact our Bangor office on 028 9127 3196.

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**For any further information about the One
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14th October
28th October
11th November
25th November

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As winter sweeps across the North Coast, The Causeway Hotel invites you to unwind with our signature Winter Warmer package with our perfect two night escape beside the world-famous Giant's Causeway.

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Tullywest Manor is situated in a beautiful rural setting, overlooking the hills, lakes and farmlands of the Co. Down countryside.

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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 more about the Residents lives helps us tailor our care to each individual need.

Tullywest Manor recognises that residents are individuals with family and relatives of their own and encourage this bond to continue. They aim to create a comfortable atmosphere of homeliness, happiness and caring.

12 Tullywest Rd, Saintfield, Ballynahinch BT24 7LX
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<https://www.tullywestmanor.com/>



NIHF Launches Search for Rising Stars

As part of its longstanding partnership with Ulster Bank, the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) has announced the return of the Rising Stars competition, a celebration of emerging talent in Northern Ireland's hotel and hospitality industry.

Now a key fixture in the sector's calendar, the initiative shines a spotlight on young professionals making a meaningful impact and highlights the exciting career pathways available within the industry.

Forming a central part of Hospitality Exchange 2025, the Rising Stars Awards Lunch will take place on Tuesday 14th October, hosted by broadcaster Pamela Ballantine and headlined by hotel icon Alex Polizzi. Best known as The Hotel Inspector, Alex Polizzi brings a wealth of experience, having launched and managed successful hotels within the renowned Polizzi family.

Her current venture, The Star in Alfriston, has earned widespread acclaim for its charm and commitment to excellence. During the lunchtime session, Alex will reflect on her hospitality and television career, sharing practical insights and leadership lessons. The awards presentation will follow, honouring the sector's brightest young talent.

NIHF President Vicky Green said:

"A career in hotels can open the door to a bright and rewarding future, offering both job satisfaction and competitive pay.

I'm delighted to launch this year's Rising Stars competition in partnership with Ulster Bank – an initiative that not only celebrates emerging talent but also shines a light on the breadth of career opportunities within our sector. "Hotels along with businesses in the wider tourism and hospitality sector offer a wide variety of roles that help individuals build valuable skills and lay the foundation for long-term career progression. I encourage all Federation members to get behind the programme and support their rising stars. I'm looking forward to meeting this year's exceptional finalists."

The Rising Stars Awards Lunch will take place on 14th October 2025 at the Crowne Plaza Belfast, hosted by Pamela Ballantine as part of Hospitality Exchange 2025.

The competition provides a high-profile platform to celebrate exceptional individuals, acknowledge their contributions, and raise awareness of the industry's potential as a long-term career path.

Entries close on 5th September 2025. Applications can be submitted via the NIHF website: www.nihf.co.uk



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Do you see a change in deciduous trees?

As we enter the autumn season, our deciduous trees begin the annual, much-loved time of changing leaf colour and fall.

Why and how that happens deepens our understanding of trees, providing insights into how they live and function.

The reasons for leaf fall are relatively simple: leaves on deciduous trees are not frost-hardy and would be damaged and die in winter if the trees didn't have a mechanism to allow them to drop; in a sense, they die at a time of the tree's choosing, rather than be killed. Also, if trees didn't shed their leaves in autumn, they would be in greater danger from seasonal storms.

And the mechanism for leaf fall is also relatively simple: shorter days trigger hormones that start a process which results in the gradual weakening of a special layer of cells at the base of the leaf, allowing it to drop.

But where do the colours come from? The amazing fact is that colour pigments are already there, in the leaves, but we can't see them until autumn,



because they are hidden by the green of chlorophyll.

As most of us know, chlorophyll is the chemical which enables plants to use the sun's energy to convert carbon dioxide and water into carbohydrates...the food that trees need to live and grow...

and as the days shorten and trees prepare for dormancy, a bit like hibernation, they no longer need that food. However, nature wastes nothing, and as the

trees break down and reabsorb chlorophyll, and try to absorb final sugars, the yellow and orange of carotenoids are revealed (these are the pigments which also give carrots their colour), followed, at least in some trees, by red and even purple, signs of sugars trapped in the leaves.

Weather also plays a part. Low temperatures destroy chlorophyll, so frosty nights produce yellow leaves. Conversely, periods of warmer dry weather

promote red pigments, although these are also weakened by frosts, so we see fewer red leaves in cold seasons.

And the browns? These are the colours of the cell walls when the leaf is completely dried out and ready to fall.

The good news, of course, is that deciduous trees have already prepared the buds for next year's leaves before autumn, so the natural cycle goes on, and on, and on...

JVA

ARE YOU CLAIMING FINANCIAL SUPPORT TOWARDS CHILDCARE FOR SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN?

Working parents can get help with wraparound childcare costs for older children.

Employers For Childcare



Many working parents find it challenging to manage and afford childcare for children who are at school. Organising the morning drop-off and the afternoon pick-ups, and the childcare required to allow parents to be in work on time in the mornings and also be able to work into the late afternoon. This is often referred to as 'wraparound' childcare as it wraps around the school day.

In addition, there is the added complication of childcare that is required when schools are closed, whether for the weeks of school holidays or for those one-off days of closure that happen during each term, as well as perhaps having other younger or older children requiring a different form of childcare.

Find out what financial support is available

Many parents don't realise that there is help available with the cost of registered childcare for older children. This can include some wraparound childcare such as breakfast or after school clubs, as well as registered childminders and day nurseries. Parents may be paying a number of different providers to meet their childcare requirements and may be able to get financial support through Universal Credit, Childcare Vouchers or Tax-Free Childcare plus the Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme to help meet their bills. Eligible parents can claim support through any of these schemes for children under the age of 12, however for older children below the

age of 16 only Universal Credit and Childcare Vouchers offer support, unless the child is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

Finding suitable childcare The Family Support NI website 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. This includes some breakfast and after-school clubs and also information on day nurseries and

childminders who offer transport to and from school. It's worth speaking to your local primary school to see what childcare it may offer and whether it accepts Tax-Free Childcare, the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme or Childcare Vouchers as forms of payment.

Further information To find out more about what financial support you are entitled to towards childcare, contact Employers For Childcare's Family Benefits Advice Service on 028 9267 8200 or email hello@employersforchildcare.org.

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Unearthing Halloween’s Hidden Traditions

Halloween, with its spooky costumes, pumpkin carving, and quest for sugary treats, feels like a holiday we all know.

But beyond the familiar rituals, a world of lesser-known traditions, steeped in history and folklore, awaits discovery. This year, why not delve deeper into the past and unearth some of these fascinating, forgotten, or simply unusual Halloween customs?

Snap-Apple Night (Ireland & Scotland)

Forget bobbing for apples in a bowl of water – imagine them dangling from a string! This lively tradition, particularly popular in Ireland and Scotland, involves apples and sometimes treacle-covered baps (bread rolls) tied to strings. Participants, with hands clasped behind their backs, must try to take a bite. It’s a messy, competitive, and utterly hilarious way to celebrate! The origins are thought to be linked to ancient harvest festivals and divinatory

games, where the first to bite into the apple might be the first to marry.

Souling (England)

Long before “trick or treat,” there was “souling.” Dating back to medieval times in parts of England, especially the North and West Midlands, poor folk and sometimes children would go from door to door on All Hallows’ Eve, singing and praying for the souls of the dead. In return, they would receive “soul cakes” – small, round cakes often spiced with nutmeg, ginger, or cinnamon. This beautiful tradition was a charitable act, offering comfort to the living and prayers for the departed.

Dumb Supper (Various Cultures)

For those seeking a more introspective and spiritual Halloween, the “dumb supper” is a captivating tradition. Performed in

silence (hence “dumb”), participants set an extra place at the table for the spirits of their ancestors. Food is served, and no one speaks, creating an atmosphere of reverence and communion with the other side. The idea is to honour and remember those who have passed, and some believe it can even provide glimpses into the future.

Nut Cracking and Fortune Telling (Celtic Traditions)

Many ancient Celtic Halloween customs revolved around divination, particularly concerning love and marriage. One such tradition involved nuts.

Couples would place two nuts on a fire – if they burned steadily together, it signified a harmonious future. If they hissed and popped apart, it suggested a more tumultuous path. Another variation involved throwing nuts into a fire



and making a wish; the way they burned or burst was thought to indicate the wish’s success.

Carving Turnips, Not Pumpkins (Ireland & Scotland)

While the pumpkin is now king, its predecessor in Halloween carving was the humble turnip.

When Irish and Scottish immigrants brought their

Halloween traditions to America, they found pumpkins to be far more abundant and easier to carve. But originally, terrifying faces were etched into turnips and potatoes, lit from within by candles, to ward off mischievous spirits and “Stingy Jack.” It’s a reminder of Halloween’s protective, rather than purely playful, origins.

Planning Your Perfect Autumn Getaway

As the vibrant greens of summer begin to mellow into a kaleidoscope of fiery reds, rustic oranges, and golden yellows, Northern Ireland transforms into an enchanting autumn wonderland.

With crisp air, fewer crowds, and a magical quality to the light, it’s an ideal time to explore its dramatic coastlines, ancient landscapes, and charming cities. If you’re dreaming of a cozy and captivating escape, here’s how to plan your perfect autumn getaway in Northern Ireland.

Beyond the breathtaking foliage, autumn offers several advantages for visitors:

- **Stunning Scenery:** From the Sperrin Mountains to the Glens of Antrim, the natural landscapes are ablaze with colour, offering incredible photographic opportunities.

- **Fewer Crowds:** Popular attractions, while still accessible, are generally less busy than in the peak summer months, allowing for a more relaxed experience.

- **Cozy Vibes:** Think roaring fires in traditional pubs, hearty local food,

and a sense of warmth and welcome that perfectly complements the cooler weather.

- **Harvest Festivals & Events:** Many towns and villages host harvest festivals, food events, and cultural gatherings throughout the autumn, offering a taste of local life.

Northern Ireland might be compact, but it’s packed with diverse regions, each offering unique autumn experience.

The Causeway Coast & Glens: This iconic stretch of coastline is spectacular at any time of year, but autumn adds an extra layer of drama.

- **Giant’s Causeway:** Witness the hexagonal basalt columns against a backdrop of autumnal hues and crashing waves.

- **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge:** The walk to the bridge offers stunning

coastal views, made even more vibrant by the changing leaves.

- **Dark Hedges:** Famous from Game of Thrones, these intertwined beech trees are particularly atmospheric in autumn, especially with morning mist or a golden sunset.

- **Glenariff Forest Park:** Known as the “Queen of the Glens,” its waterfalls and walking trails are magnificent amidst the autumnal colours.

The Mourne Mountains: For hikers and nature lovers, the Mournes are a must-visit.

- **Walking Trails:** Explore the numerous trails, from gentle rambles to challenging ascents, all offering panoramic views of the golden landscape and coastline.

So pack your bags, embrace the crisp air, and prepare to be enchanted!



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Watercress & pickled shallot, tobacco onions,
peppercorn sauce, triple cooked chunky chips
(£10 supplement) (gf)
Pan Fried Glenarm Salmon
Roasted baby potatoes, buttered greens, shellfish &
orange saffron cream (gf)
Crispy Peking Half Duck
Sriracha pomme purée, teriyaki style bok choy, lime,
ginger & lemon grass glaze
8hrs Slow Cooked Pork Belly
Celeriac pancetta & smoked cheddar, potato gratin,
fricassee of cabbage, peas & pearl onion, compressed
apple jus (gf)
Sweet Potato & Charred Baby Leek Risotto
Crumbled feta, sage oil, rose peppercorn (gf)(v)(ve)
Breaded Chicken Escalope
Tomato soprano sauce, parmesan, tender stem
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A GUIDE TO SEASONAL AUTUMN PRODUCE

As the vibrant greens of summer fade to earthy tones, a new palette of produce takes centre stage. Autumn brings a bounty of hearty, nutritious, and delicious fruits and vegetables that are perfect for warming meals and cozy gatherings.

Eating seasonally is not only great for flavour, but it can also be more sustainable and economical.

Fruits of the Season
Autumn's fruits are perfect for baking, snacking, and making warming desserts.

Apples: A true autumn staple. With hundreds of varieties, there's an apple for every purpose, from crisp eating apples like Gala and Honeycrisp to firm baking apples such as Granny Smith and Braeburn.

How to use them: Beyond the classic apple pie, use them in salads, make homemade applesauce, or roast them with cinnamon and a drizzle of maple syrup

for a simple dessert.

Pears: Pears come into their own in the fall. Varieties like Conference and Comice are sweet and juicy when ripe. How to use them: Pears are fantastic poached in red wine or spices, baked into tarts, or sliced into a cheese board for a sophisticated starter.

Plums: Late-season plums are rich in flavor. How to use them: They are excellent for making jam, compotes, or simply roasting with pork or chicken for a sweet and savory dish.

Vegetables to Enjoy
The vegetables of autumn are robust and versatile, forming the foundation of many comforting dishes.



Squash and Pumpkins: From butternut to acorn and delicate courgettes, squash is the star of

autumn. How to use them: Roast cubes of butternut squash with herbs, make a creamy pumpkin soup, or stuff

a whole acorn squash with a savory filling of rice and vegetables. Don't forget to toast the seeds for a crunchy

snack!
Root Vegetables: Carrots, parsnips, and potatoes are at their peak. How to

use them: Roasting these together brings out their natural sweetness.

They are also essential for hearty stews, chunky soups, and mashed dishes.

Cabbage and Brussels Sprouts: These cruciferous vegetables thrive in cooler weather. How to use them: Sautéed Brussels sprouts with bacon and chestnuts are a classic side dish. Shredded cabbage can be used in slaws or braised with apples for a tangy accompaniment.

Mushrooms: Foraged or store-bought, mushrooms like shiitake, cremini, and oyster mushrooms are in abundance. How to

use them: Sauté them with garlic and herbs, add them to risottos, or use them as a hearty base for a mushroom gravy.

Herbs and Nuts
Autumn also brings fresh, aromatic herbs and a bounty of nuts.

Herbs: Rosemary, sage, and thyme are perfect for flavouring roasted meats and vegetables. Their earthy notes complement the season's produce beautifully.

Nuts: Walnuts and chestnuts are harvested in the fall. How to use them: Walnuts are great in salads, baking, or as a snack. Roasted chestnuts are a classic autumn treat, either on their own or used in stuffings and purees.

A Stargazer's Guide to Northern Ireland's Celestial Shows

As the nights draw in and the crisp autumn air settles over Northern Ireland, the cosmos offers a spectacular array of celestial events.

Away from city lights, our dark skies become a canvas for meteor showers, planetary alignments, and shimmering aurorae. Grab a warm drink, look up, and prepare to be amazed!

The Draconids Meteor Shower (Early October)

Kicking off the autumn astronomical calendar is the Draconids Meteor Shower, usually peaking around October 8th. This shower is unique because it's best viewed in the early evening, shortly after dusk, rather than in the pre-dawn hours like many other showers. While often

a modest display, the Draconids can occasionally surprise with bursts of activity. Keep an eye towards the constellation Draco the Dragon in the northern sky.

Orionids Meteor Shower (Late October)

Following close behind are the Orionids, active throughout October but peaking around October 21st-22nd. These swift and bright meteors are fragments of Halley's Comet and are famous for leaving glowing trains. To spot them, locate the constellation Orion (which gives the shower its name) rising in the eastern

sky after midnight. The later you stay up, the better your chances of seeing these cosmic fireworks.

Planetary Parade: Jupiter and Saturn Shine Bright (All Autumn)

Throughout autumn, the gas giants Jupiter and Saturn will be prominent fixtures in the night sky.

Jupiter, the largest planet in our solar system, will be exceptionally bright and easily visible to the naked eye, appearing like a brilliant, steady star. Through binoculars, you might even glimpse its four largest moons.

Saturn, with its iconic rings, will also be visible, though appearing less bright than Jupiter.

While you'll need a telescope to resolve its rings, even binoculars can hint at its elongated shape. These planetary giants will be observable in the southern sky during the evening hours for much of the season.

Taurids Meteor Shower (November)

November brings the Taurids Meteor Shower, active throughout the month with two peaks: the South Taurids around November 5th and the North Taurids around November

12th. The Taurids are known for being slow-moving but occasionally very bright meteors, sometimes called "fireballs." They radiate from the constellation Taurus the Bull, which rises in the eastern sky.

Leonids Meteor Shower (Mid-November)

One of the most anticipated meteor showers, the Leonids, peaks around November 17th-18th. These meteors are famous for their historical "storms," though most years offer a more modest display. The Leonids are fragments of the



comet Tempel-Tuttle and are known for their speed and bright

trails. Look towards the constellation Leo the Lion, which rises in the late evening.

Geminids Meteor Shower (Early December)

Often considered one of the best meteor showers of the year, the Geminids peak around December 13th-14th. Unlike most showers which originate from comets, the Geminids come from an asteroid, 3200 Phaethon. They produce numerous, bright, and multi-coloured meteors. This shower is best viewed after midnight, with meteors appearing to radiate from the constellation Gemini the Twins, visible high in the southern sky.

The Northern Lights: Aurora Borealis (Potential Sightings)

While not a guaranteed event, autumn and winter can offer increased chances of seeing the Aurora Borealis from Northern Ireland, especially in areas with low light pollution such as the Antrim Coast or parts of County Fermanagh. Solar activity can cause geomagnetic storms, leading to these ethereal green and pink lights dancing across the northern horizon. Keep an eye on space weather forecasts from sites like the Met Office Space Weather Operations Centre for aurora alerts.



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HALLOWEEN IS COMING ...

With its rich folklore and stunning landscapes, Northern Ireland is the perfect place to embrace the autumn season with your family.

The cooler, crisp weather and changing colours create an ideal atmosphere for outdoor adventures, spooky fun, and celebrating the harvest. From picking your own pumpkins to navigating a corn maze, here's a guide to some of the best family-friendly autumn activities across Northern Ireland.

Pumpkin Patches and Halloween Fun.

Picking your own pumpkin has become a cherished autumn tradition for many families. These events often offer more than just a chance to find the perfect gourd; they also include fun activities like spooky trails and face painting.

Mountpanther Farm Park in County Down hosts a large Halloween event with a pumpkin patch where you can pick and have your pumpkin carved. They also have a spooky trail and other surprises.

Streamvale Open Farm, located just outside Belfast, is well-known for its pumpkin patch experience, which



includes a "Broomtastic Disco" and a haunted house.

The Ark Open Farm in Newtownards also opens its pumpkin patch for the spooky season, often featuring a Halloween trail and marshmallow toasting.

Northern Ireland, particularly County Armagh, is famous for its Bramley apples, which have PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) status. While traditional "pick-your-own" apple farms are not common, you can still celebrate the apple harvest at various events and farms.

Look for orchard tours and tasting experiences at places like Long Meadow Cider in Portadown. These visits often give

families a chance to learn about the history of apple growing, see the orchards, and sometimes even taste the freshest apples right from the tree.

For those looking for a bigger spectacle, Northern Ireland has some fantastic Halloween festivals.

Derry Halloween is arguably Europe's largest Halloween festival, a multi-day event that transforms the city into a hub of spooky celebration. It's a fantastic experience with a large carnival parade, fireworks, and a "Awakening the Walled City" trail that's suitable for families.

Smaller, local events in cities like Newry also offer family-friendly fun with street carnivals, craft caves, and spooky discos.

A Decade of Deliciousness for French's Bistro in Clough!

This year, the quaint village of Clough is celebrating a significant milestone: the 10th anniversary of its beloved culinary gem, French's Bistro

Located at 2A Castlewellan Road, this bistro has become a cornerstone of the local community, known for its warm atmosphere, friendly staff, and commitment to providing delicious food.

What began as a local eatery has grown into a destination for diners from far and wide. French's Bistro prides itself on creating a welcoming and comfortable environment, with a bright and airy interior that makes every visit feel like a special occasion.

Its reputation for fantastic service and a menu with great value has earned it a loyal following. It's especially popular with those who need gluten-free options, as the bistro offers a wide variety of choices to accommodate diners with celiac disease.

With a presence in the village for the past 30 years - the establishment

continues to have a strong connection to the community, as evidenced by its social media presence and the positive reviews from locals who have celebrated special occasions, within its walls. In addition French's Bistro also offers an excellent Outside Catering Facility perfect for your home and or community events!

The success of French's Bistro is a testament to its owners and staff, who have worked tirelessly to build a strong reputation. The bistro's commitment to quality is also reflected in its high food hygiene rating, which shows its dedication to maintaining excellent standards in all aspects of its operation.

French's Bistro offers a menu that caters to all tastes, with options for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The bistro's focus on accommodating a wide



range of dietary needs, particularly with its extensive gluten-free menu, is a key part of its appeal. The variety and quality of the dishes, combined with

its cosy atmosphere, make it a top choice for a casual meal or a celebratory dinner.

As French's Bistro embarks on its second decade, the

future looks bright. It continues to be a favourite among locals and visitors, providing a much-needed culinary hub in the heart of Clough.



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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 up to 1 hour before departure or by phone using the very friendly telephone booking service.

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Jack Frost at the MAC a festive family outing that makes the season magical

Summer has only just ended, but the Christmas tradition is already calling. Jack Frost lands at the MAC from 26 November 2025 to 1 January 2026, and it is exactly the kind of festive family outing that makes the season magical.

Recommended for ages 5+, it is bright, brisk and packed with moments that will have little ones wide-eyed and parents smiling.

In a hidden town where the Frozen Bell should ring only once on the solstice, a second chime spells trouble. Jack teams up with Saint Nicholas, Jon the talking snowman, Hoot the owl and Neve the snow angel to face

Krampus and an icy sorceress. Expect a flurry of adventure, plenty of laughs and a simple truth at its heart. The real magic is courage, cleverness and love.

Make it a proper day out! Pair an afternoon performance with a festive lunch, hot chocolates or a Santa visit and tick the family show off the list before December gets busy.

There are even relaxed performance in the run too for those who find a gentler environment helpful.

Tickets start low and rise as dates fill up, so early booking wins. Children are £14, and babies under 12 months go free in arms. Monday to Friday, the Four or More Saver takes 10% off when you add four or more seats. If you are 16 to 24, join

the MAC scheme for a £5 ticket, subject to availability.

Pop Jack Frost on the calendar now, and enjoy the satisfaction when December arrives and your seats are sorted.

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Embracing Outdoor Workouts in Cooler Weather

As the days get shorter and the air turns crisp, it's easy to retreat indoors and let your fitness routine hibernate for the winter.

But autumn is a fantastic season for outdoor exercise. The cooler temperatures can make high-intensity workouts more comfortable, and the beautiful scenery—think vibrant changing leaves and golden sunlight—provides a refreshing backdrop that can boost your mood and motivation.

The Benefits of Exercising Outdoors in Autumn

Working out in the autumn air offers unique advantages. The cooler climate helps your body regulate its temperature more efficiently, which can improve endurance and prevent overheating during intense sessions. A brisk autumn walk or run can feel invigorating, and the natural light exposure can help combat seasonal mood changes. The changing landscape also provides a visual feast that makes your workout feel less like a chore and more like an enjoyable experience.

Tips for Staying Safe and Comfortable

To make the most of your outdoor autumn workouts, a little preparation goes a long way.

- Dress in Layers: This



is the golden rule of cold-weather exercise. Start with a moisture-wicking base layer to draw sweat away from your skin, a middle layer for insulation (like a fleece or wool), and a wind-resistant or waterproof outer layer. As you warm up, you can shed layers.

- Protect Your Extremities: Your hands, feet, and ears are most susceptible to the cold. Wear gloves or mittens, thermal socks, and a hat or ear warmers.

- Stay Hydrated: Just because it's cooler doesn't mean you don't need to drink water. You can still become dehydrated, so carry a water bottle with you.

- Choose the Right Footwear: As the ground may be wet or covered in

leaves, opt for shoes with good traction. If you're running, consider trail shoes for better grip.

- Mind the Daylight: With earlier sunsets, it's crucial to be visible. Wear bright or reflective clothing, and consider a headlamp if you'll be out around dusk or dawn.

Inspiring Autumn Workout Ideas

- Don't be limited to your usual routine. Autumn is the perfect time to try something new.

- Trail Running or Hiking: Take to local trails and immerse yourself in the changing colours. The varied terrain will challenge different muscle groups and keep things interesting.

- Outdoor Yoga: Find a secluded spot in a

park and practice your yoga flow surrounded by nature. The serene environment can enhance your sense of calm.

- Raking Leaves (A Fun Challenge): Turn a chore into a workout! Raking leaves is great for your core, arms, and shoulders. For an extra cardio boost, jump into the piles you create with your family or friends.

- Bodyweight Circuits: Use a park bench for incline push-ups or step-ups, a tree for support during lunges, or find an open field for sprints. The world is your gym!

By embracing the beauty and challenges of the season, you can make autumn a time of fitness growth and renewed appreciation for the great outdoors.

Book a Golden stay at the Station House Hotel

Superbly located in the heart of the thriving town of Letterkenny so you only have to open the doors at the Station House Hotel and you are right where all the action is.

From the endless number of family friendly activities to shopping centres, charming boutiques, the vibrant nightlife scene, relaxing restaurants, the theatre and more, and with easy access to all major routes and natural attractions, Letterkenny has so much to offer over the winter season.

The hotel is built on the grounds of where the old Station House once stood when the Railway system in co. Donegal was in operation from 1901 to the 1940's. It was bought by the Gallagher family in 1953, four years after the last train passed the old building. It became their home up until 2004 at which point it was demolished and developed into a wonderful hotel boasting 81 spacious bedrooms.

Choose from a range of their guestrooms for



your accommodation, whether you are travelling as a couple, with family members or friends they have a number of room types for you to choose from including family, interconnecting, twin, triple, double, accessible and executive.

All of which are vibrant and fresh and a contemporary approach to the décor and designed with your comfort in mind

and feature plasma TVs with Chromecast allowing you to connect your phone or device directly to the screen so you can stream your favourite TV shows and films during your stay and relax, unwind and feel right at home at the Station house Hotel.

The Station House is also home to the Depot Bar and Restaurant, a true "locals local", and one of Letterkenny's best and most popular

bars and restaurants. It provides the perfect excuse for a pause and to pamper your palate, offering a wide range of sumptuous dining options. Since opening in 2006 their focus has been to provide good quality food using the finest of fresh seasonal local produce to create dishes that just ooze with flavor.

Grab yourself a great hotel deal with this incredible value Golden Years offer.

Hay Fever in the Autumn Season: A Surprising Allergy Challenge

When most people think of hay fever, springtime often comes to mind—blossoming trees, blooming flowers, and clouds of pollen.

But for many allergy sufferers, autumn brings its own set of challenges. Hay fever in the autumn season is real, and it's often triggered by a different culprit: weed pollen and mould spores.

Unlike spring and summer, when tree and grass pollen dominate, autumn allergies are typically caused by ragweed, mugwort, and other late-blooming weeds. These plants release pollen into the air from late August through October, especially in dry, windy conditions. In the UK, weed pollen levels can remain high well into September and October, making autumn a difficult time for those sensitive to these allergens.

Another major trigger during autumn is mould. As leaves fall and decompose, damp conditions create the perfect environment for mould growth. Spores from outdoor moulds can become airborne and easily inhaled, leading to symptoms

similar to pollen allergies—sneezing, itchy eyes, runny nose, and congestion. Indoor moulds can also flourish in poorly ventilated homes, especially as people start to close windows and turn on heating systems.

Managing hay fever in autumn requires a slightly different approach. Here are a few tips:

- Keep windows closed during high pollen days and

use air purifiers indoors.

- Clear fallen leaves from gardens and gutters to reduce mould buildup.

- Change clothes and shower after spending time outdoors to remove pollen and spores.

- Use antihistamines or nasal sprays as recommended by your doctor.

Though autumn hay fever is less talked about, it can

be just as disruptive as its spring counterpart. By understanding the seasonal triggers and taking proactive steps, you can enjoy the crisp air and golden leaves without the sniffles.

If you've noticed your symptoms flaring up in September or October, it might not be a lingering summer allergy—it could be autumn hay fever knocking on your door.



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HOW TO FIND A GOOD TRADESPERSON!

The majority of tradespeople are hard-working, reliable and will do a good job, but we've all heard of the cowboy horror stories.

Let's help you to avoid the bad eggs with this guide that looks at how to find a good tradesperson in your area.

Request quotes from at least 3 tradespeople

With all home improvement projects, we always recommend obtaining at least three quotes from different tradespeople in your area. You'll want to shop around to make sure you're paying a fair price for the work.

Make sure they have the relevant qualifications

To get the best results, it's important to hire tradespeople who are dedicated to their trade. Look for a tradesperson with relevant qualifications and accreditations, and check if they're part of national trade schemes.

Choose tradespeople with local experience

Hiring a tradesperson with a lot of local experience can be really valuable. They'll have a working knowledge of local planning permission, have access to a local network of suppliers and labour, and will be close at hand should you need them during the course of your project.

Ask for customer references (and contact

them)

We do this to make sure a tradesperson's reviews on our website are real, but there's certainly no harm in you following up on customer references.

When you've found a tradesperson (or tradespeople) you think could be right for the job, ask them to provide you with references from previous customers about the quality of the tradesperson's work, what it was like to work with them, and would they hire them again.

Ask these 10 questions...

Before you hire a tradesperson, it's a good idea to meet with them in person to discuss the work you need them to do. That way, you can find out more about their experience and approach to their trade.

If you want to know how to find a tradesperson you can trust, ask potential candidates these questions:

1. How long have you been working in the business?
2. What qualifications and/or accreditations do you have?
3. Have you done many projects like this before?
4. Can you show me examples of previous projects that you've worked



5. Do you have appropriate insurance, and can you provide valid certificates?
6. Could you provide me with references from previous customers for me to contact?
7. Do you offer a customer satisfaction guarantee?
8. How long will it take you to complete the work? And when can you start?
9. How much will it cost,

and what are the payment terms?

10. What steps do you take to keep your work on schedule and within budget?

The average cost of a tradesperson will depend on the trade, the nature of the work, and where they are located (labour costs in London tend to be higher than in the North).

To help you plan a budget, here are some average rates you can

expect to pay:

- Plumber costs – £40 - £60 Per hour or around £350 per day
 - Carpenter prices – £30 - £45 per hour
 - Builder rates – £50 per hour or £400 per day
 - Electrician rates – £50 per hour or £400 per day
 - Painter and decorator prices – £250- £400 per day
- For more info see <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/hiring-guides/find-good-tradesperson/>

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Newcastle Fireplaces: It's Warming Up to be a wonderful Winter!

A new business, Newcastle Fireplaces, is set to open its doors, promising to become a go-to destination for homeowners looking to add warmth and style to their living spaces.

The company specializes in a variety of heating solutions, including fireplaces, stoves, media walls, and electric fires.

Located at Unit 12, 63A Castlwellan Road, Newcastle, BT33 0JX, the business aims to supply and fit high-quality products that meet both aesthetic and functional needs.

Including a range of modern and traditional options, from sleek, freestanding stoves to classic white fireplace mantels.

For more information or inquiries, Newcastle Fireplaces can be reached at Tel: (0)77 4247 8070.

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EMBRACING OUTDOOR WORKOUTS IN COOLER WEATHER

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CREATING AN AUTUMN SANCTUARY AT HOME

As the days grow shorter and the air turns crisp, there's a natural shift in focus from the bustling outdoors to the comforting indoors.

Autumn isn't just a season; it's an invitation to create a sanctuary—a cosy, warm, and inviting space where you can retreat from the changing weather. By thoughtfully incorporating a few key elements, you can transform your home into the ultimate seasonal escape.

Embracing the Autumnal Colour Palette

The colours of autumn are nature's own masterpiece. Move away from bright summer shades and embrace the rich, muted tones of the season. Think deep, earthy hues like burnt orange, moss green, terracotta, and warm chocolate brown. You can introduce these colours through soft furnishings like throws and cushions, or with a statement wall painted in a deep, sophisticated shade. Don't forget to add pops of brighter accent colours like mustard yellow or a hint of berry red to keep the palette from feeling too heavy.



Layering Textures for Tactile Comfort

A cosy home is one that engages all the senses, and texture is a key player. This is the time to bring out all your softest materials. Combine chunky knit blankets with soft velvet pillows, or a faux-fur rug with a wool throw. The goal is to create a multi-layered, tactile experience that makes you want to curl up and stay a while. Consider adding natural textures like wood, stone, and

rattan to ground the space and add a touch of rustic charm.

The Warmth of Light
Lighting is a powerful tool for setting a mood. As the sun sets earlier, swap out harsh overhead lighting for warmer, softer alternatives. Layer different light sources, such as table lamps, floor lamps, and even candles, to create inviting pools of light throughout a room. The soft glow of a lamp in a corner or the flicker of a few candles on

a mantle-piece can instantly make a space feel more intimate and comfortable.

Bringing the Outdoors In

Autumn is a season of harvest and natural beauty. Echo this by incorporating elements from the outdoors into your decor. A simple vase filled with dried grasses or autumn branches can add a subtle, organic touch. Display pumpkins or gourds on a console table, or arrange a bouquet of seasonal flowers like sunflowers or chrysanthemums. This not only connects your home to the season but also adds a fresh, vibrant element to your interior.

By embracing these principles—colour, texture, light, and natural elements—you can create a home that is a true sanctuary, a place of comfort and calm to be enjoyed all season long.

Autumn Tasks in the Home

Autumn cleaning is about creating a cosy, functional, and organised space for the winter months. Focus on tasks that ready your home for the cold.

• **Windows and Doors:** Inspect every window and exterior door in your home for signs of drafts or gaps. A simple way to do this is by running your hand along the frame to feel for cold air or holding a lit candle near the edges to see if the flame flickers. If you notice leaks, apply fresh weather stripping, install a draft excluder, or use caulk to seal gaps. This not only prevents heat from escaping but also keeps cold air out, improving comfort and reducing your heating bills. Before winter sets in, give your windows a thorough clean inside and out—clear glass lets in more natural light during short winter days, which can brighten your home and help slightly with warmth.

- **Heating System:** Before temperatures drop, arrange for a professional to service your furnace, boiler, or heat pump. A routine inspection ensures your heating system runs efficiently, reducing the risk of breakdowns during the coldest months. Replace or clean furnace filters to maintain good airflow and air quality. If you have radiators, bleed them by opening the valve slightly until water starts to appear—this removes trapped air.



allowing them to heat evenly. For programmable thermostats, check the settings so your heating schedule matches your winter lifestyle.

- **Fireplace and Chimney:** For wood-burning fireplaces, have the chimney swept by a certified professional to remove soot and creosote, which can cause dangerous chimney fires. This is also a good time to check for any cracks or damage in the chimney structure. Stockpile dry, seasoned firewood in a covered location, or, if you have a gas or electric fireplace,

test it to ensure it's working properly before the first cold snap.

- **Gutters and Downspouts:** Clear leaves, twigs, and debris from your gutters and downspouts before heavy autumn rains arrive. Blocked gutters can cause water to overflow, potentially damaging your roof, walls, and foundation. Check that downspouts direct water at least three feet away from your home's base to prevent pooling and erosion. Installing gutter guards can help reduce future cleaning needs.

- Outdoor Furniture and Garden:

Give your outdoor furniture a good clean to remove dirt, mold, or pollen buildup, then cover it with weather-resistant covers to protect it through the winter. Store cushions and fabrics indoors to prevent dampness and mildew.

Mow your lawn one last time before growth stops, trim back perennials, and plant spring bulbs like tulips and daffodils before the ground freezes. Drain garden hoses completely, coil them, and store them away. Shut off and drain any outdoor taps to avoid frozen pipes, which can cause costly bursts.

How To Transform Your kitchen Without Breaking The Bank

Kitchen renovations don't have to break the bank; even small changes can make a huge difference.

Add New Appliances

Appliances can double as both functional pieces of tech and decorative accessories. There is a wealth of choice when it comes to kitchen appliances and there is something for you no matter what your budget is. An orange fridge might be too bold and too expensive for most, but why not mix it up with a cherry red kettle or a cobalt blue toaster.

Mix Up Your Lighting
You would be surprised what a difference that changing your lighting can do to a space. Once again the sheer abundance of options online and in store allows every style and budget

to be catered for.

You can easily transform the mood of your kitchen simply by adding or changing your light source, drawing attention to certain areas and avoiding others.

By simply avoiding the sterile bright lighting that is often used, you can create a moody, subdued style in your kitchen that will change the mood of everyone that enters. Small changes here and there such as these can make a huge difference to the look and feel of your kitchen.

Upgrade Your Fixtures
Get rid of those age-beaten handles and replace them with new, metallic fixtures to immediately

upgrade your kitchen. Rust and damaged items such as handles can make your kitchen look far older than it should and changing these can be a cheap way of giving your kitchen that lift it so badly needs.

Rusty taps are yet another easy fix that can do wonders for your kitchen. It is far too easy to put this off but if replaced it can breathe new life into that kitchen and give it the fresh look it deserves.

Storage
All too often you can't even appreciate the kitchen that you do have because every inch of the surface is cluttered. This can be easily remedied with the proper use of storage. Once you are able to clear the space it will begin to feel larger, brighter and more modern. Storage solutions can be found very easily through racks, baskets, hooks and magnets – they do not have to break the bank.

Replace **Your**

Replace Your

Counter-Top

If your budget permits, this can work wonders for transforming your kitchen and it is not always as expensive as you might think. Laminate kitchen counter tops range in prices and could be that new addition that sparks life back into your kitchen. You might even be surprised by the options available, so why not have a look!

Easy Fix For Cabinets

One of the most common mistakes in kitchen design is using the wrong colour of paint from the beginning. Picking too dark a tone will make the space feel small and absorb the natural light which will seriously affect the mood of the room. However, this is an easy fix. With a simple fresh coat of paint your kitchen can be transformed. Choosing a light, neutral tone such as white will make the room feel larger, brighter and more modern by reflecting the natural light.



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The importance of using reclaimed and recycled building materials

In a world increasingly aware of its environmental footprint, the construction industry is undergoing a significant transformation.



No longer is it just about erecting structures; it's about building them responsibly. At the forefront of this green revolution are reclaimed and recycled building materials, rising as the ethical and innovative answer to traditional construction. This movement isn't just a trend; it's a fundamental shift towards a more sustainable future, offering both environmental benefits and unique aesthetic appeal.

The range of reclaimed and recycled materials now available is vast and ever-expanding, offering architects, builders, and homeowners a wealth of choices:

- **Reclaimed Wood:** Perhaps the most popular and versatile, reclaimed timber from old barns, factories, and even underwater logging provides incredibly strong, stable, and beautiful wood. Its history is often evident in its unique grain patterns, nail holes, and distressing, adding unparalleled character to flooring, beams, and furniture.
- **Recycled Steel and Metal:** Steel is one of the most recycled materials globally. Recycled steel rebar, structural beams, and corrugated roofing offer excellent strength and durability with a dramatically lower environmental impact than new steel.
- **Recycled Concrete and Aggregates:** Demolished concrete can be crushed and reused as aggregate for new concrete mixes, roadbeds, or landscaping. This significantly reduces waste and the need for virgin aggregate mining.
- **Reclaimed Brick:** Old bricks, with their unique variations in colour and texture, are highly sought after for their authentic charm in both interior and exterior applications.
- **Recycled Glass:** From countertops to decorative tiles and even insulation, recycled glass is finding new life in myriad forms, adding sparkle and sustainability to modern designs.
- **Salvaged Fixtures and Fittings:** Old doors, windows, sinks, bathtubs, and lighting fixtures from demolition sites or architectural salvage yards offer a chance to incorporate vintage charm and reduce waste.

Incorporating reclaimed and recycled materials isn't just about environmental responsibility; it's an aesthetic choice that adds depth, history, and a unique narrative to a building. Designers are skilfully blending these materials with contemporary elements, creating spaces that are both modern and timeless. A sleek, minimalist kitchen might feature a countertop made from recycled glass, while a grand living room could boast stunning reclaimed timber beams. As the demand for responsible building practices grows, the innovation in this sector will only continue. From transforming plastic waste into durable building blocks to pioneering new uses for industrial by-products, the future of construction is increasingly looking to the past for its raw materials. By embracing reclaimed and recycled elements, we are not simply constructing buildings; we are building a more resilient, resource-efficient, and character-filled world, one salvaged piece at a time.

will only continue. From transforming plastic waste into durable building blocks to pioneering new uses for industrial by-products, the future of construction is increasingly looking to the past for its raw materials. By embracing reclaimed and recycled elements, we are not simply constructing buildings; we are building a more resilient, resource-efficient, and character-filled world, one salvaged piece at a time.



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WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR OUTSIDE DRAIN IS BLOCKED

If your outside drain is blocked, we'll take you through your options on how to clear it yourself, including tools and expert techniques.

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You're here because you've probably noticed a stench, damage to electrical fittings, or there's a lot of water sitting on the ground outside your home.

The following are often causes of a blocked drain. Leaves (covering the grid or inside the drain); Food waste, fat or oil from the kitchen sink; Soil or sand

due to a collapsed drain; Objects lodged in the pipes; Tree root damage or Toilet roll build-up.

Before deciding what to do - whether to repair yourself or hire a professional - you'll need to assess the damage. Take a look at the drain and see what you're dealing with. It might be that the

blockage is caused by leaf litter on the grid, in which case you can just clear it by hand. In most blocked drain cases though, you'll need to lift the cover and take a look inside.

To lift a cover you might need a screwdriver or a piece of rope. Once you have access to the pipe below, you're looking to see if the blockage is visible or out of sight, this will give you an idea of the work and tools needed to clear it.

If, after assessing the cause of the blockage, you're confident that you can clear it yourself, then you can source the tools needed for the job. Different clogs require different solutions to clear

them. If the blockage isn't too serious - using a solution is an obvious first step. If that doesn't work you'll need: Rubber gloves with long sleeves; Goggles and a face mask; Drain rods; Bucket and bin bags and a Pressure hose.

Armed with the tools and equipment above, including the all-important safety gear, you can take action yourself if your outside drain keeps blocking.

Bear in mind that clearing an outside drain without the help of a professional is only possible if it's not too clogged or too complex a job.

Remove any blockages - This is all about

doing the obvious and simple stuff first, as that might be all it takes to clear a blocked drain outside your house.

Put on your long-sleeve gloves, goggles and face mask, remove any debris you can easily reach, such as leaves, soap scum or food waste, and place it in your bucket or bin bag.

Clear the blockage with your rods - If clearing the drain by hand doesn't work, then it's time for the rods.

Start with one and carefully insert down the drain and into the pipe below.

If you feel resistance, twist the rod into the blockage with sufficient pressure until you break through. Can't feel it? Connect more rods until you find the blockage.

Clean up the debris - You don't want to do all that dirty work only to have to do it all over again in a few days, so clear up any material you removed and use the opportunity to clear away anything nearby that might cause another blockage.

Again, pop it in your bucket or bin bag.

It's important to take care when using rods or any kind of invasive equipment down your outside drain and pipes, as any damage caused could result in a hefty repair bill and a lot of upheaval to access the area.

To avoid this, or if your drain won't unblock, it's always advisable to call in a professional to take care of the job and it might not cost as much as you think.

On average you'll pay £60 for a call out, with drain rodding costing £80, jetting £175 and a drain CCTV survey for really difficult jobs costing on average £250. They will have the equipment, know-how and insurance to unblock your outside drain efficiently and safely. Plus, you don't get dirty!

For more information see <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/expert-advice/outside-drain-blocked-problem-solve/>

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THE RISE OF THE ELECTRIC SUV

The trend towards electric SUVs continues unabated, and this autumn will introduce several significant new players to the segment.

BMW iX3 (Neue Klasse): BMW's next-generation iX3 is one of the most anticipated EVs of the year. Based on the brand's "Neue Klasse" design language, it promises enhanced battery technology, cutting-edge infotainment, and a fresh aesthetic. This new iX3 aims

to build on the success of the current model, providing an exciting electric option for those who favor the popular X3 SUV.

Range Rover EV: For those seeking luxury and zero-emission driving, the fully electric Range Rover is finally set to arrive. This model is expected to maintain the brand's reputation for opulence and refinement, while offering a powerful and smooth electric powertrain. It will be a direct competitor to high-end EVs like the Tesla Model X and the Mercedes-Benz EQS SUV.

Kia EV5: Following the success of the EV6 and EV9, Kia is expanding its electric lineup with the EV5. This mid-sized SUV is expected to be a practical and stylish family car, competing with models like the Tesla Model Y and Skoda Enyaq. With a focus on sustainable materials and advanced technology, the EV5 is set to be a strong contender in the competitive family SUV market.

Hyundai Ioniq 9: Hyundai is expanding its Ioniq family with the Ioniq 9,

a large seven-seat SUV. This futuristic model is expected to offer a generous range and all the advanced features that have made the Ioniq lineup so popular.

The push for more accessible electric cars is gaining momentum, and several new models are poised to make EV ownership more attainable.

Skoda Epiq: Skoda's new small electric SUV, the Epiq, is designed to be a budget-friendly option for urban drivers. Sharing parts with the upcoming Volkswagen ID.2 and Cupra Raval, it promises over 248 miles of range and a price tag that will appeal to a wide range of buyers. The Epiq's distinct styling and practical interior are set to make it a standout in the affordable EV market.

Fiat Grande Panda: Reviving the iconic Panda nameplate, the new Fiat Grande Panda is a versatile and efficient city car. It will be available in both hybrid and electric versions, catering to a diverse set of needs. With its retro charm and accessible price point,



the Grande Panda is an excellent choice for eco-conscious city dwellers.

Renault Twingo: The Twingo is making a comeback as an affordable electric city car. Targeting a price point under £20,000, it aims to fill a crucial gap in the market for budget-

friendly EVs. With its compact size and cheerful design, it's set to be a popular option for those seeking a fun and efficient car for daily urban use.

This autumn's new car lineup in the UK showcases a clear direction for the industry: a rapid shift

towards electrification across all segments, from family-friendly SUVs to high-performance supercars. With a diverse range of models set to arrive, there's something for every type of driver looking to get behind the wheel of a brand-new car.

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Winter Tyres in the UK: Are They Worth It?

As winter sets in, many UK motorists begin to question whether investing in winter tyres is worthwhile.

Unlike standard tyres, winter tyres are designed with a softer rubber compound and deeper tread patterns, allowing them to grip the road more effectively in cold, icy, or snowy conditions. They remain flexible even when temperatures drop below 7°C, improving braking distances and overall

handling. In countries such as Germany, Austria, and Sweden, winter tyres are a legal requirement during colder months. However, in the UK, where winters are often less severe, there is no law mandating their use. This has led to a mixed approach among drivers. In areas prone to

snow and ice, particularly rural and northern regions, winter tyres can provide an extra layer of safety and peace of mind. Meanwhile, drivers in milder southern areas may see them as an unnecessary expense.

Cost is a key consideration. A full set of winter tyres can be expensive, and some drivers choose to invest in all-season tyres as a compromise. These offer improved performance year-round without the hassle of changing tyres twice annually.

While not essential for everyone, winter tyres can make a significant difference for those who travel frequently in challenging conditions. They not only enhance safety but can also reduce the likelihood of accidents and costly repairs. For many UK motorists, the decision ultimately comes down to balancing budget, driving habits, and regional weather conditions.

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Effortlessly electric: the all-new Nissan LEAF is the EV for everyone

Nissan Motor Co, Ltd. Recently launched the all-new LEAF. The third-generation electric vehicle (EV) benefits from over 15 years of real-world insights gained through global sales of nearly 700,000 units.

Beyond appealing to EV intenders, the all-new LEAF provides a compelling alternative for internal combustion engine (ICE) buyers with its substantially increased maximum range, enhanced charging speed and a technology suite that makes daily driving easier and enriches owners lifestyles.

The all-new LEAF is targeted to arrive at retailers across the United States from autumn, with other regions to follow.

The all-new LEAF embodies Nissan's Timeless Japanese Futurism design with a distinctive Japanese aesthetic conveyed in a simple yet powerfully modern way.

A fastback-like silhouette and features such as flush front door handles, aerotuned wheels and a flat underbody combine to ensure the all-new LEAF not only looks bold and sleek, but also offers a 0.26 drag coefficient for U.S. and Japan models, and an even more impressive 0.25 for European variants.²

The interior is spacious with an almost entirely flat floor courtesy of Nissan's CMF-EV platform and the wide horizontal instrument panel appears to be floating.

A Nissan-first Dimming

Panoramic Roof featuring heat shielding with embedded Polymer Dispersed Liquid Crystal (PDLC) technology allows owners to enjoy natural light and year-round comfort at the touch of a button.

The all-new LEAF delivers a responsive, ultra-smooth drive. The all-new, 3-in-1 EV powertrain with an integrated motor, inverter and reducer is 10% smaller than its predecessor and features Nissan's unique motor control, which enhances refinement.

The new motor, paired with a new, high-rigidity motor-mount bracket, supports a 75-percent reduction in motor vibration compared to the outgoing model.

For select regions, newly available Intelligent Distance Control Assist helps intuitively maintain a set distance from the vehicle in front while driving in city traffic and also optimizes regenerative braking.

The all-new LEAF is available with two liquid-cooled lithium-ion battery options, both of which offer thermal conditioning functionality.

Select models are powered by batteries with 52 kWh of usable capacity, supporting an output of 130 kW and



345 Nm of torque. Larger 75 kWh batteries are also available, providing 160 kW and 355 Nm of torque.

An enhanced thermal recovery and management system harvests heat created by the onboard charger (OBC) to warm up the battery, increasing its regeneration potential in cold weather.

Additionally, on applicable grades a new intelligent navigation-linked thermal conditioning function optimizes battery cooling based on the selected drive route.

When connected to a fast charger, owners can replenish 10-80% of their

charge in as little as 35 minutes.

An available Intelligent Route Planner also enhances EV ownership by providing real-time route information, state of charge and identification of convenient charging stations.

The all-new LEAF features a comprehensive suite of advanced and innovative driver assist technologies to make daily driving easier and more intuitive. Beyond providing zero emission mobility, the all-new LEAF offers features and functionality to enhance the lifestyle of owners.

Specifically for Europe,

the all-new LEAF is Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) compatible, such that in the future it will be able to send stored energy back to the power grid. This function will help customers reduce energy costs while supporting a more stable and sustainable energy system.

The all-new, third generation Nissan LEAF will be assembled at the Tochigi Plant in Japan, as well as at Nissan's state-of-the-art production facility in Sunderland, northeast England.

Further details including pricing will be provided closer to the start of sales in each respective market.

Essential Car Maintenance for Autumn

As the vibrant greens of summer give way to the golden hues of autumn, the change in seasons brings with it unique challenges for your vehicle.

Cooler temperatures, increased rainfall, and falling leaves can all impact your car's performance and safety. Taking a proactive approach to car maintenance now can save you headaches and costly repairs down the line. Here's a rundown of essential checks to ensure your car is autumn-ready.

Check Your Tyres: Grip and Pressure Are Key

Your tyres are your car's only point of contact with the road, and their condition is paramount for autumn driving.

- **Tread Depth:** Aim for at least 3mm of tread depth for optimal grip in wet conditions. If your tyres are nearing the legal limit (typically 1.6mm in the UK), consider replacing them before the wet weather sets in.

- **Tyre Pressure:** As temperatures drop, so does tyre pressure. Check your tyre pressures regularly (at least once a month) when the tyres are cold, and inflate them to the manufacturer's recommended levels. Correct pressure improves handling, fuel efficiency, and tyre longevity.

- **Punctures and Sidewall Damage:** Inspect your tyres for any bulges, cracks, or embedded objects that could lead to a sudden deflation.

Inspect Your Wipers and Washer Fluid: Clear Vision is Non-Negotiable

Autumn often brings more rain and even early morning mist.

- **Wiper Blades:** Worn or cracked wiper blades won't

clear your windshield effectively, leading to reduced visibility. Replace them if they leave streaks or chatter across the glass.

- **Washer Fluid:** Top up your washer fluid reservoir with a good quality screen wash that includes an antifreeze agent. This prevents the fluid from freezing in colder temperatures and helps to clear grime and salt from the road.

Test Your Lights: Be Seen and See Clearly

Daylight hours shorten significantly in autumn, making properly functioning lights crucial.

- **All Lights:** Check all exterior lights – headlights (high and low beam), tail lights, brake lights, indicators, and fog lights – to ensure they are working cor-

rectly. Replace any blown bulbs promptly.

- **Headlight Clarity:** Over time, headlight lenses can become cloudy. Consider a headlight restoration kit if yours are looking dull, as this can significantly improve light output.

Examine Your Brakes: Stopping Power Matters

Wet and leafy roads can significantly increase stopping distances.

- **Brake Pads and Discs:** Listen for any squealing or grinding noises when you brake, and pay attention to any changes in pedal feel (e.g., spongy or vibrating). If you have any concerns, have your brakes inspected by a qualified mechanic. They will check the thickness of your brake pads and the condition of your discs.

Check Your Battery: Don't Get Caught Out by the Cold

Cold weather puts extra strain on your car's battery.

- **Battery Age:** If your battery is over three years old, it's worth having it tested.

- **Terminals:** Look for any signs of corrosion on the battery terminals, and ensure they are clean and securely fastened.

Top Up Your Coolant/Antifreeze: Protect Against Freezing

Your coolant system not only keeps your engine from overheating but also prevents the water in the system from freezing in cold temperatures.

- **Level and Strength:** Check your coolant reservoir and ensure the level is between the min and max marks.

If you're unsure about the strength of your antifreeze, a mechanic can test it for you.

Clear Out Debris: Protect Against Clogs and Corrosion

Falling leaves and other organic matter can accumulate in various parts of your car.

- **Wiper Scuttle/Drain Channels:** Clear leaves from the area around your windscreen wipers and the drain channels beneath your bonnet. Blockages here can lead to water ingress into the cabin or affect electrical components.

- **Radiator Grille:** Remove any leaves or debris from your car's front grille, as these can restrict airflow to the radiator and lead to overheating.



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