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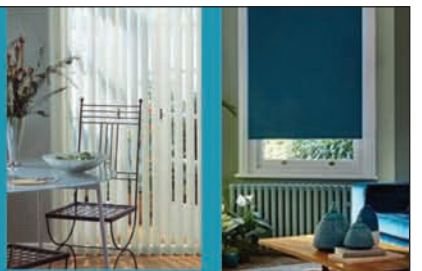
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Talented 10-year-old Grace Smith was a finalist in last year's competition and helped launch the campaign for 2025

THE GRAND PIANIST COMPETITION RETURNS TO BANGOR

Bangor Train Station will feature on the roadshow schedule for the award-winning GRAND Pianist Competition 2025.

After capturing the imagination of people across Northern Ireland in its debut year, this year's competition – which marks the first anniversary of Belfast Grand Central Station – promises to be even bigger, celebrating connection, championing local talent, creating

musical moments in stations across the region.

Open to amateur players of all ages and abilities, The GRAND Pianist will once again take a concert piano on tour across Northern Ireland's transport hubs for a series of live regional heats.

The journey will

culminate in a spectacular Grand Final at Belfast Grand Central Station in November 2025.

Since opening, the station has welcomed over 8 million people in just twelve months, achieving 96% user satisfaction and winning recognition including the UK CIHT

Infrastructure Award and Business Eye Sustainability Project of the Year. More than a transport hub, it has quickly established itself as a destination for people, experiences, and culture.

Continued on page 4

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New community-led organisation RathMORE Together is born

Alliance Bangor West Councillor Naomi McBurney has received backing for her motion to support a new community-led organisation RathMORE Together.

Building on the success of LoveBallyholme, the motion proposes replicating the model in the Rathmore area of Bangor and instructed officers to develop a plan with associated funding.

Cllr McBurney's motion was supported at the latest meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee.

"Rathmore is already a vibrant part of Bangor, and I know there is an appetite locally to build on the existing sense of community and pride in the area," said Cllr McBurney, following the meeting.

"We have seen from the success of LoveBallyholme,

the difference community initiatives can have when they are led by local people working alongside local schools, businesses, churches and other organisations. Whether it's community fairs or installing flower planters, it's about bringing people together and encouraging a well-connected community.

"This is a model that Council can adopt to support Rathmore residents, who know their neighbourhood best and want to see it thrive. I'm looking forward to seeing the report that officers come back with and doing all I can to support RathMORE Together as it gets off the ground."

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LIVE HERE LOVE HERE SCHEME RETURNS

Northern Ireland’s largest community and civic pride campaign, Live Here Love Here, has announced the return of its Small Grants Scheme for 2025, following a successful year in Ards and North Down Borough Council, where 14 local projects were awarded a total of £32,376 in funding.

Throughout 2024, volunteers contributed an impressive 1,554 hours, demonstrating the vital role of community effort in tackling environmental challenges and promoting local stewardship. Delivered in partnership with ten local councils, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and Belfast Harbour, applications for the 2025 Small Grants Scheme are open until August 18. Community and volunteer groups, schools, not-for-profit organisations, and un-constituted groups are invited to apply, with successful applications awarded grants from £500 to £3,000. Projects funded last year in Ards and North Down Borough Council included initiatives by Bangor Foodbank & Community Support, North Down YMCA, Millisle Health & Wellbeing Group, Peninsula Healthy Living Partnership, Hollywood Shared Town, Portaferry in Bloom, and Victoria PS Ballyhalbert, all working towards transforming shared spaces, enhancing biodiversity, and strengthening local engagement. Crawfordburn Primary School Garden received a

grant to support planting trees and shrubs, tools, pond dipping kits, and other materials. The school gardening club came together to transform waste ground into a more enjoyable and engaging space for the school community. They enhanced existing facilities, including the school pond, to encourage wildlife and help children learn through hands-on experiences. The project also opened up the area around the pond for wildlife investigation and expanded the vegetable garden to promote sustainability and community involvement. The Small Grants Scheme had a record-breaking year in 2024, awarding £196,342 to 115 projects across Northern Ireland. With 4,500 volunteers revitalising neglected spaces, the scheme has supported environmental improvements, civic pride, and community wellbeing across the region. Orla McGrady, Grants Officer at Live Here Love Here highlighted the array of benefits the Scheme brings to Northern Ireland. She said, “Our Small Grants Scheme continues to prove its role



in delivering tangible, long-lasting environmental benefits to urban and rural communities. With 378 applications last year, it’s clear the scheme encourages and empowers people to show the pride and passion they have for where they live. In addition to boosting the environment, we have found that the scheme also supports improved community health and wellbeing as these new shared spaces become places everyone can participate in. “We look forward to communities submitting their ideas this year in hopes we can help more villages, towns and cities

across Northern Ireland come together to leave a positive legacy.” Live Here Love Here is currently hosting Connecting Communities events across Northern Ireland, offering opportunities to meet local volunteers and learn more about applying to the 2025 Scheme. Lynda Surgenor, Live Here Love Here Manager, said, “The Small Grants Scheme continues to demonstrate the extraordinary impact funding can have when placed in the hands of passionate local people. Over 100 projects completed across Northern Ireland last year, and over

1.2 million in improvements have been delivered as a result of the scheme to date. The impact ranges from community allotments to school gardens, and biodiversity workshops to urban clean-ups - the sheer variety of noble ideas waiting to be supported, and the ongoing commitment of communities never ceases to amaze us. We look forward to delivering another successful year with the support of our partners in 2025.” To apply for the Small Grants Scheme, or for more information on the Connecting Communities Events, visit liveherelovehere.org/smallgrants.

Golf Club Business Brunch a ‘hole in one’ for Hollywood.

North Down Alliance MLA Andrew Muir has congratulated Hollywood Golf Club on a successful Business Brunch for Hollywood Chamber of Commerce.

The event showcased the facilities that are on offer at the club and the role it plays in supporting businesses and the community locally. The attendees of the event were also treated to a Rory McIlroy Club and Trophy Tour.

“I’m sure all of the Hollywood Chamber members will agree with me that the Business Brunch was a thoroughly enjoyable and worthwhile morning. It was great to discuss how we can all work together to ensure Hollywood remains a vibrant and bustling down for residents and visitors alike,” said Andrew Muir MLA. “Hollywood Golf Club, being the home of Rory McIlroy, is a great draw for tourists, and that is



Andrew Muir MLA

obviously a boost for the town as well. The trophies are a piece of sporting history, and the club is such a big part of Rory’s story. It’s a must for any golfing enthusiast. “The Golf Club and the Chamber working together is mutually beneficial and will help to boost the economic development of the town. We all want to see Hollywood succeeding, and this collaborative approach is a hole in one for everyone!



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George Best Belfast City Airport Plan welcomed

North Down DUP MLA Stephen Dunne has welcomed the announcement of plans to improve George Best Belfast City Airport. Mr Dunne commented:



“These plans, if delivered, have the potential to be transformative. It will give passengers a faster, more convenient and sustainable way of accessing the airport, easing congestion on our roads and encouraging more people to use public transport. I am particularly excited about the potential of a direct rail link between the airport and the Bangor-Belfast train line. This has been something I have lobbied the Infrastructure Minister about for some time and would give tourists and visitors a quick and convenient gateway into North Down. It also removes the need for passengers to undergo a lengthy, exposed and potentially dangerous walk along the Sydenham Bypass to access rail services. I will continue to work with the Minister and stakeholders to ensure that these plans are delivered as quickly as possible and to the highest standard, and with the support of the local community.”

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SERC SECURES TURING SCHEME FUNDING FOR STUDENT STUDY AND PLACEMENTS

South Eastern Regional College (SERC) has secured funding through the Turing Scheme for students and accompanying staff to undertake part-funded study or work-based placements across the world in the 2025/26 academic year.

Elaine McKeown, Senior International Development Manager said, “We are delighted that up to 90 students and 20 staff from across the college will undertake either a study or work placement next spring.

“Students from animal management, business studies, culinary arts, computing, construction, early years, health

and social care, media production, travel and tourism and sport courses will be heading off for part funded work placements in South Africa, St Lucia, Bali, Thailand and Europe.

“Our experience is that a study or work placement abroad is often a life-changing experience for students, giving them a unique opportunity to gain vital international experience, improve their technical skills and boost their employability.”

The first cohort of 36 students from the college’s culinary arts, travel and tourism, early years and health and social care programmes, will travel to Bali in March to participate in a citizenship and cultural immersion programme, providing them with a unique opportunity to explore global citizenship, sustainability, and

wellness.

Nine media production students will travel to Tenerife to complete a Digital Marketing course that will improve their digital media skills, whilst 27 business studies, computing and construction students will travel to Thailand to participate in a global citizenship programme which will include visits to eco-tourism sites, sustainable farms, and urban development projects to gain understanding of the impact of ethical business and responsible tourism in Thailand.

A life-changing volunteer experience awaits nine sport students, who will head to St Lucia to work alongside United Through Sport volunteers to develop and deliver sports and coaching programmes

to local children from disadvantaged backgrounds; and nine animal care students will participate in a volunteer placement with the Waterberg Biomonitoring Team who are responsible for ongoing ecological monitoring on the Welgevonden Game Reserve in South Africa.

Elaine added, “Students improve their language skills and transversal skills, or T-Skills, such as communication, collaboration and teamwork, and problem-solving skills, and the whole experience means they gain a better understanding of other global cultures and work practices. For some students, a placement or study trip can be the first time they have travelled abroad, so it can help their independence towards



adulthood as they take responsibility for important travel documents and manage their finances abroad.”

She concluded, “Funding through the Turing Scheme allows SERC to build long-term partnerships with counterparts and

organisations to share best practice approaches; this has a positive impact on the curriculum, both here and in the placement nation.”

The Turing Scheme contributes to the UK Government’s commitment to a Global Britain by

helping organisations to enhance existing international links and forge new relationships. The delivery partner for the Turing Scheme is the Department for Education. Visit www.serc.ac.uk Real Learning for Real Life #BetterOffAtSERC.

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Continued from page 1

Returning as Head Judge is Matthew Owens - a renowned

conductor, composer, pianist, and organist with more than 30 years of experience, who will once again lead the search for Northern Ireland’s standout pianists. He will be joined by a special guest judge at the Grand Final to crown this year’s winner.

Chris Conway, Translink Group Chief Executive, commented:

“Last year, The GRAND Pianist captured the imagination of people right across Northern Ireland. This year, as we mark the 1st anniversary of Belfast Grand Central Station opening, we’re excited to build on that momentum.

“The competition is about people, connections, and shared experiences.

Belfast Grand Central Station has become a community hub in its first year, and this competition is the perfect way to celebrate, by bringing music, joy, and talent into the heart of the station.

“We want to invite everyone to take part, whether you’re playing in the heats, cheering on a performer, or stopping to enjoy a musical moment on your journey.”

The GRAND Pianist roadshow will call at Lanyon Place, Belfast, Newry Bus Station, North West Transport Hub, Bangor Bus & Rail Station and Coleraine Bus & Rail Centre, where the public are encouraged to register for the regional heats and come to play on the concert piano.



Reflecting on the competition, Head Judge Matthew Owens commented:

“It was inspiring last year to uncover such a breadth of local

talent. I’m delighted to return for 2025 as we celebrate one year of this remarkable station. I look forward to hearing from pianists of all ages and abilities who are ready to share their passion and creativity with audiences across Northern Ireland.”

To enter the competition, pianists should register at the regional heats, where

entrants will perform a short piece of their choosing. Full details, including dates and times, are available at: <https://www.translink.co.uk/grand-pianist>

Download the Translink Journey planner app for your next journey by bus and train and follow all the latest Grand Pianist competition action on Translink socials #GrandPianist2025.

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MLAs make visit to Hollywood pharmacy in recognition of palliative care standards

Alliance Party MLA Connie Egan, UUP MLA Alan Chambers and DUP MLA Peter Martin made a joint visit to Sweeney's Pharmacy recently to speak to staff about their role in supporting patients who require palliative care in the local community.

The visit marked Palliative Care Week, 7-13 September, which is an annual, all-island campaign aimed at raising public awareness and increasing understanding of palliative care and its benefits.

Data previously published by leading end of life charity, Marie Curie, found that the demand for palliative care in Northern Ireland is expected to grow by more than 32% by 2048 (from 15,500 people in 2023 to 20,500 in 2048) due to an aging population, an increase in chronic illnesses, and the increased presence of two or more long-term health conditions within the population.

Palliative care is currently provided by all community pharmacies with patients and carers encouraged to use their regular pharmacy to obtain medication in the first instance, however Sweeney's is one of more than 75 pharmacies in Northern Ireland which are currently signed up to the 'Daffodil Standards' - a set



of guidelines developed by The Royal Pharmaceutical Society in partnership with Marie Curie, which help pharmacists to maintain good practice in providing palliative and end of life care.

The North Down MLAs heard first-hand how local pharmacists play a key role in supporting those living with a terminal illness, and their families and carers, by providing quality, personalised care both at the end of life and following a bereavement.

David Marshall,

Community Pharmacist at Sweeney's Pharmacy Hollywood, said: "We link in closely with the Marie Curie Hospice in East Belfast, as well as with local district nursing teams, GPs, carers and families who come through the door for things such as prescriptions, medicines, advice and signposting. Since signing up to the Daffodil Standards and rolling out the education to our staff, we've noticed an improvement in their confidence in assisting people with palliative care

needs. I would definitely encourage other pharmacies who are interested in registering, to do so."

Launched in Northern Ireland in March of this year, the Daffodil Standards for pharmacies are supported by the Department of Health, Pharmacy Forum NI and Community Pharmacy NI.

To find out more about the Daffodil Standards or how to access palliative and end of life care services for yourself or a loved one, visit mariecurie.org.uk.



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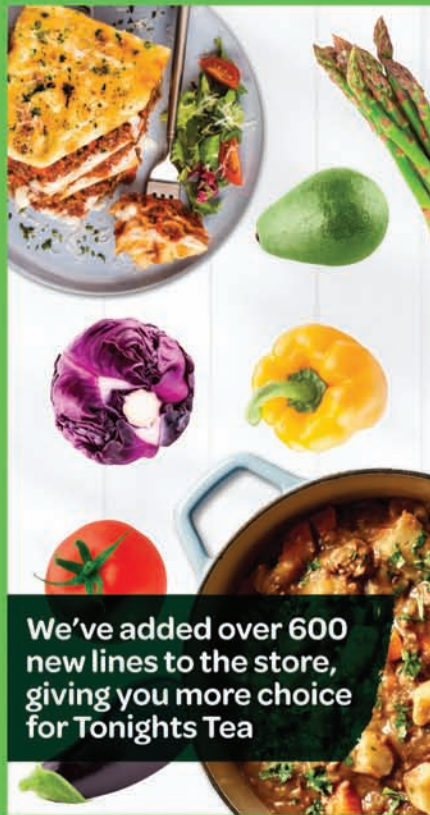
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Ards and North Down Local Development Plan 2032 – Draft Plan Strategy

Ards and North Down Borough Council has published its Draft Plan Strategy, marking the first formal stage in the preparation of the new Local Development Plan (LDP) 2032.

This strategic document sets out how the Borough will grow and develop over the next decade, shaping decisions on housing, employment, tourism, infrastructure and environmental protection.

- The LDP aims to:
- Promote sustainable development.
 - Enhance quality of life and wellbeing.
 - Support economic growth and environmental stewardship.
 - Deliver inclusive placemaking across the Borough.
- A four-week reading period is now in progress ahead of a formal consultation on the Draft

Plan Strategy that will begin on 17 October 2025. This will be open for a period of eight weeks. During this time, a series of drop-in public consultation events and information sessions will be held.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum, said: “This Draft Plan Strategy is a significant milestone for our Borough. It sets out a clear and ambitious vision for how we want Ards and North Down to grow, sustainably, inclusively and with the wellbeing of our residents at its heart. I encourage everyone to take part in the consultation and help shape the future of our



communities.”

Representations must be made during the eight-week consultation period that begins on 17 October 2025 and ends on 15 December 2025 at 4.30pm. Any received outside of these dates will not be considered.

For more information, and to view the Draft Plan Strategy, visit www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/LDP-Draft-Plan-Strategy. Alternatively, the Draft Plan Strategy can also be viewed at City Hall, Bangor, and also 2 Church Street, Newtownards.

NIE Networks welcome Apprentices

NIE Networks have this month welcomed 18 new apprentices to the award-winning NIE Networks Apprenticeship Academy.

The latest cohort join NIE Networks at an exciting time as the organisation embarks on a “once in a generation” rebuild of the electricity networks to ensure there is a robust and resilient network for years to come.

The apprentices who are on the Wayleave and Surveying apprenticeships or the Overhead Lines Apprenticeships are at the start of a two-year course which sees them obtain relevant industry qualifications and allows them to earn while they learn, avoiding student loans and gaining vital experience as part of their qualification.

The focus on growing the “Green Skills” workforce is a key element of the NIE Networks award-winning Apprentice Academy which has been shaping futures for over 50 years and is the first platinum accredited Investors in People Apprenticeship in Northern Ireland. NIE Networks are proud to have an employee retention rate of 97% and around 30% of the senior leadership team began their career journey as apprentices.

The company has bespoke training facilities and apprentices are supported

by specialist instructors who mentor them through their qualifications. The Wayleave and surveyors apprentices work both in the office and on site, surveying the overhead lines, liaising with landowners and ensuring the teams have the necessary information to allow them to carry out work on site. The Overhead Lines team are based out of the NIE Networks depot in Campsie, Derry/Londonderry and the NIE Networks training centre in Nutts Corner.

John Burns, Technical Training Manager with NIE Networks, said: “The electrical industry is in a significant growth period so the opportunities that lie ahead for our apprentices are varied and exciting. Our vision is to provide an electricity network that is safe and reliable, capable of facilitating a green, renewable future and one that meets the longer term needs of our society so we need to secure a passionate and skilled workforce.”

Ryan McMaster, an Overhead Lines Apprentice with NIE Networks, said: “My initial weeks with NIE Networks have been thoroughly rewarding.



It has been a pleasure to engage with both staff and fellow apprentices, and I am genuinely enthusiastic about contributing to the organisation’s efforts in advancing a net zero future over the coming years. I come from a farming background and love the outdoors, working on Overhead line network has

been an aspiration for me for a while now.” To learn more about NIE Networks Apprentice Academy please click here [Career opportunities at NIE Networks | Northern Ireland Electricity Networks](#) Recruitment for the 2026 NIE Networks Apprentice Academy intake will open in January 2026.

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New Local Economic Partnership

The Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald met with the Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Borough’s new Local Economic Partnership today (25 September) to learn more about the aspirations of this new group for sustainable economic progress across the local area.

Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) are collaborative bodies that bring together local authorities, businesses, educators, and civic leaders to shape the economic future of their communities. LEPs provide strategic leadership, set local priorities, and help unlock investment to support innovation, infrastructure, and job creation.

Ards and North Down Borough Council hosted the first meeting of the new Local Economic

Partnership (LEP) in August 2025. Members represent a broad and diverse group of stakeholders who are committed to working together to identify barriers to economic development and to co-design interventions that can enhance the region’s value proposition, support local enterprise, and promote innovation and skills development. This work is being supported with £4.1m in funding from the Department for the Economy (DfE) over the next three years.

Welcoming the new partnership, Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald said: “Local Economic Partnerships play a vital role in identifying the main barriers to economic development and the priority interventions that will build the region’s value proposition. They also drive a regionally balanced economy where everyone

shares the benefits of prosperity.” At the inaugural meeting, the Partnership appointed Alderman Alan McDowell as Chair and Derek Wright, President of the Newtownards Chamber of Commerce, as Vice-Chair. Along with Alderman McDowell, the Partnership includes four elected members—Cllr Craig Blaney, Cllr Joe Boyle, Cllr Carl McClean and Cllr Eddie Thompson. They join representatives from SERC (Further Education), North Down Development Organisation and Ards Business Hub (Local Enterprise Agencies), Ards and North Down Business Forum (local business reps), the University of Ulster and the Third Sector. The partnership is further supported by Invest Northern Ireland and the Department for the Economy.

Reflecting on his

appointment Alderman McDowell said: “It’s an honour to serve as Chair of this important new Partnership. Our aim is to create more good jobs and growth, to encourage start-up businesses, help existing businesses to grow, and attract new businesses to the Ards and North Down area. With Derek Wright as Vice Chair, we have a strong leadership team ready to champion innovation, investment, and inclusive growth.” Following the inaugural meeting of the Partnership a workshop for LEP partners took place on 16 September to discuss potential projects and Borough specific gaps in provision that can be addressed through the LEP Action Plan (running from now until 2028). The workshop was both productive and collaborative, with positive feedback from attendees. Initial ideas were captured



Alderman Alan McDowell (Chair of the Borough’s new Local Economic Partnership); Councillor Gillian McCollum (Mayor of Ards and North Down); Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald; Iain Joannides (Head of Eastern Region at Invest NI); Vice Chair Derek Wright (President of the Newtownards Chamber of Commerce). Image: Simon Graham.

and will be used to help shape a targeted LEP Action Plan. This marks a strong start to the Partnership’s efforts to address local gaps and develop impactful projects across the Borough. Iain Joannides, Head of Eastern Region at Invest NI, commented: “We are

working closely together with Ards and North Down LEP to help them identify opportunities for economic development in this area, and the initiatives that will make the greatest impact. Through greater collaboration and more purposeful partnerships we can achieve regional balance, enabling more businesses to start, scale and expand within the Borough.” Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to championing sustainable economic development through strategic collaboration and long-term investment, ensuring that the Ards and North Down remains a thriving environment for business, innovation, and opportunity.

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Alliance celebrates pupils at St Columbanus Prize Giving.

Alliance Representatives Andrew Muir MLA, Connie Egan MLA and Mayor Cllr Gillian McCollum have attended St Columbanus' College's Prize Giving Ceremony to celebrate the achievement of the students over the last academic year.

Speaking after the event, North Down MLA Andrew Muir said, "It was a privilege to attend the prize giving at St Columbanus' College and celebrate the students' achievements. As a former pupil, I know what a fantastic school it is. I am forever grateful for the support and learning I gained whilst at St Columbanus' College. Huge congratulations to all the young people who were recognised for their hard work and academic accomplishment. I'm sure there is a bright future ahead for all of them."

Connie Egan MLA, also representing North Down, said, "I was delighted to attend the annual Prize Day at St Columbanus' College. The number of prizes awarded to students is a testament to the hard



(R-L) Andrew Muir MLA, Principal Maria Flynn, Mayor Gillian McCollum, Board of Governor Sarah Havlin and Connie Egan MLA at St Columbanus's College

work they put into their academic success, and fostering a nurturing school community. The College's Traditional Group performed brilliantly and were a fantastic addition to the event. I look forward to continuing to engage with the school as the academic

year progresses." Ards and North Down Mayor Gillian McCollum added, "It is always great to mark the accomplishments of students on prize day, and to acknowledge the contribution of the College's staff. Not only do

students receive an outstanding education at this school, but their wellbeing is cared for deeply. The whole school community, including families, governors and support staff, deserves our praise and admiration for another wonderful year of achievements."

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NORTH DOWN & ARDS

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Working to end Domestic Abuse

North Down & Ards Women's Aid provides a wide range of free support services to women and their children affected by domestic and sexual abuse.

Our services include -

- Emergency refuge accommodation
- Floating support service for women in the community
- Children's services
- Group support programmes including Journey to Freedom
- One Stop Shop - free multi-agency drop in service
- Court support

Our range of Children's Services include:

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The One Stop Shop provides FREE, immediate and confidential access to Women's Aid, legal support, benefits advice, housing support and safety advice.

Women's Aid

NORTH DOWN & ARDS

10.00 am - 12.00 noon
No appointment necessary
Crèche facilities are available
LOCATION: House Church, Crawfordsburn Road, Newtownards, BT23 4EA

For any further information about the One Stop Shop or Women's Aid support services Contact us at 02891 273196

NEXT DATES:

14th October
28th October
11th November
25th November

Our sessions are held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month!

Housing Executive

Community Advice
Ards and North Down

Do you see a change in deciduous trees?

As we travel through 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

HELENS BAY DENTAL

30 Years of Trust, Leading the Way with Digital Dentistry

Local practice invites new patients to experience private dental care with a personal touch

Helens Bay Dental, a private clinic with over three decades of trusted service to families across the community, is setting new standards in patient care by embracing the very latest in digital dentistry.

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“Digital dentistry has transformed the way we care for patients,” explained a spokesperson for the clinic. “It means less waiting, no messy impressions, and treatment that is precisely tailored to each individual. But just as important is the personal experience—we never lose sight of the human touch.”

To support this, every



new patient is offered a complimentary consultation with a treatment coordinator, providing time in a relaxed setting to ask questions, explore options, and feel completely at ease before beginning treatment.

With a loyal, long-

standing team and a reputation for reassurance, Helens Bay Dental continues to change lives and smiles across the region.

“This is where over 30 years of trusted care meets the future of dentistry—a practice that truly delivers

confidence and comfort in equal measure.”

Please call 02891 853304 to book a complimentary Treatment Coordinator visit to see first-hand the services that can change your smile or email info@helensbaydental.co.uk

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Autumn Sale of Margey Originals at Culloden Estate & Spa

Portrush-based artist Adrian Margey, known for his vibrant, contemporary landscape works, will be hosting an exhibition and sale at The Culloden Estate & Spa from Friday 24th October to Sunday 26th October.

This highly anticipated annual event will feature Margey's latest collection, which captures the breathtaking beauty of North Down, the Ards Peninsula, the Mourne, the North Coast, Belfast, and Donegal.

Margey, whose work has been gaining recognition both locally and internationally, exhibited in Washington DC in 2022 and was invited to live-paint at the 'Experience Ireland' showcase in Milan last spring. His reputation continues to grow, making this exhibition an exciting opportunity for collectors and art enthusiasts alike.

While Margey holds a PhD from Queen's University Belfast, he is a self-taught artist whose distinctive style draws inspiration from the Fauves, Irish Impressionists, and the indigenous artists of South America. His signature

approach blends bold, kaleidoscopic colours with sweeping brushstrokes and expressive knife work, creating pieces that are both dynamic and emotive. His more impressionistic works, which emphasize naturalistic colour schemes, are also increasingly sought after.

This year's exhibition will spotlight a stunning range of large and small works, each reflecting Adrian Margey's distinctive style and use of colour. A special focus will be placed on Belfast's iconic landmarks, including the historic Harland and Wolff cranes, the Titanic Quarter, Ulster Hall and Strand Cinema. Alongside these, there will be breathtaking depictions of the North Coast, Mourne and Donegal. Striking portrayals of Strangford Lough, Scrabo Tower and Mount Stewart as well as serene scenes from



Artist Adrian Margey photographed ahead of his Solo Exhibition at Culloden Estate & Spa: Friday 24th until Sunday 26th October.

North Down, such as Kinnegar Pier, Seapark, Crawfordsburn and Bangor Marina will bring a very local flavour to this must-see exhibition.

The exhibition will run from 11 am to 9 pm on Friday, 24th October and

Saturday, 25th October, with final viewing on Sunday, 26th October from 11 am to 6 pm. Admission is free, and everyone is welcome. For more details, please visit www.adrianmargey.com or contact the Portrush studio at 07841593762.

NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme – more childcare providers than ever helping parents reduce their childcare costs

While we are still waiting for the draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy to be published, by the Education Minister Paul Givan in the coming weeks, it is positive to see that the expansion of the Northern Ireland Childcare Support Scheme (NICSS) is progressing.

Employers For Childcare

Many more childcare providers are signing up to the scheme, allowing the parents whose children attend those facilities to benefit from valuable savings on the cost of registered childcare.

As the cost of childcare remains a significant outlay for many households and is often a barrier for parents wanting to work, or to work more hours, it is vital that as many parents as possible are able access the is vital support towards childcare costs.

Often it is the registered childcare provider who is

the first point of contact for parents to ask about financial support towards their costs, so don't be afraid to ask. Support towards childcare costs is available for eligible parents with an income of up to £100,000 per parent. So most working parents in Northern Ireland are eligible to some form of support, either through NICSS, Tax-Free Childcare or Universal Credit.

Changes to the NICSS since its inception

Originally launched in September 2024, the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme

gave eligible parents of children under Primary School age a 15% discount on their childcare cost. The maximum saving per child at that time was £167 per month or £2,000 per year.

From April 2025 the savings per child were increased to a maximum of £184 per month, or £2,208 per year.

From September 2025 the scheme was expanded to also include children of Primary School age, i.e. children aged 11 and under, attending nursery, primary, or special schools.

Number of childcare providers

This expansion of the scheme to include Primary School age children has meant that many childcare providers who were previously unable to offer this valuable support

have now signed up to the scheme.

A recent NI Assembly Question response tells us that there are 1,924 providers of various types registered for the scheme. These include 18 Primary Schools, 109 Out of School groups, 141 Playgroups, 312 Daycare providers and the rest made up of Approved Home Childcarers and Childminders.

Further information

If you would like further information on help with childcare costs or wish to find out more about what financial support you may be entitled to, contact our Family Benefits Advice Service for free, impartial and confidential advice.

Contact us by emailing fbas@employersforchildcare.org – we are here to help.

Escape to the Coast with Our Winter Warmer Package

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.

Set against a dramatic backdrop of coastal cliffs and sea views, our historic hotel offers the ideal setting for rest and rejuvenation this season. Whether you're wrapping up for a beachside stroll, exploring the unique geology of the Causeway stones, or settling in our cosy bar with a drink in hand, The Causeway Hotel provides a timeless,

peaceful retreat.

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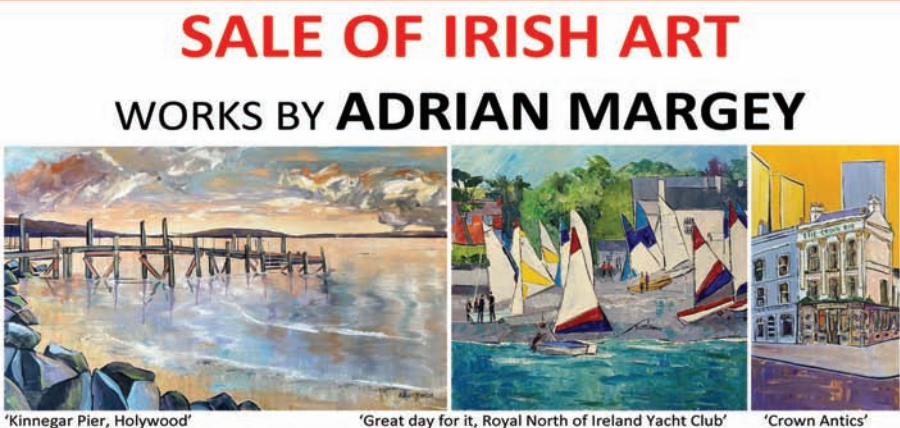
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- Breakfast each morning
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planning a quiet couple's getaway, a mid-season recharge, or a chance to explore one of Northern Ireland's most iconic landmarks, the Winter Warmer offers a little bit of everything.

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New look Rathmore Road store celebrates community with new partnerships and defibrillator installation

SPAR Rathmore Road has unveiled its £800,000 refurbishment, reaffirming its role as a community hub for the Bangor West area.

A major addition is a new Automated External Defibrillator, installed outside the store and available 24/7. Mapped on the British Heart Foundation's 'The Circuit' and registered with the NI Ambulance Service, it ensures callers to emergency services can be directed to the devices available in real time.

The store has also launched a new partnership with the local RNLI station with fundraising already underway, beginning with an in-store raffle which raised £126.85. The team also raised over £160 for Marie Curie's recent Blooming Great Summer campaign, while supporting Bangor Foodbank and other local initiatives.

Store Manager Lucinda Davies and Community Rep Chloe Carson have been driving community engagement, from visiting Rathmore Primary School



Store Manager, Lucinda Davies (front) and some of the store team with the new defibrillator available at SPAR Rathmore Road

with raffle hampers, to organising litter picks around the store. Lucinda will also join the RathMORE Together Community Group, furthering the store's connections with local businesses and organisations.

Lucinda said: "Bangor West is hugely driven by community, and it has been a pleasure to connect with

local groups and schools. We are delighted to provide lifesaving equipment and strengthen our community role in the area."

To mark the reopening, long-term customers Granny B and Anne, loyal supporters for 40 years, cut the ribbon with neighbours who were gifted goodie bags, Heatherlea

Bakery cupcakes and coffee vouchers as a gesture of thanks for their patience while the work was undertaken.

Chloe added: "We're committed to continuing the McBurney family's legacy of community spirit, ensuring SPAR Rathmore Road remains a true neighbourhood hub."

Givan welcomes start of phone-free school pilot

Education Minister Paul Givan has today welcomed the beginning of a new phone-free pilot scheme in schools, which will involve more than 8,000 young people across Northern Ireland.

The phone-free pilot will run in nine schools until March 2026. It will explore the potential benefits of restricting mobile phone use during the school day, with a focus on supporting student wellbeing and improving concentration in the classroom.

During a visit to St Ronan's College, Lurgan, one of the schools taking part in the pilot programme, Paul Givan said: "Since becoming Education Minister, I've taken time to carefully review the evidence and listen to the concerns of parents, teachers and school leaders about mobile phone use in schools. There is growing unease about the amount of time young people spend on smartphones, and research increasingly points to a link between excessive use and declining mental health among

adolescents.

"In response, I committed to piloting a phone-free solution that would prevent pupils from using their devices during the school day—helping them to fully engage with learning, social interaction, and all aspects of school life."

The Minister continued: "Countries around the world are taking action to reduce phone use in schools. While some schools here in Northern Ireland have already introduced their own policies, I believe we need a consistent, evidence-based approach. This pilot will help us understand what works best and how we can support schools to make changes that benefit pupils—boosting wellbeing, focus and academic achievement."

Following a procurement process, Odyssey Education was appointed

in June 2025 to supply the lockable mobile phone pouches for the pilot and provide associated training, guidance and support for the school pilot project.

Explaining how the pilot scheme will operate, Paul Givan said: "Pupils involved in the pilot scheme will place their phones in a pocket-sized fabric pouch with a magnetic latch that is sealed at the beginning of the school day and opened using a special unlocking base. This will ensure pupils cannot use their phones during the school day and will allow us to evaluate the impacts of reduced usage."

"I want to provide reassurance that flexibility will be provided for those students who need access to their smartphone during the school day, for reasons of health, disability or other needs."

A report about the evaluation of the phone free pilot is due to be published in June 2026.

Five of the nine schools will go live with the pilot from September. The four remaining schools, Hazelwood IC, Larne HS, Markethill HS and St Joseph's Boys' are planning to start in the coming weeks. The nine schools participating in the pilot are:

- Glenlola Collegiate, Bangor
- Friends' School, Lisburn
- Hazelwood Integrated College, Belfast
- St Genevieve's High School, Belfast
- St Joseph's Boys', Londonderry
- St Fanchea's College, Enniskillen
- Larne High School
- Markethill High School
- St Ronan's College, Lurgan

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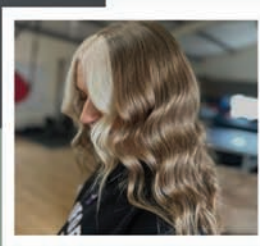
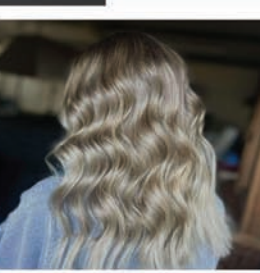
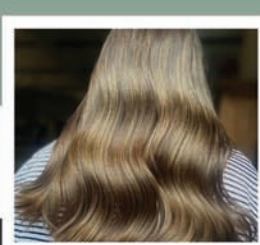
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HANNON Coach & Sail is perfect for a city break in Glasgow!

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Not just shopping, Glasgow is also famous for its fantastic nightlife, and great choice of restaurants and bars. Glasgow is the perfect choice for your next city break away.

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



alternative to flying.

The service is operated by HANNON Coach and leaves twice a day from Belfast, Grand Central Station (Stand 18) and drops visitors right in the heart of Glasgow's 'Style Mile'. The simple flat fare allows passengers to pick and mix dates and times of travel to suit and with no luggage charges it makes a perfect travel option for a shopping

trip. There are also a great range of hotels just minutes from Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station.

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

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

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

The service can be booked online at www.hannoncoach.com up to 1 hour before departure or by phone using the very friendly telephone booking service.

Call 028 9265 0700 (Mon – Fri) or visit www.hannoncoach.com

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.

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PATRICK FEENEY

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JIMMY BUCKLEY

11.30PM-1.30AM



STACEY BREEN

1.30AM

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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 but still impressive 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.

Boosting Your Immunity: Your Shield Against Cold and Flu Season

As the days shorten and a crisp chill fills the air, cold and flu season inevitably descends. But instead of resigning ourselves to sniffles and sore throats, we can proactively fortify our body's natural defences.

A robust immune system is your best armour, and building it involves a holistic approach: smart food choices, targeted supplements, and healthy lifestyle habits.

Fueling Your Defences: Good Food Choices

Your plate is a powerful tool in immune defense. Prioritize whole, unprocessed foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

Vibrant Fruits and Vegetables: Think of these as your daily dose of immune-boosting powerhouses.

Citrus Fruits (Oranges, Grapefruits, Lemons): Packed with Vitamin C, crucial for white blood cell function.

Dark Leafy Greens (Spinach, Kale, Broccoli): Rich in Vitamins A, C, and K, as well as folate and antioxidants.

Berries (Blueberries, Strawberries, Raspberries): Bursting with antioxidants that fight cellular damage.

Bell Peppers: Believe it or not, red bell peppers have more Vitamin C than oranges!

Garlic and Onions: These pungent powerhouses contain compounds like allicin, known for their antiviral and antibacterial properties.

Ginger: A warming root with anti-inflammatory benefits that can soothe a sore throat.

Lean Proteins: Essential for building and repairing immune cells. Opt for chicken, turkey, fish, beans, lentils, and nuts.

Healthy Fats: Omega-3 fatty acids found in fatty fish (salmon, mackerel), flaxseeds, and walnuts can help reduce inflammation, which supports overall immune health.

Fermented Foods: Yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and kombucha introduce beneficial probiotics to your gut. A healthy gut microbiome is intimately linked to a strong immune system.

Targeted Support: Supplements That Can Help

While a balanced diet is foundational, certain supplements can offer an extra layer of support, especially during peak cold and flu season. Always consult with your doctor before starting any new supplement regimen.

Vitamin C: Perhaps the most well-known immune vitamin, it supports various cellular functions of the immune system.

Vitamin D: Often called the "sunshine vitamin," many people are deficient, especially in winter. Vitamin



D plays a critical role in immune response.

Zinc: This mineral is vital for immune cell development and function. It can also help reduce the duration and severity of colds.

Elderberry: Traditionally used for immune support, elderberry extracts are rich in antioxidants and may help temper inflammation and support the immune system.

Probiotics: If your diet lacks fermented foods, a probiotic supplement can help maintain a healthy gut flora, indirectly boosting immunity.

Echinacea: A popular herbal remedy often used at the first sign of a cold to stimulate immune activity.

Lifestyle Habits for a Resilient You

Beyond diet and supplements, your daily habits significantly impact your immune system's

strength.

Regular Exercise: Moderate, regular physical activity can boost immune cell circulation. Aim for at least 30 minutes of brisk walking, jogging, or cycling most days of the week. Avoid overtraining, as extreme exercise can temporarily suppress immunity.

Stay Hydrated: Water helps carry nutrients to your cells, flushes out toxins, and keeps mucous membranes moist, which is important for preventing pathogens from entering the body.

By consciously adopting these food choices, considering targeted supplements, and integrating healthy lifestyle habits, you can build a formidable defense against the cold and flu season. Empower your immune system, and enjoy a healthier, more vibrant 'fall into winter'.

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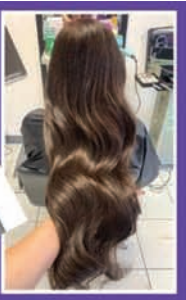
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After



Before



Tourism NI to celebrate region's world-class distilleries during October

Tourism Northern Ireland has launched a month-long celebration of food and drink in a bid to "shine a spotlight" on the region's world-class distilleries.

The 'Embrace a Giant Taste of October' campaign will showcase Northern Ireland's distillery-led experiences, celebrate local food and drink producers, and highlight collaborative chef partnerships through a series of events and immersive experiences.

From seasonal supper clubs to distillery after dark experiences with food pairings, visitors will be able to explore a vast array of food and drink events.

As part of the campaign, which is being supported by Tourism NI in partnership with Food NI, twelve distilleries which are members of Tourism Northern Ireland's NI Spirits Trail and Distillery Passport, will each host an event in collaboration with chefs and local food producers.

The initiative aims to showcase the distinctiveness of Northern Ireland's world-class, spirit-led experiences by delivering innovative, newly crafted offerings that inspire visitors to travel, book, and enjoy all that the region's distilleries have to offer.

These experiences provide engaging new reasons to visit in October, helping to extend the season, encourage midweek and off-peak travel, and support regional economies and the operational continuity of rural businesses.

The campaign will also play a key role in further positioning Northern Ireland as the 'Home of Halloween', as it will provide further storytelling opportunities.

The distilleries taking part in 'Embrace A Giant Taste of October' include Belfast-based Titanic Distillers and



McConnell's Distillery, as well as Copeland Distillery, Rademon Estate Distillery, Hinch Distillery, Killowen Distillery and Echlinville Distillery, all in Co Down.

Also taking part is Old Bushmills Distillery in Co Antrim, The Boatyard Distillery in Co Fermanagh, Wild Atlantic Distillery and Woodlab Distillery, both in Co Tyrone, and the Walled City Brewery in Derry.

Gary Quate, Food and Drink Tourism Manager at Tourism NI, said: "Embrace A Giant Taste of October celebrates the collaborative spirit of Northern Ireland's distilleries while showcasing unique

experiences developed with chefs, producers, and food and drink businesses.

"This programme is the result of our sustained partnership with the Distillery Network, supporting businesses through recent experience development programmes and one-to-one mentoring to bring new experiences to market.

"It's hugely encouraging to see so many innovative experiences created as part of this campaign. We hope this partnership leaves a lasting legacy of collaboration and innovation across the food and drink sector."

Michele Shirlow,

CEO of Food NI, said: "We are delighted to work in partnership with Tourism NI on 'Embrace A Giant Taste of October'.

"By nominating October as Distillery Month, we've been able to support these businesses in developing and delivering unique experiences.

"We look forward to encouraging consumers to explore and support these critically important local businesses as part of this exciting month-long celebration."

'Embrace A Giant Taste of October' events can be booked online at Embrace a Giant Taste of October | NI Food & Drink Events October

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The Winning Way: Master Leo Maguire and the Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland Legacy

Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland, under the esteemed leadership of Master Leo Maguire, is a prominent force in the martial arts community, shaping the lives of children and adults across the province. Master Maguire, a VI Degree Black Belt and President of the International Taekwon-Do Federation Northern Ireland (ITF N.I.), has established a network of schools dedicated to fostering confidence, discipline, and self-defense.

His distinguished career as a national coach has led the Northern Ireland team to numerous medal victories at both national and international competitions.

The Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland schools offer a comprehensive program tailored to all ages, beginning with the "Little Tiger Cubs" for children aged 3 to 5. This "Learn Through Play" program introduces basic martial arts skills through a fun mixture of games and fitness drills, helping children develop improved balance, coordination, and respect.

For slightly older children, the "Active Tigers" class (ages 5 to 8) allows students to develop their Taekwon-Do skills at a more relaxed pace. The core "Tae-Kwon Do" program, for students aged 9 to adult, is designed to be safe, practical, and fun. It focuses on the fundamental tenets of the art, including self-defense and self-discipline, while building confidence and physical fitness.

The organization's commitment to excellence was recently highlighted when Lisburn hosted the prestigious 2024 ITF Taekwon-Do Championships at the National Badminton Centre. The historic one-day event brought together Grandmasters, Masters, instructors, and competitors of all ages for a spectacular display of skill and spirit. Master Maguire, as President of

Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland, was instrumental in bringing the event to the region.

With a wide range of classes available across Northern Ireland, anyone interested in experiencing the benefits of Taekwon-Do can easily get involved. To find a full list of classes and begin your journey, visit the official website at www.taekwondo-ni.co.uk or contact Leo Maguire directly at 07891 191494.

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‘The Chip Stop’ Business owner Opens ‘The Phat Fryer’

Located on the Belfast Road, The Chip Stop has already carved out a reputation as a must-visit destination for anyone seeking Fish and Chips in County Down’s fairest city on the coast!

Now ‘The Phat Fryer’ a new second business is opening on 6th October! Both businesses are owned by Jason Walsh who has been at the centre of community life with ‘The Chip Stop’ for the past 8 years!

We don’t know much about ‘The Phat Fryer’s’ new food offering however the menu at The Chips Stop naturally celebrates the classics: perfectly battered cod alongside generous portions of freshly cut chips. But The Chip Stop, like any good Northern Irish chippy, knows its audience and expands its offerings

to include regional favourites. You’ll also find Pastie Suppers: A distinctly Northern Irish delicacy—a deep-fried savoury mince and potato patty and Extensive Chip Toppings: From the essential gravy and curry sauce to the ever-popular cheesy chip, there’s a topping for every mood.

In a city with a competitive takeaway scene, The Chip Stop consistently receives praise for its quality and consistency.

Locals often highlight the perfectly crisp batter, the fluffy potato in the chips, and the overall



excellent value for money.

So, next time you’re in Bangor and in search of the ultimate comfort food experience, follow the locals to The Chip

Stop on the Belfast Road or The Phat Fryer, on the Gransha Road you’ll quickly understand why this Bangor institution continues to reel in the crowds!

Local Digital Creators Crowned at Glamorous VAVA Awards 2025

The VAVA Awards 2025 lit up Titanic Belfast on Saturday 27th September, as Ireland’s leading celebration of digital creators and influencers returned for its fourth annual edition.

The black-tie gala welcomed over 300 guests from across the local media and marketing landscape for a night of celebration, connection and creativity. Set against this year’s theme of Old Hollywood Glamour with a touch of red, guests enjoyed a dazzling red carpet welcome, followed by a three-course dining experience, and live entertainment. The evening recognised the vibrant creator industry, which continues to go from strength to strength, and concluded with the much-anticipated reveal of this year’s winners across 22 categories, spanning beauty, fashion, lifestyle, wellness, food, travel and more.

After a record-breaking number of public nominations, standout winners included Sara Lee Little, recipient of the coveted VAVA Award for Outstanding Creativity, Authenticity and Contribution to the Digital Landscape; Kate Grant, who picked up the ‘Influence for Good’ award; and The

Girls Group chat- Olivia McVeigh, Shannon Mitchell, Diona Doherty and Jordan Arnold- winners of the ‘Best Duo/Team’ award.

The VAVA Awards were supported by a stellar lineup of sponsors, including Visit Belfast, The Rabbit Hotel, Go Succeed NI, ASG, Ulster Tatler, Shapeshifter Nutrition, Cool FM, The Boulevard Banbridge, By Caitlyn, Limelight, MACC Hair, Haymarket, THV Contracts, Elizabeth Sands Beauty School, Denman Brushes, Colin Glen, Rent and Rotate, and AXL Audio-visuals- each championing innovation and excellence in influencer marketing.

Winners 2025

- The VAVA Award – Sara Lee Little
- Travel Influencer of the Year, sponsored by Visit Belfast – Amy and Ronan Gervin
- Rising Star Award, sponsored by Go Succeed NI – Zoe Simpson
- Creative Content Award, sponsored by ASG – Olivia

Spuds

- Best Under 50K Award, sponsored by Ulster Tatler – Lyndsay Butler
- Health and Fitness Influencer of the Year, sponsored by Shapeshifter Nutrition – Molly McFall
- Lifestyle Influencer of the Year, sponsored by Cool FM – Laurny Ni Ruanaidh
- Fashion Influencer of the Year, sponsored by The Boulevard Banbridge – Tristan McGavigan
- Trendsetter Award, sponsored by By Caitlyn – Jane McDermott
- Student Influencer of the Year, sponsored by Limelight – Vicki Aiken
- Best Influencer Duo/Team, sponsored by MACC Hair – The Girls Groupchat
- Restaurant Recommender of the Year, sponsored by Haymarket – Vinny McBrien
- Home and Interiors Influencer of the Year, sponsored by THV Contracts – Peter Irvine
- Food and Drink Influencer of the Year, sponsored by

The Rabbit Hotel & Retreat – Zoe and Dani of From North Two South

- Educational Influencer of the Year, sponsored by Elizabeth Sands Beauty School – Olivia McVeigh
- Hair and Beauty Influencer of the Year, sponsored by Denman Brushes – Aoife Kelly
- Family and Parenting Influencer of the Year, sponsored by Colin Glen – Jessica Ireland
- Best Under 10K Award, sponsored by Rent and Rotate – Ellie Hanley
- Best Under 100K Award, sponsored by VAVA Influence – Holly Dineley
- UGC Creator of the Year, sponsored by AXL AUDIO-VISUAL LTD – Amanda Godfrey
- People’s Choice Award, Sara Lee Little
- Influence for Good Award, Kate Grant

Full highlights from the night can be found on vavinfluence.com/the-vava-awards and [@thevavas](https://thevavas.com) on Instagram.

HABITS OF SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE IN BUSINESS

Successful business people share a set of habits that contribute to their achievements. These habits aren’t about innate talent, but rather about discipline, continuous learning, and a strategic approach to both their professional and personal lives.

Prioritizing and Planning

Successful leaders are masters of time management. They begin their days with a clear plan, often created the night before. This isn’t just a to-do list; it’s a prioritized schedule that focuses on high-impact tasks. They understand the difference between urgency and importance, dedicating their energy to activities that drive long-term growth and achieve their most significant goals. This proactive approach allows them to avoid getting sidetracked by minor issues and to stay focused on their vision.

Continuous Learning and Adaptability

The business world is constantly changing, and successful people know that stagnation is a trap. They are perpetual students, always seeking to learn new skills, understand market trends, and gather insights from a wide range of sources, including books, podcasts, and industry peers. This commitment to continuous learning makes them highly adaptable. When faced with unexpected challenges or shifts in the market, they are



well-equipped to pivot their strategies and innovate.

Building a Strong Network

Business isn’t a solo sport. Successful individuals invest time and effort into building and nurturing a strong professional network. They understand that relationships are a valuable asset. This network provides a support system, offering advice, new opportunities, and potential collaborations. They don’t just ask for help; they are also generous with their time and expertise, understanding that networking is a two-way street built on

mutual respect and reciprocity.

Prioritizing Well-being

It might seem counterintuitive, but many successful people prioritize their physical and mental health. They recognize that burnout is the enemy of productivity and creativity. This often includes habits like regular exercise, a balanced diet, and sufficient sleep. They also build in time for hobbies and relaxation, which helps them recharge and maintain a clear perspective. By taking care of themselves, they ensure they have the energy and resilience needed to face the demands of

their business.

Cultivating Resilience

Success is not a straight line; it’s filled with setbacks and failures. A defining habit of successful business people is resilience. They don’t see failure as a final destination but as a learning experience. Instead of dwelling on mistakes, they analyze what went wrong, adjust their approach, and move forward with renewed determination. This ability to bounce back from adversity is a key factor that separates those who achieve long-term success from those who give up at the first hurdle.

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Derek Wright, Chairman of the Ards and North Down Business Forum

Derek Wright stands as a prominent figure in the Newtownards business community, serving as the President of the Newtownards Chamber of Trade and chairman of the Ards and North Down Business Forum.

He acts as a tireless advocate for local businesses, working to promote economic growth, foster collaboration, and ensure the town's voice is heard on a wider scale.

A dedicated business owner himself, Mr. Wright brings a practical, on-the-ground perspective to his leadership. His initiatives have been a driving force behind key projects aimed at revitalizing the town centre and helping local traders navigate challenging economic landscapes. He has been a vocal supporter of campaigns that encourage consumers to shop locally, highlighting how every pound spent with an independent retailer directly supports the local economy.

Under his leadership, the Newtownards Chamber has actively engaged in strategic partnerships to provide vital support to its members. A notable example is the collaboration with "Voice For Locals," an initiative aimed at helping micro and small businesses recover and rebound from the impacts of the pandemic. Mr. Wright welcomed this partnership, underscoring the Chamber's commitment to equipping businesses



with the tools and resources they need to succeed in a competitive environment.

Mr. Wright is also a key figure in the recently formed Ards and North Down Business Forum, an alliance that brings together five chambers of commerce to create a united voice for businesses across the borough. As a part of this forum, he emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the needs and contributions of businesses are recognized and prioritized in regional development decisions. His work extends to championing Newtownards as a "Gateway Town," a strategic effort to open up tourism opportunities for the entire Ards Peninsula.

Beyond large-scale initiatives, Mr. Wright has demonstrated a proactive approach to addressing specific challenges facing traders. When a "buy nothing new" campaign by the council was perceived as anti-retail, he launched a "Buy Something New Month" counter-campaign, successfully advocating for the removal of the original messaging and showing his commitment to supporting the town's vibrant retail sector. His efforts have also been instrumental in the success of events like the High Street Heroes Awards, which celebrate the achievements and resilience of local retailers.

In essence, Derek Wright's leadership is characterized by a strong dedication to the prosperity of Newtownards. He combines a business owner's pragmatism with a forward-looking vision for the town, ensuring that Newtownards remains a thriving and influential hub for both residents and visitors.

Flexible working policies not enough to change workplace practices

Researchers found expanding the legal 'right to request' flexible working has not led to major increases in employees using options such as flexitime or remote working.

New research shows a major reform designed to make flexible working more accessible to all workers in the UK has had limited impact on how employees actually work.

The study, led by researchers from King's Business School, University College London and City St George's, University of London, analysed over 15,000 employees from the UK Household Longitudinal Study between 2010 and 2020. It examined the effects of the 2014 policy reform, which extended the right to request flexible working from only parents and carers to all employees with at least 26 weeks' service.

The findings showed that women were more likely to take up reduced hours arrangements (such as part-time work) following the reform, with uptake increasing over time. There was no comparable rise in men's use of reduced hours, while no significant increases were observed for flexitime or remote working among either men or women.

Women experienced reduced psychological distress and higher life satisfaction after the reform, this was possibly linked to reduced working hours, not to other forms of flexibility.

The research highlights that legislation alone is not enough to normalise flexible working.

Previous studies at King's College London showed that bias against employees who work remotely or flexibly persists, and the study shows how employers' discretion to reject requests may still limit true access. Earlier surveys from trade unions have shown that significant numbers of mothers and women in the public sector have had requests for flexibility denied.

The researchers suggest that governments and employers need to go further to make flexible working a reality. Simply giving employees the right to request is not enough when workplace cultures and biases continue to act as

barriers.

They highlight several options, including promoting flexible working in job adverts to set expectations early, offering targeted support to smaller employers, encouraging the public sector to lead by example, and running campaigns to tackle the stigma that still surrounds flexible working.

As of 2024, UK workers have the right to request flexible working from their first day of employment, with stronger obligations on employers to justify refusals. The researchers note that it will take several years before the impacts of this new change can be properly assessed.

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Thompson Leisure prides itself on offering an extensive selection of both new and used motorhomes and campervans with over 250 vehicles in stock. They are an approved dealer for a wide range of leading brands, including Hymer, Burstner, Swift, Rapido, and many more. The knowledgeable and friendly sales team is dedicated to matching every customer with the perfect vehicle to suit their specific requirements and budget.

Beyond sales, Thompson Leisure provides exceptional aftersales support from its large, well-equipped service



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comes your guide.

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Making a ring in the Robinson Goldsmiths workshop

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?

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



Jennifer and Gillian from Robinson Goldsmiths.

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 re-imagined 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.

THE POWER OF SHOPPING SMALL: STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMY

In a world increasingly dominated by multinational corporations and online retail giants, the charm and resilience of small, independent local businesses often go unnoticed.

Yet, these enterprises are the heart and soul of our communities, offering unique character, personalized service, and a host of benefits that ripple through the local community and the wider economy. Supporting them isn't just a trend; it's a powerful way to invest in our collective future. How to Support Small Businesses

Supporting local businesses doesn't always require a big budget. There are many ways to make a difference, both big and small.

- Buy Local Goods and Services: The most direct way to help is to consciously choose to shop at local stores, use local services, and dine at independent restaurants and cafes. For every dollar spent at a local business, a significant portion stays in the community, circulating through the local economy and supporting other businesses. A simple switch of your weekly shopping, even just a small amount, can have a huge cumulative effect.

- Engage on Social Media: Follow your favorite local businesses on platforms like Instagram, Facebook,

and Twitter. Like, share, and comment on their posts to boost their visibility and help them reach new customers. Social media algorithms favor engagement, so your actions can be a powerful, free form of marketing for them.

- Leave Positive Reviews: Word-of-mouth is a small business's best friend. Take a few minutes to write a positive online review on sites like Google, Yelp, or TripAdvisor. Reviews build credibility and trust, which can significantly influence a new customer's decision to visit.

- Buy Gift Cards: Purchasing a gift card provides a business with immediate revenue, which can be crucial for managing cash flow, especially during slower periods. It's also a great way to introduce friends and family to a local gem.

- Spread the Word: Tell your friends, family, and colleagues about your positive experiences. A personal recommendation is one of the most effective forms of advertising.

The Benefits for the Local Community and Economy
The act of supporting a local business creates a



virtuous cycle of benefits that strengthen the community from the ground up.

Community Building and Identity. Local businesses are often the cornerstones of a community's identity. They contribute to the unique character of a neighbourhood, making it a desirable place to live and visit. The owners are your neighbours, often sponsoring local sports teams, donating to school fundraisers, and getting involved in community events. This personal investment in the community fosters a strong sense of place and belonging.

Innovation and Choice
A marketplace of many small businesses encourages

competition and innovation. Instead of a handful of generic, mass-produced products, you'll find a broader range of unique and specialized goods and services that cater to local tastes. This diversity provides consumers with more choices and a more personalized shopping experience.

Environmental Benefits
Supporting local businesses often leads to a smaller carbon footprint. They typically source their products locally, which reduces the need for long-distance transportation and excessive packaging. This practice helps to lessen pollution and conserve resources, contributing to a healthier environment for everyone.

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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

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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

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Your Home,Your Style,Your Solution:The Blind Spot Expands to Offer Curtains

For over 30 years, The Blind Spot has been a trusted name in Belfast, providing high-quality, custom-made window coverings for homes and businesses.

Now, they're expanding their offerings to help you achieve the perfect look and feel for your space with the launch of their brand-new curtain department.

The original factory shop was founded in 1990 by manager Krystina Bradford's mum and grandfather. The family-run business has always specialized in manufacturing and fitting top-notch window solutions. While they're already well-known for their expertise in venetian, vertical, roller, and roman blinds, their new curtain department will offer made-to-measure curtains and curtain rails, complete with a full measuring and fitting service.

Innovative Solutions for a Modern Home

The Blind Spot has always embraced new technologies and advancements in the industry. Beyond traditional blinds and shutters, they also provide innovative products like motorised blinds, which can streamline your daily life, and Blindscreens, which are manufactured in the UK and are perfect for keeping out bugs while pro-

viding total blackout on any window or door, including bi-fold doors. This allows you to manage your access to the outdoors in a revolutionary way.

Did you know that investing in quality blinds and shutters can also help improve your home's thermal insulation? Whether you prefer sleek roller blinds, practical Blindscreens, or classic shutters, The Blind Spot has you covered. By choosing their products, you can say goodbye to wasted heat and hello to a warmer, cozier home.

Personalized Service and Quality You Can Trust

The Blind Spot takes pride in offering made-to-measure blinds and shutters that are crafted with precision. They provide a free measuring service across all of Northern Ireland, so you never have to guess when it comes to getting the right fit. Their mission is to provide affordable prices without compromising on quality or choice. You can explore a wide range of styles, fabrics, and colours to perfectly match your property's aesthetic.



While their showroom is open throughout the week, they are also open on Saturdays from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, giving you the chance to browse their extensive range of blinds, shades, and shutters at your leisure. In the showroom, you can get a true sense of the quality and colour choices available, including their beautiful Sante Fe shutters, which can be installed in as little as six weeks. The team is always ready to help you schedule

a home appointment for a personalized quote, ensuring you get real numbers tailored to your space.

Stop by and visit the new showroom at 4 East Belfast Enterprise Park, Belfast BT5 4GX, or give them a call at 028 9059 5255 to discuss your requirements. You can also visit their website at www.theblindspotbelfast.co.uk. The team at The Blind Spot would love to help make your home vision a reality.

Hospitality Exchange 2025

The full programme for Hospitality Exchange 2025 has been unveiled, with the two-day conference returning to Crowne Plaza Belfast on Tuesday 14 and Wednesday 15 October 2025.

Organised by the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF), the event will welcome around 600 delegates for two days of insight, inspiration and networking.

This year's programme centres on the themes of Excelling, Engaging and Evolving, reflecting the sector's focus on innovation, resilience and growth.

Headline speakers will feature marketing leader James Peach, two-Michelin-star chef Aktar Islam, hotel expert Alex Polizzi, and economist Richard Ramsey.

Programme highlights include 'The Leadership Lunch' with Alex Polizzi, where the broadcaster and hotelier will share candid leadership insights before the presentation of the Rising Stars Awards, supported by Ulster Bank. Another key feature is 'The Industry Unpacked', an interactive series of seminars focused on new skills, personal development and what really drives success.

James Peach will deliver a keynote session, 'Making Marketing Matter', exploring how purpose-driven storytelling and leadership help brands connect more meaningfully with audiences. There will also be an 'In Conversation' session with Aktar Islam, who will share his journey as a Michelin star chef. In addition, Aktar will host a gourmet culinary experience at The Merchant Hotel on Monday 13 October.

On Wednesday morning

(15 October), the 'Business Breakfast', hosted by Mark Simpson, will deliver the latest intelligence on hotel performance and future growth from STR, followed by a lively panel discussion on costs and challenges facing the sector. Later that morning, Talking Tourism will examine the forces shaping the visitor economy, with updates from tourism leaders, a review of the big events of 2025, and analysis of emerging trends and opportunities.

In the afternoon, the 'Speaker Lunch' will feature a keynote address from Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald MLA. The conference will conclude with the Wickedly Wonderful

Gala Ball, a celebration of fine food, wines and spell-binding entertainment.

Vicky Green, President of the NIHF, said: "As the sector continues to evolve, Hospitality Exchange 2025 will provide a vital platform for shared learning, inspiration and celebration. With a focus on innovation and growth, this year's event is about equipping our industry for future success while recognising the extraordinary talent that continues to shape our hotel and hospitality landscape."

Hospitality Exchange 2025 takes place on 14-15 October at Crowne Plaza Belfast. For full programme details and ticket information, visit www.hospitalityexchange.org.uk.

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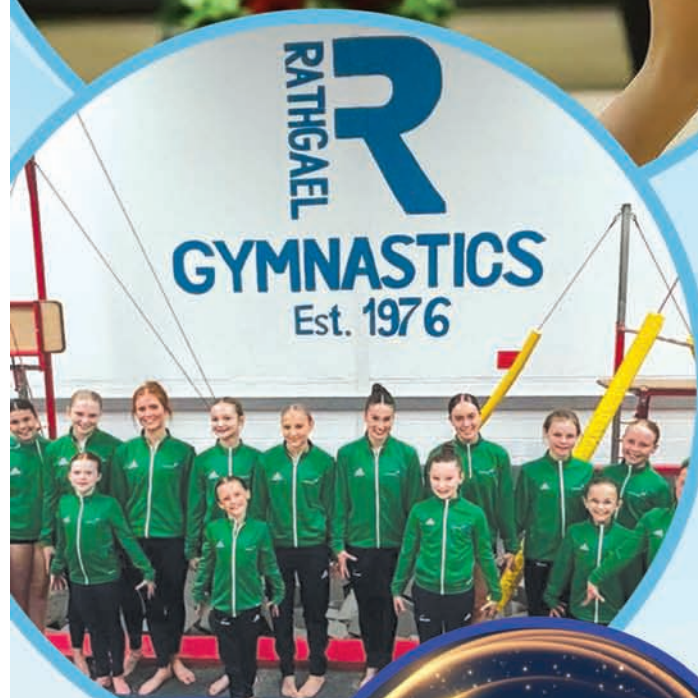


RATHGAEL GYMNASTICS

Some of the highlights from the past year

Visit of High profile VIPs British Gymnastics CEO, Sarah Powell, Community Director, Dave Marshall, and Gymnastics Northern Ireland Area Manager, Rebecca Morrow

- Award success for Rathgael Gymnastics & Tumbling Club winning the award for Best Place to Volunteer through SPORTED
- 20 Acro gymnasts represented NI this year at National and Inter-Regional finals Club
- Tumbling Squad competed in the Northern Ireland Tumbling Qualifying Series 2025
- Rathgael Gymnastics and Tumbling Club was proud to become a Finalist at the NI Social Enterprise Awards 2025
- British Gymnastics 2024/25 winner of 'Young Coach of the year and 'Services to Gymnastics'
- Finalist for Dance/Cheer school of the year 2025
- British Gymnastics 2025 awards- finalist with 14 coach nominations and club of the year nomination.
- In the last 16 months we have reinvested £100,000+ of equipment back into our club



*Looking forward to celebrating our
50th anniversary in 2026!*



For information on classes
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Rathgae! Gymnastic & Tumbling Club Celebrates an Amazing Year in 2025!

Rathgae! Gymnastic & Tumbling Club, a cornerstone of the Northern Ireland gymnastics community, is celebrating a year of remarkable achievements and growth.

With its state-of-the-art facility buzzing with energy and talent, the club has once again solidified its reputation as a hub for both aspiring gymnasts and elite athletes. From grassroots development to top-tier competitions, this past year has been nothing short of spectacular.

At the heart of Rathgae!'s success is a vibrant and dedicated community. The club's philosophy of providing opportunities for all abilities, from pre-schoolers taking their first steps on the mat to adults honing their skills, has proven to be a winning formula. The wide range of disciplines on offer—including Artistic, Acrobatics, Tumbling, and more—ensures that every member finds a path that ignites their passion. This year, the club saw a significant increase in participation across all levels, a testament to its welcoming and inclusive environment. Due to popular demand extra classes have been added to the Kindergym facility and the recent Summer Schools have been fully subscribed.

Starting with the most junior members Jumping Jellybeans, enjoyed every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9am to 11am by early athletes from 0 - 4 years old has proved ever popular this year with both children and parents/carers moving to music and having lots of fun!

May saw a Visit of British Gymnastics CEO, Sarah Powell, Community Director, Dave Marshall, and Gymnastics Northern Ireland Area Manager, Rebecca Morrow to the facility. All were impressed by the level of dedication and talent showcased on the visit. Add to this recent award successes such as Rathgae! Gymnastics & Tumbling Club winning the award for Best Place to Volunteer through SPORTED, 20 Acro gymnasts represented NI this year at national and inter-Regional finals and earlier in the year a Tumbling Squad competed in the Northern Ireland Tumbling Qualifying Series 2025

As Rathgae! Gymnastic & Tumbling Club reflects on an amazing year, the focus is already shifting to the future. The unwavering support of the coaches, volunteers, and parents is the engine that drives this club forward, and it's clear that with such a strong foundation, the next year promises to be even more exciting.

For those interested in joining this thriving community, Rathgae! offers a wide variety of classes and camps. Whether you're a complete beginner or an experienced gymnast, there's a place for you to learn, grow, and achieve your goals at Rathgae! Gymnastic & Tumbling Club.

Here's to another year of high-flying triumphs and outstanding achievements in 2026 - which will be our 50th year!

We have a whole range of celebrations planned throughout the coming year and we would like all old members of Rathgae! to send us their story's, as well as any photos they may have, so we can share these throughout the year.





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EXPLORING BALLOO INDUSTRIAL ESTATE: A HUB OF BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Balloo Industrial Estate, situated in the picturesque town of Bangor, is a thriving hub for various enterprises.

This industrial estate hosts a diverse range of businesses, each contributing to the local economy and community. Let's delve into some of the notable companies that call Balloo Industrial Estate home:

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

Balloo Hire Centres
Balloo Hire Centres is a key player in the Northern and Southern Ireland Tool, Equipment, and Plant Hire market. They offer an extensive range of plant and tools for both business and DIY needs. From Chemical

toilet hire for events to Spring Cleaning your home you will find all the essentials here.

Other Notable Businesses
Beyond these highlights, Balloo Industrial Estate hosts a plethora of other companies, including technology firms, manufacturers, and service providers. Some of these include:

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

Stonebrooke Kitchens Limited: Offering kitchen solutions from their unit in Balloo Industrial Estate.

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

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



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

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

So, whether you're seeking tools, property services, or artistic inspiration, Balloo

Industrial Estate has something to offer. Next time you drive through its streets, take a moment to appreciate the entrepreneurial spirit that defines this remarkable corner of County Down.

Regency Carpet Manufacturing: Weaving Quality, Innovation, and Community in Bangor

In the heart of Bangor's Balloo Avenue stands a business that has quietly become one of the UK's carpet manufacturing powerhouses.

Since 1994, Regency Carpet Manufacturing Limited has been blending traditional craftsmanship with cutting-edge innovation, producing carpets of exceptional quality that grace homes across the UK and Ireland.

Part of the long-established Furlong Flooring Group, Regency's 100-strong team operates 25 state-of-the-art tufting machines, creating products built to last. But this is no ordinary factory floor. Sustainability sits at the heart of the operation, with recycled yarn now woven into many ranges, showcasing how a local manufacturer can lead the way in shaping a greener future for the industry.

Equally important is the company's commitment



Regency Staff raising funds for the Northern Ireland Hospice chosen Charity of the Year. Belfast Lagan Dragon Boat Race 2025

to people. Regency offers apprenticeships in Electrical, Mechanical, and Joinery, opening doors for young people in the area to learn vital skills while building solid careers. The business also invests in

its community, supporting local charities and groups, reflecting a belief that true success comes from giving back.

As one of Bangor's most substantial employers, Regency plays a vital role in the local economy.

With significant turnover and an impressive scale of operations, the company's carpets are certified to the highest standards — ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and ISO 45001 — and distributed throughout the UK and Ireland.

From traditional wool styles to advanced performance synthetics, Regency brings comfort, durability, and style to homes nationwide.

Regency Carpet Manufacturing isn't a shopfront showroom; it's something far more powerful. It's a symbol of Bangor's industrial strength, a story of skilled people and forward-looking innovation, and a company whose reach extends well beyond Northern Ireland's shores.

For nearly three decades, Regency has been more than a manufacturer. It has been a proud part of Bangor's fabric — weaving quality, sustainability, and community spirit into everything it does.



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EVs in the Cold:A Guide to Winter Performance and Range

As the days get shorter and the temperatures plummet, a common question arises for electric vehicle (EV) owners and prospective buyers: How do EVs perform in the cold?

The answer is nuanced, but with a bit of knowledge and preparation, an EV can be a reliable and even advantageous choice for winter driving.

The Science Behind the Winter Drop

The primary challenge for EVs in winter is the lithium-ion battery. These batteries are an intricate system of chemical reactions, and like many chemical processes, they are sensitive to temperature. The optimal operating temperature for an EV battery is typically around 21.5°C. When the mercury drops, the chemistry slows down.

• **Reduced Range:** In cold weather, the electrolyte fluid inside the battery becomes more viscous, which hinders the movement of lithium ions. This means the battery's ability to store and release energy is less efficient, leading to a noticeable reduction in range. Studies and real-world data suggest that a drop of 15-20% is common, though this can be more significant in extreme cold.

• **Slower Charging:** Just as discharging is less efficient, charging also slows down. A cold battery has higher internal resistance, so it can't accept the same rate of charge as a warm one.



This is why you might notice that a fast-charging session takes longer in winter, as the car's thermal management system must first use energy to warm the battery to an optimal charging temperature.

Winter-Proofing Your EV: Practical Tips

Driving an EV in winter doesn't have to be a struggle. With these simple tips, you can maximize your car's efficiency and stay safe.

1. **Pre-Condition While Plugged In:** This is perhaps the most important tip. Most modern EVs have a pre-conditioning feature that allows you to warm the cabin and the battery while the car is still plugged into the charger. This uses energy from the grid, not the battery, ensuring you start your journey with a warm battery at its peak

efficiency.

2. **Use Heated Seats and Steering Wheel:** If your car has them, use these features instead of blasting the cabin heater. They are much more energy-efficient and directly warm the occupant, conserving battery power.

3. **Charge Smartly:** Don't let your battery level drop too low in cold weather. Keeping it topped up, especially above 20%, allows the car's thermal management system to maintain a healthy temperature for the battery. It's also best to charge immediately after a drive while the battery is still warm.

4. **Drive Smoothly:** Just like with any car, smooth acceleration and gentle braking are key to safety and efficiency in winter. For EVs, this is even more critical as it helps conserve

battery power and can make the most of regenerative braking, which recovers energy during deceleration.

5. **Park Indoors:** If you have access to a garage, park your car inside. This simple action can help keep the battery from reaching extreme low temperatures overnight, improving its performance and reducing the energy needed to warm it up in the morning.

In conclusion, while electric vehicles do face a unique set of challenges in cold weather, they are by no means unsuitable for winter. With an understanding of how the cold affects their performance and by implementing a few proactive habits, EV drivers can navigate the winter months with confidence and efficiency.

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.

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. It's also worth noting that switching tyres can help extend the lifespan of both sets, as each is used only during the appropriate season. Proper storage of off-season tyres, ideally in a cool, dry place, is also important to maintain their condition and performance.

Winter tyres also provide better traction on wet roads and slushy surfaces, not just snow and ice. This improved grip translates to shorter stopping distances and more stable cornering, which can make a significant difference during sudden braking or evasive manoeuvres. The tread design, with numerous small grooves known as sipes, helps channel water away and reduce the risk of aquaplaning — a common hazard on cold, rainy UK roads.

However, there are some drawbacks to consider. Winter tyres tend to wear out faster in warmer weather due to their softer rubber composition, so they should be swapped back to summer tyres once temperatures consistently rise above 7°C. This seasonal changeover adds another task — and cost — for vehicle owners, although many tyre retailers



offer storage services and discounted changeovers to make the process easier.

Drivers covering long distances or commuting early in the morning when roads are at their coldest may particularly benefit from the added control and

safety winter tyres offer. Similarly, those living in hilly or rural regions, where untreated roads can remain icy for days, will notice a significant difference in vehicle performance and confidence. On the other hand, urban motorists who

mostly drive on gritted and well-maintained roads may find all-season tyres a more practical balance between cost and performance.

Another point worth noting is the impact on insurance and safety

assessments. While UK insurers do not typically offer discounts for fitting winter tyres, some may view their use positively in the event of an accident during adverse weather. Additionally, many safety experts and motoring organisations, such as the RAC and AA, recommend winter tyres for enhanced control and accident prevention when temperatures drop.

Ultimately, the decision to invest in winter tyres depends on individual circumstances. Factors such as location, driving frequency, road conditions, and budget all play a part. While not essential for every driver, they offer significant

safety and performance benefits for many. Taking the time to evaluate your driving habits and local weather patterns will help you decide whether they're a worthwhile investment.

Even though they are not legally required in the UK, winter tyres remain one of the most effective ways to improve grip, stability, and confidence when driving through the colder months.

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A significant amount of a home's heat is lost through various weak points, making it harder and more expensive to maintain a comfortable temperature. Fortunately, there are several practical and affordable ways to prevent heat loss.

Sealing Drafts and Gaps
One of the most effective and cheapest ways to prevent heat loss is to tackle

drafts. Air leaks can account for a significant portion of your home's heat loss.

Windows and Doors: Inspect the seals around all your windows and doors. You can use a lit incense stick or a thin piece of paper to check for drafts. If the smoke wavers or the paper flutters, you have a leak. Use weatherstripping to seal gaps around doors and windows. For larger gaps or

cracks in the window frame, caulk is an excellent sealant.

Mail Slots and Pet Doors: These can be major sources of drafts. Consider installing a brush seal on mail slots or insulating your pet door with a cover when not in use.

Electrical Outlets: Gaps around electrical outlets and switch plates on exterior walls can be surprisingly drafty. You can easily install foam gaskets behind the plates to seal these leaks.

Insulating Key Areas
Insulation is critical for keeping heat inside your home. While a professional may be needed for major insulation projects, there are smaller, DIY-friendly options.

Attic and Loft: A properly insulated attic can save you a lot of money on heating. Heat rises, so a significant amount of heat escapes through an uninsulated or poorly insulated attic. You can add more layers of insulation, like rolls of fiberglass batting or blown-in cellulose, to increase the R-value (a measure of thermal resistance).

Pipes and Water Heaters: Insulating your hot water pipes and water heater can reduce heat loss, meaning



your boiler doesn't have to work as hard to heat the water. You can buy pre-slit foam pipe insulation and simply wrap your pipes.

Optimizing Windows
Windows are a notorious source of heat loss. Even double-glazed windows can be improved upon.

Thick Curtains: Installing thermal or insulated curtains is a simple and effective solution. These curtains have a special lining that acts as an extra layer of insulation, trapping heat inside and blocking cold air from the outside.

Window Film: You can apply a DIY window insulation film kit to your windows. This clear plastic film creates an insulating air pocket between the film and the glass, similar to double-glazing, and can significantly reduce heat loss.

Mindful Heating Habits
Simple changes in how you use your heating system can also make a big difference.

Radiator Reflectors: Place radiator reflectors (panels of foil-backed foam) behind radiators on external

walls. This reflects heat that would otherwise be lost into the wall back into the room.

Close Off Unused Rooms: Don't waste energy heating rooms you aren't using. Close doors to spare bedrooms, studies, or other unused spaces and turn off the radiator.

By implementing these practical and often low-cost measures, you can create a warmer, more comfortable home this winter while also seeing a noticeable reduction in your heating bills.

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THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF WINTER: A GUIDE TO PREVENTING MOULD, CARBON MONOXIDE, AND FIRE HAZARDS

Winter brings a desire for warmth and cosiness, but this season also ushers in a set of often-overlooked household dangers.

As we seal up our homes to keep the cold out, we can inadvertently create conditions ripe for mould growth, carbon monoxide poisoning, and house fires. Being aware of these risks and taking preventative steps can keep your family safe all season long.

Mould: The Silent, Spore-Producing Invader

Mould thrives in damp, humid environments, and while we often associate it with summer, winter can be a prime time for it to flourish. When cold air hits warm, moist indoor surfaces—like windows, walls, and pipes—it creates condensation. This moisture is a perfect breeding ground for

mould. Poor ventilation from closed windows exacerbates the problem, trapping humid air inside.

Prevention is key:

Improve Ventilation: Regularly open windows for a few minutes to air out rooms, even when it's cold. Use exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens.

Manage Humidity: Use a dehumidifier in basements or other damp areas. Maintain indoor humidity levels between 30% and 50%.

Check for Leaks: Inspect pipes, roofs, and window seals for leaks that can introduce moisture.

Clean and Dry:

Promptly clean up any spills or condensation and use mold-killing cleaners on surfaces where mold has been found.

Carbon Monoxide: The Invisible Killer

Known as “the invisible killer,” carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless gas produced by the incomplete burning of fuel. In winter, the risk increases as we use furnaces, fireplaces, gas stoves, and generators more frequently. Blocked chimneys or faulty appliances can cause CO to build up to dangerous levels indoors, leading to flu-like symptoms that



can quickly escalate to unconsciousness or death.

How to stay safe:

Install CO Detectors: Place CO detectors on every level of your home, especially near sleeping areas. Test them monthly and replace them every five to seven

years.

Maintain Appliances: Have a professional inspect and service your furnace, water heater, and other fuel-burning appliances annually.

Clear Vents: Ensure all vents and flues for fireplaces, furnaces, and dryers are clear of snow

and debris.

Never Use Appliances Improperly: Never use a gas oven for heating or a generator inside your home or garage.

Fires: The Most Common Winter Hazard

Winter is the peak season for home fires, with cooking, heating,

and holiday decorations being the primary culprits. Clogged chimneys, improperly maintained heating systems, and electrical issues from overloaded outlets are significant risks. A single spark or a flammable item placed too close to a heat source can lead to a devastating fire.

Fire safety tips:

Inspect Heating Systems: Have your fireplace and chimney professionally cleaned and inspected before the heating season begins. Ensure all heating sources are in good working order.

Give Space Heaters

Space: Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything flammable, including curtains, furniture, and blankets. Never leave a space heater unattended.

Mind the Kitchen: Stay in the kitchen while cooking and never leave a stovetop or oven unattended.

Check Smoke Alarms: Test all smoke alarms monthly and replace batteries at least once a year.

Don't Overload Outlets: Use surge protectors instead of overloading outlets with multiple plugs, and inspect cords for frays or damage.

The Best Ways to Prevent Mould and Moss Out of Doors

As the colder, wetter months approach, gardens become susceptible to the growth of mould and moss.

These growths not only make surfaces unsightly and slippery but can also cause damage over time. However, with some preparation and a bit of effort, you can protect your outdoor spaces.

Pre-Winter Cleaning

The single most effective step you can take is a thorough clean-up before winter begins. Using a pressure washer is the quickest way to remove existing dirt, moss, and algae from hard surfaces like patios, paving, and walls. For a deeper clean, consider using a specialized outdoor cleaner or a solution of water and white vinegar. For wooden surfaces like garden furniture or sheds, a stiff brush and

a wood-specific cleaner are recommended. Ensure all surfaces are completely dry before moving to the next step.

Improve Drainage and Reduce Moisture

Mould and moss thrive in damp conditions. Improving drainage is a key preventative measure. Check that your gutters and downpipes are clear of debris, and ensure that water is draining away from your patio and the base of your shed. Rake leaves and sweep away other organic matter from surfaces, as they hold moisture and provide a food source for mould.

Apply Protective Sealants or Treatments

Once surfaces are

clean and dry, applying a protective sealant or treatment can prevent future growth. For paving and patios, a patio sealer creates a barrier that makes it harder for moss and weeds to take root. For wooden furniture and sheds, a wood preservative or stain will repel water and protect against fungal growth. Some treatments contain

biocides that actively inhibit mould and moss growth. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

Ensure Good Air Circulation and Sunlight Exposure

Mould and moss prefer shady, still environments. Pruning back overhanging branches or shrubs that shade your patio, walls, or shed will allow

more sunlight and air to reach the surfaces. This helps them dry out more quickly after rain. If possible, rearrange garden furniture so it's not permanently in the same damp spot.

Regular Maintenance

Even with all these preventative steps, regular maintenance is crucial. A simple sweep of the patio and paths a few times over

the winter will help to remove any new organic debris. Keep an eye out for any new moss or mould and treat it promptly with a spot cleaner to stop it from spreading.

Following these steps will not only keep your outdoor areas looking great through the winter but will also save you time and effort come springtime.



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