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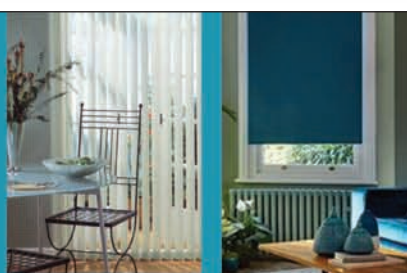
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Pictured following the Ards and North Down heat of Go Succeed: The Ultimate Pitch from left, judge Fiona O'Neill; overall winner Alexandra Mooney; Inclusive Entrepreneurship Award winner Fiona Matthan; Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum; Rising Star Award winner Hannah Crothers; and judges Claire Anketell and Derek Wright

PARENTS' ASD AID APP SECURES 'THE ULTIMATE PITCH'

A mum who has designed an app to support the parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has taken the top prize in the Ards and North Down heat of Go Succeed: The Ultimate Pitch.

Alexandra Mooney from Newtownards came up with the idea for ND Nook after struggling to use the traditional materials she was given to support ASD for her own child. She secured £1,000 investment for her business, and a place in

the regional Ultimate Pitch Final next month where she'll be in with the chance of an additional £5,000.

The competition is organised by the government-backed enterprise support service Go Succeed. Alexandra said

traditional methods for dealing with ASD – from visual communications charts to schedules and timers – were cumbersome and outdated, while also taking up valuable space.

Her idea for ND Nook is an app that provides

the same tools digitally in a form that can be easily transported and updated, for use in the home, on the go, and in education and hospital settings.

Continued on page 4

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Live Here Love Here Small Grant for SERC

South Eastern Regional College (SERC) have received a Live Here Love Here Small Grant to help support their work with local food banks.

Paul Mercer, Principal Lecturer, School of Hospitality at SERC said, "We are delighted to have been awarded £1,670 funding under the Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme 2025.

"Since 2021, SERC has partnered with food banks in the SERC community to combat food poverty. Our work has included catering for events, cookery demonstrations using food bank staples, and turning surplus food into frozen meals for users of the food banks. This new funding will help us expand our work through a Grow Your Own Vegetables project, where students with mild to moderate learning disabilities will help cultivate vegetables to

support our food bank efforts.

He added, "We plan to create four gardening groups for students at SERC Campuses in Bangor, Downpatrick, Lisburn and Newtownards. We want to empower participants through gardening which will in turn promote their personal growth and skill development and help improve their social skills through teamwork and friendship.

"Poly tunnels are currently being installed in Bangor and Newtownards Campuses which will be followed by Downpatrick and Lisburn Campuses.

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Agriculture Awards presented at CAFRE

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) celebrated the success of students completing Further Education courses at a ceremony at Greenmount Campus, Antrim recently.

Joining CAFRE staff on the Platform Party to congratulate the students were Tracey Teague, Head of Climate Change and Science Innovation Group, DAERA and Joe McDonald, UK Head of Corporate Affairs, Asda.

As Chairperson for the event, Ms Teague welcomed students, family members and industry guests to the ceremony. The Awards Day marked the students' achievements on Level 2 Agriculture, Floristry and Horticulture courses and Level 3 students' attainments in Agriculture, Land-based Engineering, Horticulture, and Poultry were also celebrated.

Addressing the audience, CAFRE Director, Paul McHenry commented: "Take pride in all you've accomplished during your time at CAFRE, we are truly proud of you. The qualifications you've earned will support you well, no matter which industry you pursue or where your career leads."

He added: "CAFRE's commitment to education, knowledge transfer, and innovation is designed to empower those entering and working within the agri-food and land-based sectors. As you progress in your career, stay curious and open to growth. It's those who embrace lifelong learning



The NIAPA Cup presented to Max McDonnell from Portaferry for performance in animal husbandry on the Level 2 Technical Certificate in Agriculture. Max was congratulated by Donal McAtamney, NIAPA and Andrew Reid, Agriculture Lecturer, CAFRE.

and personal development who truly stand out."

Philip Holdsworth, Senior Lecturer delivered the Agriculture education report. Mr Holdsworth highlighted that 116 full-time students would be receiving Agriculture and Land-based Engineering qualifications along with a further 112 part-time students. He congratulated them all saying: "Today you reap the rewards of your assignments, synoptics, exams and endless hours of studying."

Commenting on the agri-food supply sector, Mr McDonald highlighted it as the backbone of the everyday economy: "No matter how advanced technology becomes, society will always rely on farms,

food growers, producers, and retailers, and that gives your future real strength. The opportunities for you are real, and they are growing."

For those continuing their studies, he urged them to: "Keep the same energy and ambition that brought you here today. Lifelong learning is the key to standing out and staying ahead."

Your career might not follow the path you expect, mine didn't. In 2013, I joined Asda and found that success comes down to people and purpose. Twelve years on, I'm proud to lead Corporate Affairs in one of the UK's biggest retailers. With 20 million customers a week, every decision matters, from supporting farmers to

protecting the environment. It's a fast-paced, fascinating industry, and it all started with saying yes to an unexpected opportunity."

"CAFRE has equipped you to be part of the next wave of innovators driving productivity, sustainability, and entrepreneurship in the everyday economy, an industry that touches every life, every day," concluded Mr McDonald.

For information on Further Education courses available at CAFRE visit: www.cafre.ac.uk. Discover A-Level alternative study routes or courses to help you secure a job in the Agriculture, Land-based Engineering and Horticulture sectors at Greenmount Campus, Antrim.



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Ards and North Down Borough Council

BLOOMING SUCCESS AT 2025 AWARDS

Ards and North Down Borough Council proudly celebrated the outstanding achievements of local residents, schools, businesses and community groups at the 2025 Ards and North Down In Bloom Awards, held recently at the picturesque Orange Tree House, Greyabbey.

The event recognised the dedication and imagination that keep the Borough's towns and villages vibrant and flourishing.

Guest speaker was Amy Kelly, founder of Amy Kelly Gardening and a regular voice on BBC Radio Ulster's Gardener's Corner. The In Bloom Awards honoured a wide range of green-fingered

achievements:

Best School Gardening Project

Winner: Lakewood School, Bangor — A sanctuary of growth and learning, featuring a restored pond, fruit and vegetable gardens, and a therapeutic, nature-led approach.

Runner Up: St. Mary's Primary School, Portaferry — Gardening at the heart of learning, from sensory spaces to recycling and biodiversity initiatives.

Runner Up: Alexander Dickson Primary School, Ballygowan — Themed raised beds, pollinator planting, and an Eco Committee leading by example.

Tallest Sunflower Competition

Winner: Abigail Pattison - 301cm

Runner Up: Olivia Long - 264cm

Runner Up: Penny Storey - 249cm

Painting Competition (10 and Under)

Winner: Mason Wilkinson (Killard House School) - A bright sunflower against a blue background with excellent blending and colour choice.

Runners Up: Lydia Wright (Loughries Primary School), Ivy New (Loughries Primary School), Calvin Mawhinney (Killard House School).

Painting Competition (16 and Under)

Winner: Chloe Graham (Movilla High School) - A beautiful rose in a vase, detailed with a patterned tablecloth.

Runners Up: Katie McKeag (Movilla High School), Corey Goldthorpe (Killard House School), Bethany Murphy (Killard House School).

Best Kept Commercial Premises

Winner: Pier 36 - Full of colour and character, enhancing the local area and delighting visitors.

Runners Up: Hoops Courtyard and Coffee Shop, Greyabbey; The Stables, Groomsport; Groomsport Inn.

Best Community Planting Scheme

Winner: Portaferry In Bloom - Vibrant, sustainable planting and strong community involvement, including new gardens, hedging, and produce donations to the local foodbank.



Runner Up: Groomsport Village Association; Bayburn Community Association; Ballywalter Community Action Group.

Best Kept Front Garden

Winner: Sean Lennon - A beautifully planted, colourful garden full of variety and wildlife-friendly touches.

Runner Up: Billy and Jackie McClean; Elaine McFeeters; Ian McCormick

Gardening for Wildlife Award

Winners: Victoria and Darren Colville - A wonderful garden designed to attract and support

wildlife.

Runners Up: Derek McClure; Rooted in the Dee; The Hanna Family.

Volunteer of the Year

Winner: Liz McWatters - Celebrated for her tireless commitment, creativity, and leadership in Donaghadee's environmental and floral projects. Liz's enthusiasm and community spirit continue to inspire others.

Special Recognition

At the regional Best Kept Awards, Ards and North Down saw huge success: Groomsport - Best Kept Large Village

Small Town Bangor - Runner-Up, City Category

Holywood - Runner-Up, Medium Town Newtownards - Finalist, Large Town Category.

This year's ceremony was further enriched by the success of the Borough at the Ulster in Bloom Awards, where Donaghadee was awarded 1st place in the Town Category and Crawfordsburn achieved an impressive 2nd place in the Village Category, a remarkable feat for its first year of entry.

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Continued from page 1

She was among ten entrepreneurs to pitch at the local Ultimate Pitch heat at the Cultra Manor, with others including Hannah Crothers who won the local Rising Star Award for her business Doggy Doodles which creates bespoke dog portraits, and baker Fiona Matthan from One Love Bakes who received the local Inclusive Entrepreneurship Award.

Participants each presented a three-minute pitch to a panel of judges that included Fiona O'Neill, Regency Carpets; Claire Anketell, Inspiring Yarns; and Derek Wright, Street Life.

Heat winners from each of Northern Ireland's 11 councils will progress to

The Ultimate Pitch regional final in Seamus Heaney HomePlace in Bellaghy, Co. Derry on 19th November.

The overall winner at the regional final will receive the Go Succeed Ultimate Pitch Award, £5,000 investment, and a prize package including a photography session supplied by Brian Thompson Photography, podcast recording session supplied by Attention X Studio NI, membership of Toastmasters, and a media training session supplied by LK Communications.

Winners of sub-categories at the regional final, which include the Go Succeed Impact Award for the best social enterprise, the Go Succeed Inclusive Entrepreneurship Award, and the Go Succeed Rising Star Award for the most inspiring 16-25-year-



old entrepreneur, will also receive £1,500 towards their business idea.

Meanwhile, members of the public will have the opportunity to vote for their favourite regional finalist to win the People's Choice Award, sponsored by Ardmore Group, with the winner also receiving a £1,500 cash prize.

Go Succeed (www.go-

succeed.com) is funded by the UK Government and delivered by Northern Ireland's 11 councils. The service supports entrepreneurs, new starts and existing businesses with easy-to-access advice and support – including mentoring, masterclasses, peer networks, access to grant funding and business planning – at every stage of their growth journey.

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Victim Support NI

GRANDfest Celebrates Culture, Connection and Community Spirit!

The Queen's Hall in Newtownards came alive with colour, culture and community spirit recently during GRANDfest, a vibrant celebration held as part of Good Relations Week.

The event brought together residents, community leaders and organisations from across the Borough to honour both local and global cultures under the shared theme of 'Connect'.

Organised by Ards and North Down Borough Council, GRANDfest showcased music, dance, food and storytelling from diverse backgrounds, reflecting the rich tapestry of traditions that make the Borough a welcoming and inclusive place to live.

Speaking at the event, Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum, said: "This event has been organised during Good Relations Week to celebrate local and global culture from across our Borough, and it is an event that I am particularly passionate about. 'Belonging' is the overarching theme



of my Mayoral year, so I am delighted to stand alongside so many passionate individuals and organisations who are committed to building a better, more connected community - a community where we all feel that we belong."

She continued: "Peace isn't just a word, it is a daily effort, a shared

responsibility, and a vision we work toward together. GRANDfest is a reflection of our commitment to fostering inclusion, understanding and respect across all communities. It's also a call to action: to connect, to listen and to build relationships that last far beyond this week."

GRANDfest was one of many events held across Northern Ireland during Good Relations Week, highlighting efforts to tackle sectarianism, racism, inequality, poverty and social isolation. The festival served as a reminder that meaningful change begins with connection and collaboration.

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ENTERPRISING SPIRIT AT SERC SEASONAL FAIRS

Enterprising students at South Eastern Regional College (SERC) got the half term off to a great start with the first of their annual fairs which showcased their enterprise spirit alongside some Halloween themed gifts and treats.

Charlotte McCormick, Senior Innovations

Advisor from SERC's Enterprise and Entrepreneurship team said, "We were delighted that 35 stalls were hosted by students, staff and guests at the Halloween 'Pop Ups' in Bangor, Downpatrick, Lisburn and Newtownards Campuses. She added, "For some of the students, this is the first time they will have had the opportunity to sell direct to their fellow students and staff on a pre-booked stall. Our seasonal markets mean they can get feedback and ideas from customers as well as see the competition. Some of them will make improvements to their offer or perhaps team up with other students, or completely rethink what

they are making and selling, in preparation for our Christmas fairs. "Many of the enterprises are linked to the students' course of study, for example, FDQ Professional Chef students hosted stands selling freshly baked wheaten bread, apple tarts, Halloween themed shortbread, cupcakes and chocolate and toffee covered apples - goods they will have practiced and perfected during the first term. And talented students from the HND Graphic Design course hosted a stand selling illustrated stickers, prints and crocheted items, which are all on trend. "This year, depending on campus, stall holders had baked goodies and treats, arts, crafts,



Selling spider plants are Level 2 Animal Care Students, Darcie Prentice and Kiera McCord, with (middle) Laura Leeboddy, Animal Care Technician to help raise funds for animal enrichment at the college's Animal House.

gifts, oil paintings, ceramics, Halloween themed decorations, spider plants, prints and stickers, pin badges, jewellery, upcycled, recycled and nearly new items. Most items were produced or sourced by students and staff, and sometimes guest stallholders. Truffle,

SERC's vintage shop in Downpatrick Campus was also open." Visit www.serc.ac.uk Real Learning for Real Life #BetterOffAtSERC.

Abbey Villa Football Club 70th anniversary dinner

North Down DUP MLA Stephen Dunne has paid tribute to Abbey Villa Football Club for their outstanding contribution to local sport and community life as they marked their 70th anniversary with a very special celebratory dinner at Donaghadee Golf Club.

Mr Dunne commented: 'It was a great privilege to join with so many past and present members of Abbey Villa FC to celebrate this tremendous milestone of 70 years. Abbey Villa is a club with a proud history at the heart of the community in Millisle and the wider local area, and over

the decades, it has provided countless opportunities for people of all ages to get involved in sport, make friendships, and build a sense of belonging. I want to commend the current Chairman, Mr Gary Pitman, the club's committee, players, coaches, volunteers, and supporters who have sustained the club through the years and ensured that it continues to thrive. Their dedication and passion have made Abbey Villa more than just a football club, it is a real community institution in Millisle with a thriving youth section that develops important life skills such as teamwork.

The evening was also marked by a moving and heartfelt address from local sports journalist Dennis Nash BEM. Despite the very recent and sad loss of his beloved wife Jennie, Dennis showed remarkable courage in speaking at the event and sharing his memories. I want to pay tribute to Dennis for his strength and extend my deepest sympathies to him and his family at this difficult time. Abbey Villa FC can also proudly claim to have a current Irish FA President within their club in Conrad Kirkwood which is a great honour for the Club. Everyone involved at Abbey Villa should be rightly proud of all they have achieved over the past 70 years, and I look forward to continuing to work with them as they continue to serve the local community in the future, and I want to wish them continued success.'

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MAYOR LAUDS VETERANS' MULTI-SPORT EVENT IN NEWTOWNARDS

Around 60 veterans descended upon the Ards Blair Mayne Leisure Centre, in Newtownards recently to participate in the Help for Heroes Community Sports Series.

The Community Sports Series is a UK-wide initiative, with events taking part across the regions, which allow veterans to come together with other members of the Armed Forces community and participate in a variety of inclusive sports.

And they were joined in Newtownards by the Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum, Northern Ireland Veterans' Commissioner David Johnstone and Local Veterans' Champion Alderman Trevor Cummings who all donned sports 'gear' to participate in the accessible sports events alongside the veterans.

The Newtownards 'leg' was the final event of six this year, following successful outings in Liverpool, Inverclyde, Birmingham, Cardiff, and Cornwall. Attendees participated in various accessible activities including walking football, boccia and archery.

Last year, these events engaged more than 113 members of the Armed Forces community in sporting activities, helping them to try new sports in a safe environment. Some found it so beneficial that they attended every event.



(Left to right) Gillian Lyall, Help for Heroes Clinical Lead, Northern Ireland; Glenn Barr, Help for Heroes Community Builder, Northern Ireland; Alderman Trevor Cummings, Veterans' Champion Ards and North Down; Gillian McCollum, Mayor, Ards and North Down; Fiona Sinclair Help for Heroes Community Development Manager, Scotland and Northern Ireland; David Johnstone Veterans' Commissioner Northern Ireland; Rachael Hutcheson, Help for Heroes Community Occupational Therapist, Northern Ireland and Paola Grenier (sitting) Help for Heroes Inclusion and Engagement Project Manager

Help for Heroes Community Sports Coordinator, Gemma Kemble-Stephenson, said: "We're really pleased to have been able to have our first Community Sports Series event in Northern Ireland.

"The support of the staff at the leisure centre and the local veterans' community has been phenomenal. We've had such positive feedback from participants with many saying how much

they enjoyed the event. Some of them have attended Sports Series events in other parts of the UK, but I think having this event on their home turf made it extra special."

Help for Heroes champions the Armed Forces community and helps people live well after service. The Charity supports veterans and their families with their physical and mental health, as well as welfare and social needs. It has

already supported tens of thousands - and won't stop until every veteran gets the support they deserve.

The Charity supports veterans from any branch of the UK military - regulars or reserves - irrespective of length or place of service, and locally embedded civilians (and their families) who worked under the command of UK Armed Forces.

To get support visit helpforheroes.org.uk.



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THE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT WORK OF NDAWA

Emalyn Turkington, CEO, explains how NDAWA continues to provide frontline services to women, young people and children affected by domestic and sexual abuse, even though resources are being stretched to the limit.

The work of NDAWA is critical in working with women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse in the Ards and North Down area. NDAWA are seeing more women seeking support staying with their abusive partner as they cannot afford to leave, or women who have left the abusive home who need more support with finances/ budgeting and debt management.

When needed, NDAWA will do what they can to help women in financial difficulties with their basic needs of food, electric, gas or oil. At times they can secure funding for these

situations, at other times they use monies from donations NDAWA have received from generous donors. It is always great when the public or other agencies donate money or raise money for NDAWA.

Christmas can be a challenging time for many families, even more so for families that live in an abusive environment. Help and support is available. North Down & Ards Women's Aid have emergency refuge accommodation and community support services available. We are open and here to help and have been supporting



Emalyn Turkington, Chief Executive Officer, North Down & Ards Women's Aid

women and children throughout the year.

You can directly support women and children this Christmas by donating money, gifts

or vouchers to NDAWA. Please visit our website www.ndawomensaid.org for details on how to donate or phone on 028 9127 3196.

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

Local practice invites 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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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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MLAs get the message from deaf young people

The National Deaf Children’s Society helped MLAs immerse themselves in the world of deafness and sign language at an event organised by the Assembly’s Committee for Communities at Stormont recently.

At the request of the Committee, the charity invited deaf child Alexander Buchanan, 12, and his mother Natalia, from Waringstown near Lurgan, and Lydine McCaughran, the mother of a deaf daughter from Jordanstown, to meet the members.

Alexander, who was born deaf and communicates using speech and BSL, had the opportunity to share many first-hand insights into the world of deafness with the MLAs and talk about the daily challenges facing deaf children and their families in Northern Ireland.

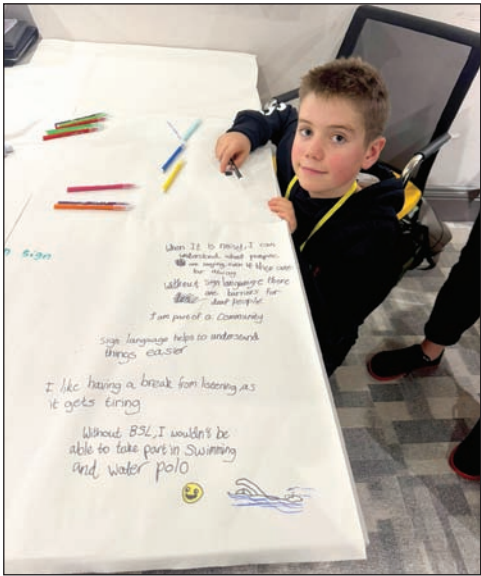
Alexander, who attends Banbridge Academy, was joined by a group of deaf children from Jordanstown School, who had also been invited to come along to meet and talk to the Committee members. Registered sign language interpreters were on hand to assist.

During their visit, the children took part in an important and fun activity in which they wrote down what they wanted the Sign Language Bill to deliver and what they liked about sign language.

Among those present were the Chair of the Committee for Communities, Colm Gildernew MLA, and Committee members Andy Allen MLA, Nicola Brogan MLA, Pam Cameron MLA and Sian Mulholland MLA.

The event was organised as the Sign Language Bill is being scrutinised by the committee stage on its way to becoming law in Northern Ireland. The Bill recognises and promotes BSL and Irish Sign Language (ISL), and places duties on public bodies to ensure that they are fully accessible to individuals in the deaf community.

The Assembly has vowed to prioritise the passing of



the Bill into law during its current term. In February, Communities Minister Gordon Lyons delivered the first part of his speech introducing the Bill to the Assembly in BSL. He described it as a “...long-awaited step forward in achieving the same rights and opportunities as those in the hearing community”.

For more information, please contact the National Deaf Children’s Society media team by calling 020 7014 1100 or emailing media@ndcs.org.uk

Child Benefit – Parents experiencing long processing delays

New parents who have applied for Child Benefit are experiencing long wait times for their applications to be processed and even to receive a response from HMRC.

Employers For Childcare

These delays have been going on for some time, with parents who have already submitted an application waiting months for a response from HMRC. It seems that there is not much prospect of the processing times being reduced in the near future.

What is Child Benefit?

Child Benefit can be claimed by someone who is responsible for bringing up a child and it is often the first benefit that a parent will claim which is specifically linked to having a baby.

This benefit can provide vital financial support to parents at a time of increased household expenditure due to having a newborn baby often coupled with a reduction in income as parents

are receiving Statutory Maternity or Paternity Pay or Maternity Allowance instead of their normal salary.

Applications for Child Benefit and more information on the eligibility criteria can be found at www.gov.uk/child-benefit.

Payments for new claims of Child Benefit will automatically be backdated by three months from the date of submission or to the baby’s date of birth, whichever is later.

How long is the delay?

At the time of writing the HMRC website says that for a Child Benefit application made in late October 2025 - a reply can be expected in mid-March 2026. That is a delay of four and a half months,



almost 20 weeks!

On the website it also states that they are currently processing claims that were received in June 2025, which again is well over four months ago.

Parents can check the progress of their own Child Benefit claim via the HMRC website: <https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/guidance/Check-when-you-can-expect-a-reply>

from-HMRC

Further information

If you would like further information on help what financial support your household 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.

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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.

To book, call us on 028 2073 1210 or visit our website at www.thecausewayhotel.com

Let the coast call you back this winter.

£1.1m Musical Instruments Programme

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has announced that 134 grants will be issued to individuals, bands and groups from across Northern Ireland, who have been successful in the 2025/26 Musical Instruments Programme.

The programme was open to individuals, bands and professional and non-professional performing groups to purchase new musical instruments and replace old ones.

Minister Lyons said: “Firstly I want to congratulate all the successful applicants of this year’s Arts Council of Northern Ireland’s Musical Instruments Programme. Music is part of our culture and it enriches our cultural experiences.

“I recognise that funding is a challenge for many individuals, bands, groups and organisations across the entire music and arts sector

so I am pleased to be able to announce this funding which makes a difference across Northern Ireland.

I am delighted to see an increase in awards from 119 last year to 134 this year with increased capital investment from £823k in 2024/25 to £1.1m in 2025/26. This demonstrates the need and I will continue to support those who strive to improve the standards of musicianship in Northern Ireland.

I am also very pleased to see the spread of funding reaches all local council areas.”

The Musical Instruments

Programme is designed to help musicians in Northern Ireland replace their old, worn-out instruments and purchase new ones.

A total of 134 grants have been awarded through the Programme, which saw 94 bands (£819,405), 12 professional and non-professional performing groups (£134,928) and 28 professional musicians (£148,667) receive funding.

The Musical Instruments Programme includes three strands:

- The Bands strand of the programme was created to support bands based in Northern Ireland, which

are formally constituted, including accordion, brass, flute, pipe, wind and concert bands.

- The Professional and Non-Professional Performing Groups category was open to choirs and orchestras, community music groups, musical societies, primary and post primary schools and youth groups.
- The third strand is for Individual Professional Musicians.

More information on the successful applicants can be found on the Arts Council NI website at <https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/musical-instruments-awards>.

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The future for modern day Raptors

Wildlife, from tiny insects to elephants, have evolved over thousands, indeed millions of years, and yet even in the last 50 or 60 years the lives and prospects of two of our native birds of prey have changed. One is a hawk, the other a falcon.

Hawks and falcons are from the group of birds that kill other vertebrates for food, sometimes referred to as raptors (from the Latin rapio, meaning to seize or take by force) but hawks, such as the common buzzard, have broad wings and rounded tails, and are strong gliders, while falcons, such as the kestrel, have narrow, pointed wings and slender bodies, and are faster and more agile.

Buzzards became effectively extinct in Ireland more than 100 years ago, mainly through persecution and poisoning by gamekeepers, but since the 1950's, and later legal protection, have re-established themselves by flying over from Scotland and are now commonly seen soaring on thermal currents in the sky or sitting on telegraph poles along rural roads.

Conversely, kestrels, once commonly seen hovering throughout



our countryside and alongside motorways, are in serious trouble.

I'm not a scientist, merely an observer of nature, but it seems likely that habitat change and how birds feed might explain how one raptor can prosper and another decline.

Common buzzards, which nest in woodland, are raptor generalists. While they will kill small mammals, including rabbits, and

birds, they are also scavengers, feeding on carrion, and can even be seen eating earthworms on ploughed fields.

On the other hand, kestrels are birds of open countryside, mainly living off small rodents and large insects, both of which are also in decline, along with the vast scale of hedgerow... and habitat... removal over the past few decades, and the growth

in the use of poisons (rodenticides).

Maybe legal protections emerged just in time to save buzzards, but radical changes in agriculture seem to be imperilling kestrels. Or possibly it's a case of the generalist, the creature best able to adapt to a rapidly changing environment that will prosper, while specialists struggle. Time will tell...

JVA

UK'S BIGGEST FOOD COLLECTION CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS TO SUPPORT CHARITIES.

With food banks and charities facing continued high levels of need this winter, people are being urged to give the gift of their time to take part in the UK's biggest food donation drive.

Now in its 13th year, the Tesco Winter Food Collection is taking place in all Tesco stores from November 27th to November 29th. Tesco's charity partners, Trussell and FareShare, are calling for volunteers to sign-up to support the event in store as both charities are providing a lifeline in response to high levels of need.

During the collection Tesco customers will be encouraged to donate long-life food to support the charities in their work. Donations for Trussell will help its community of food banks provide emergency food parcels to people who cannot afford the essentials, while donations to FareShare will support its network of 8,000 local charities and community groups helping to feed people in local communities across the UK.

Volunteers will help out at collection points



in Tesco stores to raise awareness of the impact every single donation will have on people across the UK, who rely on Trussell and FareShare for food.

Donations are needed now more than ever, with one in five Trussell food parcels coming from Tesco and its customers.

Kris Gibbon Walsh, CEO at FareShare said: "Food from FareShare reaches a network of over 8,000 charities across the UK, enabling them

to provide food support alongside access to other vital services. In the winter months, many people accessing these local groups are forced to choose between keeping warm and eating. This makes the Tesco Winter Food Collection more important than ever. We know from experience that having volunteers present in store significantly increases the number of food items donated, and hope that more people

than ever will generously give up their time this year. By volunteering just three hours, people can play an important part in our mission and help create lasting change, one meal at a time."

You can sign up to volunteer in your local Tesco store with FareShare at <https://fareshare.org.uk/foodcollection/> or with Trussell at <https://www.trussell.org.uk/support-us/tesco-food-collection>



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BELFAST CHRISTMAS MARKET 2025

Get ready to step into a winter wonderland as the Belfast Christmas Market returns to the iconic City Hall grounds in 2025!

A cherished tradition, this market transforms the heart of the city into a festive spectacle, offering a truly enchanting experience for locals and visitors alike.

When is it Happening?

The Belfast Christmas Market generally runs from mid-November right up until December 22nd or 23rd. This allows ample time to soak up the festive atmosphere, whether you're looking for unique gifts, delicious treats, or simply a dose of Christmas cheer.

What to Expect: A Feast for the Senses

Prepare yourself for an immersive sensory experience that embodies the spirit of Christmas:

- A Global Culinary Journey: One of the market's biggest draws is its incredible array of food and drink. Expect to find traditional German bratwurst, towering Yorkshire pudding wraps, French crepes, Dutch pancakes, and Spanish churros. For those with a sweet tooth, there's an abundance of fudge, chocolates, and festive pastries. And of course, no Christmas market experience is complete without a warming mug of glühwein or a pint of local craft beer.
- Unique Artisan Crafts and Gifts: Beyond the food, the market is a treasure trove of unique gifts and handcrafted goods from across Europe and beyond. Browse stalls offering bespoke jewellery, intricate wooden carvings, personalised ornaments, festive homeware, and luxurious clothing. It's the perfect place to find that special, one-of-a-kind present that you won't find on the high street.
- Festive Ambiance and Entertainment: The City Hall grounds are beautifully adorned with twinkling lights, festive decorations, and a towering Christmas tree, creating a truly magical backdrop. Live music, carol singers, and occasional street performers often add to the vibrant atmosphere, filling the air with the sounds of the season.
- Family-Friendly Fun: The market caters to all ages. Children will delight in the sweet treats, vibrant stalls, and the general buzz. Keep an eye out for Santa's Grotto – a popular attraction where little ones can meet Father Christmas and share their wish lists.

Making the Most of Your Visit

To ensure you have the most magical experience at the Belfast Christmas



Market 2025, here are some top tips:

1. Go Early or Late (on weekdays): The market can get incredibly busy, especially on weekend evenings. If you prefer a more relaxed stroll, consider visiting on a weekday morning or early afternoon. The market generally opens around 10:00 am or 11:00 am.
2. Dress for the Weather: Belfast winters can be chilly and damp. Wrap up warm with layers, a waterproof coat, hat, gloves, and comfortable shoes, as you'll be doing a lot of walking.
3. Bring Cash (and Card): While many vendors accept card payments, having some cash on hand can be useful for smaller purchases or if a particular stall only takes cash.
4. Plan Your Food Stops: With so many tempting options, it's easy to get overwhelmed. Take a walk around first to scope out what takes your fancy, then strategically plan your culinary journey. Don't forget to grab a festive drink to warm you up!
5. Embrace the Atmosphere: Don't just rush through. Take your time to soak in the sights, sounds, and smells. Enjoy the festive buzz, listen to the music, and simply revel in the Christmas spirit.
6. Explore the City Hall: While you're there, take a moment to admire Belfast City Hall itself. Its stunning architecture provides a magnificent backdrop to the market.
7. Combine with Other Activities: The market is conveniently located in the city centre, making it easy to combine your visit with some Christmas shopping in Belfast's many stores or a visit to other local attractions.

The Belfast Christmas Market 2025 promises to be another unforgettable celebration of the festive season. Mark your calendars, gather your loved ones, and prepare to be enchanted by this truly magical experience!



Thank you to all our Staff, Suppliers and Customers.

Roy Lyttle has been growing vegetables in Ards and North Down for over 45 years. Our main crop at this time of year is Leeks as well as Parsley, Celery, White Cabbage and Beetroot. At other times of the year we produce Scallions and Lyttle Leaves salads. Roy and Sheila's son Alexander now takes responsibility for crop growing and maintenance. When ready, the vegetables are harvested before being trimmed, prepared, washed, packed and labelled in the farm's packhouse. Products are delivered across Northern Ireland & South of Ireland to multinationals, independent retailers and processors.

We welcome Schools and Community groups to visit our farm.

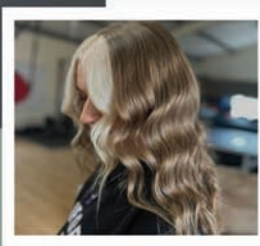
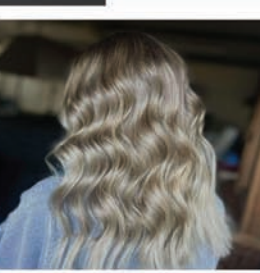
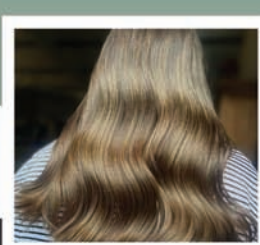
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THE PHAT FRYER THE CHIP STOP

‘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 now open! 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! Like The Chip Stop - ‘The Phat Fryer’s’ new food offering celebrates the classics: perfectly battered cod alongside generous portions of freshly cut chips. 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!



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The Four Seasons Hotel & Leisure Club, Monaghan, Celebrates Triple Success at Irish Hotel Awards

The Four Seasons Hotel & Leisure Club, Monaghan, is delighted to announce that it has been honoured with three prestigious awards at the Irish Hotel Awards 2025, held recently.

The awards recognise excellence across hospitality, weddings, and leadership in the hotel industry. The Four Seasons Hotel & Leisure Club proudly received the following accolades:

- Local Hotel of the Year – Ulster
- Intimate Wedding Venue of the Year – Ulster
- Revenue Manager of the Year – Ulster: Mairead Donegan

Commenting on the achievement, Barbara McKenna-Lang, Banqueting Manager said: “We are incredibly proud to receive these awards, which reflect the dedication and hard work of our entire team. Each accolade is a testament to the outstanding experiences we strive

to create for our guests, whether it’s a relaxing stay, a memorable wedding, or exceptional service across all areas of our hotel.”

The awards highlight the exceptional skill and leadership of the management & staff, whose innovative approach to hospitality has contributed significantly to the hotel’s success and reputation. These honours further cement the Four Seasons Hotel & Leisure Club, Monaghan, as a premier

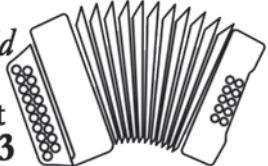


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HANNON Coach & Sail is perfect for a city break in Glasgow this Christmas!

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

A shopper’s paradise, Glasgow is recognised as having the best retail therapy in the UK outside of London. Consistently voted ‘top of the shops’, the city is Scotland’s premier shopping destination.

Not just shopping, 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 Christmas

shopping. 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.

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Turning Old into Gold: How Robinson Goldsmiths Are Redesigning Heirlooms Sustainably

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

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

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

In their family-run workshop, old jewellery is given a second life through a thoughtful and skilled

process. The gold is melted down - a mesmerising sight - not to erase its past, but to prepare it for a new chapter.

"Working with customers to design and create unique jewellery is a real privilege," says Jennifer Robinson, partner at Robinson Goldsmiths. "Often,

inherited jewellery is just sitting in a box somewhere, unseen and unused, as it's not the right style or size. By using these items to create something new, the customer gets a custom piece of jewellery which is all the more special knowing the history behind it."

Once molten, the gold

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

Whether it becomes a sleek new ring, a modern pendant, or a bespoke design co-created with the team, each piece is 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.

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Jonathan understands that hearing loss affects far more than sound alone, it influences relationships, work, social life and overall wellbeing. His goal is to make every client feel understood, supported,

and empowered. Through attentive consultations, thorough assessments, and clear explanations, Jonathan ensures that each person receives care tailored specifically to their lifestyle and needs. His friendly manner and genuine interest in people have earned him a strong reputation across the Ards area.

Linenhall Hearing offers a full range of services, including comprehensive hearing tests, ear wax removal and access to the latest discreet, top-performing hearing aids from leading manufacturers. Jonathan

guides clients through every step of the process, from initial assessment to ongoing aftercare, ensuring they experience long-term comfort and outstanding results.

What truly sets Linenhall Hearing apart is its focus on local, community-driven care. Rather than a rushed, corporate experience, clients receive time, attention, and continuity, qualities that make a real difference in hearing health.

Whether you are noticing changes in your hearing, seeking expert advice, or simply



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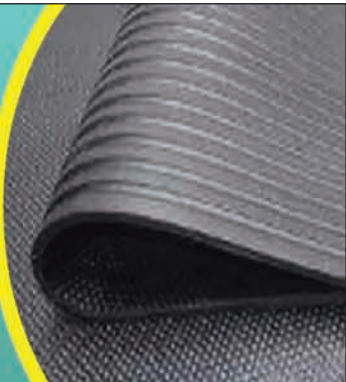


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DACIA SPRING: STRONGER PERFORMANCE, SAME GREAT EVERYDAY RANGE

Dacia is delivering on all the promises made for Spring, its first all-electric model, with a series of updates that include two, new, more powerful motors that offer stronger performance, without sacrificing everyday drivability or range.

A promise to make zero-emission* mobility more affordable. Since its launch in 2021, Spring has sold more than 179,000 units in Europe (up to June 2025). In 2025, Spring performed strongly with over 17,000 vehicles sold, securing second place in the European market for electric vehicles sold in the retail channel (segments A, B, B-SUV). These results reflect the success of a car that is still the most affordable on the all-electric market, tailored to the real needs of customers.

A promise to make this all-electric model even more appealing with substantial

improvements every year. Although not coming to the UK initially, Spring benefited from substantial improvements every year. These included the new Dacia identity in 2022, new more efficient 65 hp powertrain in 2023, and a major upgrade in 2024 including a fully renewed design and a more digital experience.

A promise met once again today. Spring takes a major step forwards with an enhanced driving experience, more fun, greater safety and increased versatility for everyday use.

An all-rounded compact car, Spring

gained a number of upgrades in 2024 to optimise performance, including: electric power steering settings retuned for increased precision and feedback, new 15-inch wheels and a new steering wheel for better grip.

Today, Spring is taking this process to new levels with structural changes contributing to a fully renewed and enhanced driving experience.

The chassis houses a new battery in its reinforced central section. These changes make the structure stiffer and optimise weight distribution between front and rear to improve the overall



balance of the vehicle.

Braking is safer thanks to more powerful assistance. The 15-inch wheels also contribute to improving the Spring's road handling.

Spring also gains an anti-roll bar for the first time, standard on all versions. The car's stability in corners is thus improved and further enhanced by the adoption of

new settings for the shock absorbers and suspension springs.

*Zero CO2 tailpipe emissions, excluding wear parts, in compliance with the WLTP certification

cycle

In addition, Spring has undergone various aerodynamic improvements.

A NEW POWERTRAIN RANGE FOR EVEN MORE ENJOYABLE STRESS-FREE DRIVING

Two new motors, 70 hp/52 kW and 100 hp/75 kW, replace the previous 45 hp/33 kW and 65 hp/48 kW units. These offer more power and torque between 50 and 75 mph (up to +20%). This means that Spring can travel with ease in less urban areas and fit naturally into motorway traffic for a more comfortable driving experience.

Charging is optimised with a new 40 kW DC onboard charger, compared with 30 kW previously. Available on the Extreme trim level, it charges the battery from 20% to 80% in just 29 minutes. A 7 kW AC charger is still standard on all Spring models which, combined with the new battery, allows for faster charging from 20% to 100%: 3 hours 20 minutes instead of 4 hours on a 7kW wall box, and 10 hours 11 minutes on a domestic socket.

The new 70 hp powertrain is available with the Expression trim, while the new 100 hp powertrain is available with Extreme.

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Jeep® Wrangler named The Sun Road trip Car of the Year

Jeep® has triumphed at the 2025 News UK Motor Awards, with Wrangler being named The Sun Road trip Car of the Year.

This win is notable, as Wrangler is the first car to win this brand-new category that reflects the growing appetite among drivers for hitting the road and creating

new adventures, core values that remain at the heart of Jeep.

Wrangler won the award for its ability to defy limits and fulfill the road-trip dreams of those seeking adventures around the world. Its versatility and ability to provide true open-air freedom, with its removeable roof and doors, set it apart and make it the ideal car to make

unforgettable memories with.

Wrangler has cemented itself as the benchmark for the off-road capabilities and ruggedness that are inherent to Jeep. Blending style with practicality, Wrangler adapts to the different needs of road trippers across the world. Unmatched off-road capability, removable doors and roof and a foldable windscreen make it the



perfect car for exploring the world.

Wrangler also benefits from the latest Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems (ADAS) and Uconnect infotainment system, making road trips comfortable and enjoyable.

Kristian Cholmondeley, MD of Jeep UK said, "At Jeep we encourage everyone to get out and explore the world around them with friends and loved ones.

Wrangler has the style and capability to undertake any adventure. There's no better way to live out our motto of 'Go Anywhere, Do Anything' than by hitting the road and seeking the freedom that doing so provides - this award proves that."

Rob Gill, Motoring Editor of The Sun, said "Nothing is off-limits in the all-American hero, and you can whip off the roof and

the doors while you're at it. Wrangler is the perfect companion for unforgettable adventures on the road trip you always promised yourself."

Launched in 2018, The News UK Motor Awards are judged by industry respected automotive journalists from across News UK's titles. Categories honoured include Luxury, Sports, Family, Adventure and Electric.

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New C5 Aircross Plug-In Hybrid

New C5 Aircross Plug-In Hybrid is now open for orders, with prices starting from £38,855 OTR MRRP. The plug-in hybrid powertrain joins the hybrid and electric powertrains already available for customer orders.

New C5 Aircross represents Citroën's boldest step yet in the mid-sized SUV segment, offering outstanding comfort, on-board space, and value for money.

Welcoming a new and bold chapter in Citroën design, New C5 Aircross range features a more assertive and aerodynamic look that enhances performance and road presence. At the front, Citroën's striking new three-point LED light signature is set within a strong horizontal structure that widens the stance, while a redesigned grille and streamlined bumper elements optimise airflow and visual impact. New C5 Aircross delivers excep-

tional practicality without compromising on style. A generous 2.78m wheelbase contributes to a spacious interior feel, particularly in the second row, where passengers enjoy improved leg and headroom. The boot capacity is among the best in its class, from 651 litres (565 dm3 VDA) with the seats up to 1,985 litres (1,668 dm3 VDA) with the rear bench folded, offering the flexibility of a true family SUV.

Thoughtful design touches like a wide-opening boot, split-folding rear seats, and a flat load area make loading and everyday practicality effortlessly simple.

New C5 Aircross Plug-In

Hybrid features rechargeable hybrid technology, combining two energy sources: a 150hp turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine and a 125hp electric motor that powers the front wheels. Depending on driving conditions and selected modes, the engine and motor operate independently or together. In Electric mode, the vehicle runs exclusively on electric power, making it ideal for city driving and low-emission zones. In Hybrid mode, the system intelligently switches between electric and petrol power or uses both based on performance needs. When operating together, the petrol engine and electric motor gener-



ate a peak power output of 195hp.

The plug-in hybrid system features a 21kWh battery – nearly double that of the previous generation – enabling the car to drive solely on electric propulsion for up to 53 miles (WLTP EAER Combined). Equipped with a 7.4kW single-phase on-board charger, the battery can be fully recharged in

just 2 hours and 55 minutes using a 7.4kW AC charger.

The plug-in hybrid powertrain is being launched exclusively on the MAX trim. As standard, the MAX trim comes equipped with a 360-degree camera, an extended head-up display, heated front seats and steering wheel, hands-free electric tailgate, and Drive Assist Pack 2.0 with semi-

autonomous features.

At the heart of the cabin is a new 13-inch 'waterfall' HD touchscreen, uniquely

mounted in a vertical cascade that flows from the dashboard into the centre console. This floating dis-

play has both fully customisable and fixed sections for quick and easy access to essential functions at all times.

MASSEY FERGUSON 9S SERIES TRACTOR

Designed with the farmer in mind, the MF 9S Series offers better dependability and efficiency to help farmers achieve a lower overall cost of ownership.

The MF 9S Series is the standard when it comes to efficiency, dependability and field-proven technology. Its high-quality design, along with Massey Ferguson's commitment to product value, ensures you'll get into the field on time, ready to meet your optimum planting window. While in the field, farmers have experienced up to a 15% reduction in fuel consumption along with other fluid efficiencies, to help reduce costs and maximize profits.

Designed with field-proven technology, including the industry-leading 8.4-liter AGCO Power™ engine, Dyna-VT™ transmission and Protect-U™ cab design, as seen on previous Massey Ferguson S Series models, the MF 9S Series delivers maximum power and



efficiency for demanding implements. The 90 GPM ECO pump allows farmers to deliver the power needed to operate the technology features on the implements they need without taking that power away from the operation of the tractor itself. Each farm and every field are different, and the ECO

pump enables farmers to adapt their operations. The right ballast reduces unneeded compaction while providing high levels of traction for heavy draft work, ensuring the maximum amount of power for your operation. Additionally, MF Care Pro service comes standard on every tractor and is

partnered with extended warranty options, guaranteed optimal performance, and reduced costs and servicing time.

In addition to money-saving power, the MF 9S Series features Massey Ferguson's exclusive Protect-U design, boasting industry-best cab comfort and visibility.



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THE NUGENT TDC CATTLE TRAILER RANGE

Launched in May 2025, the Nugent TDC (Tractor Drawn Cattle) trailer range represents a significant scaling up of the company's offering, specifically targeting professional farmers and hauliers needing high-capacity, heavy-duty livestock transport.

Available in substantial 20ft and 24ft models, the TDC range is built with an uncompromising focus on structural integrity, animal welfare, and towing performance.

Nugent's reputation for robust engineering is evident. The TDC features a fully galvanised chassis and framework as standard, promising exceptional

longevity and resistance to corrosion—essential qualities for any equipment constantly exposed to the elements and livestock effluent.

Durability extends to the floor, which uses 3mm fully welded aluminium plating. This is a considerable upgrade from standard floors, providing maximum strength, hygiene, and a solid foundation for

heavy cattle.

Perhaps the most critical innovation in the TDC range is the focus on animal well-being during transit. Nugent prioritised achieving maximum internal width, a key feature designed to ensure livestock have ample space. This reduction in crowding is vital for minimizing stress and aggression during transport and significantly improves airflow within the unit. Loading is simplified by heavy-duty gates fitted with guide handles and a high-grip rear tail door, ensuring smooth and safe movement onto the trailer. Safety is further reinforced by a fixed internal dividing gate, standard with dual latches,

and crash rails for side impact protection.

As a tractor-drawn unit, stability and smooth running are paramount. The TDC range delivers this through a combination of high-specification running gear. It utilizes 445/45 mini super single wheels, which offer excellent ground contact and enhanced on-road stability, crucial for managing long loads. Complementing this is a monoleaf parabolic suspension system, renowned for absorbing road shock more effectively than traditional setups, resulting in a significantly smoother and safer journey for both the livestock and the towing vehicle.

The inclusion of a sprung drawbar and an adjustable coupling eye ensures versatile and easy coupling across various heavy-duty tractors.

The Nugent TDC range is positioned as a market leader in the heavy-duty segment. By successfully combining exceptional structural integrity (galvanised chassis, 3mm aluminium floor) with thoughtful features aimed at animal welfare (maximum internal width, smooth loading), Nugent has produced a robust, reliable, and user-friendly trailer. For large-scale farming or commercial livestock movements, the 20ft and 24ft TDC



models offer a compelling, long-term investment. While likely commanding

a premium price, the design specifications suggest superior operating

performance and reduced stress on both the operator and the animals.

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EVs in the Cold: A Guide to Winter Performance

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. 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.

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ROYAL ULSTER WINTER FAIR

Get ready for the premier showcase of the dairy industry as the Royal Ulster Winter Fair, in association with sole sponsor Danske Bank, returns to the EIKON EXHIBITION CENTRE in Lisburn on Thursday 11th December.

This single-day event, organised by the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS), is a vital fixture in the agricultural calendar, bringing together farmers, enthusiasts, and industry leaders to celebrate excellence in dairy farming and explore the future of agri-innovation.

The Winter Fair features livestock competitions, with top-quality dairy cattle from across the region. Exhibitors compete fiercely for prestigious titles, including the highly coveted Supreme Interbreed Championship.

Visitors will have the chance to see some of the finest examples of breeds such as Holstein, Ayrshire, Dairy Shorthorn, and Jersey, demonstrating the genetic excellence achieved by Northern Ireland's dedicated dairy farmers.

The competitive atmosphere in the show ring is a true highlight, providing a platform to celebrate the hard work and dedication that underpins the local dairy community.

Beyond the cattle ring, the Royal Ulster Winter Fair serves as an invaluable business platform and a hub for agricultural innovation



with nearly 200 Trade Stands offering a vast array of the latest farm products, services, technologies and machinery.

Don't miss the opportunity to witness a spectacular display of dairy excellence and explore the cutting edge of agri-innovation

at Northern Ireland's premier dairy event.

For more info see www.winterfair.org.uk

Securing the Farm: Brady Insurance at the Royal Ulster Winter Fair

Brady Insurance, a third-generation family-owned company with over 50 years of experience in Northern Ireland's insurance industry, is a leading specialist in protecting the agricultural sector.

Recognising the unique and specialised needs of farmers, the company offers a comprehensive range of Farm and Tractor Insurance policies designed to safeguard farm property, vehicles, and personnel.

Farming operations rely on a combination of valuable assets, from heavy machinery to livestock and essential infrastructure. Brady Insurance acts as an independent insurance intermediary, which allows their experienced brokers to compare a wide variety of policies across the market to find the most competitive and suitable cover for individual farm requirements.

The core of their offering is the combined farm insurance policies, which can cover multiple aspects under a single, streamlined package, saving farmers time and money. Key areas of cover typically include:

- Farm & Tractor Insurance: Essential cover for a variety of agricultural vehicles, including tractors, combine harvesters, and quad bikes. They also cater to Farmers' Car policies, allowing farm cars to be included as part of a fleet deal for potential savings.

- Property and Outbuildings

Insurance: Protection for farmhouses, barns, sheds, and other critical structures against unforeseen damage or loss.

- Liability Insurance: Vital protection, including Public Liability and Employers Liability, to cover legal costs and compensation arising from accidents or injuries on the farm premises or involving employees.

- Livestock Insurance: Protection for valuable herds and flocks against disease, accident, or other risks.

By providing professional, independent advice, Brady Insurance ensures farmers have reliable cover tailored to their specific operations and budget, offering peace of mind against the unexpected.

Brady Insurance is committed to engaging with the farming community face-to-face and is delighted to announce their presence at one of the biggest events in the agricultural calendar.

Make sure to visit the Brady Insurance team at the Royal Ulster Winter Fair on Thursday, December 11th at the Eikon Centre, Lisburn.

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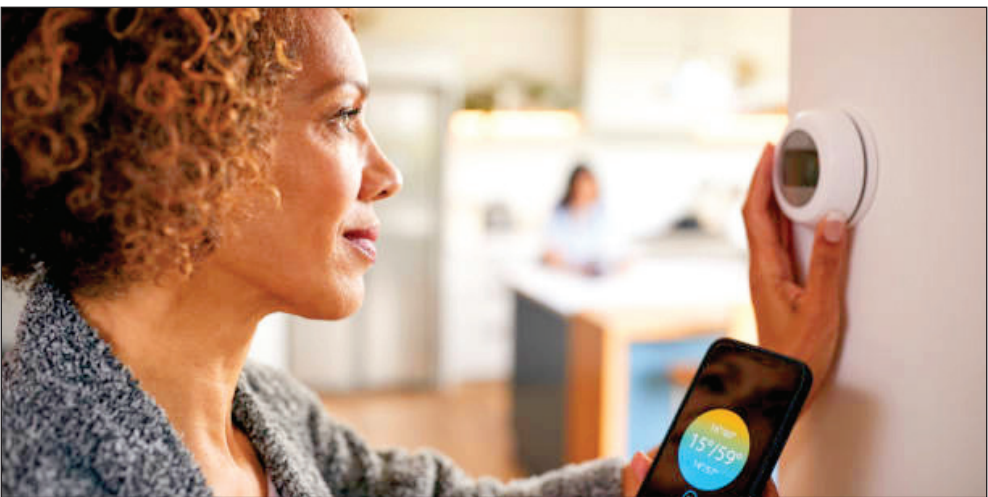
As the days get shorter and the furnace starts to kick on, your home’s heating system becomes your biggest energy drain.

One of the simplest and most effective ways to lower your winter utility bills while boosting comfort isn’t an expensive replacement—it’s upgrading the brain of your heating system: the thermostat. By replacing an old manual thermostat with a programmable or, even better, a smart model, you gain granular control over your home’s temperature, ensuring

you only heat the house when you need to. The Case for Programmable Savings. A programmable thermostat allows you to set customized heating schedules that automatically adjust the temperature throughout the day. This simple feature prevents your furnace from running unnecessarily while you’re away or asleep. The core principle is

setback: intentionally lowering the temperature during periods of low activity.

- When You’re Away: There’s no reason to keep your house a cozy when everyone is out at work or school. Setting the temperature back by to for eight hours a day can save you up to 10% on your heating bills annually.
- When You’re Asleep: Your body naturally lowers its core temperature overnight. A setback of to while you sleep not only saves energy but can also promote better rest.
- The Sweet Spot: Don’t turn the heat off completely. Setting the temperature too low forces your system to work overtime to reheat the house in the morning, negating the savings. A moderate setback is far more



efficient. Stepping Up to Smart Technology. While programmable models are great, smart thermostats offer an even greater leap in efficiency, convenience, and control. These Wi-Fi-enabled devices learn your routines, monitor your HVAC system, and can be adjusted from anywhere using your phone. Programming Tips for

the Winter Season. To get the most out of your smart or programmable thermostat, follow this simple scheduling strategy: 1. Morning Warm-Up: Set the heat to turn on about 30 minutes before you wake up. This ensures the house is warm when you step out of bed, without wasting heat all night. 2. Daytime Setback: Program the heat to drop as soon as the last person leaves the house for work or school. 3. Evening Warm-Up: Set the heat to rise about 30–60 minutes before you arrive home. This allows the house to warm up gradually and efficiently. 4. Nighttime Setback: Program the temperature to drop once everyone is under the covers, typically around 10:00 PM. By setting up a customized, automated heating schedule with a smart or programmable thermostat, you take the human error out of energy management. It’s an investment that pays for itself quickly through lower utility bills and provides a more consistently comfortable home all winter long.

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The Draft-Buster Guide: Sealing Air Leaks to Keep the Cold Out

When winter winds howl, the last thing you want is that chilling breeze sneaking into your living room.

Those tiny gaps and cracks around windows and doors are silent thieves, robbing your home of warm air and dramatically increasing your heating bills. Sealing these air leaks is one of the quickest, cheapest, and most effective ways to winter proof your home.

1. Pinpoint Your Problem Areas Before you can fix a draft, you need to find it. An easy way to detect air leaks is to perform a “draft test” on a cool, breezy day:

- The Hand Test: Simply hold a damp hand near the edges of all windows, around door frames, and near any wall penetrations (like cable lines or dryer vents). If you feel a

noticeable chill, you’ve found a leak.

- The Incense Test: Light a stick of incense or a thin candle and slowly move it around the frame of a window or door. If the smoke suddenly blows sideways or the flame flickers violently, cold air is entering.

2. The Solution for Fixed Gaps: Caulking Caulking is the go-to solution for sealing gaps that don’t move, such as where window frames meet the exterior siding or where trim boards meet the wall.

- Choose the Right Caulk: For exterior applications, use silicone or polyurethane caulk, as these are flexible, durable, and resistant

to extreme temperature changes and moisture. For interior cracks, acrylic latex is easier to clean up and paint over.

- Prep the Surface: For maximum adhesion, make sure the surface is clean, dry, and free of old, cracking caulk. You may need a utility knife to scrape away the old material.

- Apply a Smooth Bead: Cut the caulk tube nozzle at an angle, making a small opening. Apply steady pressure as you draw the gun along the gap, then smooth the bead with a moistened finger or a caulking tool for a professional seal.

3. The Solution for Moving Gaps: Weatherstripping Doors



and operable windows (the ones that open) require a solution that seals the gap when they’re closed but compresses to allow movement when they’re opened. That’s where weatherstripping comes in.

4. Temporary Fixes for Extra-Drafty Windows If you have very old or single-pane windows, caulking and weatherstripping might not be enough. For these situations, temporary

measures can provide a significant boost in insulation:

- Plastic Window Film Kits: These inexpensive kits use a clear plastic film applied to the interior window frame and shrunk tight with a hairdryer. They create a layer of still air between the window and the film, which acts as excellent insulation.
- Insulated Curtains: Heavy, thermal-backed curtains or cellular shades can be drawn at night to block the cold radiating from the glass. Remember to open them during the day to capture any solar heat! By taking a few hours to become your home’s draft-buster, you’ll ensure the heat generated by your furnace stays inside where it belongs, keeping your family comfortable and your energy bills manageable.

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Why Your Boiler Needs Its Annual Check-Up Now

Before you rely on your boiler for months of consistent warmth, a comprehensive annual service is not just recommended—it’s essential.

Getting ahead of the winter rush ensures safety, efficiency, and peace of mind.

When is the best time to book your annual service? Reasonable Notice: Most heating engineers recommend booking your service during the late summer or early autumn (August to October). This allows you to avoid the inevitable rush of emergency call-outs that begin as soon as temperatures drop (typically from November onwards).



cost for a one-off annual boiler service in the UK is typically: £80-£100 for a gas boiler and £90-£140 for an oil boiler. Crucially, never allow

an unqualified person to service your boiler. Always ask to see the engineer’s official ID card (Gas Safe or OFTEC) before work begins.

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The Winter Rush: During peak winter months, a plumber or heating engineer’s schedule fills up rapidly, often dominated by emergency repairs for broken-down systems. While you might need only a few days’ notice in summer, in winter, you could be looking at a wait of a week or more for a non-urgent service. For an

annual service, aim to give your chosen professional at least 2-4 weeks’ notice in the lead-up to winter.

Boiler servicing is a routine cost of home ownership, and the price can vary based on your location, the type of boiler, and the engineer. Based on current estimates, the average

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