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Sandra Wright, Head of Organisation and Workforce Design, NatWest Group; James O'Callaghan, HEMS Paramedic and David Sinton, Ulster Bank Branch Manager, Lisburn

## NEW PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ULSTER BANK AND AIR AMBULANCE NI READY FOR LIFT OFF

Ulster Bank has announced a new charity partnership with Air Ambulance Northern Ireland (AANI), committing to fundraising for only Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) in the region.

As a charity, AANI relies entirely on support from the public and local businesses to remain operational and requires around £2.5m in annual donations to continue to offer this life saving service.

Through fundraising,

volunteering and raising awareness. Ulster Bank and AANI will work together in a strategic partnership to highlight the crucial work of this service and ensure that the charity is supported to continue to provide the very best, pre-hospital

critical care.

On average, two individuals in Northern Ireland will find themselves in the need of care from AANI every day. Support helps the charity ensure its expert crew, comprised of a pilot, doctor and paramedic, can

attend medical incidents 365 days of the year.

Colleen Milligan, Business Development Manager at AANI, welcomed the news of the new charity partnership:

**Continued on  
page 4**

## Showcasing Success: Business Awards 2025

in association with Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and GMcG Chartered Accountants, the prestigious event celebrated the outstanding achievements of local businesses.

Guests were immersed in a dazzling New York, New York themed extravaganza, complete with glamorous red carpet entrances, exquisite cuisine, electrifying live entertainment, and dynamic moments, all masterfully presented by the charismatic local Radio Presenter, Cate Conway.

Awards were presented in 14 categories, highlighting excellence in areas such as customer service, new business innovation, business success, and tourism.

The black-tie ceremony was hosted by local Radio Presenter, Cate Conway and also featured entertainment performances by musical theatre stars from Peter Corry Productions - Northern Ireland's premium corporate entertainment production company, who, for over 15 years have been col-

laborating with businesses to deliver one of a kind shows and events that are truly unforgettable.

The cast, regularly seen on stages in London's West End and beyond, delivered a stunning performance of musical theatre favourites including I Have a Dream, Hamilton, Defying Gravity, Your Song, Stars, and One Day More.

They were joined for a spectacular finale by Peter Corry MBE, whose distinguished international career has seen him captivate audiences around the globe. His notable roles include Javert in Les Misérables, Sweeney in Sweeney Todd, and Fagin in Oliver!

For more details and photos from the awards ceremony please visit [www.lcccbusinessawards.com](http://www.lcccbusinessawards.com)

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# Community heroes celebrated at glittering presentation evening

Community heroes in the Lisburn & Castlereagh area have been recognised for their selflessness and commitment to others at a special celebration event last night held at La Mon Hotel.

The Mayor's Community Awards, which are held each year, acknowledge the outstanding contribution of volunteers and groups from across the local area.

The event brings together members of the community, civic leaders, and local heroes to honour their dedication, hard work, and positive impact within their communities.

The awards celebrated winners across a number of categories, including community service, health & wellbeing, youth leadership, and environmental improvement. Each winner was selected for their exceptional commitment to making a difference in their local community.

The winners announced on the evening were:

- Brian McDowell Volunteer of the Year Award Category - Marian Nicholas, Mencap
- Fiona Irvine Community Champion Award Category - Steve Davis, Royal National Institute for Deaf People



- Young Volunteer of the Year Award Category - Sam Donald, Ravine
- Community Group of the Year Category - Moira Friendship Group
- Environmental Champion Award Category - Lisburn Scouts
- Health & Wellbeing Award Category - Mid Down & Lisburn District Community First Responders Scheme

The memorable evening

was made possible with the support of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's partners, Education Authority, South-Eastern Health & Social Care Trust, Volunteer Now and Education Authority.

The evening was filled with inspiring stories, heartfelt speeches, and a sense of unity as attendees celebrated the positive impact of community efforts. Guests enjoyed

dinner and entertainment, making the event both memorable and uplifting.

The Mayor's Community Awards continue to serve as a reminder of the importance of community spirit and the power of collective efforts in creating a better future for all. As the event concluded, attendees left with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to their community.



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# GO SUCCEED WAS A 'BLAST' FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS

Excitement filled the air as local post-primary school students gathered at The House of Vic-Ryn in Lisburn to present their innovative business ideas as part of a Dragon's Den style pitching event.

This was the finale of the Blast Off programme supported by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council as part of Go Succeed.

It was delivered by Young Enterprise NI in post-primary schools across Lisburn and Castlereagh in recent months. The programme teaches students enterprise skills, behaviours and attitudes in fun interactive workshops.

Pupils from Dundonald High School, Friends' School Lisburn and Wallace High School took part in the pitching event. They demonstrated their creativity, business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit to a panel of esteemed judges.

As local business leaders and entrepreneurs the judges heard pitches on the business concepts of each school. Each team had the opportunity to showcase their ideas, receiving valuable feedback and insights on originality, feasibility, and potential impact.

Alderman Amanda



Grehan, Chair of Regeneration & Growth at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, said:

"The Blast Off Pitching event really showcased the talent and creativity we have in Lisburn and Castlereagh. Programmes and initiatives like this, really inspire young minds and foster the next generation of entrepreneurs. Students took the opportunity to pitch their ideas and developed important skills in public

speaking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

The thought of delivering 'a pitch' may have been daunting but the skills they demonstrated will serve them well on their educational and professional journeys. As a council we are keen to invest in our young people. Programmes like Blast Off are key to nurturing a culture of creativity and entrepreneurship that will positively impact our local economy for years to come."

Speaking from

Young Enterprise NI, Carol Fitzsimon MBE, Chief Executive said:

"The energy and innovation displayed by the students was truly inspiring, we are proud to have facilitated this event, which not only allowed young people to demonstrate their entrepreneurial skills but also encouraged them to think critically about the future of business in their community. The feedback from the judges highlighted the immense talent that exists within our local

schools."

The event was a resounding success, offering students the opportunity to network with local business leaders and gain invaluable experience in entrepreneurship. As the day concluded, it was clear that the future of business in the community is bright, with the next generation of entrepreneurs eager to make their mark. To learn more about Go Succeed visit [www.go-succeed.com](http://www.go-succeed.com). To learn about Young Enterprise NI visit [www.yeni.co.uk](http://www.yeni.co.uk)

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## Continued from page 1

"We are honoured to be chosen as Ulster Bank's charity partner for 2025 and grateful to have their support. As a charitable organisation, we rely entirely on public donations so this will go a long way towards strengthening and sustaining the work that we do.

"This partnership will

make a huge difference and help the HEMS team to continue to provide life-saving care in local communities when seconds really matter. We're excited to work alongside Ulster Bank to raise awareness and make a lasting impact together."

Terry Robb, Head of Retail at Ulster Bank NI explained colleagues were excited about the partnership and looking forward to surpassing last year's fundraising total.

"A huge part of our ethos at Ulster Bank is to champion the power of community, not just in our day-to-day operations, but with the impact we can have on society as a whole.

"The Air Ambulance

Northern Ireland is an incredible organisation, and our colleagues are excited to get behind the partnership and do what we can do help them continue their vital work.

"In 2024, Ulster Bank raised an incredible amount of money for local charities but colleagues right across the bank also volunteered their time and their skills and this is certainly something we want to continue with this year."

For more information about the work of AANI, including details on how you can support, visit [www.airambulancenir.org](http://www.airambulancenir.org)

To learn more about Ulster Bank's fundraising activities, keep an eye on their social media channels.

  
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# Eikon Exhibition Centre Celebrates 10 Years with Community-Driven Project

As the Eikon Exhibition Centre celebrates a significant milestone—marking 10 years at its Halftown Road location in Lisburn—the venue plays a notable role in supporting the local community.

In recent weeks, the Eikon Operations team was proud to be part of a project that holds deep importance for the Lisburn area, collaborating with the Lisburn Foodbank to enhance the services they provide to those in need.

This project greatly resonated with the charitable mission of the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, owners of the Eikon Exhibition Centre. The Royal Ulster Agricultural Society's mission is to showcase excellence in farming and food.

Lisburn Foodbank, founded in 2013 and supported by The Trussell Trust, has been a lifeline for individuals facing financial hardship. The centre provides emergency food and support to people in crisis, helping them get back on their feet through referrals from local agencies. In keeping with the spirit of service and community connection, the Eikon Exhibition Centre contributed to the project with the aim of creating a welcoming, warm environment where people can not only receive support



Lynsey Agnew, CEO Lisburn Foodbank and Eikon Exhibition Centre Operations Team

but also feel heard.

Phase 1 of the project, which has already been completed, saw the Eikon Operations team get to work on transforming the space into a safe haven for those seeking help. This phase included a paint refresh to brighten the environment, laying down a new floor to improve accessibility, and creating bespoke shelving units and a room divide to ensure the space was both functional and comforting.

The goal was clear: to provide a space where individuals could feel supported, relaxed, and confident in seeking the help they need. The kettle is always on, symbolising the warm and welcoming atmosphere that the Lisburn Foodbank Centre team, largely made up of volunteers, is committed to providing.

“This project embodies our desire to build strong connections within the local community, something we truly value,” said Theresa Morrissey, Group Executive Director. “It’s so important for us to give back, especially in times of crisis. We know that when we work together, we make a real difference in the lives of those around us.”

With phase 1 now complete and phase 2 on the horizon, the Eikon Exhibition Centre is eager to see the final result and the positive impact it will have on the local community. As the Eikon Exhibition Centre looks ahead to the next 10 years, commitment to local community engagement remains a cornerstone of the Venue’s mission.



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| 22 May 2026       | Highlights of Devon and Brittany                        | 6 Nights  |
| 28 May 2026       | Coastlines of Cornwall & Northern France                | 7 Nights  |
| 4 June 2026       | Iceland's Land of Ice & Fire                            | 10 Nights |
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# First 'Gamified' graduation takes place

Forty residents have graduated from the first 'Gamified Essential Learning Programme' provided by the Lisburn and Castlereagh Labour Market Partnership.



They all embraced the interactive non-classroom learning environment delivered by Studysed CIC on the council's behalf.

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

Alderman Amanda

Grehan, Regeneration and Growth Chair at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, speaking at the graduation said: "Each of our 'Gamified Graduates' has shown that numeracy and literacy can be learnt in a fun, supportive game-style environment. From taking part in games to earn points to levelling up and from completing challenges to winning badges, there was 'plenty to play' for when taking part in 'Gamified'.

"Our intention with this free programme was to help residents improve their employability. Participants have graduated and received a recognised qualification in numeracy or literacy, which is excellent.

"The lessons took place in a relaxed environment in venues across the council area with some friendly competition taking place. I wish all our graduates every success as they use their new qualification to open

the door to better job opportunities."

The council hopes to run this programme again in the next financial year. If you are over the age of 19 and unemployed or working less than 16 hours a week please monitor on our social channels to find out more.

Information on all the Labour Market Partnership employability and skills programmes can be found online at LMP Programmes - lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk

## HOP INTO EASTER FUN AT DOWN COUNTY MUSEUM, DOWNPATRICK!

Looking for a fun, family-friendly adventure this Easter? Join us at Down County Museum!

This Easter Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday, enjoy free tours (10:30am & 3pm) and outdoor games.

Don't forget to stop by our 'History to Go' table to pick up a book and take a little history home with you!

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- Arts & Crafts – Unleash your creativity with fun projects!
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When Can You Visit?

We're open Saturday, Monday and Tuesday from 10am-4:30pm, **AND ENTRY IS FREE!**

Check out what's happening and when this Easter on social media @NMDMuseums or visit

[www.visitmournemountains.co.uk/museums](http://www.visitmournemountains.co.uk/museums).

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**This is the fifth business venture for  
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The original Paddington Lodge, situated in Carryduff, opened in 1989, the second Paddington Lodge, situated in Saintfield followed in 2002, in 2019 Paddington @ Academy PS in Saintfield opened and the team took over Paddington’s Little Treasures in Carryduff last year. Currently Paddington Little Birdies comprises of 3 care rooms - a Baby Room registered for 8 children aged 0-2 years, a Toddler Room registered for 10 children aged 2-3 years and a Pre-School Room registered for 22 children aged 3-5 years. The new Walker Room, for children 18mths to 2 years, opens just after Easter! There are also plans to open further rooms in the near future. The building, which previously operated as Birdies Day Nursery, has been fully renovated and has 3 separate external play areas so that all age groups have access to outdoor play at the same time. The new nursery strives to ensure top quality childcare by providing a bright and welcoming home from home environment, offering a varied range of age appropriate resources which ensures that every aspect of the children’s development is catered for and providing a fully qualified care team. It is overseen by Jacqui Rowe who has 35 years childcare experience, it is managed by Dianne Wright who has over 20 years experience (and was previously the manager with Birdies) and Liz Wilkinson who also manages Paddington’s Little Treasures in Carryduff.



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Colin says "It's been a busy and memorable few years! Being an audiologist is very rewarding as you get to meet so many people and you can make such a big difference to people's hearing and quality of life." As well as continuing to help people with their hearing Colin has been able to give the shop

front a face-lift and create a brand new website!

Colin first qualified as a hearing aid audiologist in 2007 and has 19 years of experience working at House of Hearing in Edinburgh specialising in the fitting of bespoke hearing solutions and wax removal.

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"Lisburn Hearing

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## Hop Into Easter Fun at Down County Museum!

Looking for a fun, family-friendly adventure this Easter? Join us at Down County Museum!

Housed in the historic Downpatrick Old Gaol, our museum brings the rich heritage of County Down to life. Explore over 9,000 years of history, stroll through restored prison cells,

and discover fascinating stories through our engaging exhibitions and hands-on activities!

This Easter Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday, enjoy free tours (10:30am & 3pm), and outdoor



games. Don't forget to stop by our 'History to Go' table to pick up a book and take a little history home with you!

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Got questions? Email us at museums@mandd.org or call 0330 137 4049.

Hop into history this Easter – we can't wait to see you!

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## Priority health outcomes announced for Live Better areas

The Department of Health has set out the three priority themes for the Live Better approach to tackle health inequalities.

Activities within the first two Live Better locations, which have been identified by local stakeholders, will deliver across themes of Starting Well, Living Well, and Ageing Well. They will also promote awareness of health inequalities issues through community health fairs, health checks and improving health literacy.

The initial Live Better locations are the Court District Electoral Area (DEA) in Belfast and The Moor DEA in Derry/Londonderry.

The three priority themes have been identified through engagement with local stakeholders to identify health issues in their neighbourhoods. They will involve:

- Starting Well: children's oral health (The Moor); childhood vaccinations (Court);
- Living Well: prediabetes, smoking cessation and cancer screening (The

Moor); smoking in pregnancy (Court);

- Ageing Well: frailty and falls prevention (The Moor); connecting isolated older people with local support services (Court); and

In addition, health fairs and checks will be provided in both areas.

Health Minister Mike Nesbitt confirmed the agreed outcomes on a visit to a health fair hosted by Shankill Shared Women's Centre in the Court area.

The event included information stalls, advice and support, alternative therapies and health checks.

Some examples of programmes up and running or due to get underway include: a physio-lead intervention on safer mobility, including strength and balance exercises for older people with a text message service encouraging participants to be more active; a 12-week community-led pre-diabetes

intervention programme; and a number of health check opportunities across the two demonstration areas.

Aidan Dawson, Chief Executive of the PHA, said: "The local community organisations and primary care providers collaborating on Live Better are helping to deliver a community-centred approach to support people who are impacted most by health inequalities.

"The ongoing work by the PHA to help improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in communities has the potential to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes, which is complemented by the Live Better initiative.

"Over the coming weeks, I would encourage everyone to engage in Live Better activities in these areas to find out more about, and participate in, the project in their community."

# HERE COMES THE SUN

Why Planning Your Summer Holiday now could be a Game-Changer for your mental health!

The daffodils are in full bloom, a gentle warmth is returning to the air, and a sense of possibility hangs in the breeze. It's early spring, and while summer might seem a distant dream, it's the perfect time to start planning your summer holiday. Why? Because the benefits, both for your mental well-being and your wallet are significant.

The Mental Boost: Anticipation and Control  
Imagine this: the long winter months are behind you, and you have a sun-drenched getaway to look forward to. Just the act of planning a holiday can provide a significant mental boost. Studies have shown that anticipation is a powerful emotion, and the excitement of envisioning your trip can increase happiness and reduce stress levels.

Having a holiday to look forward to can also provide a sense of control. In our busy lives, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by responsibilities. Planning

a holiday allows you to take charge, make choices, and create something positive for yourself and your loved ones. It's a chance to escape the daily grind and focus on relaxation and enjoyment.

Financial Advantages: Early Bird Gets the Best Deals

Beyond the mental benefits, planning your summer holiday in early spring can also be a smart financial move. Booking flights and accommodation in advance often means securing better deals. Airlines and hotels tend to offer lower prices for early bookings, and you'll have a wider range of options to choose from.

Planning ahead also allows you to budget more effectively.

By spreading the cost of your holiday over several months, you can avoid a large financial outlay all at once. This can make your holiday more affordable and reduce any post-trip financial stress.

Tips for Early Holiday



Planning

- Set a budget: Determine how much you can afford to spend on your holiday. This will help you narrow down your options and avoid overspending.

- Choose your destination: Consider your interests and preferences. Do you want a relaxing beach holiday, an adventurous hiking trip, or a cultural city break?

- Book early: As mentioned earlier, booking

flights and accommodation in advance can save you money.

- Be flexible: If you're flexible with your travel dates, you may be able to find even better deals.

- Do your research: Read reviews and compare prices before making any bookings.

- Get organized: Create a detailed itinerary and make sure you have all the necessary documents, such as passports and visas.

Planning your summer holiday in early spring is a win-win situation. You'll not only reap the mental benefits of anticipation and control, but you'll also have a better chance of securing great deals and sticking to your budget. So, as the days get longer and the weather starts to warm up, take some time to dream about your perfect summer getaway. Your mind and your wallet will thank you for it.



**"Giving children the best possible start in life"**

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Your postcode can be checked for eligibility using the postcode checker at: [www.lisburnsurestart.org](http://www.lisburnsurestart.org)

**Support is offered via programmes and one to one support through four key areas:**

- 1. CHILD HEALTH WORK:** Focus on antenatal, postnatal and breastfeeding support via telephone calls, home visits, programmes,
- 2. FAMILY SUPPORT:** Provide support to parents and children aged 0 – 3 years via home visits, telephone calls and programmes.
- 3. EARLY YEARS:** Provide support for children through good quality play and interactive learning.
- 4. SPEECH AND LANGUAGE:** Provide support via tailor made programmes of activity, home visits and telephone support.

**For more information and a calendar of events see**  
**[www.lisburnsurestart.org](http://www.lisburnsurestart.org)**

**Lisburn Sure Start Administration: Tel: 028 92 66 6987**  
**or email: [lisburnreception@brysonsurestart.org](mailto:lisburnreception@brysonsurestart.org)**  
**website: [www.lisburnsurestart.org](http://www.lisburnsurestart.org)**



# Baby meerkats at Belfast Zoo named in honour of Marie Curie's Great Daffodil Appeal

Leading end of life charity, Marie Curie, has announced that two baby meerkats born at Belfast Zoo have been named 'Daffo' and 'Dil' in honour of their biggest annual fundraiser, the Great Daffodil Appeal.

The Great Daffodil Appeal encourages everyone to wear Marie Curie's iconic daffodil pins and donate to the end of life charity throughout the month of March, to help them bring expert end of life care to more people.

Marie Curie is also celebrating 60 years of delivering care in Northern Ireland, this year.

Marie Curie runs an 18-bed hospice in Belfast, as well as providing a hospice care at home service to every county in Northern Ireland. In 2023/2024, more than 4,660 people in NI were cared for by their hospice care at home service.

In addition, the charity also operates a free support line and webchat, bereavement services and companion services for people living with a

terminal illness as well as for their loved ones.

Angela Duffy, Healthcare Assistant at Marie Curie Northern Ireland, said: "People tend to know Marie Curie for our hospice, but lots of people aren't aware that we also provide care at home, which is where most people want to be at the end of their lives. It's a great privilege for me to provide specialist care to someone in what can often be their final months, weeks, or days of life.

Sadly, we know that not enough people in Northern Ireland are receiving this care, despite the majority of us needing it. We hope that the Great Daffodil Appeal, and this wonderful partnership with Belfast Zoo, will help to raise much needed awareness of this issue."



Ruairi Donaghy, Senior Zookeeper at Belfast Zoo, said: "Daffo and Dil's mum and dad, Sergi and Luna, arrived from Wild Ireland in October, and surprised us with the birth of two pups a few weeks later! We were delighted when Marie Curie contacted us and

proposed the partnership, as it was perfect timing, since we had to name the two new pups. It's such a lovely way to generate awareness of both the important work of Marie Curie along with highlighting the essential conservation work of Belfast Zoo. Meerkats

are a firm favourite of our zoo visitors, due to their playful and inquisitive nature. Kids love them!"

Collections for Marie Curie's Great Daffodil Appeal are taking place throughout March. To donate and support the appeal, visit [mariecurie.org.uk/daffodil](http://mariecurie.org.uk/daffodil).

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

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

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

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

Not just shopping, 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.

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

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

Mile'. The simple flat fare allows passengers to pick and mix dates and times of travel to suit and with no luggage charges it makes a perfect travel option for a shopping trip. There are also a great range of hotels just minutes from Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station.

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

"People love the fact that it's so hassle-free compared to flying, no airport transfers and with no extra charge for luggage it is a massive help with keeping the cost of a break down," said Mr Hannon.

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

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

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# MY SLIMMING WORLD JOURNEY

**Dolores is a member at Christine's Thursday morning class at Lisburn City Elim Church. She is at her target weight with a weight loss of 3st 2lbs!**

"I joined the Elim Slimming World many moons ago,

Worried and apprehensive...wasn't sure if I should go!

I hovered at the front door...afraid to step inside,

To say that I was frightened ... I was. I couldn't lie.

I slowly pushed the handle...into the room I took a step

A sea of friendly faces is the first thing that I met.

I sat with our consultant... she talked of sins and speed

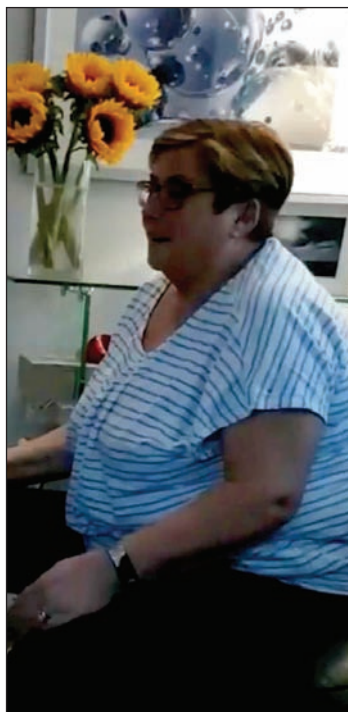
We all had our books open to take home and have a read

Christine was warm & Friendly... I felt so much at home

Gazing around at other members I knew I wasn't on my own.

I set myself a target and weighed in for the first time,

I really did mean business and was prepared to tow the line.



The talk of food optimising my mind I had to train,

But if I followed correctly we shouldn't feel hungry again!

I tried my best to follow...I had my ups and downs,

with the support of all the members, my feet were firmly on the ground.

You really have to join us to see all our success

Without my weekly SW I sure would be a

mess!

So if you decide to come along on your journey

Take it at your own pace

Always remember becoming who we want

## Spring. My favourite time of the year.

**A time of renewal, flowers blooming, leaves bursting forth on trees, bees buzzing...and bird song.**

While mistle thrushes, along with robins and blackbirds, are songbird heralds of spring, I really look forward to hearing our warblers, mainly chiffchaffs, willow warblers and blackcaps, most having flown perilously from southern Europe and Africa.

I remember a few years ago spotting a newly arrived willow warbler at Crawfordsburn Glen as it alighted on a bush, clearly exhausted, but undoubtedly determined to do what nature requires: to eat, regain strength, breed and raise young. But song is also integral to that process, critical to the breeding season when males sing loudly to attract mates and declare territory.

It's mostly in woodland, and in large mature gardens, that you're likely to hear these warblers; you'll seldom see them, small greenish/brown birds



hidden by new leaves. The blackcap is a little flashier than the others, with a black cap on the males, the females sporting a brown one.

One of the earliest warblers is the chiffchaff. Although its song is not particularly melodious, high-pitched notes from which it gets its name, chiffchaff, chiffchaff, chiffchaff echoing through the woods, for me that's welcome

proof that spring has really arrived.

I tend to associate other warblers with late spring into summer, their beautiful cascading songs heard repeatedly, blackcaps mainly in woodland, willow warblers preferring more open space, often close to freshwater where willows grow.

In recent decades we haven't made it easy for many birds and

other wild creatures, clearing or damaging habitat, and killing off the insects that warblers need to survive because of chemical pollution of our air, water and soil, but hope springs eternal, and I'm immensely grateful and joyful when I hear our warblers, a vivid reminder of life's cycle, and its importance.

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# Dancing Diggers to make Balmoral Show appearance!

Balmoral Show organisers, the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, are thrilled to announce that the renowned JCB Dancing Diggers are returning to the Show for the first time in over 30 years having taken the crowds by storm at the King's Hall in 1993.

Avid machinery enthusiasts and visitors of all ages will be in with the chance to watch the impressive stunt team manoeuvre up to eight mighty machines through pyramid formations, balancing acts and seamless spins on each day of the Show. With the team limiting their appearances to three or four shows each year, this is an exclusive performance not to be missed.

The JCB Dancing Digger Performance Team will feature at the Balmoral



Show, organised in partnership with Ulster Bank, when it returns to the Eikon Exhibition Centre showgrounds from Wednesday 14th May to Saturday 17th May 2025.

For the latest updates follow Balmoral Show on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

# Make Your Special Occasion a Winner at Dundalk Stadium

Looking for a unique and memorable way to celebrate a birthday, anniversary, or other special event?

Dundalk Stadium is throwing open its doors this spring and summer with a fantastic offer that combines great food and a vibrant atmosphere.

"We put the Special into Special Occasions," and that's not just a slogan – it's a promise. From April 18th to August 31st, 2025, you can "Spring into Summer" with a delicious dining experience every Friday and Saturday. For just €29, enjoy a main course that's sure to please, with options to add starters and desserts to create a truly personalized celebratory meal. And for families, bring the kids along! Children can dine from just €12.50.

Dundalk Stadium offers more than just a meal; it provides an experience. Imagine celebrating with friends and family in a venue known for its



excitement and energy. With its proximity to the border, it's an ideal location for those seeking a special outing without extensive travel. Whether you're a racing enthusiast or simply looking for something different, the stadium's unique setting adds an extra layer of "special" to your occasion. The thrill of the races

combined with a delightful dining experience creates a memorable atmosphere. This is a perfect opportunity to enjoy a night out, with the convenience of a short journey home for many in Northern Ireland.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to make your next celebration a winner. Book your special

occasion at Dundalk Stadium and create memories that will last a lifetime. With its easy access and unique setting, it's a perfect choice for those seeking a celebration that stands out.

Please note that the offer excludes July 12th and August 15th.

Visit [www.dundalkstadium.com](http://www.dundalkstadium.com) for more details and to book your experience.

# A Rare Opportunity: Book your dream new year's eve wedding now!

Exclusive New Year's Eve 2025 Wedding date just opened up - act fast!

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special circumstances, our coveted December 31st 2025 wedding date has become available!

New Year's Eve weddings are rare, and this is your chance to host the most glamorous and memorable

event of the year. Ring in 2026 surrounded by loved ones, revelations, and romance. As an added bonus, all new wedding bookings for 2025 will receive a complimentary wedding meal for their top table (T&Cs apply)! Availability won't last long—secure your dream date today! Enquire about our exclusive New Year's Eve wedding package and make your dream celebration a reality: [weddings@4seasonshotel.ie](mailto:weddings@4seasonshotel.ie) +353 (0)47 81 888 | [www.4seasonshotel.ie](http://www.4seasonshotel.ie)

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# HAVE A BLAST AT THE BREAST FOOT FORWARD WALK

Every year Action Cancer helps to save and support 20,000 people across Northern Ireland through the delivery of its services including the provision of 8,000 breast screening appointments at Action Cancer House and on board the Big Bus.

On Friday 6th June, a sea of pink will sweep through Belfast once again as Action Cancer hosts the Breast Foot Forward Walk, sponsored by SuperValu.

This year, the charity is calling on 800 enthusiastic walkers to help raise vital funds and awareness for Action Cancer's life-saving breast screening service.

The charity is encouraging men, women and children of all ages to participate in the fun-filled event – where dogs are welcome too! Walkers will gather at Belfast City Hall from 6pm for a lively warm-up with Fitness Freddy, plus plenty of free goodies to kick things off. Participants can choose between a 5K or 10K route, helping to raise vital funds and awareness

for breast cancer across Northern Ireland.

This year's Breast Foot Forward Walk aims to raise £60,000 to fund potentially life-saving breast screening appointments for 500 local women.

Action Cancer is the only charity in Northern Ireland offering free breast screening to women aged 40-49 and over 70 – those who fall outside the NHS screening programme. While these appointments are free for the women who need them, each screening costs the charity £120 to deliver. That's why taking part in the Breast Foot Forward Walk is so important – every step helps fund this vital, life-saving service.

Tanya Byers (aged 45) from Ballyclare has signed

up already to this year's event. Tanya knows only too well the importance of this fundraising event. Tanya said: "Action Cancer saved my life through early detection. The doctors told me it would have been years before I would have been able to feel a lump and, as I was not eligible to receive my first NHS mammogram until 50, by that point it may have been too late. I am so grateful to Action Cancer for providing this amazing service. I'm so excited to get involved in this year's walk. Last year was amazing and I know this year will be bigger and better. It really is a fun-filled event for an amazing cause and I hope to see you there."

All participants are encouraged to raise a



minimum of £120 in sponsorship, the amount it costs Action Cancer to provide digital breast screening for one woman.

Every year Action Cancer helps to save and support 20,000 people across Northern Ireland through the delivery of its services

including the provision of 8,000 breast screening appointments at Action Cancer House and on board the Big Bus, supported

by SuperValu and Centra. For every 1,000 women screened, an average of six breast cancers are detected – hopefully at an early and treatable stage.

This is only possible because of the continued, generous support Action Cancer receives from the general public in Northern Ireland and through its charity partnership with SuperValu. The charity needs your support now more than ever to continue with the work and help save lives.

Desi Derby, Director of Marketing at Musgrave NI, added: "As a long-term partner of Action Cancer throughout the last 25 years, SuperValu is delighted once again to sponsor this superb event. The Breast Foot Forward

Walk is a great opportunity for friends, families, work colleagues and sporting and community groups to come together, have a blast and raise vital funds for this local charity."

Early registration is now open and will run to the end of April with a reduced price of £10 per adult and £5 per child. Everyone taking part will receive a drawstring bag for life and complimentary pink t-shirt. So, grab your BFF or your 4-legged friend, get dressed up in pink, and step your way to the finish line with Action Cancer!

For further information or to register, visit [www.actioncancer.org](http://www.actioncancer.org), contact Action Cancer on 028 9080 3344 (option 2) or email [breastfootforward@actioncancer.org](mailto:breastfootforward@actioncancer.org)

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# YOUR GUIDE TO THE BEST CONSERVATORY PLANTS

As spring sunshine fills conservatories across the UK, transforming them into vibrant, light-filled spaces, now is the ideal time to breathe life into your conservatory with a touch of greenery.

But which plants should you choose to enhance this environment? British Garden Centres has compiled a guide featuring selected plants that will thrive in the bright, warm conditions of your conservatory, helping you create an indoor paradise.

A conservatory is a unique environment for plants, as the glass can cause significant temperature fluctuations throughout the year and enhance sunlight, leading to increased humidity levels. Plants need to be able to tolerate these conditions, so here are the top plants that will thrive.

Cacti are ideal conservatory plants due to their love of sunlight and drought tolerance, making them appealing and low maintenance. Popular varieties like Echinopsis, Cereus, and Opuntia thrive in warm, dry conditions and require well-draining soil, deep but infrequent watering, and ample light, especially during the growing season.

Grouping them in decorative pots adds a touch of desert charm to your conservatory.

Succulents are perfect for filling a conservatory, offering greenery, easy care and resilience. Crassula ovata, the jade or money plant, with its

fleshy oval leaves and good fortune, thrives in sunny conservatory spots. Echeveria, known for its striking rosette shapes and diverse colours, tolerates dry conditions and bright light, making it a perfect for a conservatory whilst Senecio rowleyanus, the string of pearls, and Sedum morganianum, the donkey's tail, create stunning cascading displays when hung or placed on shelves, adding texture and drama.

Aloe vera, with its thick, pointed leaves, is not only the perfect plant to place in your conservatory but offers medicinal benefits with its soothing gel. It can withstand dry conditions, and its preference for bright

light makes it a natural fit.

Palms

For larger conservatories, container-grown palms create stunning indoor features. The Kentia palm (Howea Forsteriana) thrives in this environment and brings height and a dramatic presence to the space. Likewise, the Ponytail palm (Beaucarnea recurvata), with its wild foliage, loves being in a dry, humid conservatory environment and, due to its slow growth, will decorate the room with little effort.

Large houseplants

Houseplants provide an urban jungle vibe to your home while also being remarkably resilient, with some varieties being ideal



for conservatories.

The Aspidistra, also known as the Cast Iron Plant, lives up to its name, tolerating low light, not needing much watering and withstanding the different temperatures, making it an ideal choice for areas of the conservatory that might not receive direct sunlight.

Dracaena, with its ribbon-like leaves, also loves being in an environment like the conservatory. It adapts well to the warm, humid environment and can thrive in partially shaded areas. The popular Monstera Deliciosa, with its swiss cheese-like perforated leaves, adds a touch of tropical drama. Its rapid growth and striking foliage create a focal point, wherever placed in the conservatory and will encourage a healthier indoor environment by purifying the air and creating a calming, natural atmosphere to relax in.

For more info see Facebook: British Garden Centres

Twitter: @BGCentres

Instagram: @BritishGardenCentres

Website: www.britishgardencentres.com

# Planning for later life at home

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

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

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

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

1. Start Early: If your parents are over 70, begin observing their daily routines and any challenges they face. Casually introducing the idea of care as a way to maintain great quality of life in our 70s, 80s, and beyond. Having the discussion before it becomes an immediate necessity can help

make the conversation less awkward later. By addressing potential concerns early, like vision issues or difficulties driving, you create a more comfortable environment for discussion when the need for care eventually arises. The support needed first may well be home help or dementia support, rather than for personal care.

2. Talk It Out: Foster open dialogue about your observations, focusing on your parents' wishes. It's important that Mum or Dad feels heard and has the opportunity to share their thoughts and preferences in a respectful conversation. Collaborate to find

solutions that work for them and use examples of where you are concerned about gaps in their current health and wellbeing. Use a tone you would appreciate if the roles were reversed.

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

4. Attend one of Home Instead's 'Preparing for Later Life at Home' workshops, which run



quarterly either as a webinar or in Saintfield.

If you'd like to sign up for our next workshop,

or if you'd appreciate some information or advice, please call 028 9560 9910 or email [info@downlisburn.homeinstead.co.uk](mailto:info@downlisburn.homeinstead.co.uk).

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# Bathroom trends and inspiration

Let's dive in to bathroom ideas for your bathroom reno! Which bathroom styles are on trend for 2025?

Contemporary elegance. Clean lines, minimalist designs, and sleek features continue to be popular with homeowners. Neutral colour palettes such as soft grey, white, and muted tones contribute to a timeless, sophisticated, and elegant ambience.

Vintage revival. Combining traditional elements such as clawfoot baths, pedestal sinks, and vintage-inspired taps adds character and charm to your bathroom style. Mixing these facets with more contemporary features creates an eclectic and visually interesting space.



Nature-inspired oasis. Homeowners are increasingly seeking to bring the outdoors into their bathrooms. Nature-inspired themes, including natural stone, wood accents, and greenery create a calming oasis, while large windows and skylights allow for ample natural light.

Industrial chic. The trend for industrial-inspired bathrooms continues with exposed brick walls, concrete finishes, and metallic fixtures adding an urban feel. Pair with softer textures such as wooden shelving and accessories

and plush towels for balance.

Scandinavian simplicity. Scandinavian simplicity rests on functional, minimalist design. Light colours, natural materials, and streamlined furniture is the key to creating a calm, tranquil, and clutter-free bathroom.

Spa-like retreat. Transforming your bathroom into a spa-like retreat is a significant trend. Think rainfall showerheads, freestanding baths, and a calming colour

scheme for the ultimate in luxury and relaxation. Soft, plush textiles, ambient lighting, and air-purifying greenery will enhance this look.

Sustainable design. Sustainability is a key trend for 2025 and beyond, using recycled materials and water-saving technologies without compromising on aesthetics. Homeowners strive to include eco-friendly materials, low-flow fixtures, and energy-efficient lighting to reduce

their environmental impact.

Artistic expression. Many homeowners are pushing forward the trend to inject a powerful punch of personality into their bathroom designs. Whether within bold colour choices on the walls, feature walls, artistic murals, or custom mosaic tiles, homeowners enjoy the opportunity to add unique touches to their bathrooms. For more info see: <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/ideas/inspirational-bathrooms/>

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

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

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



It is important that you factor in the other costs associated with buying a property. These can add up to the thousands of pounds and can derail any potential budget when it comes to getting your first home. Additional costs include survey costs, solicitor's fees, buildings insurance and valuation fees to name but a few. It is worth asking your bank about these prices before making an offer and you

can therefore factor them into your budget. First-time-buyers do have an advantage here as they will pay no Stamp Duty on the first £300,000 for properties valued up to £500,000. When applying for your mortgage, the most important factor for your lender is to know that you will be able to meet your repayments. You will need to provide documentation

of all of your outgoing costs, including, debts, household bills, or other costs such as car repayments, childcare or travel costs. The amount that a lender will give you for a mortgage is directly related to both your income and outgoing expenses – so it is important to consider this when looking into homes that you can afford.

There are a number of governmental schemes available to help first-time-buyers get on the property market such as affordable housing schemes, help to buy schemes and shared ownership schemes. These are designed to assist those who are struggling to save their full deposit and might be exactly what is required to get you on the property ladder.

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# 10 years of Eikon Centre and 15 years of Dubshed

As the Eikon Exhibition Centre celebrates its 10th anniversary, Gethin Evans, co-founder of the much-loved Dubshed event, looks back on the incredible journey of a show that started in a modest shed at the King's Hall complex and grew to become one of the premier automotive showcases in Ireland.

The Early Days at the King's Hall

"It all began with a simple idea and a shed," Gethin recalls with a smile. "We had no grand plans back then—just a shared passion for cars and a desire to bring like-minded enthusiasts together. The King's Hall complex gave us a space to turn that idea into reality."

The early years were defined by a sense of community and creativity. "There was a magic about those days," Gethin says. "The King's Hall had a character of its own, and we made the most of every inch of the space we had. People came because they shared our enthusiasm, and that's what made it special."

A New Era at the Eikon Exhibition Centre

When the Royal Ulster Agriculture Society (proprietors of the Eikon Exhibition Centre) relocated to Balmoral Park in Lisburn, Dubshed moved with it—a transition that opened doors Gethin and his team could only have dreamed of in those early days.

"The move to Balmoral Park was transformative," he reflects. "It gave us the room to grow and to think bigger. Suddenly, we had the Eikon Hall, the Logan

Hall, the main arena, and a vast outdoor space at our disposal. It wasn't just a new venue—it was a new chapter."

With the increased space and state-of-the-art facilities, Dubshed was able to expand far beyond its original scope. "We could welcome more exhibitors, showcase more cars, and create experiences that simply weren't possible before. The operations team at the Eikon supported us every step of the way, helping us make the most of what the venue had to offer."

Celebrating 10 Years of the Eikon Exhibition Centre

Gethin pauses to reflect on the profound impact of this remarkable partnership, which began 15 years ago at the Kings Hall. "The team has been far more than just a venue provider—they've been collaborators, advisors, and true champions of our work. From our early days at the Kings Hall to our journey at the Eikon, their support has been instrumental in our growth. They've given us the space to evolve while guiding us along the way. Through this partnership, we've built strong relationships and a level of trust that no other



L – R Gethin Evans, Colin Tweed and Nigel Lamont

venue could match."

Over the past decade, Dubshed has grown into a landmark event for car enthusiasts across Ireland and beyond, a transformation Gethin in part attributes to the unique opportunities the venue facilities offer. "The facilities here are second to none, and the flexibility of the space lets us get creative in ways we never thought possible."

Looking Ahead

As Dubshed continues to thrive, Gethin and the

Dubshed team are already thinking about the future. "Every year, we aim to make the event better than the last, and with the Eikon Centre's support, we've been able to do that. I'm excited to see what the next 10 years will bring—not just for Dubshed, but for the venue and its other events too."

Offering his congratulations to the Eikon Exhibition Centre team, Gethin adds, "Thank you for believing in our vision and helping us bring it to life.

You've been instrumental in making Dubshed what it is today, and I'm grateful for the partnership we've built over the years."

For Gethin Evans and the Dubshed team, the journey from a shed at the King's Hall to the expansive grounds of Balmoral Park has been nothing short of remarkable. As they celebrate the Eikon Centre's 10th anniversary, there's a shared sense of pride in what's been achieved—and a sense of excitement for what lies ahead.



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## Planning an Outdoor Kitchen



### PLANNING THE SPACE

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

### FUNCTION AND FORM

Make provision for countertop space for cooking as well as serving & entertaining. For example an island with bar area and stools could be considered or perhaps a lounging area as well.

### GET COOKING

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

options into your outdoor kitchen.

### KEEP IT COOL

It may not be too long a trek to the kitchen but an outdoor fridge can be beneficial if you are preparing salads and or cool desserts out of doors. Also handy for keeping drinks cool and within easy reach.

### WHICH MATERIAL

Stainless steel is a hot favourite for industrial look cabinetry however there are lots of powder-coated metals that also work. Stone and tile are also options. Countertop materials are another thing to think about. They need to be both functional and durable.

### HEAT IT UP

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

### POWER UP

Be sure you have enough power on the deck or patio, which could mean enlarging

a gas line or adding electrical capacity to run appliances and lighting.

### LIGHT IT UP

You will need functional lighting for cooking safely

at night –so consider this at work surface level as well as ambient lighting.

### ENTERTAINING OUT OF DOORS

You can install built-in

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

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# Local businesses network at Meet the Buyer event

A wide range of local businesses attended a 'Go Succeed Meet the Buyer' event at Larchfield Estate recently, in partnership with Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

Key decision makers from leading retail and hospitality businesses took the opportunity to view and sample supplier products that included baked goods, beverages, deli delights and dairy products. These buyers used the event as an opportunity to source local suppliers and explore potential new business partnerships.

The retail sector was represented by buyers from Tesco, Musgrave Group, Iceland and Savage & Whitten. While the hospitality sector buyers were from Arthurs of Hillsborough, Larchfield Estate and La Mon.

Speaking at the event, Alderman Allan Ewart MBE, Regeneration and Growth Committee Vice-Chair said: "We wanted to deliver this event as part of our Go Succeed programme to give buyers and suppliers the unique chance to connect and build business relationships. Fifteen Lisburn and Castlereagh suppliers confidentially displayed their premium products



to the buyers alongside three companies from neighbouring council areas.

"The suppliers present clearly demonstrated their desire to succeed and grow their supply chain with leading businesses within Northern Ireland. We wish every supplier who joined us at Larchfield Estate every success as they pursue the opportunities they secured today. Our Business Solutions team is committed to help local entrepreneurs and SMEs grow through the support of Go Succeed and other support

programmes we have on offer."

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council was pleased to deliver this cost effective and productive means of getting local businesses in front of senior buyers.

Go Succeed ([www.go-succeed.com](http://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, master classes, peer networks, access to grant funding

and a business plan, at every stage of their growth journey.

The suppliers at the event were:

Tori's Cakes and Bakes  
Cachi Foods  
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Cocktail Keg Company  
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# LISBURN PROBUS CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Lisburn Probus Club marked a significant milestone as members gathered at Lagan Valley Island for a special reception celebrating the club's 50th anniversary and the launch of its commemorative book, 50 Years of Meetings, Milestones and Memories.

Hosted by the Mayor of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Cllr Kirtus Dickson, the event recognised the club's long-standing contribution to the local community and the friendships fostered among its members. The Deputy Lord Lieutenant for County Antrim Iain Getty was also in attendance.

Speaking at the event, Mayor Dickson praised Lisburn Probus for its legacy of engagement and camaraderie: "For 50 years, Lisburn Probus Club has provided a fantastic space for retired professionals and businessmen to come together, share experiences, and continue making a positive impact in our community. The launch of this anniversary book is a wonderful way to celebrate and preserve the history of the club. On behalf of the Council, I congratulate all



members—past and present—and wish the club continued success for many years to come."

Founded in 1975, Lisburn Probus Club meets weekly at Lisburn Golf Club, offering its members a chance to stay connected, learn from guest speakers and support local initiatives. The newly launched anniversary book captures key moments in the club's

history, highlighting its achievements and the enduring friendships formed over the decades.

Reflecting on the milestone, Lisburn Probus Club President Denis Quinn expressed his pride in the club's legacy:

"Lisburn Probus has been a cornerstone for so many of us, providing not just companionship but also a shared purpose beyond retirement. This

anniversary is a time to reflect on our past, celebrate our present, and look forward to the future. We are delighted to share our journey through this book and hope it inspires others to be part of our story."

The celebration concluded with a toast to the club's ongoing success, as members and guests reminisced on the past 50 years and looked forward to the future of Lisburn Probus.

## County Down author Kate launches her first pony book for children!

County Down horsewoman turned author Kate Russell has launched her first equestrian themed children's book.

Kate, a well known figure in the NI world of equestrianism and equine therapy has published 'Peanut gets his sparkle back'.

Kate says: "I have always wanted to write a children's book from an early age. I have stories whirling in my head and usually inspired by the ponies dogs and cat. My friend had two young boys who would listen to my stories – they encouraged me to write a book and what's more – asked if they could be in it!

Working with children and the ponies through equine facilitated learning I could see the very real benefits of the interaction with the different pony personalities."

The book is based on the main characters Peanut an 8hh Falabella cross pony and Tobi a 27 yr old rescue pony. In real life this odd couple have struck a very strong friendship and became pretty much inseparable! Peanut is young, curious and cute and everyone who meets him falls in love with him. Tobi is older, a little bit stiff but calm with the kindest nature. They are both very much loved for being themselves! In real life Tobi & Peanut are also fully qualified therapy ponies who like nothing better than helping others!

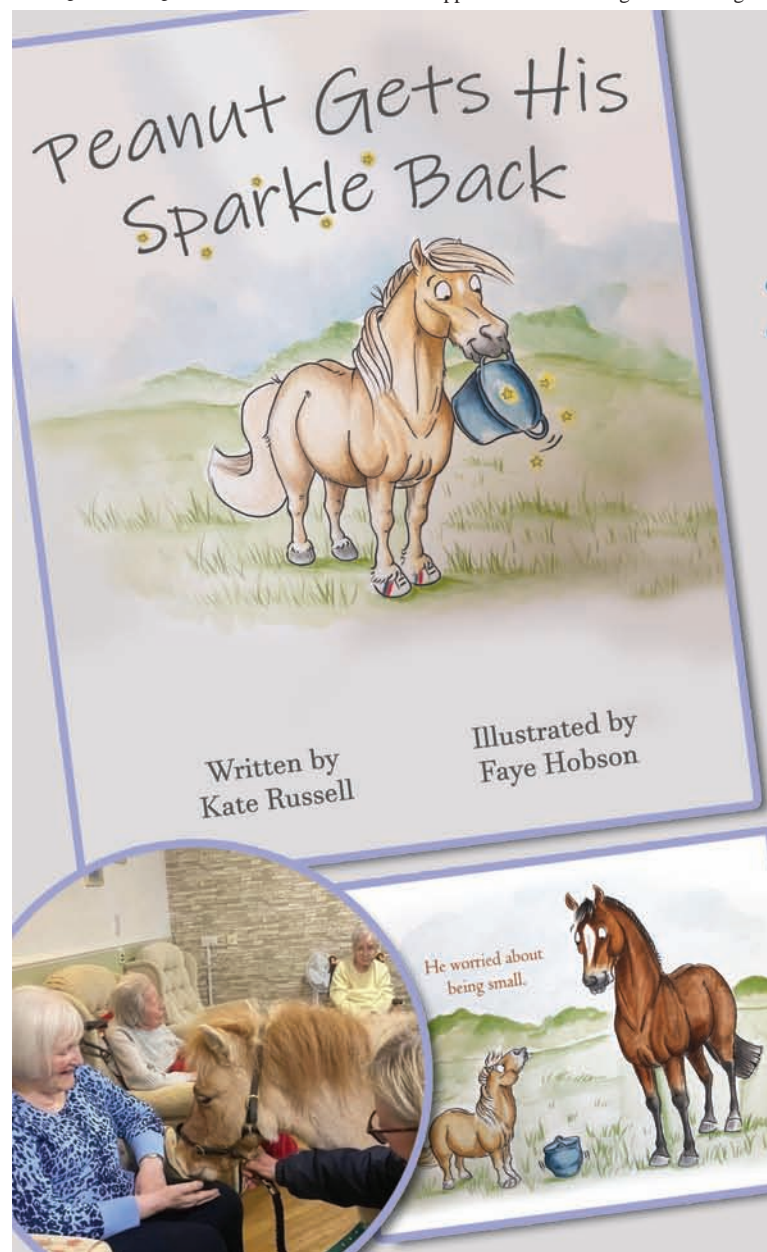
The story aims to help children with anxiety and worries and show that that it is ok to have worries but not to let them build up. 'Peanut, gets his sparkle back' is a heart-warming children's book about overcoming fear and finding the courage within oneself.

With charming colour illustrations by the talented Faye Hobson, and a relatable story, young readers will be inspired to face their own worries and become brave little ponies themselves!

'Peanut gets his Sparkle Back' is ideal for children 3-9 with coloured text suitable for children with dyslexia, teaches valuable lessons about perseverance, self-confidence and the power of friendship.

It's a must read for parents, teachers and children alike and is sure to become a beloved addition to any child's bookshelf! Join Peanut and his friends on their journey to bravery and show your little ones that they too can conquer their worries and be the courageous heroes they've always dreamed of being.

**You can find out more about Tobi, Peanut and friends and also purchase a copy of the book direct online at**  
<http://www.tobiandpeanut-therapyponies.com/product-page/peanut-finds-his-sparkle-children-s-story>  
**Book priced £10, (postage fees apply).**





# RENAULT 5 TURBO 3E: THE LEGEND RETURNS

But Renault 5 Turbo 3E is also more than that. More than just a restomod of an iconic model, modernised, innovative, electric, and even more exuberant and powerful than its predecessors, it asserts its identity as the first in a new class of vehicle: mini-supercars.

Just like bigger vehicles, it boasts impressive technical specifications (540 hp, 0-100 km/h in under 3.5 seconds, carbon superstructure, etc.), while offering a high level of customisation to meet all requirements. What's more, it has a minimum length/width ratio of 2.01, putting it in the same league as a supercar, but in a compact hot hatch format.

Built on a custom platform tailored to its ambitions and performance, Renault 5 Turbo 3E is the mini-supercar taking up a position alongside Renault 5 E-Tech electric (the city car) and Alpine A290 (the sporty city car) Renault Group thus applying the formula already seen in the 1980s with the Renault 5, Renault 5 Alpine and Renault 5 Turbo: the bold image and strong credentials of

Renault combined with the competitive spirit and expertise of Alpine.

At the same time, other complementary forces are emerging, such as Ampere for software and electronic architecture, and Mobilize for bidirectional charging (V2L and V2G), along with a range of services to make electric driving easier: Mobilize Smart Charge, Mobilize Charge Pass and the Plug & Charge function.

Some partners also have provided their expertise and know-how for key components such as the in-wheel motors and carbon fibre superstructure. As such, Renault 5 Turbo 3E takes full advantage of Renault Group's transformation, driven by the Renault plan.

On the outside, Renault 5 Turbo 3E is designed to look like a supercar: exuberant – as witnessed by the prominent bumper



and rear wing extensions – while never turning aside from the quest for sportiness, agility and optimised aerodynamics. On an electric vehicle, aerodynamics plays a key role in vehicle efficiency, alongside weight.

The design of Renault 5 Turbo 3E is naturally inspired by the original Renault 5 Turbo and Turbo 2. A few features and characteristics are recognisable from the recent Renault 5 E-Tech electric, such as

the rear lights and wing mirrors, but the main idea behind the project was to revive the iconic heritage of these two 1980s models, using cutting-edge technologies to showcase its modern credentials and optimise performance. This

is the concept of retro-futuristic design already applied to the Renault 5 and Renault 4, rebooted as the Renault 5 E-Tech electric and Renault 4 E-Tech electric.

To revive the genetic base of the original Renault

5 Turbo and Turbo 2, Renault 5 Turbo 3E is built on a new platform with specifically developed rear-wheel drive architecture. Compared with Renault 5 E-Tech electric (3.92m long and 2.54m of wheelbase), the windscreen has been moved back and the wheelbase extended (2.57m) to achieve truly spectacular dimensions (4.08m long, 2.03m wide, 1.38m tall) that showcase the sophisticated lines. The windscreen pillar, for example, appears to melt towards the front wheels. With these dimensions, Renault 5 Turbo 3E has the length of a city car for the width of a supercar. With its combined performance, it has created the category of 'mini-supercars'.

At the front, Renault

5 Turbo 3E maintains the same layout as its predecessors: square headlights – now with LED technology – fusing with the edge of the bonnet, a slim strip with three central square lights, originally long-range lights now replaced by LED daytime running lights.

Strictly a 2-door, 2-seater vehicle, Renault 5 Turbo 3E conceals 20-inch wheels, each fitted with an electric motor, under its wing extensions. All the power electronics are located in between, while the battery is housed under the floor. This architecture frees up plenty of boot space for luggage - a unique proposition for such a sporty vehicle - while lowering the centre of gravity.

## Are you financially prepared? Nearly 7 in 10 lack a car repair fund, despite spending £2,800 a year on indulgences

A new study has revealed a concerning trend among motorists in Northern Ireland – spending heavily on life's little luxuries while putting off vital car repairs and lacking emergency funds for motoring costs.

In the survey of 2,000 UK adults commissioned by The Motor Ombudsman, the findings showed the average driver in the region spends around £234 per month – or £2,809 annually – on so-called 'guilty pleasures'. This includes:

- Takeaways and dining out – £88.93
- Streaming subscriptions – £47.38
- Coffee, snacks and drinks on the go – £29.98
- Taxis and short journeys – £23.42
- Beauty and grooming treatments – £140.13
- Fashion and clothing – £84.38

Despite this level of monthly spending, just 22% of respondents in Northern Ireland have a dedicated savings fund for car expenses – leaving 78% exposed to unexpected bills.

Worryingly, 40% of drivers admit to delaying essential car maintenance in order to save money, increasing the risk of higher repair costs and vehicle safety issues further down the line.

financial awareness, only 20% of those surveyed in Northern Ireland said they feel completely in control of their finances. Over half (51%) said they occasionally overspend, while 9% confessed to feeling completely out of control and struggle to manage their spending and finances.

Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director of The Motor Ombudsman, commented:

“This research shows a disconnect between everyday spending habits and financial preparation for essential costs. Motorists in Northern Ireland are spending thousands each year on small luxuries, yet very few are putting money aside for repairs.

“With 40% delaying essential maintenance, the implications go beyond personal finances – they could also impact road safety. We're encouraging drivers to review their budgets, set up repair funds where possible,



and access our free motoring resources to stay road-ready.”

The Motor Ombudsman provides impartial resources covering all aspects of car ownership, from servicing and repairs, to buying new and used vehicles.

For more information, garage in Northern Ireland, visit [www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org](http://www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org) and to find a Motor Ombudsman-accredited

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# KITCHEN RENOVATION PLANNING GUIDE:

The kitchen is the heart of the home. Breathing new life into this space can create a whole new feel within your property, as well as add up to 10% to your home's value.

Every kitchen renovation starts with an idea. Perhaps you've always had your 'dream kitchen' in your head and need some help making that vision a reality. Maybe you're bursting with inspiration from home interior magazines and kitchen showrooms but aren't sure how to narrow down your choices, or perhaps your kitchen renovation project is currently a completely blank canvas!

Colour Planning.  
Colour has a huge impact on how we engage with a space. And it's the

combination of colours – otherwise known as a colour palette – that will achieve a desired look or feel. A colour wheel is a helpful tool when deciding a colour palette for your new kitchen. Here are some of the most common options. Tonal. Choose one colour as your 'base colour' and add various tones of that colour throughout your room. Harmonious. Choose a colour on the colour wheel and work its neighbouring colours into your scheme. The colours complement each other without being too similar. Complementary. Choose a colour on the

colour wheel and find its complementary colour on the opposite side of the wheel to make a statement with your colour scheme.

Lighting design.  
Lighting has many functions. Of course, its main purpose is to light a space, but well-considered lighting can add to the style of your kitchen and have a major impact on the mood and atmosphere too. Kitchen lighting should aim to marry design and function. When planning the lighting for your kitchen renovation, aim to tick off at least one from each of these categories: General lighting. General (or ambient) lighting will spread light around the whole kitchen, via a ceiling light or spotlights, for example. Task lighting. You need task lighting in your kitchen to help perform certain tasks. For example, lights above the worktops where you'll prep food. Spot lighting Spot (or accent) lighting works to draw your attention to a particular



area, for example, artwork on a wall, a bookcase in a recess, or glassware in a cabinet. Atmospheric lighting Atmospheric (or decorative) lighting will help to achieve the right mood for your kitchen space, by using dimmable lamps above a dining area, for example.

Kitchen cabinet inspiration.

The kitchen cabinets you choose will have a huge influence on the overall look of your kitchen. But it's not just about style. The quality of the

material, the finish you opt for, and special features (wine racks, spice drawers etc) will all have an impact on your budget. To help you select the best kitchen cabinets for your kitchen renovation, take a look at the six main styles available. Shaker-style. An affordable, classic, and traditional style of kitchen cabinet that has always been popular. Glass-fronted. Glass-fronted cabinets help to display the items within, and bounce light around the room too. It's common to mix and match glass-fronted cabinets with other styles. Tongue and groove.

The texture and warmth of tongue and groove cabinets give the feel of a relaxed, country cottage style kitchen. It's also a popular design element in a Scandi-style kitchen. Flat-fronted. For a simple and minimalist look in a contemporary kitchen,

choose flat-fronted cabinets with no panels or frames. Plywood cabinets will help to achieve an organic, warm kitchen. They're also a very cost-effective choice. Natural (unfinished) wood. For a truly rustic feel, opt for natural wood cabinets in your kitchen. These are popular with homeowners striving for a relaxed, informal style kitchen.

Your kitchen worktop needs to be tough and hard-wearing, unlikely to chip, scratch, or be damaged by heat. And crucially, it needs to be affordable. While quartz and granite worktops typically sit at the higher end of the spectrum, materials such as laminate make a super versatile and cost-effective option.

For more detailed info on this topic see: <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/planning-guides/kitchen-renovation-project/>

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# Driveway ideas for maximum kerb appeal

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

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

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

Tarmac driveways. Tarmac or asphalt driveways are durable and long-lasting. Tarmac is a mix of aggregates and tar, whereas asphalt is a mix of aggregates and bitumen. The latter offers a better finish and smoother surface compared to tarmac. The finish of tarmac can be



enhanced through 'chip sealing'. This is when tar is poured onto a gravel base, stones are added, and it's pressed with roller equipment. Tarmac and asphalt are cost-effective to install and pair well with a number of aesthetics. They look great alongside patterned bricks. Create a stunning look by contrasting tarmac or asphalt with lighter stone. Soften the dark tones by including a lush lawn or greenery in your tarmac driveway design.

Concrete driveways. Poured concrete is one of the most common driveway materials on the market. It's used to create low-maintenance driveways that require minimal upkeep. Coloured concrete is great if you want to add dimension and interest, such as a cream border or chequered patterns. It's also malleable when installed correctly. For example, it can make patterns when poured into moulds and can be sectioned and paired with other materials, such as aggregate or slate. Stamped concrete

can give the appearance of a different material such as stone or brick for a fraction of the cost.

Block paving driveways. Block paving creates a classic and elegant first impression. It's usually made from concrete, which is engineered in a factory for consistency and accuracy. For this reason, block paving is a durable and versatile option for your driveway. A popular design trend with block paving is using light grey blocks to border and 'edge' the drive and any central features, such as a roundabout, lawn, water feature, or pathway.

A dark grey paving block is then used to fill in the remaining area, offering a great aesthetic that stands the test of time. Whether you use one type of block, two-tones, mixed, or a combination of materials, block paving is a decorative option that offers a lovely finish. Monoblock paving driveways incorporate two-tones of block paving to create patterns and interest. The two tones can be two different materials or two colours of the same material.

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

# PLANNING A BUILDING PROJECT: WHO SHOULD BE ON-SITE WHEN

Successfully sequencing tradespeople is fundamental to a smooth building project. Starting with the groundwork, the initial phase involves clearing the site, excavating foundations, and laying essential drainage.

Groundworkers and foundation specialists are paramount at this stage, followed by drainage experts to ensure proper sewer connections. This foundational work sets the stage for the structural integrity of the entire build.

Once the groundwork is complete, the focus shifts to creating the building's shell. Bricklayers and structural engineers, if needed, erect the walls and steel supports. Roofers then make the structure watertight, and window and door installers seal the building, protecting it from the elements. This phase is crucial for establishing the basic form and weatherproofing of the building.

The next stage, "first fix," involves installing the internal infrastructure. Electricians and plumbers lay the groundwork for essential services within the walls and floors. HVAC engineers install ducting, while carpenters frame internal walls and prepare for staircases. Insulation installers then ensure the building is energy-efficient. A rough plastering may also occur at this point, preparing the walls for the



final finishes.

"Second fix" is where the finishing touches are applied. Electricians and plumbers complete their installations, fitting fixtures and connecting appliances. Carpenters install doors, skirting boards, and fitted kitchens. Tilers, plasterers, and painters then work their magic, transforming the interior spaces. Finally, flooring installers lay the chosen flooring materials, completing the interior finish.

The final phase involves external works and landscaping. Pavers and landscapers create outdoor

spaces, while fencers install any necessary boundaries. General labourers handle the final cleanup, ensuring the site is tidy and ready for occupancy. Throughout the entire process, flexibility and effective

communication are vital. Coordinating inspections at required stages and understanding the project's critical path are also essential for avoiding delays and ensuring a successful outcome.

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