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Pictured (left to right) are: Caroline Walker, Head of Hillsborough Castle and Gardens; John Murphy, Head of Finance, Kylemore Abbey; Nicola Andrews, Palaces Group Director, Historic Royal Palaces; Conor Coyne, CEO, Kylemore Abbey; Liz McConnell, Executive Director of The Kylemore Trust; and Mark Larmour CBE, Strategic Partnerships Advisor, Hillsborough Castle and Gardens; on the terrace of Kylemore Abbey.

## HILLSBOROUGH CASTLE AND GARDENS AND KYLEMORE ABBEY ANNOUNCE LANDMARK HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP

Hillsborough Castle and Gardens and Kylemore Abbey have announced a new all island partnership designed to deepen co-operation and promote knowledge sharing between two of Ireland's most significant historic estates.

The partnership will focus on a range of key areas including heritage and conservation; biodiversity and sustainability; and tourist destination management. Through this collaboration, both

organisations aim to enhance the preservation of their cultural landscapes, strengthen environmental stewardship, and broaden public engagement with the island's rich heritage. Caroline Walker, Head

of Hillsborough Castle and Gardens said: "By working and learning together, we can amplify our collective social impact - protecting biodiversity, enriching cultural understanding, and ensuring that our historic landscapes

continue to thrive. This collaboration strengthens not only our organisations, but the wider all island heritage community."

**Continued on page 4**

## Planning approval granted for £75m of investment

At a recent meeting of LCCC's Planning Committee recently planning approvals were granted which will see around £75m invested across the council area, creating community, retail and sporting facilities as well as new housing.

Planning was approved for a neighbourhood centre consisting of two retail units, a community unit, and a petrol filling station, including four EV charging ports, services bay, ATM, cycle parking and car parking. It will be constructed on a site bordering Ballymaconagh Road, Knockbracken Golf Centre and Laurelgrove Court.

Carryduff Primary School got the green light for a new synthetic sports pitch, including fencing and floodlighting.

Housing developments were approved in Lisburn and Castlereagh, including a residential development of 26 properties on a site between Brooke Hall and Brooke Hall Heights in Castlereagh.

In Lisburn, 75 new dwellings are to be constructed on the site of the former Charles Hurst Vauxhall dealership on the Belfast Road, and 119 new homes will be built on a site on the Ballinderry Road, situated between the Home Bargains store and Enterprise Crescent, previously used as agricultural land.

Subject to section 76 agreements, these developments will align strongly with LCCC's Local Development Plan, which encourages sustainable development, including housing growth, and supports quality design, the creation of quality environments, and developments which complement and enhance the existing area.

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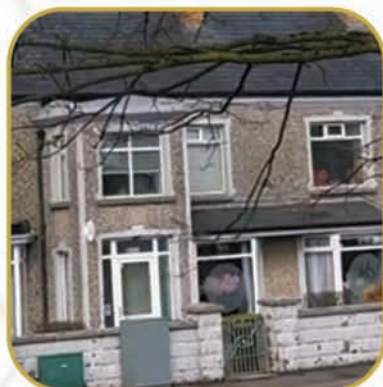
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# Schools celebrate winning streak at Environmental Youth Speak 2026

Pupils from across the council area gathered recently to speak out on environmental issues as part of the 2026 Environmental Youth Speak competition, organised by our Waste Management team at the Island Arts Centre, Lisburn.

A total of 27 young people from 14 primary and post-primary schools participated in the event, which aims to advance environmental awareness among the younger generation by providing a platform to research, speak out, and examine environmental issues. The competition had two age categories: Junior (P6 and P7) and Senior (Years 8, 9 and 10).

'How to be a Binfluencer!' was the theme for the Junior Section. Pupils were required to demonstrate how to be a positive role model and inspire others to manage their waste responsibly. They shared a wide range of practical steps to help us all change our habits for the better.

The Senior Section had the theme 'How do we turn the tide on plastic waste?' Students were tasked with researching the impact of plastic on our environment and exploring ways to reduce plastic waste in our daily lives, as well as influencing others to do the same.

Mayor, Alderman Amanda Grchan, said: "I was honoured to welcome everyone to the Environmental Youth Speak competition 2026. It was fantastic to see such a great turnout for this wonderful



event.

"Competitions like this are so important, because they give young people the chance to share ideas, speak up about issues that matter, and inspire others to take action. When it comes to protecting our environment we need exactly the kind of energy and creativity that these students have."

"Well done to everyone involved, you certainly helped us all learn something new."

Chair of the council's Environment and Sustainability Committee, Alderman Owen Gawith, also praised the efforts of the participants: "I was delighted to be invited to be on the judging panel for this year's Environmental Youth Speak."

"It was great to hear the

many wonderful ideas the students researched for the event to help us protect our precious environment. Their generation will be the ones to help us get it right. The presentations were fantastic and I learnt lots of new tips to reduce waste in my own life.

"The standard was very high, and the judging panel had a very difficult time choosing the winners from such a talented group."

Taking the Junior Section Winners' Cup back to their school were Eden and Martha from Rowandale Integrated Primary School, who retained the title for 2025 for their school. Ava and Mandana from Anahilt Primary School were second, with Corbin, Mason, Donny and Daniel from Longstone Special

School in third place.

The Senior Section Winners' Cup went to Holly from Laurelhill Community College, completing a hat-trick for the school with its third consecutive win. Eva and Naomi from Friends' School were second, with Michelle from Wallace High School in third place.

All participants received a certificate, a reusable shopping bag made from recycled material and an insulated stainless steel drink bottle or hot drinks cup.

If you would like more information on how schools can take part in future competitions or to book a visit to your school by the Waste Education Officer, please email: waste.education@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk



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Sophie Christie's journey into the world of aesthetics began with her own first laser treatment in 2015. Inspired by the transformative power of the technology, she utilized the opportunity to qualify at one of London's top laser training clinics, eventually opening her own practice in 2022. "It brings me so much joy when I see men and women's lives transformed by the services that I provide," Sophie says.

The clinic offers a comprehensive suite of services designed to address a variety of concerns. These include laser hair removal, tattoo removal, carbon facials, and SPMU (Semi-Permanent Makeup) removal. Omorphia is particularly noted for its inclusive approach; transgender and PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome) recognizing the significant impact these procedures can have on a person's confidence and quality of life.

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Beyond laser technology, the clinic utilizes advanced Cryopen therapy for the removal of warts and skin tags, and offers micro-needling to target wrinkles and pigmentation. As an exclusive stockist of the award-winning vegan skincare range Pestle & Mortar, Sophie also provides personalized consultations to help clients find the perfect facial routine for their unique skin type.

# FIRE AND SECURITY APPRENTICES ENGINEER A WIN AT PBLX

A team of Fire and Security Engineering Apprentices from South Eastern Regional College's (SERC) Lisburn and Newtownards Campuses, have won the annual SERC PBL X (Project based learning expo) hosted at the College's Lisburn Campus recently.

The PBL X Final was delivered as a Dragon's Den style competition, with shortlisted student teams presenting their ideas to an external judging panel - Katie

Matthews-Furphy, The Mind Tribe UK, Irvine Abraham, Above Ground Level and Bronagh Ward, Royal Academy of Engineering - which was live streamed. SERC's

Skills Intercampus Competition Finals ran concurrently, adding to the excitement with students showcasing their skills, teamwork and real world problem solving abilities across classrooms and workshops.

The winners, Harry Johnston (20) from Newtownards, Zeki Kaya (20) from Newtownards, and Fernando Gomes Da Silva (25), from Magherafelt, all Level 3 Apprenticeship NI in Fire and Security Systems, wowed the judges with their Security Engineering & Resource Centre project - an apprentice-led training facilities designed to provide hands-on, industry-aligned learning in modern security technologies.

The judges were impressed with how the apprentices completed the full design, installation, configuration, and commissioning of integrated intruder alarm, CCTV, and access control systems

across the newly developed training environments at both SERC's Newtownards and Lisburn campuses. The facilities now serve as regional training hubs for fire and security professionals, supporting apprenticeship pathways, technician upskilling, and industry skills development. Its focus on integrated security and AI-powered Internet of Things (AIoT) technologies enhances employability, addresses skills shortages, and strengthens long-term workforce resilience.

Santa's Little Helpers, pitched by Lewis Nickell (27), Peter Church (45) and Ben Hartley (24), all from Bangor and all Restart Education students, came joint second. The students designed and delivered a Christmas 2025 donation drive to support young people in care. The project focused on community engagement and social responsibility, with the learners working collaboratively to plan, promote, and deliver the



(L-R) Judges, Katie Matthews-Furphy, The Mind Tribe UK, Irvine Abraham, Above Ground Level and (far right) Bronagh Ward, Royal Academy of Engineering with Joint Runners Up of the SERC PBL X 2026 Competition for their More Taste, Less Waste project Jameson Cheuk (from Moira), Ethan Hopkins (from Crumlin), Brody Fyffe-McFadden (from Lisburn), Matthew Beech (from Dunmurry) and Victor Smith Quiroz (from Belfast). The students are all completing Level 3 Diploma in Professional Chef at SERC's Lisburn Campus.

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initiative.

Joint second place also went to the More Taste, Less Waste project from Jameson Cheuk (21, from Moira), Ethan Hopkins (22, from Crumlin), Brody Fyffe-McFadden (20, from Lisburn), Matthew Beech (20, from Dunmurry) and Victor Smith Quiroz

(52, from Belfast), all Level 3 Professional Chef students at Lisburn Campus who worked in partnership with Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to develop a recipe book aimed at reducing household food waste and promoting sustainability. The students researched,

developed, tested, and refined recipes suitable for the domestic kitchen, with a strong emphasis on using leftover and surplus food items.

The winners and runners up received a trophy, vouchers, kindles and SERC Entrepreneur Club hoodies. And all finalists received a

voucher and a hoodie. All projects can avail of further mentoring from the college Enterprise and Entrepreneur team. Two projects will now go on to compete in the Intercollege Sector PBL Competition which will take place at South West College in Omagh on 30 April.

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Continued from page 1

Welcoming the announcement, Conor Coyne, CEO, Kylemore Abbey added: "Kylemore Abbey and Hillsborough Castle share a deep commitment to heritage, learning, and environmental

stewardship, and we are delighted to work together in advancing these values."

The partnership will initially focus on: Knowledge Sharing: Joint research projects, staff exchanges, and learning programmes designed to share best practices in estate management, horticulture, historical

interpretation, and visitor experience.

Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability: Working together to protect native species, address invasive species, promote sustainable gardening, and support climate resilient landscapes across both sites. Initiatives will include seed banking collaborations, pollinator friendly planting programmes, and ecological monitoring.

Cultural and Heritage Conservation: Combined approaches to preserving historic buildings, gardens, and cultural collections, ensuring that both estates remain vibrant centres of heritage for future generations on the island of Ireland.

Community and Educational Outreach: Development of all island events, exhibitions, educational programmes, and dialogues aimed at strengthening understanding of shared history and fostering community connections.

This new partnership reflects a growing momentum and enthusiasm for cross border co-operation in areas including heritage and environmental sustainability. By combining their expertise and resources, Hillsborough Castle and Kylemore Abbey aim to create a working model for cultural, ecological, and educational collaboration on the island of Ireland.

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# NEW OUTDOOR GARDEN UNVEILED AT LISBURN ASSESSMENT AND RESOURCE CENTRE

A newly refurbished outdoor garden at Lisburn's Assessment and Resource Centre (LARC), designed to support adults with learning disabilities, was officially opened by the Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh Alderman Amanda Grehan.

The welcoming outdoor space has been transformed into a colourful and accessible environment where Service Users can relax, socialise and enjoy activities outdoors. As the weather improves, staff hope the garden will become a lively hub where everyone can spend time together.

As Spring sunshine bathed the garden, LARC, Senior Day Care Worker, Mandy Glasgow explained how the refurbishment was made possible by the work and fundraising efforts of Sensability, a charity group set up to support adults with learning disabilities who attend LARC, Dairy Farm Services and Seymour Hill Horticultural Unit.

Mandy shared how delighted she and staff were to welcome Mayor Grehan to the Centre. "Our new space now features a wheelchair accessible swing, picnic tables, flower planters and a bright, durable ground covering. The Service Users and staff



Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh, Alderman Amanda Grehan, does the honours at the recent opening of Lisburn's Assessment and Resource Centre (LARC) newly refurbished outdoor garden

are absolutely delighted with this space and we are looking forward to making lots of use of it as the weather improves."

Joyce Belshaw attends LARC three days a week and added how much she enjoyed the Mayoral visit and outdoor refurbishments. "I like it very much and I am looking forward

to sitting out here in the Summertime."

LARC Support Worker, Amanda Irvine shared how those who attend the Centre will be able to utilise the outdoor area for a place to, "Come out and sit for some quiet time, especially when the nice weather arrives."

"This space will really

benefit our Service Users and give them the chance to get out into the fresh air. It is a lovely place to just come out and sit and chill. We have purpose-built tables, comfy bean bags and vegetable trucks with herbs planted by our Service Users. We really hope that over the Summer this will be an area that is full all the time."

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# WIPEZILLA INSPIRES PUPILS AT BALLYMACWARD PRIMARY SCHOOL

NI Water's monster mascot Wipezilla made a big impression with pupils at Ballymacward Primary School in Lisburn recently as NI Water's 'What Lies Beneath' art competition for schools continues.

The gloves were off when Wipezilla, NI Water's colossal wet wipe monster, came face to face with the champion 'fatberg fighters'. Together they learned how these notorious creatures are sustained by everyday waste that is wrongly flushed and how only the 3 Ps - pee, poo and toilet paper - belong in the sewer system.

Pupils at Ballymacward Primary are part of a growing tribe of young monster hunters across Northern Ireland taking part in NI Water's art competition. Armed with crayons, their imaginations and a sense of humour, the students are unleashing their artistic talents to outwit and expose the 'baddies' lurking below.

Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils are invited to select one of NI Water's Wipezilla-themed colouring sheets to complete their entry. Meanwhile, Key Stage 2 students can get even more creative by designing an A3 'WANTED' poster. The

poster should showcase their own imagined sewer monster, explaining its name, origin, and how everyone can help stop it from causing chaos in the sewage system.

All competition entries must be submitted to NI Water by 5pm on Friday 1st May 2026. Winners will be chosen based on creativity and enthusiasm, with prizes awarded for each year group as well as a dedicated Special Needs Schools category. Winners will then be invited to a special NI Awards ceremony on Friday 12th June 2026.

NI Water Education Officer Anna Killen explains: "Every time wet wipes or greasy leftovers go down the drain, our sewers become prime real estate for monsters like fatbergs and wet wipe creatures. These monsters grow quickly, turning from a single wipe into a whole horde, causing nasty blockages and making our pipes groan more than a hungry tummy at lunchtime.



"When these monsters take over, homes and schools can face unpleasant flooding and unmistakable smells. That's when NI Water's team - like real-life superheroes - step in, equipped with high-powered hoses and powerful suction tools to restore order underground. "It was a pleasure to meet the pupils at Ballymacward Primary School, and to personally

thank them for pledging to keep fatbergs and wet wipe monsters away for good!" How You Can Help - Some Sewer Monster-Busting Tips from NI Water:

- Flush only the 3Ps: Pee, Poo, and Paper. Monster food is strictly off-limits!
- Wet wipes, cotton buds, and nappies belong in the bin, not in your monster's lunchbox.
- Pour leftover fats and grease into a container, not down the sink (Fatbergs

hate starving). • Tell your family how to keep monsters out - extra points for silly monster voices.

Schools can find out more information about the NI Water 'What Lies Beneath' schools art competition by visiting [www.niwater.com/education-and-the-community/resources-for-schools](http://www.niwater.com/education-and-the-community/resources-for-schools) or contact NI Water Education Officer Anna Killen on email [education@niwater.com](mailto:education@niwater.com)

## The Big Bridge inspires nearly 400 local school pupils to explore STEM careers

397 pupils from primary schools across Lisburn and Castlereagh took part in 15 interactive engineering sessions at Lagan Valley Island recently.

They worked alongside professional engineers to design, build and test a giant 13-metre-long, 3-metre-high bridge.

The young students were participating in The Big Bridge STEM initiative, delivered by the Lisburn and Castlereagh Labour Market Partnership, which is funded by the Department for Communities.

Councillor Claire

Kemp, Regeneration and Growth Committee Chair, said: "It was fantastic to see nearly 400 young people fully immersed in hands-on engineering activities. The Big Bridge not only supports classroom learning but also helps pupils understand how STEM skills connect directly to future careers.

"As a council, we are committed to creating



opportunities that raise aspirations and support long-term economic growth across our area."

Designed for Primary 5 to Primary 7 pupils, each one-hour workshop combined collaborative construction, curriculum-aligned learning and insight

into engineering careers. The young people experienced real-world STEM in an engaging, hands-on setting, and each participant received a certificate of achievement. Feedback has been positive, with schools and parents commenting

that children were still discussing their enjoyment of the workshop days later. Teachers have highlighted the strong alignment with the Northern Ireland curriculum and the benefit of pupils engaging directly with professional engineers.

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# Stepping Stones NI Chief Officer Paula Jennings Receives MBE at Windsor Castle

The Chief Officer of Stepping Stones NI, Paula Jennings, was recently awarded the prestigious Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) by HRH The Prince of Wales at a formal investiture ceremony held at Windsor Castle, in recognition of her commitment and services to people with learning difficulties in Northern Ireland.

Through her leadership at Stepping Stones NI, Paula has played an important role in the organisation's development, as it provides vital services for people with disabilities and those facing barriers to learning. Her strategic vision has supported the inclusion of people with disabilities in society over the last 28 years.

Congratulating Paula on her MBE, the board of Stepping Stones NI stated, "Paula's MBE is extremely well deserved. She's been an outstanding advocate and champion for people in Northern Ireland's disability sector. We are very proud to celebrate this recognition with her alongside our staff team, trainees, clients, and entire Stepping Stones NI family."

Paula has been central to the growth of Stepping Stones NI over the last 28 years.

Speaking after the investiture ceremony at Windsor Castle, Paula

said: "It was an incredible privilege and honour to receive an MBE from Prince William at Windsor Castle, who asked about Stepping Stones NI and funding challenges. We were blessed with a perfect spring sunny day, as I celebrated the occasion with my husband and three daughters. A day I will never forget."

Paula goes on to say, "I am very proud to represent Stepping Stones NI and the disability sector in Northern Ireland. However, this MBE doesn't belong to me alone. It belongs to every single person who makes Stepping Stones NI what it is. It belongs to the incredible people we support, who are at the heart of everything we do, and to our amazing team of staff and board who dedicate themselves every day to seeing everyone's potential."

Colleagues, service users and supporters have warmly congratulated Paula on the achievement,



Paula Jennings, Chief Officer of Stepping Stones, pictured at Windsor Castle following the Investiture Ceremony on Wednesday, 11th March. MBE honour for Services for people with learning difficulties in Northern Ireland.

describing the honour as a fitting recognition of her commitment, passion and leadership within the sector.

Her award also shines a

light on the important work carried out by Stepping Stones NI and the positive impact it continues to make across the community.

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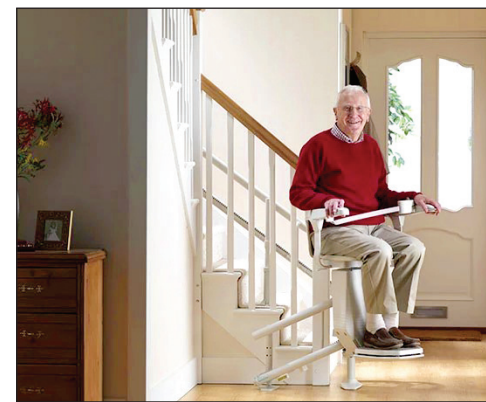
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Beyond Stairlifts, Olympic Lifts also supplies, installs, tests, and maintains Passenger Lifts, Access Lifts, Goods Lifts, escalators, and Moving Walkways. We are proud to have completed almost 20,000 projects over the past four decades. Recently, we launched our new



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For more information on our range of Stairlifts and other lifting solutions, please contact us at 02892 622331 or visit our website at www.olympiclifts.co.uk.

# What we can all do for hedgehogs.

As their name indicates, hedgehogs mostly live in or around hedges, and that has been their downfall, as rural hedges have been increasingly removed to accommodate intensive agriculture.

It's estimated that hedgehog numbers in farmland have fallen by more than 50% in the last 20 years. While they have been adaptable by occupying urban and suburban gardens and parks, even there their numbers are declining.

Anybody with a garden can help.

First, if you have a hedge, please don't remove it and replace it with a fence. I know it can be a bit of a chore to trim, but

hedges are not just useful to hedgehogs, they are shelters and nesting places for other wildlife, particularly birds.

Hedgehogs travel about a mile every night to find food, being the gardener's friend by gobbling up slugs and insects, and if they're blocked by fences, then, inevitably, they will die. So, if you must have fences, just do one simple thing:

leave a small, roughly 13cm x 13cm (5" x



5"), gap at the bottom of them. You can even get hedgehog highway signage to display over the gaps. And why not encourage your neighbours to do the same and create a really useful hedgehog-friendly habitat?

Second, leave some areas of lawn or garden to simply grow, revealing native grasses and other plants,

including wildflowers (which will also help bees and other insects). A scrubby corner could be hedgehog paradise!

Third, stop using slug pellets, which not only kill hedgehog prey, but the hedgehogs themselves. If you're lucky to have garden hedgehogs they'll happily deal with the slugs.

Finally, if you have a suitably dense hedge (even under those pesky leylandii!), why not buy or make a hedgehog home: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home>

Think about what you can do. You'll make Beatrix Potter's Mrs Tiggy-Winkle happy and be doing your bit for wildlife recovery. JVA



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Planning a city break in Glasgow? Skip the airport queues and travel stress and choose the Belfast–Glasgow Express with HANNON Coach & Sail—a comfortable, hassle-free way to reach the heart of Scotland’s largest city.

Now departing from the new Belfast Grand Central Station, this award-winning service offers a smooth coach-and-ferry journey straight into Glasgow city centre, making it the perfect alternative to flying. Already a firm favourite with seasoned travellers, the Belfast–Glasgow Express is proudly rated 5-Star on TripAdvisor.

Glasgow is a vibrant, stylish city with something for everyone. From world-class culture and nightlife to outstanding restaurants and bars, it’s a destination that never disappoints. Shoppers are particularly well catered for—Glasgow is widely recognised as the UK’s top shopping destination outside London, with its famous ‘Style Mile’ offering unbeatable retail therapy.

With a simple flat fare of just £49, including ferry travel and luggage, the Belfast–Glasgow Express delivers outstanding value.



With no hidden costs and flexible travel options, passengers can pick and mix dates and times to suit their plans—making it ideal for a spontaneous spring getaway or a longer city break.

The service operates twice daily from Belfast Grand Central Station (Stand 18) and drops passengers at

Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station, close to the Style Mile and a wide range of excellent city-centre hotels.

Company Director Aodh Hannon says the service’s popularity comes down to convenience and simplicity.

“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.”

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## All-Ireland economy driving tourism growth - Archibald

Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald has welcomed latest tourism figures showing trips by visitors from the south to the north increased by 15% in 2025.

According to statistics released by the Central Statistics Office, there were 1.3 million trips in 2025, compared to 1.1 million in 2024.

In addition, there was a total of 2.7 million overnight nights taken in Northern Ireland by these visitors last year compared to 2.5 million in 2024 – up by nine per cent.

Furthermore, the money spent by the visitors increased from just over £242.7 million in 2024 to almost £317.1 million last year – an increase of 31%.

The Minister said: “These latest figures show that the all-Ireland economy is driving growth in our tourism industry. More people from the south are visiting the north, bringing increased spending into our local economy. With Belfast hosting the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann this August we can expect this positive trend to continue.”

Tourism NI continues to work to drive visitor growth by encouraging prospective visitors to embark on a giant adventure in Northern Ireland through investment in marketing and promotion, and by growing the range of visitor attractions and experiences and enhancing the accommodation offer.



Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald is pictured at the Giant’s Causeway

Tourism NI’s 2026 Spring marketing campaign has already been hugely successful to date, and is on track to deliver 125 million opportunities to see or hear the activity in ROI. The TV, radio, press and social media campaign has been showcasing a broad range of attractions, experiences and events in Northern Ireland as well as ideas on where to stay, building on the knowledge of what the region has to offer - highlighting value for

money and delivering clear and compelling reasons to book a short break.

Carmel Scott, Head of Marketing at Tourism NI, said: “This growth reflects the impact and importance of our sustained marketing focus in this key market, highlighting what our industry has to offer and driving demand.

“ROI visitors continue to enjoy our stunning landscapes and coastlines, vibrant food and drink scene, and world class

attractions, experiences and accommodation - all delivered with the giant welcome Northern Ireland is known for.

“Our heavyweight marketing campaign continues in ROI until 31 March. We will maintain a strong focus on this market and encourage industry partners to do the same, ensuring Northern Ireland continues to achieve marketing cut through and remains top of mind for short breaks all year round.”



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For many years guests from across the North have journeyed to Killarney on a Gleneagle Coach Tour.

Now in partnership with Giles Tours, this popular holiday package has remained a great value holiday break down south. Guests enjoy all the elements of a coach holiday – great accommodation, excellent food, day tours in Kerry, live entertainment and a warm Gleneagle welcome.

A holiday to Killarney is a memorable one. With some of the most stunning scenery in Ireland and close to the Wild Atlantic Way, this tour brings guests to these fabulous locations. Day tours to the Ring of Kerry and Dingle Peninsula are included.

Accommodation at the famous Gleneagle is included with stunning views overlooking Killarney National Park and close to the town of Killarney. All guests have access to



the great leisure amenities, entertainment and dining options including the new Fiadh Restaurant.

Many tour guests have returned year after year to familiar faces in the hotel. With Giles Tours, guests are assured of a luxury

coaching experience and family-friendly welcome. Over the last few years, the hotel has enhanced its offering with a great selection of bedrooms, improved pool and leisure options plus a

greater selection of guest experiences. This spring guests can enjoy a 5-day tour to Killarney with tours, meals and transport included. Bookings are easily made with Giles Tours – contact the booking office on 028 9181 1099

experiences. This spring guests can enjoy a 5-day tour to Killarney with tours, meals and transport included. Bookings are easily made with Giles Tours – contact the booking office on 028 9181 1099

## NEW LOOK FOR ANDERSON'S TRADITIONAL FISH & CHIP SHOP

If you are searching for the perfect golden batter and fluffy hand-cut chips in Lisburn, look no further than Anderson's Traditional Fish & Chips.

Located at 26 Grand Street in Hilden, this local favourite has built a reputation for serving high-quality meals that stay true to the classic chippy experience. Whether you are a lifelong resident or just passing through the Hilden area, Anderson's offers a menu filled with fresh ingredients and traditional flavours.

Now there is something different about your favourite chippy! Not just a new look shop but the recent renovations include new state of the art fryers, a refreshed modernised shop and

well as a new counter and brand new menu!

The secret to the success of Anderson's lies in their commitment to freshness. The team takes great pride in sourcing the best local produce. Their fish is prepared with care to ensure a crispy finish and the potatoes are peeled and chipped fresh on-site every day. This dedication to quality extends across their entire menu which includes everything from succulent cod to battered sausages and savoury pasties.


Exclusive Savings This Month There has

never been a better time to visit than right now. Anderson's is currently running a special promotion for their customers. You can receive 20% off your order by presenting their latest advertisement. This limited-time offer is a great way to enjoy a family feast or a quick lunch while making a significant saving on your total bill.

Opening hours are:  
 • Monday – Thursday: 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm  
 • Friday & Saturday: 12:00 pm – 9:00 pm  
 • Sunday: Closed  
 Anderson's offers an


easy collection service. You can browse their full range of burgers and chicken dishes and sides at [www.andersonschipshop.co.uk](http://www.andersonschipshop.co.uk) to decide on your meal in advance. Call them at (0)28 9262 9873 to place your order for pickup.

Next time the craving for traditional fish and chips hits, head down to Grand Street and experience the warm service and delicious food that makes Anderson's a standout destination in Hilden. Don't forget to bring your advert along to claim your 20% discount!




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## HYROCKS HYBRID OPENS DEDICATED PERFORMANCE TRAINING FACILITY IN LISBURN

A following a significant investment of over £50,000, a new performance-focused training facility has opened on Longstone Street, bringing Lisburn its first dedicated HYROX training centre.

HYROCKS HYBRID has been founded by husband-and-wife team Suzie and Nick Rocks, who having completed over 25 events collectively, recognised a gap in the local market for structured hybrid strength and conditioning training.

Suzie Rocks, Owner and Coach, brings over 22 years of experience in education and began her own fitness journey in her early thirties.

"I started with half marathons and 10Ks with no strength training background," she explained. "After having two babies back-to-back, I joined a gym feeling anxious and unsure if I belonged. Very quickly I realised it wasn't about comparison; it was about community and doing something positive for myself."

Her teaching background naturally evolved into coaching.

"As a teacher, I understand that people learn and move differently. I became passionate about helping people move well, build strength safely and grow in confidence through structured training."

Discovering HYROX proved to be a turning point.

"When I completed my first race, I realised there were clear gaps in my fitness. It challenged me in a completely different way and pushed me to train with greater structure

and purpose. Nick and I soon realised there wasn't a dedicated local space where people could properly prepare for this style of competition, and we often found ourselves travelling to access suitable facilities."

Nick Rocks, coach and experienced HYROX athlete, was introduced to the sport by Suzie, with Dublin marking his first event.

"I came from more than 20 years of competitive mountain bike racing and thought I was well prepared," he said. "In some ways I was, but HYROX demands real specificity. That's what made me respect the sport immediately."

Since 2024, Nick has competed in 18 HYROX events across the UK, Europe and the United States in Open, Pro, Singles and Doubles categories. His competitive record includes consecutive World Championship appearances in Nice and Chicago, with Stockholm marking his third.

"Competition has always been a big part of my life," he added. "Suzie and I approach training differently. She thrives in a group environment, partner sessions, shared workouts and the energy that comes from training alongside others. That sense of community is hugely



important to her.

"I've always been comfortable training independently, believing that consistent effort moves you closer to your goals. But no one can push themselves to their limits alone all the time. There's real value in being part of a team and being challenged by others."

The couple say HYROCKS HYBRID reflects that balance combining structured group training with clear progression pathways for individuals.

"HYROX is built around flow managing effort and fatigue across varied stations," Nick explained. "We've designed the gym with that same mindset. Sessions are purposeful and progressive, helping people train with clarity, structure and confidence."

"Any form of exercise is positive, and if someone is making the effort to show up, that's already a success.

We're not claiming to have all the answers, but we've both experienced the impact of good coaching and consistent preparation. That's what we want to bring to Lisburn."

The couple hope to build a welcoming, supportive training community for people of all abilities from aspiring competitors to those simply looking to improve their strength, fitness and overall wellbeing.

"We understand the pressures of work, family life and the self-doubt that can come before a race or starting something new," Suzie added. "We're raising our children while building this business. HYROCKS HYBRID is about helping people develop resilience, physically and mentally, within a supportive and structured environment."

For further information or to book sessions, visit the HYROCKS HYBRID Instagram page.

# LOOKING FOR THE ULTIMATE WEDDING LOCATION?

Carlingford, nestled between the Cooley Mountains and the waters of Carlingford Lough, is one of Ireland's most enchanting wedding destinations.

Its blend of medieval charm, natural beauty, and intimate village atmosphere creates a storybook backdrop that couples and guests instantly love. Nowhere else offers such a seamless mix of romance, history, and breathtaking scenery in one compact setting.

The village's cobbled streets, ancient ruins, and colourful shopfronts evoke a timeless charm that feels far removed from everyday life. Carlingford's dramatic landscapes provide a wedding photo backdrop that feels like a fairytale.

At the heart of this setting stands the Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford, a venue designed for elegant, stress-free celebrations. Its location allows couples to enjoy the full Carlingford experience, with diverse photo opportunities that feel like multiple destinations, all within minutes of the hotel.

The hotel elevates weddings with sophisticated décor, spacious event suites, and beautiful gardens. Recently renovated spaces offer a contemporary



yet warm atmosphere, giving couples freedom to personalise their day while ensuring comfort and luxury. Dedicated wedding coordinators guide every detail, ensuring each celebration runs smoothly. Culinary excellence defines the experience, from canapés to carefully crafted banquets rooted in quality and local flavour. Guests enjoy exceptional

food, stunning views, and attentive service from a team committed to creating memorable celebrations.

What sets the Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford apart is the harmony between bespoke experience and natural surroundings. The result is a wedding that feels both luxurious and personal, set within one of Ireland's most picturesque locations.

For couples seeking beauty, atmosphere, and exceptional service, the Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford offers everything needed for a celebration to remember. With its blend of scenery, service, and style, it consistently delivers unforgettable wedding experiences that leave lasting impressions on couples, families, and guests alike for years to come.

## Some Summer ideas for Family Days Out

Summer 2026 in Northern Ireland is shaping up to be a legendary season, especially with the arrival of some massive cultural milestones.

Whether you are a local looking to rediscover your own backyard or you are planning to host visiting family, the calendar is packed with a mix of high-energy festivals and quiet, scenic escapes. From the bustling streets of Belfast to the windswept North Coast, there is a refreshing variety of ways to keep the kids entertained—and perhaps even enjoy yourself in the process.

The Rhythm of the City:

Belfast's Big Summer One headline event for this year is the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, which descends upon Belfast from August 2nd to 9th. This is the first time the city has hosted the "World Cup" of Irish traditional music, and it is expected to transform the city centre into a massive, family-friendly carnival. You can expect the streets to be alive with sessions, pageants, and plenty of free outdoor performances. Just

before the Fleadh kicks off, Belfast TradFest runs from late July into the first week of August, offering a perfect warm-up with world-class concerts and workshops that are surprisingly accessible for younger listeners. If you need a break from the music, the Ulster Museum in the Botanic Gardens remains a reliable refuge, offering everything from Takabuti the mummy to dinosaur exhibits, and it is conveniently located right

next to the park for a post-museum picnic.

Coastal Adventures and Maritime Magic

Heading north, the Foyle Maritime Festival in Derry-Londonderry returns in late June to celebrate the city's seafaring history along the River Foyle. It is a fantastic spot for children who love ships, street performers, and the inevitable excitement of a fireworks finale. Further along the Causeway Coast, the Red Sails Festival in Portstewart takes over the promenade in mid-July. It is a quintessential local festival featuring Irish dancing, live music on the waterfront, and sandcastle competitions that bring out the competitive streak in even the most relaxed parents. For those who prefer a bit of speed, the North West 200 in May often kicks off the summer vives early, but for a family day out later in the season, the Ulster International Rally in Ballymena this August celebrates its 50th anniversary with plenty of high-octane spectacle.

Festivals in the Fields: Arts and Nature

For a more laid-back, "boots and grass" experience, the Stendhal Festival in Limavady remains the gold standard

for family-focused music events. Taking place in early July at Ballymully Cottage Farm, it offers a dedicated family programme that manages to be cool enough for teenagers while keeping toddlers safely occupied with arts and crafts. If you are looking for something closer to home in County Down, Down Time Summerfest in Downpatrick provides a quirky mix of horse racing, BMX displays, and live music in the heart of St. Patrick's country. It is the kind of event where you can watch a high-energy stunt show and then wander over to a quiet heritage workshop within the same hour.

Thrills, Spills, and Indoor Backups

We all know the Northern Irish summer can occasionally involve four seasons in a single afternoon. When the clouds turn grey, W5 at the SSE Arena is still the champion of indoor entertainment, with over 250 interactive exhibits that make science feel like a playground. For the older, more adventurous kids, The Jungle NI in Moneymore offers llama trekking and tree-top adventures that are perfect for burning off excess energy.

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# TAEKWON-DO NI: A DISCIPLINE FOR ALL AGES!

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Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland, under the esteemed leadership of Master Leo Maguire, is a prominent force in the martial arts community, shaping the lives of children and adults across the province. Master Maguire, a VII Dan Degree Black Belt and President

of the International Taekwon-Do Federation Northern Ireland (ITF N.I.), has established a network of schools dedicated to fostering confidence, discipline, and self-defense. His distinguished career as a national coach has led the Northern Ireland team to numerous medal victories at both national and international competitions.

The Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland schools offer a comprehensive

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

For slightly older children, the "Active Tigers" class (ages 5 to 8) allows students to develop

their Taekwon-Do skills at a more relaxed pace. The core "Tae-Kwon Do" program, for students aged 9 to adult, is designed to be safe, practical, and fun. It focuses on the fundamental tenets of the art, including self-defense and self-discipline, while building confidence and physical fitness.

Taekwon-Do NI are working towards sponsorship and fundraising for other international

competitions in the coming year of 2026!

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

## Flanders Fields Belgium Open

The team travelled to Belgium recently and safe to say the team did amazing!

With just a team of 14 members Taekwon-do NI came 6th overall club out of 800 competitors! It was a monumental effort by the team to place high up with teams around us boasting much larger squads.

Two members achieved Double Gold and placed top of the individual categories.

The team keep going from strength to strength and we couldn't be more proud of them.

Thank you to Masters Dana and Pascal for hosting the great event!



## The Warrior Open in London

The team had an amazing weekend in London for The Warrior Open and once again they did everyone proud with their performance and conduct.

This competition draws many of the best and each of our competitors rose to the occasion bringing home 4 Gold 2 Silver and 5 Bronze from a small team of 8. As coaches Taekwon-do NI aren't only proud of the medals they got but also the unity they are showing and building between themselves and all other members of the Northern Ireland Squad!

Medal winners: Mollie-Rose (2x golds); Lucas (gold); James (gold); Tammy (silver); Fiachra (silver & bronze); Lily (2 x bronze); Klaidas (bronze) and Emily (bronze).



## LEO MAGUIRE TAE-KWON DO SCHOOLS (3 Years - Adults)



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## TEAM NORTHERN IRELAND



## Robin Swann MP visits new HANNON Steel premises

Robin Swann MP visited the new HANNON Steel premises at Nutts Corner, meeting the team and viewing the company's purpose-built facility as the business begins a phased move into the site.

The visit provided an opportunity to see first-hand the HANNON Group's investment in the HANNON Steel facility, part of the group's wider redevelopment of the former RAF base at Nutts Corner.

The new premises have been developed to better serve HANNON Steel's customers, providing increased stockholding capacity, improved processing areas and walk-in customer facilities. The investment allows the business to hold a broader range of materials on site while improving operational efficiency and supporting continued growth.

HANNON Steel supplies mild steel products to customers across Northern Ireland including engineering firms, fabricators, farms, construction contractors and manufacturing businesses who rely on quick access to steel for projects and day-to-day operations.

An important part of the service is the company's daily delivery operation across Northern Ireland. Using its own fleet,



Pictured L-R: Jonathan Whyte, General Manager, HANNON Steel; Adrian Hannon, Managing Director, HANNON Steel; Robin Swann MP, Member of Parliament for South Antrim; Aodh Hannon, CEO & Founder, HANNON Group; Chris Whyte, HANNON Steel.

HANNON Steel delivers steel products directly to customers' premises every day.

Adrian Hannon, Managing Director of HANNON Steel, said:

"Our customers depend on being able to access the steel they need quickly for their projects and operations. Increasing our stockholding capacity and improving how we process and dispatch orders allows us to continue building on the service we already provide."

The development at Nutts Corner also forms part of the HANNON Group's longer-term plans for the site, including a £22 million pharmaceutical logistics and warehousing facility for HANNON PharmaLink.

Robin Swann MP welcomed the continued investment at the Nutts Corner site and the positive contribution it will make to the local economy.

"It was a pleasure to visit Nutts Corner and see first-hand the HANNON

Group's ambition for this site. I very much appreciated the invitation and the opportunity to see these impressive new facilities.

This level of private investment is exactly what we want to see in South Antrim, showing a confidence in the area and providing job opportunities for the local community. I welcome this expansion and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will continue to have on our local economy."

## MINISTER CELEBRATES COMMUNITY FUND PROGRAMME

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has praised the work of those involved in the community sector across Northern Ireland as he met some of those who have benefited through his Department's continued investment in its Neighbourhood Renewal programme.

The Department for Communities (DfC) invests over £20million per annum in Neighbourhood Renewal, supporting the work of voluntary and community organisations in the most deprived areas across Northern Ireland, with the Small Capital Investment Programme being a key component of this funding.

In 2024/25, the Fund helped over 1,500 people secure employment through targeted training and employability interventions, as well as giving more than 5,500 adults the opportunity to volunteer within their communities.

Speaking at a community event at the Ecos Centre in Ballymena, Minister Lyons said: "These projects may be described as 'small capital,' but their impact is anything but small. Investment in small capital costs keeps services running and allows groups to adapt, expand, or innovate. Whether it's roof repairs, upgraded IT equipment, a kitchen refurbishment, or essential accessibility improvements - these are the practical enablers of meaningful community



impact. My Department's ongoing investment in Neighbourhood Renewal reflects a long term commitment, one that is not only financial but deeply rooted in our belief in the power of communities to shape their own futures."

Over the last year alone, DfC has supported 77 community projects through his fund, with an investment of £1.18m. A number of community representatives attending today's event took the opportunity to share their stories on the positive impact this funding has had.

Angela Mulholland, West Bann Development said:

"This funding has ensured that as a service provider to the local community, we were able to continue to offer a first-class service and providing people with a safe secure environment to learn, play and create."

Jim McLroy, Harryville Men's Shed added: "Men's Shed provides a vital role within the community offering a safe, welcoming space where men can connect, learn, and support one another. This investment has played a vital role in helping to maintain and strengthen the services we provide to men across the Ballymena

community.

Theresa Brady, Ionad na Fuisceige said: "Small capital funding meets a real need in the community - relatively small amounts of money required that can make a huge difference to the local area."

John Hunter, Community Sports Network, Shankill added: "Relatively small investments can deliver significant, long-term impact. This funding has created lasting benefits, improving safety, expanding opportunities, and allowing us to meet a broader range of community needs."

## Selecting a Care Home

Selecting a care home is a deeply personal balancing act between clinical necessity and emotional comfort.

To move beyond the polished surface of a brochure, you must prioritize questions about the facility's greatest asset: its staff. Beyond simple ratios, inquire about staff turnover and longevity. A revolving door of caregivers often signals deeper systemic issues, whereas a stable team suggests a more consistent, compassionate environment. It is also vital to confirm that the staff

possess specific training tailored to your loved one's unique needs, such as dementia care or specialized physical support.

A resident's quality of life depends heavily on their sense of autonomy. Ask how much control a resident has over their daily rhythm—from when they wake up to what they wear. A truly person-centred home should offer a variety of social activities that reflect

individual interests rather than a rigid, one-size-fits-all schedule. Similarly, check if residents are encouraged to bring their own furniture and mementos. A room that looks like a hospital ward rarely feels like a home, so the ability to personalize the space is a significant indicator of the home's philosophy.

Medical and nutritional oversight require equal scrutiny. You should

ask how the home manages complex dietary requirements and whether snacks and drinks are available around the clock. On the clinical side, clarify how they handle medication management and emergencies, and ask about their relationship with local doctors.

Financial transparency is just as critical; ensure you receive a comprehensive breakdown of weekly fees and potential "extra" costs like hairdressing or specialized outings to avoid stressful surprises later.

Finally, while the answers to these questions provide a framework, your own observations are the most reliable guide. During a tour, look past the decor and watch the interactions. Do the staff address residents by name with genuine warmth? Do the residents appear engaged and well-groomed? The "feel" of a home—the smell, the noise level, and the general atmosphere of respect—often tells you more than any prepared answer. Trusting your intuition alongside these practical queries ensures you find a place where your loved one can truly thrive.

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# Funding Boost for District's Community Transport Providers

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has helped drive the success of two local transport providers connecting people and communities.

The Council's partnership with the voluntary sector helped pave the way for Down Community Transport and Newry and Mourne Community Transport to secure £200,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, supported by the Strategic Stakeholder Forum, to each purchase a new minibus to meet a growing demand for services.

The additional minibuses have not only had a positive impact on drivers and staff, but individuals and community groups. Over the past year, the transport providers carried almost 11,000 passengers on nearly 3,400 journeys, helping address social isolation and enhance community well-being.

Together, they employ 16 drivers, have 19 mini buses and a number of volunteer drivers, making a positive difference in people's lives and ensuring they can remain active in their respective communities by getting out and about, with the Dial-A-Lift (DAL) service assisting those who find it challenging to access public transport.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Philip Campbell said, "Community transport providers play an invaluable role, particularly at the heart

of rural communities. For many with mobility needs, the community transport service is a lifeline.

"The organisations have faced significant funding pressures in the past and I am delighted the service is going from strength to strength. Transporting almost 11,000 passengers in a year shows the reliance people place on this invaluable service which is staffed by committed individuals, providing access for a wide group of people including the elderly, those with disabilities, Special Education Needs and community group members."

Cllr Philip Campbell added, "Community transport providers are making a positive difference across Newry, Mourne and Down and an important contribution to people's overall health and wellbeing, with their staff among the many unsung heroes who work across our district."

Down Community Transport Manager, Sheileen Brady, has thanked Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for its support and funding provided through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

"This investment has made a genuine and measurable difference across the district. The funding has



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson Councillor Philip Campbell (second left), with Chris Moore (left) from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which, supported by the Strategic Stakeholder Forum, provided funding for two new minibuses for Down Community Transport and Newry and Mourne Community Transport. Included are Down Community Transport manager Sheileen Brady and Newry and Mourne and Community Transport Chief Executive Stephen Yeomans.

enabled both organisations to introduce two new accessible buses, strengthen DAL and group hire services and respond to growing community demand," she said.

"The funding has enabled fleet modernisation and expansion of our combined fleet to 19 buses. This has improved reliability, comfort, safety, and service flexibility while creating local employment. The impact goes far beyond transport alone, with the buses reducing isolation, increasing independence, and strengthening community wellbeing."

Newry and Mourne Community Transport Chief Executive, Stephen

Yeomans, said the funding it received had an exceptionally positive impact on the organisation and many individuals and community groups across the Council area.

"The additional finance has enabled us to deliver affordable and accessible transport, reducing social isolation and allowing more people with mobility needs to participate in social, recreational and community services," he said.

"The funding has allowed us to modernise our ageing fleet. We have been able to extend our services, respond more flexibly to community need and support increased volunteering and partnership working."

# Lisburn Sure Start: Empowering Families

Lisburn Sure Start, a key initiative under the Bryson Charitable Group, is dedicated to ensuring that every child in the Old Warren, Tonagh, Hilden, and Hillhall catchment areas receives the "best start in life".

This comprehensive programme supports families through the critical journey from pregnancy until the child's fourth birthday. By providing a diverse range of free programmes across four approved venues, the organisation creates a nurturing environment for both children and their caregivers.

The organisation operates with three primary aims designed to foster long-term success for local families:

**Improved Ability to Learn:** This is achieved through high-quality play and early identification of learning difficulties.

**Improved Health:** The team promotes children's development by offering community health advice and caring for parents.

**Improved Social Development:** Sure Start strengthens early relationships between parents and children while supporting those with emotional or behavioural needs.

Lisburn Sure Start offers specialised support at every developmental stage. For expecting and new parents, the Child Health Team provides home visits and sessions including Antenatal Café to share insights on brain development,

bonding, and mental health. Notably, the organisation holds UNICEF Baby Friendly Accreditation, reflecting its commitment to professional breastfeeding support and education.

As children grow, programmes such as Sensory Explorers, Stay & Play, and Play & Discover encourage physical and cognitive milestones through interactive fun. For toddlers aged 2-3, play-based initiatives like Little Stars and Little Rainbows prepare children for the transition to preschool by building social and emotional confidence in intimate, supportive settings.

The organisation also prioritises the well-being of the entire family. Family Support Workers assist with practical parenting challenges, including healthy sleep habits and toilet training. Meanwhile, programmes like Take 5 focus on parental mental health, and the Dad's Group offers a specific space for male caregivers to bond with their children through activities like football and outdoor play. Additionally, Speech and Language Therapists work directly with families to enhance communication skills from infancy.



Lisburn Sure Start		
Weekly Schedule		
APRIL 2026		
Mon	9.30AM - 11AM	Breastfeeding Group 9 Market Place All breastfeeding parents welcome
Tue	9.30AM	Infant Massage
Wed	11.00AM	Babbles & Bubbles
Thu	9.30AM - 9.30AM	Stay & Play Walking Group
Fri	9.30AM	Stay & Play

Families living within the catchment area can register at any point between pregnancy and their child's fourth birthday.  
9 Market Place, Lisburn,

BT28 1AN Phone: 02892 672292 or 02892 666987  
Email: lisburnreception@brysonsurestart.org Website: www.lisburnsurestart.org

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# FAMILY GUIDE TO SUMMER HEALTH

Summer is a season of sun-drenched memories and late sunsets, but it also demands a bit of proactive planning to keep the whole family in top shape.

While it's tempting to let all routines slide, maintaining a few core health habits ensures that the season remains more about poolside fun and less about heat exhaustion or sunburn.

Staying hydrated is the cornerstone of summer wellness. By the time a child complains of thirst, they are likely already experiencing the early stages of dehydration. To keep things interesting, try "water with a twist" by infusing pitchers with sliced strawberries, mint, or cucumber. A helpful trick is to freeze water bottles halfway overnight and top them off in the morning; this provides a steady stream of ice-cold water as it melts throughout the day. Complement this by snacking on seasonal, water-rich fruits like watermelon and berries, which provide hydration and essential vitamins without the heavy "food coma" associated with winter comfort foods.

Sun safety is equally vital and requires more than just a single morning application



of sunscreen. Families should aim for a broad-spectrum SPF 30 or higher, applied fifteen minutes before heading outdoors and reapplied every two hours—or immediately after swimming. It is also wise to plan high-energy activities for the early morning or late evening to avoid the peak UV intensity between 10 AM

and 4 PM. When you do head back inside, make a habit of performing a quick "tick check," especially after hikes or backyard play, to keep pests at bay.

Finally, remember that while summer offers a break from the school run, the body still thrives on a consistent wind-down routine. The late-setting sun

can easily disrupt sleep cycles, leading to cranky kids and exhausted parents. Maintaining a predictable evening ritual helps everyone recharge for the next day's adventures. By balancing the freedom of the season with these simple health safeguards, your family can make the most of every warm, golden hour.

## 'Vets for Pets Lisburn Longstone celebrates over 10 years in Business'

Vets for Pets Lisburn Longstone Practice Owner Anna Barron-Moore BSc(Hons), BVSc, MVM, MRCVS, studied veterinary Medicine at Bristol University and after completing her Master of Veterinary Medicine in Glasgow she returned to Northern Ireland and worked as a small animal vet. Anna also has a Bachelors degree in Animal Behaviour and Welfare.

She says: "When I was given the opportunity to open my own practice, it was very important to me to make the patient experience as stress free as possible. Vets for Pets Lisburn Longstone was purpose built in 2015 on Longstone Street. We were the first Gold Standard Cat Friendly practice in Northern Ireland and currently hold Silver status. All the team are passionate about cats, with our Registered Veterinary Nurse Debbie, studying for a diploma in feline behaviour."

Anna is herself a busy working mum and running a veterinary practice isn't without its challenges! She says: "Veterinary medicine is a unique profession, name another place you can get your nails done, have surgery, an x-ray or your teeth done, all in the same day! To help enable us to offer a wide range of services we have in house blood machines, digital x-ray, ultrasound scanners and visiting specialists so that we can provide a wide range of services in house."

Last year the practice introduced the first HT

Vista machine to Ireland, an innovative, pain free scanner for the early detection of skin cancer in dogs. In just a few minutes a pain free scan can let you know the likelihood a lump in you dogs skin could be cancer; helping put minds at ease or instigate early treatment.

Also last year the practice achieved General Practice accreditation from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Practice Standards Scheme, which means they provide the highest standards of clinical care. To receive this award practices must show how they've met additional requirements that benefit the veterinary team, patients and clients. Vets for Pets Lisburn Longstone is the only GP accredited practice in the Lisburn area.

The practice is currently a 2 vet 4 nurse team but are seeking to recruit another vet so that they can maintain the level of service and appointment availability that clients have become used to.

One of the biggest challenges the veterinary industry is currently facing



is the huge amount of false and dangerous information about pet health being widely circulated online.

Anna stresses that: "Your Vet will always be the best source of information on your animal's health; we are increasingly concerned that some products making

false claims online are delaying proper treatment for patients and in many cases could be harmful to your pet.

To make an appointment or to register your pet Tel: 028 9262 8080, email lisburnlongstone@vets4pets.com or WhatsApp 07723451886

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# Horticulture Competition at Balmoral Show 2026

The 157th Balmoral Show will take place from Wednesday 13th May to Saturday 16th May 2026 at the Eikon Exhibition Centre, Lisburn.

This year's Horticulture Competition sponsored by Hillmount Garden Centre and 3T Power is fresher, more vibrant and exciting than before.

Creativity is the name of the game as participants "Create a Critter" using a colourful array of fruits and vegetables. From kiwi turtles to fruity butterflies and even cauliflower cuckoos, entrants are invited to let their imaginations run wild, combining the tastiest produce to craft their favourite animals.

Jenny McNeill, Royal Ulster Agricultural Society commented, "This year

the RUAS Horticulture Committee wanted to highlight the variety of fresh and vibrant produce at our fingertips with this creative competition.

"We encourage everyone taking part to include an array of fruits and vegetables to design their tasty masterpieces. Our other top tips are to use larger, more sturdy items for the base and smaller, lighter items to add those all-important features and finishing touches."

The competition is free to enter and has three categories for veggie visionaries of all ages

including pre-school/primary school, 12-17 years old and an over 18 category.

All entries must be no more than 50cm tall and the base must fall within a 28cm<sup>2</sup> area.

The closing date for this competition is Friday 17th April at 5pm.

The Balmoral Show in partnership with Ulster Bank will return to the Eikon Exhibition Centre showgrounds from Wednesday 13th May to Saturday 16th May 2026. For the latest updates on the Show follow Balmoral Show on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.



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## A new draft policy that aims to understand, champion and support rural communities.

Developed through an intensive co design process involving government departments, local councils, voluntary and community organisations and academic partners, the draft policy places rural voices and lived experiences of rural communities at its core.

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The 15-year policy sets out five strategic proposals aimed at bringing people and government together to help shape a thriving, sustainable and inclusive rural Northern Ireland.

The policy is guided by clear criteria to ensure it is fair, effective, delivers good value for money and can be implemented in practice.

It supports collaboration

across government, respects the roles of all Northern Ireland departments and complies with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Welcoming the launch of the public consultation, Minister Muir said: "This draft policy led by my Department is an approach to understand, champion and support rural communities. It aims to reflect the

diversity of rural areas and the experiences of those who live and work in them.

"The proposals seek to identify how people and government can work together to address the challenges and opportunities that face rural communities and highlight the need for coordinated action to support improved outcomes."

Minister Muir added: "I want everyone to talk rural. Contributions from individuals, community groups and sector representatives will play a vital role in refining the proposals and informing future decisions. Together, we can unlock the full potential of rural Northern Ireland."

Closing date for responses will be: 23:59 on 1 June 2026.

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# Revamped International Show Jumping Classes Set To Raise The Bar

Balmoral Show organisers the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS) are delighted to announce a revamped International Show Jumping schedule for the 2026 event.

The changes to last year's classes have been designed to align with the evolving trends of modern show jumping, offering athletes and spectators a more diverse and exciting range of fixtures at the Show.

The Society also confirmed that the prize money up for grabs will be allocated differently this year with a must-watch international class taking place each day.

On the opening day of this year's Show, Wednesday 13th

May, spectators can look forward to the new International Winning Round Classic competition. Recognising the growing popularity of similar competitions, the RUAS Show Jumping Committee has allocated the second-largest prize fund of the event, making the first day of this year's Show just as thrilling for enthusiasts as the last.

The three days of international show jumping will culminate on Friday

15th May with the new International Speed Challenge before all eyes fall on the renowned International Grand Prix, where competitors can also gain valuable points for the Longines Ranking leaderboard.

Course Designer for the show jumping competitions at the Balmoral Show, Colm Quinn, commented, "It is an honour for me to return as the Course Designer for one of the highest profile international show



jumping events in Ireland.

"With the volume of

spectators that attend, it brings show jumping to a wide range of people from various backgrounds not only equestrian. Therefore,

it makes Balmoral a unique event for our sport. Who knows, this may be the first experience of show jumping for a future top athlete!

"I am very much looking forward to the Show and would like to wish a successful week to all involved."

The Balmoral Show in partnership with Ulster Bank will return to the Eikon Exhibition Centre showgrounds from Wednesday 13th May to Saturday 16th May 2026. For the latest updates on the Show follow Balmoral Show on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.



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# Premiere Care and Premiere Caring at The Irish Equine Rehabilitation & Fitness Centre

Located just outside Lisburn, lies a facility that has redefining equine recovery and performance: the Irish Equine Rehabilitation & Fitness Centre (IERFC).

This state-of-the-art centre offers a holistic and innovative approach to equine rehabilitation and fitness, catering to horses of all disciplines and levels, from top-tier athletes to beloved companions. Due to impressive results The IERFC has quickly established itself as a leader in its field and in 2022 received a Royal Visit from The Princess Royal, Princess Anne!

What underlines the success of the centre? Founder and Owner Michelle Kane reveals that the business grew out of her own need to access quality rehab and fitness resources in order to rehabilitate her own injured horses.

Michelle, who has over 50 years experience, and a wealth of industry experience says: "It's vital that family ponies and horses belonging to hobby owners can access the same quality rehabilitation services as a grand prix show jumper, a 4\* eventer or a Grade 1 racehorse owners and that the cost is achievable for all. Every equine client through the doors has a bespoke plan and access to the best resources available."

A family run and family friendly business The IERFC prides itself on providing bespoke, individually tailored rehabilitation or fitness programs. The tranquil setting, with 12 stables, promotes relaxation and recovery, essential for a horse's physical and mental well-being during a period of rehabilitation. The team at IERFC team was the



A purpose built state of the art bespoke Equine Rehabilitation & fitness centre offering water treadmill with incline, cold saltwater spa, cryogenics, Class 3B & 4 Laser, Shockwave and dry salt therapy alongside post operative care.

first team in Ireland to achieve formal qualification in Water Treadmilling and have since achieved many more specialist qualifications. The Centre works closely with local vets and also with a network of world class sports injury specialists including renowned vets, chiropractors, dentists, physiotherapists, massage therapists, body workers and farriers to ensure every horse receives a comprehensive and integrated care package which is reviewed and tweaked as necessary on a daily basis.

The IERFC boasts an impressive array of facilities designed to optimise equine recovery and enhance fitness including: ECB Water Treadmill with Incline; ECB Cold Saltwater

Hydrotherapy Spa; Cryogenic therapy, Class 3B & 4 Laser to optimise healing and Shockwave therapy, all of which can be undertaken in a dedicated Treatment Room with Solarium; there is also a Standalone Dry Salt Therapy Room as well as State-of-the-Art Stabling; Carpet Gallop Anti Concussion Sand Arena and Indoor Lunge Pen; and in addition to individual grass turnouts there is also a secure graze pen.

A range of hand-picked products and supplements are available from the Centre, and The IERFC is one of only a few establishments stocking the award winning Connexion from Equine-X which promotes nutritional support for connective tissues, after successfully trialling the product for

many months. Whether it's a day visit for specific treatments or a longer-term livery for fitness bootcamp, recuperation and recovery or for post-operative care, the IERFC offers flexible options to meet each horse's individual needs. By combining cutting-

edge technology with experienced horsemanship and a dedicated team, IERFC is helping horses across Ireland and beyond return to soundness, achieve peak fitness, and enjoy a better quality of life. The IERFC is located at 6 Aghalee Road, Lower

Ballinderry, Lisburn Tel: 07522 227335 and Michelle is happy to discuss your equine's needs. Email: [ierfc@outlook.com](mailto:ierfc@outlook.com) or see [www.ierfc.co.uk](http://www.ierfc.co.uk) Article used is copyright of The Irish Equine Rehabilitation & Fitness Centre

## Revolutionising Equine Rehabilitation

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## Why Hydration is the Unsung Hero of Healthy Aging

While many health conversations surrounding the elderly focus on heart health, bone density, or cognitive maintenance, one of the most fundamental pillars of well-being is frequently overlooked: hydration.

For older adults, drinking enough water is not merely about quenching a temporary thirst; it is a critical requirement for maintaining metabolic balance, physical safety, and mental clarity. Unfortunately, as the body ages, the biological systems designed to keep us hydrated begin to shift, making dehydration a “sneaky” but serious threat to independent living.

The challenge begins with a subtle change in how the brain communicates with the body. In younger people, the “thirst centre” of the brain is highly sensitive, sending clear signals when it is time to drink. In older adults, this mechanism becomes less responsive. This means an individual might be biologically dehydrated but simply won't feel the sensation of thirst until their fluid levels are dangerously low. This lack of a “warning light” makes it much easier to slip into a state of chronic dehydration without even realizing it.

Beyond the neurological signals, the physical makeup of the body also changes in ways that impact fluid storage. As we age, we naturally lose

muscle mass and tend to gain a higher percentage of body fat. Since muscle tissue holds significantly more water than fat, the body's natural “reservoir” for fluids begins to shrink. Coupled with kidneys that gradually become less efficient at conserving water and concentrating urine, the aging body has a much smaller margin for error when it comes to fluid loss.

The consequences of this imbalance often manifest in ways that are easily mistaken for other age-related conditions. One of the most common and alarming signs of dehydration in seniors is a sudden onset of confusion or “brain fog.” This mental cloudiness can be so pronounced that it is frequently misdiagnosed as early-onset dementia or even a stroke. In reality, the brain simply lacks the hydration and electrolyte balance necessary to fire its neurons correctly. Restoring fluid levels can often clear this confusion with surprising speed.

Physical safety is also directly tied to how much water is in the system. Dehydration causes a decrease in overall blood volume, which can lead

to a condition known as orthostatic hypotension. This is that sudden, dizzy lightheadedness one feels when standing up too quickly from a chair or bed. In the elderly, this brief moment of instability is a primary culprit behind dangerous falls and fractures. Keeping blood volume steady through consistent hydration is one of the most effective ways to maintain balance and prevent these life-altering accidents.

Internal health also suffers when fluids are scarce. Water acts as the body's primary flushing agent, moving waste through the kidneys and keeping the digestive system moving. Chronic dehydration is a leading risk factor for kidney stones and can make urinary tract infections (UTIs) far more frequent and severe. Furthermore, digestive issues like constipation are often a direct result of the body trying to pull water from the intestines to compensate for a lack of intake elsewhere.

Given that the thirst reflex isn't always reliable, staying hydrated requires a more deliberate strategy than just “drinking

when you're dry.” It is often easier to focus on high-water-content foods like cucumbers, watermelon, and oranges, or to incorporate more soups and broths into the diet. For those who find plain water unappealing, infusing it with lemon or berries can make it more palatable. Taking small sips throughout the day is generally more effective—and more comfortable—than trying to consume large amounts of fluid all at once.

Finally, it is essential to remember that hydration is a balancing act that should be managed alongside a healthcare provider. Certain common medications, such as diuretics for blood pressure, increase the rate at which the body loses fluid. Conversely, individuals with specific heart or kidney conditions may actually need to limit their fluid intake to avoid putting too much strain on their systems. When managed correctly, however, proper hydration acts as the “oil in the engine,” keeping every biological system running more smoothly and helping to preserve vitality well into the golden years.

## THE RISE OF LIVED-IN LUXURY

As 2026 gains momentum towards the summer months we are collectively moving away from the “catalog-perfect” minimalism that dominated the early 2020s and leaning into something much more soulful.

For Spring/Summer 2026, the vibe is authentic, immersive, and unapologetically tactile. If your home feels like a curated collection of your life's best moments rather than a sterile showroom, you are exactly on trend.

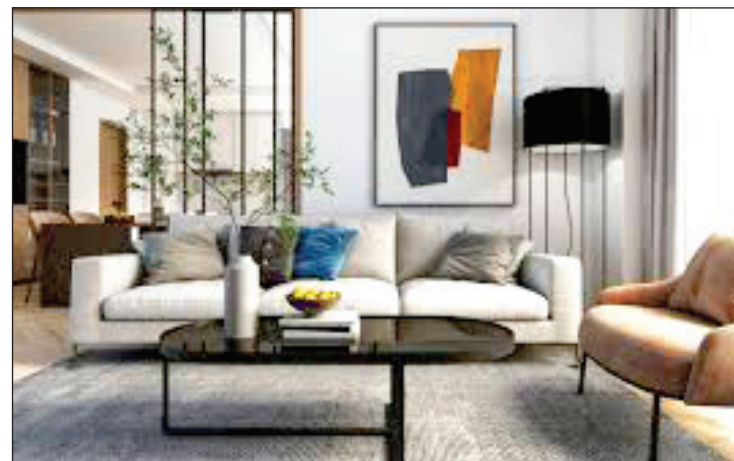
The Palette: Deep Teals and Sun-Kissed Earth

Forget the washed-out pastels of yesteryear. This season, designers are embracing colours with serious gravitas. Transformative Teal has emerged as a powerhouse shade, sitting right between blue and green to offer a look that is both dramatic and grounding.

It works particularly well when used in velvet upholstery or as a bold “colour drench” on walls. To balance this depth, we are seeing a surge in Amber and Burnt Caramel. These warm, unctuous tones replace the flat beiges of the past, bringing a sense of a sun-bleached Mediterranean retreat to any room. Perhaps most surprising is the breakout duo of Icy Blue and Burgundy; the crispness of the blue lifts the weight of the deep red, creating a look that feels both retro and avant-garde.

“Texture-Maxxing” and Materiality

The primary goal this season is to make every surface worth touching, a movement we've dubbed “Texture-Maxxing.” Light Scandi oak is taking a backseat to richer woods like walnut and chocolate mahogany, which



provide a traditional anchor to otherwise modern rooms. We are also firmly in a new Stone Age. Travertine and Calacatta marble are no longer reserved for countertops; instead, they are appearing as stone-base lamps, fluted side tables, and heavy marble trays that add physical and visual weight to your decor. To soften these hard surfaces, natural fibers remain essential. While linen is still the king of summer, it is now being joined by heavy bouclé, wool, and even wrought iron for a mix of textures that feel high-end yet entirely approachable.

The Shape of Things: Curves and Postmodernism

Sharp angles are officially out, replaced by fluid, undulating lines that feel more organic. The “skirted sofa” has returned with a vengeance, proving that what was once considered “grandma style” can be reimagined as romantic

and sophisticated with the right piping and fabric. This flows into a massive revival of European Postmodernism from the 1970s through the 1990s. We are seeing a preference for low-profile modular sofas and space-age fiberglass coffee tables that prioritize comfort and flow. The trend of “sofa-scaping” has also taken hold, where homeowners choose one massive, curved statement piece and design the entire room's energy around its silhouette.

Folk Bohemia and Fruit Motifs

Decor accents are becoming more whimsical and artisan-focused this year. We are seeing a move toward Folk Bohemia, which is far removed from the “boho” trends of a decade ago. This version is more colourful and craft-heavy, featuring Kelim rugs, intricate lattice patchwork cushions, and hand-painted ceramics.

Adding a theatrical flourish to these spaces is the rise of fruit motifs. From pear-shaped paperweights to pomegranate-shaped glass ornaments and oversized apple sculptures, these playful nods to the bounty of summer add a sense of humor and vitality to bookshelves and coffee tables.

The New Direction of Home

The overarching theme for 2026 is intention. Whether you are adding a splash of chartreuse to a bathroom or layering rugs for extra depth, the focus is squarely on how a space makes you feel rather than how it looks in a photograph. We have reached a point where we are done decorating for “the grid” and have finally started decorating for the human beings living inside. The transition from cool, clinical whites to rich, lived-in layers marks a return to the home as a true sanctuary of personal expression.

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The company offers a comprehensive range of services designed to ensure the safety and efficiency of residential heating systems. Beyond standard chimney sweeping, A&C Morrow specializes in advanced procedures such as chimney reaming and de-

scaling. These processes are critical for removing hazardous, hardened creosote and tar build-up that poses a significant fire risk. Their technical proficiency extends to the installation of cowls and bird guards, which protect flues from wildlife and debris. Additionally they provide specialized fireback replacement and installation, as well as exterior maintenance services like gutter cleaning and repair.

A hallmark of their business is the “Cleanest Sweep in Town” guarantee. By utilizing

industrial-strength vacuum systems and meticulous protective sheeting, A&C Morrow ensures that the process is entirely dust-free, leaving the customer's home as clean as it was before the service began.

This commitment to cleanliness is matched by a dedication to professional accreditation. As a member of the Northern Ireland Association of Chimney Sweeps (NIACS), A&C Morrow operates under strict safety protocols. Upon completion of any job, they issue a formal

Certificate of Completion. This document is not only a mark of quality assurance but is often a mandatory requirement for homeowners to fulfil their home insurance policy conditions. By combining 40 years of skill with certified safety documentation, A&C Morrow provides clients with total peace of mind and remains a leading choice for professional chimney care.

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# Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins meets students to discuss the Graduated Driver Licensing scheme

Minister Kimmins has met with students from St Mary's High School and Limavady High School at their new shared campus in Limavady to discuss the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) scheme.

GDL is a road safety scheme designed to reduce the disproportionate involvement of new – primarily young – drivers in fatal and serious road traffic collisions and will introduce a revised training, testing and post-test framework for new drivers and motorcyclists. It has been launched as part of a new Road Safety Strategy Action Plan, developed in partnership with the Emergency Services, other departments and agencies, focusing on the latest road safety interventions.

Minister Kimmins said: "I was delighted today to meet students from St Mary's High School and Limavady High School to discuss the new Graduated Driver Licensing Scheme and hear their views on the scheme and how it will improve road safety for younger drivers and improve progression to attaining a full driver's licence.

"This is the most significant reform to

driver licensing and testing in almost 70 years, with these changes aimed at young drivers who are sadly most likely to be killed or seriously injured on our roads.

"In 2024, there were 164 casualties (killed or seriously injured) from collisions where a car driver aged 17-23 was responsible with this age group of drivers accounting for 24% of fatal or serious collisions despite holding only 8% of licences.

"Behind these figures are too many shattered lives as loved ones set off on an everyday journey and suffer life changing injuries or never come home to their family and friends.

GDL aims to ensure drivers are not just technically competent but also safe, through structured learning, including completion of a Driver's Programme of Training and Logbook. This will better prepare drivers for both the driving test and post-test driving period by helping



Left to right in the photo is: Dr Darren Mornin Principal of Limavady High School, Cian Canning Head Boy, St Mary's High School Limavady, Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins, Harry Kealey, Head Boy, Limavady High School and Sean Mullan Principal of St Mary's High School.

learners understand how their attitude, personality, behaviour and feelings can affect their driving style.

"Road safety is a significant priority for me

and my Department, and GDL will be invaluable in helping ensure everyone who uses our roads, does so safely."

The Department will shortly launch a public

information campaign about GDL, and officials will liaise with approved instructors, the PSNI and a range of other stakeholders in advance of its introduction.

# Kimmins launches two new hard hitting road safety campaigns

Minister for Infrastructure Liz Kimmins has launched two powerful new road safety campaigns which will go live on television screens recently.

The hard-hitting campaigns – called 'Priority List' and 'Control or Speed' – address two of the main causes of deaths and serious injuries on our roads – speeding and, more generally, driver behaviour.

Launching the campaigns the Minister said: "Too many people are dying on our roads, something that has been brought into sharp focus within recent weeks. We are only just into the third month of 2026 and, tragically, 15 people have lost their lives.

"We must all do everything we can to ensure no more families are plunged into the unimaginable and life changing grief that road deaths bring to their door.

"As Minister, I want to do all I can to ensure everyone who uses our roads, does so safely. To help drive real behavioural change on our roads we need a societal conversation about how we all behave when we are travelling and, today I am launching two new powerful and hard-hitting advertisements to help stimulate that conversation.

"The first campaign, 'Priority List' challenges the everyday choices drivers make that lead to collisions - inattention, driving too close, and

momentary distractions. These may seem minor in the moment, but they can have devastating, life changing consequences. The campaign highlights how a split second decision to take a risk can end in tragedy, a scenario many of us will sadly recognise.

"The second, addresses excessive speed, which remains a major factor in deaths and serious injuries, particularly on rural roads where you are likely to encounter more difficulties. Despite the risks, many drivers believe they are in control when speeding. However, evidence shows that speed reduces reaction time, increases stopping distances, and leads to more severe outcomes. The message of this campaign, entitled 'Control or Speed', is simple: you can have

control, or you can have speed - but you cannot have both."

Minister Kimmins added: "The campaigns will run across TV, radio, digital platforms, and outdoor media, with a focus on raising awareness among all drivers with a particular focus on younger drivers.

"Alongside this work, my Department is reviewing several speed related matters, including national speed limits on rural roads and dual carriageways, HGV limits, and the wider use of 20mph zones. A public consultation is now open, and I encourage you to take part and make your views heard."


These latest road safety campaigns complement recent work undertaken by the Department for Infrastructure to improve



Infrastructure Minister is pictured with PSNI Chief Inspector Celeste Simpson at the launch of two new hard hitting road safety campaigns called 'Priority List' and 'Control or Speed'

road safety behaviour. Current campaigns include safety around school buses for children [www.sharetheroadtozero.com/DriversThinkSafetyWhenPassingBuses](http://www.sharetheroadtozero.com/DriversThinkSafetyWhenPassingBuses), Be Bold. Be Seen [www.sharetheroadtozero.com/be-bold-be-seen](http://www.sharetheroadtozero.com/be-bold-be-seen) and our most recent TV campaign

which highlights the dangers of drug driving <https://sharetheroadtozero.com/TVWebPages/never-ever-drive-on-drugs>. You can respond to the consultation on the review of speed limits here: <https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/dfi-1/speed-limit-review-2026>



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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.

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# MAINTENANCE TASKS FOR APRIL

April is nature's alarm clock, but it's also the month where your home and garden demand a little manual intervention to shake off the winter blues.

As the soil warms and the days stretch out, the priority shifts from simply surviving the cold to preparing for the "high season" of summer living. It is the bridge between the hibernation of March and the frantic growth of May, making it the perfect window to tackle tasks before they become overwhelming.

**The Garden Awakening**  
In the garden, your primary mission is to get ahead of the growth curve. The Maiden Mow is the first major milestone; when the grass finally starts to push upward, give it a light trim. It is crucial to set your mower blades high for these first few passes, as scalping the lawn too early can stress the root system. While you're out there, launch a proactive strike against weeds. Young, tender weeds are significantly easier to pull than the established monsters they will become by June.

Once the beds are clear, applying a thick layer of mulch will act as both a weed suppressant and a moisture-lock for the warmer months ahead. Don't forget the "room" outdoors either—April is the ideal time to scrub down the patio furniture and check if your wooden decking or benches need a fresh seal of oil to survive the summer sun.

**Shielding the Exterior**  
Moving to the house itself, your home's exterior has likely spent the last few months taking a beating from wind and rain. Start by inspecting the gutters; even if you cleared them in the autumn, winter storms often deposit a fresh layer of grit and stray twigs that can lead to overflows during April showers. While you have the ladder out, give the windows and frames a deep scrub. Winter leaves a greasy film of salt and pollution on the glass that dulls the natural light entering

your home. A thorough cleaning doesn't just improve your view—it allows you to inspect the seals and frames for any rot or cracks that might have developed during the freeze-thaw cycles of the colder months.

**Technical Health and Safety**

Inside the home, the focus should shift toward efficiency and safety. Before the first heatwave hits, service your cooling systems or at the very least, swap out the HVAC filters. A dusty filter forces the system to work harder, driving up your energy bills and shortening the unit's lifespan. Similarly, take a moment to pull your refrigerator away from the wall and vacuum the condenser coils. Dust buildup here acts as insulation, making your fridge work overtime to keep things cold. This is also the standard time to perform your bi-annual safety



check: test the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure they are fully operational for the season ahead.

**The Seasonal Transition**  
Finally, April is the best time for a functional declutter. As you rotate your wardrobe from heavy wools to lighter linens, be ruthless with what you put into storage;

if you didn't wear a coat all winter, it likely doesn't deserve space in your closet next year. This seasonal swap-over is the perfect excuse to deep-clean the hidden corners of your bedroom and storage areas that usually get bypassed. By clearing out the physical and mental "winter weight" now, you create a refreshed environment

that matches the energy of the world outside.

**A Quick Warning:** Before you hook up the garden hose for the first time, check your outdoor taps for hairline fractures. If water was trapped in the pipe during a freeze, the first time you turn the tap on could result in a hidden leak behind your siding or in your basement.

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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.

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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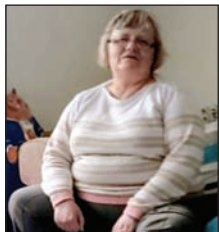
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# SlimmingWorld *feel real good*

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### JOHN & KAREN

My wife Karen joined Slimming world first around eight years ago as she has health problems and was finding things difficult moving around. I joined about seven years to give Karen moral support and as I also needed to lose weight. Karen was 17st 5 1/2lb and I was around 15st but now Karen is 11st 12lb (5st 7 1/2lb lost) and I am 12st 5lb and have been in target from 2018 and a diamond member since 2019. It has been a journey for us both but one that we needed to go on which has changed our lifestyle and how and what we eat. Slimming World gives us the opportunity to try different foods. There are no boring recipes as you can make your fakeaways and never feel hungry. We attend group every week and are now part of the social team. I was a bit worried at first going to group as at that time there was not many men going. I didn't need to worry as they accepted me straight away. So I would encourage men to join as the group is very lively and great fun. Karen and I take part in everything together so it was only



natural that we won two together last week which was an honour as this is voted for by the group. It is always nice to collect your shiny stickers and certificates when you achieve each milestone but it is important that you attend class even if you have had a gain. We are all

following the same route on our journey to where we want to be and we are all different so some might get the faster but remember it is not a race. The important thing is you need a great leader to encourage you and that is what Christine does for all of us

### ELAINE

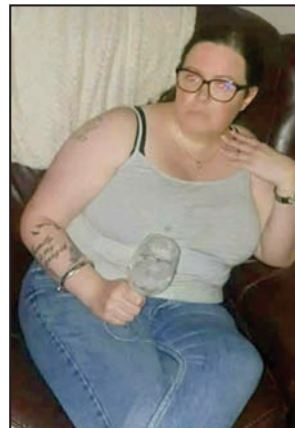
I joined my local Slimming World group at the Mt Zion Transformation Centre in December 2024. After struggling with my weight for a number of years I decided I owed it to myself and my family to make the changes to become healthier and to work on having a better relationship with food.

My weight made it difficult to exercise but now having lost 3 stone it's so much easier and enjoyable. I enjoy going to spin classes.

Slimming Worlds food optimising plan is very easy to understand and to follow. I love the fact that nothing is off limits.

I reached my target weight after 10 months and have gone from a size 16/18 to a size 10. I am now at my target weight.

The support from my Consultant Christine and the other members has made my weight



loss journey so much easier and enjoyable. I love seeing the other members in group achieving their weight loss goals too.

### MARIE

Marie joined Slimming World in April 2017. She currently attends Christine's 5.30pm session at Elim Church. Marie is at her target weight with a weight loss of 5 stone.

Marie says I love my Slimming World group. The ages of member vary from in their 20's to their 90's! Everyone is so supportive. The room is always buzzing and ringing with laughter.

I love our food optimising plan. Being able to have all my favourite foods just by making a few changes to the way I cook. One of my favourite dishes is Chicken fried rice. It's a firm favourite with the family and grandchildren. Whenever we have taster sessions in group I would always take this along. It is loved by members too.

Losing my weight has helped me gain so much in my life: my confidence, improved health, better appearance and being more active. I walk the dog several times a day and swim 3-4 times a week.

I owe my success to the members at my group for their continued support and to our Consultant Christine.



She 's always there to praise you and encourage you if your week didn't go quite to plan.

Even now as a target member I always attend my group and stay for the group session so I can encourage other members on their weight loss journey.

# SlimmingWorld *feel real good*

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