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John Toner, Finance Director, Hagan Homes is pictured with Jacob McClure-Dalzell and Keziah Dines from North Down Cricket Club.

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HAGAN HOMES ANNOUNCES THREE-YEAR SPONSORSHIP **DEAL WITH NORTH DOWN** CRICKET CLUB

The move is part of its commitment to the community surrounding its Enler Village development in Comber

Hagan Homes, one of Northern Ireland's leading homebuilders. has confirmed a threeyear sponsorship deal with North Down Cricket Club, based in Comber.

sponsorship The reaffirms Hagan Homes' commitment to the local community and its Enler Village development

Comber, where recently began phase three of the £150m site. Hagan Homes' latest venture represents

the company's most extensive project to date. Upon completion, the development will have 900 homes spread across 112 acres. This impressive undertaking is a collaborative effort involving a consortium

other renowned building firms such as Antrim Construction Company (ACC) contributing to the site.

Now, as an extra commitment to the Hagan Homes North will sponsor Down Cricket Club in Comber, which has been operating since 1857 and is considered one of the most successful

clubs on the island of Ireland.

With thriving youth section, multiple senior teams, and an inclusive approach, it aligns seamlessly with Hagan Homes' values of community engagement and support for local

Continued on page 4



Community stores come together in aid of Cystic Fibrosis

Six EUROSPAR stores including **EUROSPAR** Hardford Link, Newtownards, **EUROSPAR** Portaferry, and EUROSPAR Kircubbin recently came together to raise over £1,100 for Cystic **Fibrosis Trust.**

campaign organised by Steven Jones, Team Leader at EUROSPAR Rathgael in Bangor, whose two daughters suffer with Cystic Fibrosis. Steven decided to bring his colleagues together to fundraise for Cystic Fibrosis Trust not only to raise awareness of the condition, but to give back to the charity that has given his

family so much.

Steven said, "This charity has helped me and my family in a number of ways not only providing us with much-needed grants, but my daughters will receive lifesaving medication before the age of 12 thanks to the research which has been funded by Cystic Fibrosis

Steven kicked off the

fundraising with a quiz instore giving one lucky shopper the chance to win a hamper containing exciting prizes, including two gift vouchers for Omeya Day Spa, a voucher for Donegans Bar, a bottle of wine, sweets and chocolates.

Steven continued, "I want to thank all our shoppers and the teams from the other five stores who all got involved to help me raise money for this deserving charity. Their support means a lot to me and it was great to come together to raise a total of £1,112 for Cystic Fibrosis Trust".

The other stores that helped fundraise towards the total are EUROSPAR Gransha Road, Bangor and EUROSPAR Moat Street,













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Bridgewater Retail Park, The Boulevard, Banbridge, BT32 4LF • Belfast
Warehouse 2A Oakbank Channel Commercial Park, Belfast, BT3 9DT

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£7.4 Million Water Improvement Scheme Completed for Ards Peninsula

NI Water is pleased to announce the completion of a £7.4 million project, which will be essential to the future resilience of the water supply infrastructure, primarily in the Ards Peninsula area.

The project involved laying a key water pipeline made up of 6.7km of large diameter trunk main. Phase one of this essential work got underway in May 2022 on the Bangor Carriageway and continued down the Ards Peninsula, through Loughries and out towards Greyabbey, with work recently completed ahead of schedule.

Tzvetelina Bogoina, NI Water's Director of Infrastructure Delivery said:

"We are delighted to announce the completion of this major Whitespots/ Ards Peninsula Water Improvement Scheme, which will bring many improvements to our customers, including improved security of the local water supply.

"This key improvement scheme will also protect and future-proof the local water infrastructure for customers, businesses and tourism in the area.

"This scheme is a good example of what can be done when the



(L-R) Mark Mitchell, Gary McFadden, Tzvetelina Bogoina (all NI Water), John Murphy Farrans, Martin Gillen NI Water, Gary Farrell WSP, Shane Dolan WSP and Trea Crozier from Farrans pictured marking the completion of the £7.4 million Whitespots/ Ards Peninsula Water Improvement Programme.

necessary funding is in place and highlights the importance of continued investment in this critical infrastructure to sustainably deliver key water and wastewater services."

Gary McFadden, NI Water Senior Project Manager added:

"This scheme will greatly benefit the Ards Peninsula area, improving the

robustness and resilience of the water supply infrastructure.

"This investment will be particularly important during the winter months and other unplanned events, to ensure maximum security of supply for our customers in the local area. This investment will provide people with an improved, more reliable service.

"This scheme involved

a lot of pipelaying on busy roads such as the Bangor carriageway and through busy residential areas and NI Water and our project team, including contractor Farrans Glanua JV and WSP would like to thank the public for their continued patience and cooperation as we completed this essential water improvement scheme."





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COLLEGE AND COUNCIL INITIATIVE WIN-WIN FOR STUDENTS AND SPORT

A unique initiative between Ards and North Down Borough Council and South Eastern Regional College (SERC), is set to equip sports students with valuable experience needed for the industry whilst they gain their qualifications.

Text Scarlett Jenkins, (18), from Carrowdore, and Curtis Sinclair, (32), Newtownards, are the first to secure one-year placement through the new Student and Leisure and Fitness completing their BTEC Level 3 Sport at SERC's Bangor Campus.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Jennifer Gilmour, said:

"This collaborative approach between SERC the Council's HR and Leisure service has helped to areas this successful scheme to fruition. It been a long-held has desire for our Leisure staff to have the opportunity to develop a working partnership with SERC and their leisure studies programme. It will help to attract students into working environments leisure industry, providing them with a



wealth of experience during their early working This will not only benefit students, but it will

also benefit both SERC and the Council's Leisure

> McKelvev. Phillip Curriculum Manager, Sport and Uniformed Services at Protective SERC said:

> "This new initiative affords existing SERC
> Sports students the opportunity of one-year paid employment at the Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex in Newtownards. As well as completing their Level 3 Extended Diploma in Sport, they are enhancing their vocational

qualifications, and gaining valuable experience which will support both employment and further studies.

Sean Fegan, Operations Manager at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex, said:

"The new Student and Leisure and Fitness Associate programme aims to grow talent for the leisure industry. We are delighted to have Scarlett and Curtis join our team following a successful application and interview. Both students, who have been in the one-year Associate since October 2023, have quickly become an asset to the smooth running of the Leisure Complex. In addition, both have gained Royal Life Saving Society Level 3 Awards in Pool Lifeguarding."

The annual placement will be open to second year Sports students who will benefit from valuable work experience. Associates work on a shift pattern over four days which includes two evenings and weekends. Visit SERC for more information.



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Continued from page 1

The gold sponsorship package that Hagan has committed to will help support the club's growing Outreach which Programme engages with numerous schools and community organisations. It will also go towards developing within Academy, purchasing coaching

equipment provision for ladies, girls and youth squads

Further ground developments including artificial playing wickets and practice facilities will be bolstered by the new sponsorship, as well as a refurbishment of the clubhouse for wider community use.

The sponsorship will mean heightened visibility for Homes, with

company's logo featured on the shirts of adult, youth, and ladies sections throughout club

Other benefits include advertising prominent on and off the pitch as well as participation in many of the club's social

Hagan Homes has been actively involved in the community in Comber already, supporting events like the Comber Farmers Market for several years.

The market runs on the first Thursday of every month, featuring rich produce from local everything from foods to crafts.

It was started by the Comber Regeneration
Community Partnership in a bid to regenerate Comber and create an opportunity for local food producers to sell their goods.

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CUAN CRAIC DRAMA GROUP RETURNS

The Cuan Craic Drama Group returns to meeting weekly in Maxwell's Courtyard, Kircubbin,. This is a friendly, free group for anyone who is interested in telling stories, having some fun and meeting new people.



Led by Jenny Long, of Northern Ireland's finest and experienced most theatre practitioners, workshops are specifically designed for people aged 50, although welcome. over all are experience necessary as Jenny provides lots of guidance, inspiration and support throughout each workshop, along with a lot of laughs!

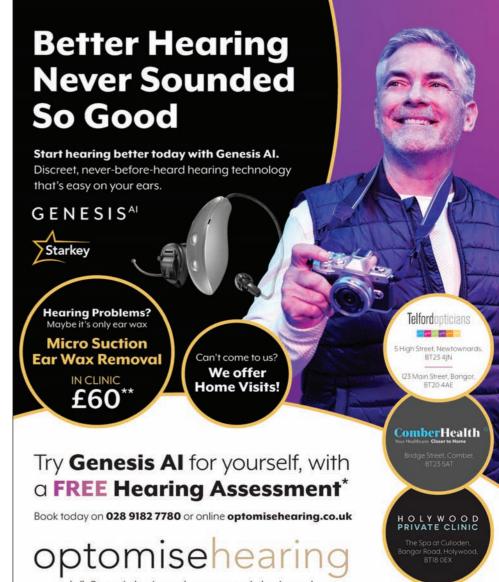
S p e a k i n g about the group, Amy McKelvey, Community Arts Development Officer at Ards and North

Down Borough Council said, "After a hugely successful performance at Portico in December, we are delighted to be starting up workshops again at end of January and we are looking for new people to join us, so if you are interested, please do get in

touch."

Cuan Craic meet on Tuesdays from 2pm - 4pm from Tuesday 30 January, for eight weeks.

If you are interested in finding out further details about the group, please contact Amy McKelvey on 028 91810803.





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Something super is happening at Oxfam Holywood

The Oxfam Ireland shop in Holywood is set to expand, with exciting plans to open the organisation's first superstore on the island of Ireland in Ards and North Down.

All will be revealed ahead of the official opening in Spring 2024 but right now Oxfam is issuing an invitation to the public to get involved from the beginning. They can do this by volunteering or donating pre-loved and unwanted items.

"The people who volunteer and support our shops are what truly makes them super," said Trevor Anderson, Director of Trading at Oxfam Ireland. "We're calling on people to be part of our exciting expansion in Holywood from the outset.

"We need people to give their time and talents as volunteers. This is a chance to something new and innovative take shape from the ground up and play a key in promoting a more sustainable way to shop and live. Our shops also funds vital raise work communities hardest hit by poverty, disaster and the climate crisis. We're encouraging all



enthusiastic people to apply – as little as four hours a week can make

a big difference. Anderson Trevor says Oxfam Holywood also needs donations: "With more to fill and more capacity for stock, we're also reminding individuals and local businesses to donate items to us. We're clothes, accepting handbags, shoes and accessories as well as homewares, furniture, books and more. This new venture is more than a charity shop,

it's a community hub and we're relying on local support to get us up and running. We also want to take this opportunity to thank our loyal customers and the public for their ongoing generous support in Holywood, support that has contributed to lifechanging work for 30 years."

Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Jennifer Gilmour, said: "I am delighted that Oxfam will be opening their first superstore in Ards

and North Down. This will not only help to raise more vital funds for their lifesaving work around the world but will also create new jobs and volunteering opportunities for local people. Support from local people will be vital to its success so I would encourage everyone to show their support by either shopping, donating volunteering at Oxfam."

People interested in volunteering or donating, can email holywood@oxfam.org.







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HOW WILL THE CUT TO NATIONAL **INSURANCE AFFECT YOUR FAMILY?**

In last year's Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced a reduction in the amount of National Insurance that employees have to pay. This change came into effect on

Employers For Childcare

This small saving is welcomed by families at this time of year when budgets are already stretched, and there will be a little extra going into salaries to help with paying the post Christmas bills.

However, while this is positive, the change to

the National Insurance rate will also have a negative impact on parents who are using Childcare Vouchers and are basic rate taxpayers, by reducing the amount savings available through that scheme.

What is the change and how might it affect

From 6 January the

main rate of Class 1 National Insurance has been cut from 12% to 10%

This means that someone on the average Northern salary in Ireland of £32,879 will see an annual gain in their net income of £406.

However, families currently making saving through the Childcare Voucher scheme will have this saving reduced by up to £58 per year, per parent, or £116 per year if two parents in a household are both in the Childcare Voucher scheme.

We are here to answer your questions

The start of a new year is good time to check that you are receiving the best form support in your current circumstances. Some households may find they are now better off claiming another form of support such as Tax-Free Childcare or Universal Credit. However, vou should

advice expert

before applying, as

eligibility criteria and

requirements for each

different

are

form of support.

Give Employers For Childcare's Family Benefits Advice Service a call on Freephone 0800 028 3008 and one of our trained advisors

will be able to give advice and information. and calculate what is the best form of support vou may be entitled to



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Grand Opera House presents This Sh*t Happens All the Time

The Grand Opera House has announced details of its production of This Sh*t Happens All the Time, a powerful take on a true love story set in 1990s Belfast, which will form part of its new programme strand 'The Studio Series', designed to champion local writers, artists, and creatives from Northern Ireland.

Written by prominent Belfast writer Amanda Verlaque, the play is set in 1990s Belfast and uses Amanda's personal experience of homophobia, misogyny, and coercive control to shine a spotlight on the societal challenges that Northern remain for Ireland's LGBTQ+ community

This Sh*t Happens All the Time is a powerful take on true events that happened in Amanda's earlier life, looking back to when the Lurgan native was an undergraduate at Queen's University in Belfast, embarking on an exciting new relationship, when her girlfriend's jealous ex-boyfriend retorted with murderous intent.

intense and moving love story is set to bring audiences on a rollercoaster of emotions and will be brought to life on stage in the intimate setting of the Grand Opera House's 120-seat Studio. Directed by Rhiann Jeffrey, the one-woman show sees celebrated local actor Nicky Harley play multiple roles to tell this true and challenging tale.

Wilson, Chief Ian Executive of the Grand Opera House said:

"This fantastic story written Amanda Verlague, first seen at the Lyric Theatre



L to R; Amanda Verlaque (writer), Nicky Harley (actor) and Rhiann Jeffrey (director).

www.

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and now produced by the Grand Opera House, of local talent, and showcases the incredible power of theatre in storytelling

"We're thrilled welcome Happens All the Time to the Theatre as part of our brand-new programme strand The Studio Series, which champions our local writers, artists.

This Sh*t Happens All the Time will run in The Studio at the Grand Opera House from 22 -30 March 2024

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Tickets are available online at goh.co.uk, telephone on 028 9024 1919 or in-person at the Box Office on Great around Victoria Street.

issues that matter. discussion This Sh*t place on Amanda Sally Bridge (PRISM), Sophie Nelson (HERe

A post-show panel will take Wednesday 27 March with writer Verlaque,

Jo McParland (Cara Friend) and Kirsty Mulholland (Pride). The panel will discuss key themes tackled in the show and issues faced by the LGBTO+ community in Northern Ireland both in the past and today.

For full details and to book tickets visit: https://www.goh.co.uk/ w h a t s - o n / t h i s - s h t happens-all-the-time/

Measles cases in Northern Ireland likely

The Department of Health has advised that it's likely there will be new cases of measles in Northern Ireland.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Professor Lourda Geoghegan has emphasised that the measles, mumps rubella (MMR) vaccine offers the best protection against the emergence of new measles infections locally.

Professor Geoghegan warned that outbreaks of measles could occur unless we act to increase the uptake of the MMR vaccine in Northern Ireland.

"There has been an alarming rise in measles infections across Europe this winter, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is currently reporting an increase in measles cases in England, and sadly last week health authorities in Ireland reported the death of an adult from measles.

"While there have been no confirmed cases of measles in Northern Ireland since it is only a matter of time before the illness is reported here. The Department is working very closely with the Public Health Agency to monitor our situation locally.

"It is important that everyone is aware that the most effective way to prevent measles is by maintaining a high uptake of two doses of the MMR vaccine. It is essential that our uptake of the full course (two doses) of the MMR vaccine in Northern Ireland is increased and we all act now to address the threat of measles."

Latest figures show that in Northern Ireland - around 89% of children had received their first dose of MMR vaccine at two years of age and 85% had received their second dose of MMR at five years of age. This means that we have fallen behind WHO recommended

uptake of 95% for two doses of MMR, achieving this uptake will protect individuals and our population from the risks of measles spreading.

Geoghegan Professor added: "We forget, because we do not now see it regularly, that measles can cause children to become very sick and some who contract measles will suffer life changing complications. We need to remember that measles can cause serious infection and illness in adults. Measles is spread through coughing sneezing, close personal contact or direct contact with infected nose or throat secretions

"We have launched an MMR catch-up campaign in recent weeks across Northern Ireland. Through this campaign we are offering MMR vaccination to those aged up to 25 years old who may not have been vaccinated at all or who are only partially vaccinated.'

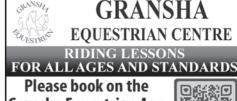
Routinely, the MMR vaccination first dose is offered when a child is one year old and the second when they are 3 years and 4 months old.

Parents and guardians of children under 6 years can protect their children by taking up the offer vaccination when contacted by their GP.

Those aged 6 to 25 years

who have missed MMR doses will be invited by letter to attend a local Trust clinic where they can be vaccinated. The MMR vaccine has been used extensively since 1988 and is proven to be safe. Adults aged 26 years and over who have missed an MMR vaccine can approach their GP to request vaccination.

Information on Trust clinics can be found at www.nidirect.gov.uk/mmr



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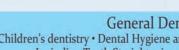
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Issue 212 - Support Local

Local team launch Optomise Hearing

Founded in Newtownards in 1999, Telford Opticians and Optomise are multi award winning eye care providers that pride themselves on outstanding local, professional and friendly service.

From January 2024, owners Len Telford and William Stockdale are excited to launch Optomise Hearing to deliver all aspects of hearing care. Now clients can receive the very best hearing care from the same team they trust to look after their eyes.

Heading up hearing care service is Jonathan Hagan (pictured), previously with Campbell in Belfast, Hearing bringing over years' experience delivering hearing care. Newtownards man, Jonathan, adds "It's great to be coming home. I've spent my whole life around Ards and North Down and I'm excited to provide hearing care to the community I've lived in. I am really looking forward to meeting clients old and new."

Like eye care, hearing care is a personalised journey that requires the hearing professional to work closely with the patient to get the best



very best outcomes for their hearing. That's why at Optomise Hearing, we offer unlimited after-care and service. We see clients in the comfort of their own home, a care home, or one of our four clinics in North Down.

Hearing health is directly connected to overall health and well-being. That's been proven, and it means that people who hear well can engage with the world around them. Whether it's

communicating with friends and family, interacting with colleagues, enjoying a film or TV show, or waking up to birds singing outside your window — when you hear better, you simply live better.

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ALL THAT JAZZ!

Brilliant Corners number 12 is back.

So, what's in store this year? An incredible mix of veterans and young'uns of extraordinary talent – every night different, every night special.

There's a brand-new suite of music written by local legend Stephen Davis. free-playing that'll blow your socks off with Alan Niblock, John Butcher and Mark Sanders, an improvising supergroup of Christy Doran, Ronan Guilfoyle Gerry Hemingway, life-affirming and moments from Seb Rochford Zoe Rahman.

We also welcome four acts to the island for the very first time - Jasmine Myra and her piece band, Luke Bacchus Quartet, Scottish trio and French trailblazers NOUT. See them before they go boom!

and Tom Ollendorff Trio with Aaron Parks make sure our afternoons are well and truly covered!



So come along and get your fill of truly incredible music. See you at the

Creative Events to Inspire Children at Young Aspects

Aspects Festival has unveiled its exciting Young Aspects programme, offering a range of creative children's events suitable for all ages.

Carnegie Library Saturday 2 March. Come and see the Doctor with a difference! The Doctors will give each patient a unique 'consultation' and a personal

particular interests!

Aspects the ever-popular Woodland Chew and Yarn, Book Inspired Yoga, a Art Workshop, Book Binding, Writing Workshops, a Bedtime Story event and more! All perfect for your little readers, writers and artists!

Speaking about

Councillor Jennifer Aspects provides excellent opportunities for children to enjoy literature and get creative. The programme of events is both educational and fun and I would encourage everyone to get involved." Aspects Festival Director, Patricia Hamilton said: "We are delighted

which have stories at their core but presented in lots of different ways and for all ages." Young is presented by Ards and North Down Borough Council and will run from - 3 March at various locations around Bangor. Tickets are on sale now. To view the full programme and to book tickets, visit: https://aspectsfestival.com/





NORTHERN IRELAND HOME TO UK'S OLDEST DIY FANATICS

NORTHERN Ireland has been revealed as the home of the UK's largest community of DIY-crazed pensioners, a new study commissioned by Hallmark Luxury Care Homes

has found. The study of 2,006 adults, aged 66 years of 2,006 and over - the national retirement age - revealed the most popular pastimes of the country's older generations to show how pensioners are shunning traditional activities in search of new experiences and opportunities.

Make do and mend

seems to be the mantra

for the over 66's in the country, with nearly a third.

Learning was also popular aspiration for pensioners in the region, popular which contained highest number of older people who wanted to try learning a new language in 2024, showing that you really can teach an old dog



And the UK's older generation were revealed to be looking to use their time to try out things they've never done before, with more than a third (37%) saying they were at least 60 years plus before they started a new interest, hobby, or activity in life.
In addition to DIY

around the home, Bee Keeping, Cold Water g, Throwing and Blowing Swimming, Pottery Glass ranked among the more surprising top ten pensioner pursuits for 2024, while a number of as parasailing or skydiving. research

showed that while mindfulness might feel a truly Gen-Z phenomenon for keeping brains in tip top condition, we could all learn a thing or two from our elders. Across the UK, the average retiree claimed they practised mindfulness as a day-to-day lifestyle with more than a third (36%) stating they engage in regular daily hobbies to keep their minds active and happy.

The study commissioned

to showcase the over 66 hopes and dreams of the nation, and to introduce the 'Hopes & Dreams Concierge' who works with residents across all 22 of their care homes to organise special activities opportunities that back to goals, hark passions and desires that residents have had since

Hallmark's belief is that at every stage of life one can still experience new moments that can ignite a fire within or make them

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VERY COMPETITIVE RATES



Here are some of the most exciting events happening in Belfast this spring 2024:

Simple Minds: Global Simple Minds will be performing in Belfast on Tuesday, 19, 2024 March at 6:30 PM as part of their Global Tour 2024

Belfast Traditional Music Trail: This is a unique way to experience music.

Stop Brunch: Join Taste and Tour on a 3-hour grazing style Sunday Belfast Brunch Tour in the city's finest quirky.

In addition to these events, there are many other exciting things to do in Belfast this spring.

Another event that is sure to be popular is the Brilliant Corners Belfast Jazz Festival, which is taking place from March 1 to March 9,

2024 2. This festival features a wide range of jazz musicians around the from world, and is a great opportunity to experience some of the best jazz music around.

If you're looking for something a little different, why not make a note to check out the Festival of Fools, which is taking place from May 4 to May 6, 2024. This festival is celebration street theatre, circus, and comedy,

features performers around the world.

A few Spring Highlights in Belfast

Finally, if you're interested in running, Mash Direct Belfast Marathon is taking place on May 5, 2024.

This marathon is one of the biggest events in Belfast's sporting calendar, and attracts runners from around the world.

information on these events and other happenings in Belfast, check out the Visit



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TIPS FOR SELLERS TO MAKE BUYERS LOVE YOUR HOME

Turning home viewers into home buyers could be an art or a science, but either way, home sellers have a lot more control over the process - and the final decision - than they may think.

Prospective buyers who are coming to view your home are usually already 'sold' on your neighbourhood and price. You just need to make sure that the property itself lives up to the expectations that have brought them to your door, and turn their hopes that this might be 'the one' into reality.

Create a sense of space
Moving home is very
stressful and the number
one reason why most
people even consider
doing so is to have more
space, or different space,
to do the things they enjoy
or to accommodate a

change in family size.

You need to show off whatever space you have, and why a good estate agent will always suggest that you de-clutter tables, countertops and cupboards and let in as much light as possible, and preferably before the listing photos are taken.

Make a great first impression

Increased security is the second biggest motivator for people to brave a house move.

There is no bigger disappointment for prospective buyers than arriving at a home that looked great online and



finding that it isn't like that in reality. Kerb appeal is what you need to get them out of the car and into the right frame of mind to really appreciate your home, and the only way to achieve it is to pay

attention to detail.

You need to win them over right from the start with fresh outside paintwork, gleaming varnish, a swept driveway, welcoming porch, wellkept garden and shiny,

clean windows.

Create a modern look
You may not have the
means, time or inclination
to put in a new kitchen or
bathroom before you sell,
but unless your home is
a national monument,

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the chances are that most buyers will be looking for a home with as many modern features as possible.

If you going are repaint, pick updated neutral that complement architecture flooring of your home. In the kitchen, consider installing new cabinet doors and hardware and countertops. bathrooms, try new towel rails, new mirrors, and a new shower curtain or laundry basket, as well fresh towels, soaps and bathmats for a clean, modern look. As for the rest of your home, new light fittings and new flooring are some of the most cost-effective updates you can make.

Clean, check and repair everything

The cleaner it is and the fewer dripping taps there are, the better. Some buyers are so critical that even a minor problem that would only cost a few pounds to repair can put them off the whole deal.

Hire a professional team if necessary to give your home a deep clean before you put it on show - and before that, cast a critical eye over every part of the property and fix anything

that is not already in perfect working order, from a loose door handle or a cracked window pane to a temperamental garage door or a rusted gutter.

Put your security on show

Visible security measures are a key attraction. Prospective buyers will be looking for burglar guards and an alarm system at the very least, but if you also have security gates, good outdoor lighting, electric fencing or a CCTV system and other security measures in place, these should be pointed out by your agent

Home interior design trends for Spring 2024.

The interior design world is buzzing with new trends and ideas. According to House Beautiful and Zillow, the following are the top interior design trends for spring 2024:

Statement pieces: In 2024, we will see a shift from filler pieces to conversation starters. Sculptural furniture is coming to the fore, which means that even your smallest side table can make a big statement.

New neutrals: The evolution of Scandiinspired design, from minimalist and to cosy and cocooning, informs an array of warm neutrals in 2024. Greys are being swapped earthy contemporary off-whites and taupes that sit so well with the natural materials and modest decoration of Scandi homes

Ruffles: Ruffles – for the most part applied to cushions and table linen – are adding a bit of fun and whimsy to our homes. It's usually matched with a gingham print, ice cream shades or candy cane stripes like these fabulous Amuse Bouche examples

from Rose & Grey.
The one-wall kitchen: The one-wall kitchen is truly an exercise in ingenuity. This diminutive layout requires a real balance between storage capacity, functionality and flow - it can be tempting to install a whole row of cabinets on your one-wall kitchen, but that can be imposing. Open shelving break, and adds opportunity for decoration - an important element in an otherwise functional

L-shaped and chaise sofas: The pragmatic amongst us are saving space with L-shaped and chaise sofas, turning awkward alcoves into seating.

These sofas are perfect for small spaces and can be used to create a cozy and inviting atmosphere in the living spaces.

in the living spaces.

Relaxed silhouettes: In 2024, we will see new relaxed silhouettes in interior design. This means that we will see more of comfortable and cozy furniture in our living

Playful trimmings:
Playful trimmings are
making a comeback in
2024. We will see more
of bold patterns, textured
fabrics, and personalized
decor items in our living

spaces

Vintage shopping: Vintage shopping is becoming more popular in 2024. It's a great way to save money and reduce waste. You can find unique pieces from flea markets and secondhand sellers destined for upcycling and repurposing.

Sensory gardens: Sensory gardens are becoming more popular in 2024. They are a great way to connect with nature and create a relaxing atmosphere in your home.

Murano glass chandeliers: Murano glass chandeliers are making a comeback in 2024.

They are perfect for adding a touch of elegance and sophistication to your living spaces.



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SPRING GARDENING GUIDE:

CULTIVATING BLOOMS AND BOUNTY

Whether you're experienced or a budding enthusiast, this comprehensive guide will help you make the most of this vibrant time of year. From planting seeds to pruning, we've got you covered!

1. Seed Sowing: The Miracle of Growth

Raising a fully grown plant from a tiny seed nothing short of miraculous. As the days lengthen and temperatures rise, it's the perfect moment to sow seeds. Here's how:

Indoor Sowing: Start seeds indoors using trays or pots. Provide warmth. light, and moisture to encourage germination.

Outdoor Sowing: Once

frost risk subsides, sow directly into prepared soil. Follow seed packet instructions for depth and spacing.

2. Planting: Giving Life a Rooted Beginning Planting is an art, and

spring offers an ideal canvas. Follow these for successful steps planting:

Choose Wisely: Select plants suited to your climate and soil type.

Prepare the Soil: Clear

weeds, amend soil with compost, and ensure good drainage.

Planting Depth: Place plants at the right depth, covering roots adequately. Water Watering:

thoroughly after planting to settle soil around roots. 3. Pruning: Shaping for

Beauty and Health

Pruning is essential for maintaining healthy plants and encouraging new growth. Here's what to prune in spring:

Dead or Diseased Remove Branches: any dead or damaged branches.

Shrubs and Trees: Shape shrubs and trees by cutting back overgrown or crossing branches.

Perennials: Cut back perennials to encourage fresh growth. 4. Lawn Care: A Lush

Green Carpet Your lawn deserves some springtime love too! Follow these tips:

Gradually Mowing: lower your mower blades as the grass grows. Aim for a height of around 2



Aeration: If your lawn is compacted, aerate it to improve soil structure.
Weeding and Mulching:

Tackle weeds early and add a layer of organic

mulch to retain moisture 5. Container Gardening: Portable Beauty

Containers allow you to create mini gardens these spring container ideas:

Colorful Blooms: Mix pansies, daffodils, and tulips for vibrant displays. Herb Haven: Plant basil, mint, and chives in pots

near your kitchen. Shady Spots: Ferns,

begonias, and impatiens thrive in shaded

6. Wildlife Gardening: Inviting Guests to Your

Make your garden a haven for birds, bees, and butterflies:

Bee-Friendly Plants: bee-attracting Choose flowers like lavender, salvia, and sunflowers.

Bird Feeders: Hang bird feeders filled with seeds and suet.

Hedgehog Hideaways: Create cozy spots with

leaf piles and log piles. Gardening Beginners: A Journey of

Green Discovery If you're new to gardening, fear not! We've got resources to

Plant Types Explained Understand annuals. perennials, shrubs, and more.

Know Your Plot: Learn about sun exposure, soil quality, and drainage.

Allotment Adventures: Discover the joys of growing your own food.

gardening isn't inst about blooms; it's about nurturing life, connecting with nature, and reaping the rewards of your So grab your trowel, don your sun hat, and let's make this spring a season of growth and beauty!

For more inspiration detailed guides, explore BBC Gardeners' World Magazine and National Trust resources

Gearing Up For a Spring Clean

For many, the onset of springtime is almost synonymous with clearing one's home



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As the days begin to get longer and the dark, inclement weather becomes but a distant memory, many wish to refresh their homes by clearing the clutter that has gathered over the last year.

This might be as simple as giving any unwanted clothes to a charity shop or might even span as far as conducting a deep clean across the whole home. If the latter appeals to you, then we

have some tips that can make the process much more effective.

It might not be something that you think about regularly, but how clean is your dishwasher?

For many of us, we simply stack up the dishwasher and assume that when the cycle finishes, our dishes will be sparkling and germ free - however this is not always the case. If not well maintained, your dishwasher can accumulate dirt without you even realising, making your dishes dirty even after they have been through a cycle.

One quick hack to fix this is to fill a dish-washer safe container with white vinegar, place this on the top shelf and set it on a high tempera-ture cycle. The results will disinfect and clean machine. Once done, you can sprinkle bicarbonate soda on the bottom and run a short cycle to freshen your

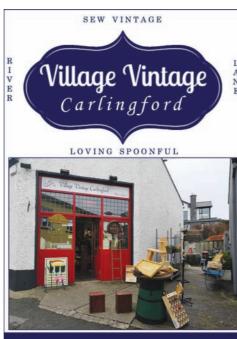
machine. Moving to your bath-

rooms, we find a similar problem. The shower is a place that we go to get clean, but if the shower itself is unclean then it can easily fail in our objective. Your showerhead can be easily descaled by filling a sandwich bag with warm water, vinegar and lemon juice before putting it around the showerhead. Once allowed to soak, the mixture will remove dirt and grime, preventing blockages and increasing

the cleanliness of your shower.

Why not add a little shine to your hardwood floors using tea bags? You read that right...tea

The tannic acid contained in tea bags is a good way of both cleaning and adding shine to hardwood floors. Simply boil a kettle, let a few tea bags steep in the mop bucket before cleaning. Note that this hack only on real wood flooring and not



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ULSTER BANK SUPPORTS RUAS TO LAUNCH THE 155TH BALMORAL SHOW

Ulster Bank and the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society have kickstarted the countdown to the 155th Balmoral Show.

With just four months to go until the 2024 event, the two parties met to announce the new attractions for this year and to confirm Ulster Bank will remain as principal sponsor of the show – marking a fifteen-year partnership between the organisations.

Returning to the Eikon Exhibition Centre from 15-18 May, this year's Balmoral Show in partnership with Ulster Bank will feature new attractions including a kids' farm, a mini Land Rover experience and sheep dog trials, along with the usual mix of livestock classes, food exhibitions and funfair attractions.

2024 will also see the introduction of a new Sustainability Village. As the agri community begins to farm more sustainably, the Sustainability Village will house a host of companies who have

already made the switch and are working in areas such as renewable energy, efficient energy solutions, environmental causes and recycling and waste reduction. Ulster Bank colleagues will also be exhibiting in the space with information on Lombard, green finance propositions, and green mortgages.

Operations Director at the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, Rhonda Geary, said the Sustainability Village was just one of a number of new initiatives visitors can expect at this year's event.

"With just four months to go until we open the gates at Balmoral Park, plans are already underway to deliver a truly world-class event and ensure that the 155th Balmoral Show is bigger and better than ever. We are particularly excited by the new Sustainability Village



and the platform this will provide for companies to engage with visitors, farmers, and food producers, to showcase the opportunities that exist for businesses

sustainability into their day-to-day operations.

Thanks to the support from our principal partners at Ulster Bank, we have been able to add more exciting attractions to the programme

and we are confident that we can build on previous events and put together four fantastic days of entertainment and enjoyment for the 110,000 visitors expected to attend the Balmoral

Show."

Early bird tickets for this year's event are already available to purchase online and the details of livestock competition entries, show opening hours, and the full programme of events will be available on the Balmoral Show website. For more information

about how Ulster Bank can support your business needs, visit www. ulsterbank.co.uk/business





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The publication editor told Woodstoc:

"Despite the obvious hardships the last two years have brought to the UK we've seen SME's work tirelessly to adapt and overcome a myriad of challenges, and we believe more than ever the incredible dedication by these enterprises should be recognized. We are delighted to give you great news that Woodstoc Ltd has been Awarded Best Timber & Garden Suppliers – County Down."

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Roy and Sheila's son Alexander now takes responsibility for crop growing and maintenance. When ready, the vegetables are harvested before being trimmed, prepared, washed, packed and labelled in the farm's packhouse

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Muir meets with local vegetable producer

Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister Andrew Muir has met with local vegetable producer and supplier, Roy Lyttle.

Roy, along with his wife Sheila and son Alexander, have been growing, preparing and packaging vegetables for over 35 years and supplying to local businesses.

During his visit, the Minister heard about the history of the business, how they grow, harvest and prepare their crops including the use of new and innovative technology. The Minister also had an informative tour the farm including the packaging facilities where he heard of the work and saw firsthand multiple stages required to prepare the crops before they are distributed to suppliers. Speaking after the Minister Muir said: "I'm delighted to visit this horticulture farm on the outskirts of Newtownards. It's been really inspiring engaging with Roy and his family hearing how the business started and has developed over the



Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister Andrew Muir is pictured with er, Sheila and Roy Lyttle on a visit to their farm where they grow, prepare vegetable and supply to local businesses

goes into growing, harvesting packaging as well as hearing about the new innovative technology being used on this farm to produce high quality

"Mv department supports the sustainable growth of our local horticulture industry help improve its overall productivity sustainability, grow the economy, and help ensure the stability of the food supply chain.

recognise the uniqueness and potential of the horticulture sector fully recognise and challenges many industry

facing. As Minister Agriculture, Environment Rural Affairs, I am determined to do what I can to support the horticulture industry here in Northern Ireland and I look forward to further engagement with the horticulture sector in the time ahead."



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Jacksons of Saintfield - find something special this Spring!

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Saintfield is a longestablished, familyrun department store located at 38-54 Main Street, Saintfield. They stock a variety of garden furniture, health foods, cookware, fashion items, and more. They are part of the Home Hardware group and offer a wide range of products including housewares, D.I.Y. materials, ironmongery

In their homeware department find beautiful wall art, sparkling décor ideas, elegant cookware, the latest Ninja air fryers or coffee makers! Some of the brands they stock include Stellar, Judge, Belleek Living, Galway Glassware, Horwood, Creuset, Nespresso.



(February) a massive garden furniture sale with six seater firepit sets from £999, Bistro sets from £199. Call in today to pick up early season deals not to be missed!

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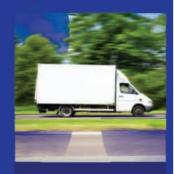


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Muir calls for an Executive to tackle North Down's poor water quality.

Alliance North Down MLA Andrew Muir has outlined the need for an incoming minister to tackle agricultural run-off and poor wastewater infrastructure which are impacting water quality at bathing waters in his constituency.

Last year, Ballyholme Beach was the only identified swimming spot that was deemed quality, and candidate bathing waters Brompton Bay and Donaghadee Harbour also failed to meet minimum standards.

Since then, Mr Muir has written to both NI Water and the Department Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to press for action on water quality in North Down.

"If we drastically improve

water quality Beach, Ballyholme Bay Brompton and Donaghadee Harbour, then we will need an incoming Executive that is willing to tackle wastewater and agricultural run-off that finds its way into the

swimming spots," said Mr Muir.

"I appreciate ongoing NI Water is doing in Bangor as part of its Drainage Ârea Plan, including the upgrades made to Brompton Road and Stricklands Glen

Wastewater Pumping Stations, however, we need to see significant investment. For too long, NI Water has been underfunded and a returning Executive address shortfall.

"In terms of the impact of agriculture, the need for an independent Environmental Protection is clear and it is that disappointing previous opportunities to opposed by all local unionist representatives. Whilst we want to encourage sustainable farming practices, the problems with Lough Neigh have highlighted what happens without effective enforcement.

"DAERA statutory duty improve the water quality at designated bathing waters, and there is work being done around nutrient pollution and management, but other measures need Executive approval to progress such as the latest River Basin Management Plan. Going forward, next DAERA Minister must provide an overall strategic direction and ensure a joinedup approach across responsible public bodies.

"I was delighted to see Brompton Bay and Donaghadee Harbour designated as candidate Bathing Waters last summer. joining Ballyholme Beach, but it is vital that swimmers feel confident that water is safe to swim in. I will continue to press the need for improvement."



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TOURISM NI LAUNCHES 'GET INTO TOURISM' COURSE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BELFAST MET

Tourism NI is urging people to `Get into Tourism' with the launch of a new accredited training course

The organisation has teamed up with Belfast Metropolitan College to deliver the free Level 2 City and Guilds qualifications.

Tourism is a growing sector in Northern Ireland and is a significant economic driver. generating wealth, jobs, exports and innovation.

In 2019, the sector was worth more than £1 billion.

Careers in the industry offer flexible working and career progression, positive aspects which are often overlooked.

The 'Get into Tourism' course has been designed to provide additional upskilling and reskilling opportunities.

is focused individuals, supporting who ordinarily would not have applied for the courses, to engage in learning and improve the skills profile of our local tourism workforce.

There are still places available on the course, which will take place at Titanic Belfast on 5th and 6th March, and is aimed at those who are interested in pursuing a career in tourism, who may have little or no experience in the sector and are not currently working in the industry.

The course will provide participants with the opportunity to explore pathways in the industry and ensure the best fit for their future career.

Participants will also have the opportunity visit some of Northern Ireland's best tourism attractions and



experiences

Those who complete will course awarded a Level qualification in the Principles of Customer

Service. The course is free and fully funded by Tourism NI.

Carolyn Boyd, Industry Development Manager Tourism NI, said:

"Working on the frontline in tourism and hospitality

is a vital role. "Visitors tell us that it is often the strength our friendliness which gives us standout as a destination," she said.

"Tourism NI delighted to work with Belfast Met to deliver this short course which will enhance customer service skills and open opportunities to those entering the sector and those already working in

Mark Rice, Curriculum Business Lead for Hospitality & Tourism Belfast Metropolitan College, said: "Get into Tourism aims to attract new entrants, providing

fully immersive tourism experience which showcases this vibrant industry and the multiple career pathways available within the tourism sector.

"Furthermore, participants will be introduced to a range of employers that currently have live vacancies and therefore exposure to real job and employment opportunities within tourism, supporting employers to recruit too.

Tourism NI and Belfast Met also recently teamed up to offer the 'Bighearted - Level 2 Award in Principles of Leisure, Hospitality, Travel and Tourism' course aimed at those who already have experience in the sector and want to refresh and hone their customer skills.

The pilot programme, which will take place at Titanic Belfast on February 22, is already oversubscribed.

Further information on 'Get Into Tourism' is available at; http:// tinyurl.com/ypw3257j

Youth on the Move with growth in yLink Card

Young people in County Down are voting with their feet as Translink reveals a massive 64% growth in the use of yLink proving more and more are choosing public transport as the smarter, greener way to stay better connected.

The card, available to everyone aged 16-21, offers 50% off single fares across all services on Translink's bus and rail network.

Commenting on increased number of young people now travelling by bus or rail with yLink, Maeve Nethercott, Brand Representative at Translink, said

"As students return for the new term it's great to see so many young people choosing to make the most of the yLink card to get to university, college, work, and to socialise with family and friends.

"We know from our engagement with young people that they are increasingly aware of the climate crises and the need for reducing emissions by changing travel behaviour towards more sustainable

"The cost of living crisis has also severely impacted on young people so the 50% discount is also helping them to make their money stretch a little further combined with the partner offers for social, leisure and lifestyle activities that come with a yLink card.

"In addition, contactless payments on Metro, Glider, and Ulsterbus, alongside the mLink app allows users to add their yLink card to their virtual wallet to make it even easier to travel and

"This next generation of voung movers are leading the way towards a smarter, greener and healthier region connected society for all.

Natalie Corbett, Interim



Co Director at the Northern Youth Forum. Ireland "We know from our engagement with young people that climate and cost of living are two issues high on their list of Access to good public transport services is extremely important to

enable young people to travel for school, college, uni, work and socialising.

"More affordable public transport through initiatives like the free yLink card with 50 percent off fares makes travel even more accessible and makes it easier to choose sustainable travel

options - ultimately helping both the planet and their pockets."

more information For Translink's yLink about card and how to apply, as well as details of exclusive and partner initiatives, visit translink.co.uk/yLink





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NI MARVELS ARRIVE FOR SPRI

As a 3-door model in its fifth generation, the all-electric MINI Cooper underscores the brand's tradition with its hallmark MINI design and stands for urban driving fun.

The new MINI Country-man has grown in external dimensions and offers its passengers even more space, comfort, and safety - even beyond paved roads thanks to all-wheel drive. The new MINI Cooper and the new MINI Countryman are both fully electric, guaranteeing locally emission-free driving and emphasising the exceptional position the MINI has in its respective segment combining distinctive

design, advanced drivetrain technology and an immersive digital experience.

Electrified go-kart feeling and an immersive user experience take the MINI DNA to a new level. The new allelectric MINI Countryman has grown and emphasises its suitability for setting out on adventures beyond the city limits. In addition, the MINI Aceman is set to premiere in April 2024 as a crossover in the premium

able locally emission-free mobility and allow MINI drivers to adapt them to their different lifestyles and requirements. The hallmark MINI creative use of space offers maximum flexibility as well as enabling a high degree of variability in terms of interior design. The user experience takes a noticeable technological leap with the MINI Operating System 9, which has been optimised for touch and voice control. The round OLED display, the MINI Interaction Unit, is both an instrument cluster as well as the centre of experiences and comfort.

small car segment

The new vehicles en-

Textile surfaces revolutionise the aesthetic appeal of the interior by reducing it to the essentials and adding a new level of well-being and warmth.

into its fifth Going generation. model the MINI Cooper 3-door still

embodies the core of the brand. As an all-electric vehicle, the new MINI is available in the Cooper E variant and as the Cooper SE, featuring higher output and range. Within the new MINI family, "Cooper" refers to all MINI 3-door and 5-door models, and also the MINI Convertible. It is no longer used as an engine specification. The classic

round headlights and the striking octagonal grille are the dominant features of the front section, making the model the characteristic face

In the interior the design of the front section harks back to the elegantly mini-malist design of the classic Mini with a slim and generous dashboard and a multifunction steering wheel for

hallmark MINI go-kart feeling. The central OLED display, the MINI Interaction Unit, sets a new standard with its high resolution and contributes to the heightened presence of the circular instrument, which has a diameter of 240 millimetres

The new MINI Intelligent Personal Assistant can be activated by saying the words "Hey MINI". Being

able to control numerous functions with voice control increases comfort, facilitating greater concentration on driving. The newly designed reduced toggle bar with five switches includes all driving functions and is ideally positioned for the driver below the circular instrument. The gearshift has been eliminated to create additional storage space between the front seats. In the wireless charging area in this storage space, mobile

devices can be charged and

conveniently accessed at any

Higher, longer, MINI with an additional six centimetres in height and thirteen centimetres in length, the new MINI Countryman has grown noticeably compared to its predecessor, offering even more space and com-fort. Wider wheel arches and a clear, modern design enhance the crossover aesthetic appeal of the rugged

The MINI Operating System 9, which has been optimised for touch and voice control, together with the central OLED display with a diameter of 240 millimetres and many new, digital ad-ditional functions in the MINI Connected Package, noticeably raises the level of hallmark MINI driving fun in the cockpit of the MINI Countryman This also becomes apparent in the newly designed multifunction steering wheel with two-spoke design and optional textile strap instead of the classic lower spoke Compared to the MINI Cooper, the air outlets in the cockpit are arranged verti-cally and, together with the upright dashboard, emphasise the character of the new MINI Countryman

The new electric 2024 MINI Cooper arrives in showrooms in April, priced from £30,000.



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MAINTENANCE CHECKS EVERY MOTORIST SHOULD BE DOING

Motor insurance experts at One Sure Insurance, have shared their checklist of essential car maintenance tips, to identify whether your car is likely to need any repairs

Many of these checks can be performed at home, but you will need some assistance from a mechanic to replace some of these parts.

Battery performance check

Car batteries supply the electrical current for the starter, engine, and other components, electronic and the car will often fail to start if this is not working correctly. January is a good time to check the performance of the car battery as colder winter weather can affect its ability to hold its charge.

The first, and probably

most obvious sign of battery failure, is the ignition struggling to start or the engine not turning on at all.

If your engine starts fine, but you notice a red battery warning light appear on your dashboard this should not be ignored. This warning light often looks like a small rectangular box with a plus and minus sign in-

If this light is permanently on, it indicates a replacement battery is needed, while a flickering light means the connection may be faulty. You may also notice that the vehicle's headlights are dimmer than they should be since they are receiving less electric power.

Car batteries usually last between three and five years when properly cared for, but various factors can affect their lifespan. You can check the health of a car battery by connecting a voltmeter to see if the reading is between 12.4V and 12.7V or not, or by seeing if the headlights are dimmer than they should be.

It is recommended to get the car battery replaced by a garage or car



repair service due to the risk of acid spillage and exposed electrical wiring. Brake performance check

With some roads being at risk of ice and snow throughout January, it

is important that your brakes work correctly. Although many car models use different brake systems, there are still signs of brake failure that can be spotted before they become dangerous

The brake fluid should be replaced every couple of years, and there are a couple of checks

drivers can do that themselves. Check your dashboard to see if your car brake warning light is on, telling you your brake fluid may be low

or that your brakes need replacing if the fluid is

already full You may also feel hear unusual noises when braking, such as squeaking or grinding sounds from the brake pads.

See if the brake fluid

levels are between the minimum and maximum lines in the brake fluid reservoir under the bonnet on the master cylinder. Otherwise, it might

need topping up. The main indication of broken brakes is the brake pad wear warning light on the car's display indicating they board, may be almost worn out. However, not all cars

so have your car checked immediately by a qualified professional if you think your brakes are faulty at all. It is advised that you have your brake discs and brake pads inspected every 10,000 miles anyway to prevent potential accidents, but this depends on driving habits and car parts.

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DE-ICERS AND WINTER CHECK

BATTERIES, WHEEL TRIMS, CAR CLEANING ESSENTIALS

VAUXHALL OFFERS NEW CUSTOMERS ONE YEAR'S FREE EV CHARGING CREDIT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TESCO

Vauxhall is partnering with leading supermarket Tesco to provide new Vauxhall electric vehicle (EV) customers with one year's free charging credit at stores across the country.

by leading provider Pod Point, Tesco holds 2,700 charging bays across 619 Tesco stores nationwide making it the country's largest supermarket charging network, with a mix of 7kW, 22kW, 50kW and 75kW charging stations.

While the charge points are accessible for all EV drivers, new Vauxhall retail customers who purchase an electric Vauxhall car or van direct from a Vauxhall retailer will be able to benefit from one year's worth of free charging credit when visiting Tesco.*

As part of the partnership all 2,700 charge bays across Tesco stores will be updated with a Vauxhall & Tesco co-branded livery.

With millions of visitors per month and over 3.8 million charging sessions per year, Tesco stores are found within a 10-minute drive for over 70% of UK population, allowing greater ease and convenience for EV drivers across the country.

Vauxhall's partnership with Tesco comes as part of its Electric Streets of Britain initiative. Electric Streets of Britain was



needs

introduced to address lack of charging provision in the UK, following exclusive research that revealed over 70% of UK councils surveyed did not have a published strategy in place for residential onstreet charging for electric vehicles, and that 69% of local authorities had yet to install any on-street chargers.2

Through of Streets Vauxhall has established an help improve Local understanding Authority of residential on-street

working

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residential EV chargers installed near them can register their interest at www.electricstreets.co.uk. The information in this national database will then help councils across the UK to determine where best to focus their investment and help as many people as possible to make the switch to electric

want to have on-street

By the end of this year, Vauxhall will offer a fully electric version of every car and van model in its line-up. Vauxhall was the UK's best-selling electric van manufacturer in 2023. while the Corsa Electric was the UK's best-selling small electric car and the Mokka Electric the bestselling electric compact crossover model last year.

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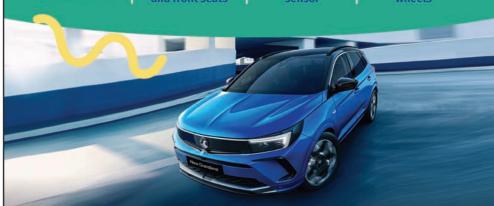
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FRESH LICK OF PAIN

Spring is a time of renewal and rejuvenation, and what better way to celebrate the season than by giving your home a fresh coat of paint?

Here are some of the best paint colours to use this spring:

Coral Reef: This shade of coral is perfect for adding a pop of colour to any room. It pairs well

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with white or light gray walls and can be used as an accent wall or on all four walls of a room

Fresh Mint: This light green hue is perfect for creating a calming and

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any room. It pairs well with tan or cream walls and can be used as an accent wall or on all four walls of a room

relaxing atmosphere in

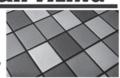
English Yellow: This sunny yellow shade is perfect for adding a touch of warmth to any room. It pairs well with white or . light gray walls.

Nancy's Blushes: This soft pink hue is perfect for creating a romantic and feminine atmosphere in any room. It pairs well with white or beige walls and can be used as an accent wall or on all four



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Sky Blue: This light blue hue is perfect for creating a cool and calming atmosphere in any room

It pairs well with white or earth toned walls.

View: Eagle's lavender hue is perfect for creating a fresh and unexpected look in any room. It pairs well with white or pastel walls and can be used as an accent wall or on all four walls of a room.

Piranesi Pink: pale peachy pink hue is perfect for creating a soft and romantic atmosphere in any room. It pairs well with white or natural toned walls and can be used as an accent wall or on all four walls of a

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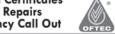
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ESSENTIAL HOME MAINTENANCE TASKS FOR SPRING

Repair rotted wood: After winter snow melts and the April showers leave your property damp, it's a good idea to inspect for signs of rotted wood.

If you find any areas in need of replacement, use a filler to polyester rebuild the damaged areas. First, use a 5-in-1 tool to remove the rotted wood from the area. Then press the filler into the recesses of the wood with a putty knife, building up the layers as needed until you have a smooth profile. You should have between 10-15 minutes to work with the polyester filler before it begins to harden. The new structure will take paint well and won't rot again in the future.

Sharpen garden Pruning, tools: clipping and shearing most useful are when clean, precise cuts to the plant are accomplished, and the

only way to guarantee that is to regularly maintain your tools. Pruning shears, hedge shears and clippers each have two sharp surfaces which are finely ground at the factory to their most efficient angle. Pick up a new 10-inch mill file at your local home center, and file the blades along their original factory bevel Clean

Clogged gutters can cause water damage to your home. Clean your gutters and downspouts to ensure that they are free of debris. Use a ladder to reach the gutters and wear gloves to protect your hands. Remove any leaves, twigs, and other debris from the gutters and

gutters:



downspouts. Flush the gutters with water to ensure that they are clear of any remaining debris.

Pressure-wash patios

decks: Winter weather can leave your patio and deck looking dirty and dingy. Pressure-washing an easy way to clean

these surfaces and restore them to their original condition. Rent a pressure washer from your local home centre and follow

the manufacturer's instructions for use. Be sure to clothing protective and eyewear when using the pressure

Repair windows: Check your windows for any cracks or gaps that may have developed over the winter. Fill any gaps cracks in the window frames invest in new. This will help to prevent drafts and keep home vour more energy-efficient.

Clean dryer vents: Lint build-up in your dryer vents can be a fire hazard. Clean your dryer vents to ensure that they are free of lint and other debris. Disconnect the drver from the vent and use a vacuum cleaner to remove any lint from the vent.

Reconnect the dryer to the vent and run it for a few minutes to ensure that the vent is

clear.

Inspect your roof: Inspect your roof for any damage that may have occurred over the winter. Look for any missing or damaged tiles, and check for any signs of leaks. If you notice any damage, contact a professional roofer to make the necessary repairs.

Clean If chimney: have a fireplace, it's important to have your chimney cleaned and inspected annually. Hire a professional chimney sweep to clean your chimney and ensure that it is free of any debris or blockages.

Service your lawn mower: Get your lawn mower ready for the

What is the best city in Northern Ireland to buy a home in?

Bangor is the least affordable city in Northern Ireland to own a home in. Meanwhile, Lisburn offers the best work-life balance in the country.

On a national level, five cathedral cities top the list of UK cities with the least disposable incomes after paying their basic bills and mortgage rates. Among bigger UK cities, Bath is the least affordable place to own a home in in England; Newport – in Wales; Bangor – in Northern Ireland; and Edinburgh in Scotland. Newcastle is the #1 UK city that leaves homeowners with most disposable income. In Scotland, this is Aberdeen; in Northern Ireland - Lisburn; in Wales - Wrexham.

UK-based data collection experts SmartSurvey reveal how much disposable income average-earning homeowners living and working in every UK city would have after paying their basic household bills and mortgage rate. The study evaluates and

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compares median property prices and median PAYE earnings, as well as gas, electricity, water council tax bills in 73 cities across England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The mortgage rates are calculated equally, based on a 10% deposit and a fixed 5% interest rate over 25 years.

Which Northern Ireland cities are least and most affordable for homeowners

Bangor is the least affordable city in Northern Ireland, largely due to having the highest bills (£418) and home prices (£245,000). Median earnings of £1,985 are not proportional to the costs of owning a home in Bangor. After paying their mortgage rate and basic bills, two average-earning homeowners here would have £1,844 to spare for expenses every

month. This is the lowest disposable income of all Northern Ireland cities and £626 below the next least affordable city, Newry.

People in Lisburn enjoy the best work-life balance of all city dwellers in Northern Ireland.

Despite having the second most expensive homes in Northern Ireland (203,161), salaries are the best here (£2,298). Average homeowners living and working in Lisburn can pay their

utilities monthly and mortgage and still have £3,000 nearly month to cover any other household costs.

The median price for a city home in the UK is £260,000. City generally residents earn £2,154 a month. gas, electricity, water and council tax "rates" in Northern Ireland) bills amount to £348 every month, while mortgage are estimated at £1,520.

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This leaves two averageearning city homeowners with £2,440 in disposable to cover all their other household costs.

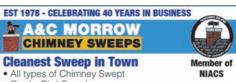
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