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Issue 242 - East Down BT24 • BT30 • BT31 • BT33

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Content creator Steph Duke and family with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Gareth Sharvin

Lottery Heritage Awards Community Heritage Park

Saintfield Community Association has welcomed the news that their application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for a grant to provide a community heritage park at the Windmill Field has been successful.

The three acre site behind Saintfield Community Centre is home to an early 19th century windmill tower, flour mill and millers cottage that are of heritage importance in the area, and the park design includes work to stabilise these key buildings and make them safe to enter. The park is now expected to become a reality before the end of 2025.

The site for the park contains the only surviving buildings of an industrial complex from the 18th and 19th centuries. The windmill was built in 1803 and operated until 1839, when the sails were blown off in The Big Wind and never repaired.

It is a testament to the high-quality work of the stone masons that the tower is in such good condition today.

The final design for the park takes into account feedback from public consultations over the past few years and so provides access for all abilities from the community centre car park to the higher ground in the park, including two interpretation panels and viewing points for the windmill and railway track bed.

A team of volunteers has been working for 10 years to provide the shared outdoor space for the residents of the Saintfield area. Saintfield Community Association is looking for new volunteers who would like to be a part of this exciting project. See the website www.discoversaintfield.com for more information.

WHERE YOU SHOP MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Over the past number of weeks residents in Newry and Downpatrick may be aware of a fresh new advertising campaign featuring local faces on outdoor advertising and digital sites.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Make It Local spring campaign carries the strapline 'Where You Shop Makes a Difference' and was designed specifically to encourage residents to support their high streets. By introducing some of the friendly faces behind Newry and Downpatrick's

independent businesses, the campaign focuses on the message that small business owners are a vital part of our communities - they are our neighbours and our friends.

The campaign highlights the local offering in Newry and Downpatrick. From fantastic gift shops, boutiques, family-run

cafes and restaurants to independent retailers, town centres enrich communities and add value to people's lives. Now is the time to show your local area some love.

The campaign has been funded by the Department for Communities (DFC), which has also supported an incredible free

programme of events in Newry and Downpatrick over the last three months including temporary, interactive sound and light exhibitions, enhanced St Patrick's Day celebrations and a free classical Easter concert.

Continued on page 4

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Newry, Mourne and Down Job Fair Will Support Employers' With Current Job Vacancies

Local employers from the Newry, Mourne and Down are being given the opportunity to promote their current job vacancies to local residents at an upcoming Job Fair on Friday 24 May in Newry, hosted by Newry, Mourne and Down Labour Market Partnership.

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

Now in its third year, Newry, Mourne and Down Job Fair is an excellent platform for businesses across the district to promote live employment vacancies and engage directly with potential employees interested in starting, progressing or shifting careers.

Local employers can promote and recruit for current vacancies across a range of various sectors including manufacturing, professional services, health care, finance, hospitality, transport and many more. Vacancies

can range from full-time to part-time, and flexible and casual roles, with global, local and family-owned businesses.

Launching the Job Fair at the Canal Court Hotel, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Valerie Harte said, "Employers across our district can promote their current employment vacancies and connect with talented individuals. The regional Labour Markets are currently driven by high demand from employers, resulting in tight competition. The Job Fair presents a valuable opportunity for our indigenous businesses to directly interact with potential employees. By showcasing their current job offerings, businesses can actively contribute to their growth and long-term success. Exhibition space at



previous Job Fairs have been oversubscribed, so employers are encouraged to register their interest as early as possible to secure their place.

The Job Fair will take

place in the Canal Court Hotel on Friday 24 May from 10.30am-3pm. Employers wishing to exhibit for free can register by emailing dfcemployerservices@communities-ni.gov.uk



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YOUNG PEOPLE SPEAK OUT ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is delighted to announce the winners of the Environmental Youth Speak Competition 2024 which took place recently in the Downshire Civic Centre.

This annual Sustainability team aims to empower the next generation to become environmental leaders.



Clogher Valley Show

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The event saw twelve talented pupils from local schools present their environmentally themed speeches to a panel of judges. Pupils submitted their speeches online initially and the top eight primary school pupils and four secondary pupils were selected to perform their speeches in person at the final.

The judges were very impressed by how thought-provoking and informative the speeches were with each participant demonstrating a deep understanding of the importance of their topic. Primary school pupils spoke on the topic "I'm an Energy Detective and I've been busy investigating how to save Energy. Here's what I found", while Secondary schools

were asked to speak on "How do we feed the world without destroying the planet". After listening to all of the speeches the judging panel chose Josie Hughes from Grange Primary School, Kilkeel as the Junior champion and Lily-Ann O'Loughlin from Our lady's Grammar School, Newry as the Senior champion. Runners up in the junior section were Aaron Taylor from Drumlins Integrated Primary School, Ballynahinch and Natasha O'Connor from St Mary's Primary School, Killyleagh. Runners up in the senior section were Akshara Sawant from Sacred Heart Grammer School, Newry and Catherine Ogle from St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen.

Highly commended were Ethan Miller from St Louis Grammar



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson Councillor Valerie Harte pictured with Environmental Youth Speak Competition Finalists. Front Row (L to R) Josie Hughes, Grange Primary School Kilkeel; Daire McGrotty, Annsborough Integrated Primary School; Aaron Taylor, Drumlins Integrated Primary School Ballynahinch and Lily Rose McAlinden from St Bronagh's Primary School Rostrevor.

Back Row (L to R) Cara Trainor, Sacred Heart Primary School Dundrum; Akshara Sawant, Sacred Heart Grammer School Newry; Sharon McMasters, Community Outreach Manager New Leaf Compost; Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Assistant Director of Sustainability, Conor Sage; Senior Champion Lily-Ann O'Loughlin, Our lady's Grammar School Newry; Ethan Miller, St Louis Grammar School Kilkeel; Catherine Ogle St Joseph's High School Crossmaglen; Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Head of Sustainability, Eamonn Keaveney and Myla Chigariro, St Malachy's Primary School Castlewellan.

School, Kilkeel, Primary School, Daire McGrotty from Annsborough Integrated Primary School; Cara Trainor from Sacred Heart Primary School, Dundrum; Myla Chigariro from St Malachy's Primary School, Castlewellan; Ellen Strain from St Malachy's Primary School, Camlough and Lily Rose McAlinden from St Bronagh's

particular environmental themes thoroughly. Combating climate change and protecting the environment is an important role for everyone and it is encouraging to hear pupils talk so passionately about energy saving techniques and sustainable food production. Cllr Harte continued, "I would like to thank all

the schools and students who took part in the competition this year. Empowering the next generation to speak out is a hugely important part of effective global climate action." All participants received a commemorative certificate, voucher, goodie bag and a bag of New Leaf compost for taking part.



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Continued from page 1

It is widely recognised that experiences and

initiatives assist in creating vibrant and sustainable town centres. The package of funding was provided to market

and animate our high street offering in the aftermath of the autumn flooding that severely impacted parts of their commercial centres.

Department for Communities Minister Gordon Lyons said, "I am pleased that my department is supporting this campaign, as small business owners are a vital part of the community. This initiative highlights the great local shops, family-run cafes, restaurants and independent retailers in the Newry and Downpatrick area. It will encourage people to visit local businesses and high streets, therefore stimulating the local economy, especially in the aftermath of the recent flooding that severely impacted parts of the town centres."

Thanking DfC for its support, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson Councillor Valerie Harte said, "The Council recognises the challenges faced by its businesses in the aftermath of the recent flooding. I would like to extend my thanks to the Department for Communities for providing funding that allowed us to carry out this advertising campaign and programme an exciting range of experiences in the heart of Newry and Downpatrick. The funding allowed us to demonstrate our support for our local business and high streets in a practical and creative way. We want everyone to know that 'where you shop makes a difference' and encourage everyone to continue to do so."



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Local Tourism Industry Discovers District's Hidden Gems

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council was pleased to host a series of familiarisation trips for local tourism businesses and visitor information centre staff recently.



Members from the local tourism industry visited local attractions and accommodation – Montalto Estate, Slieve Donard Hotel and Spa and the Green holiday cottages in Kilkeel - as part of a series of familiarisation trips organised by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, which showcased the diverse attractions, experiences and offerings available throughout the district.

As part of the Council's ongoing efforts to promote sustainable tourism development, enhance the visitor experience in the destination and foster collaboration within the industry, these familiarisation days showcased the diverse attractions, experiences and offerings available throughout the district.

From its rich heritage and vibrant culture to its delectable culinary offerings, there is an

abundance of tourism experiences on offer and something for everyone to enjoy. During the trips, industry members had the opportunity to immerse themselves in the natural beauty of Mourne Gullion Strangford. They explored historic sites, took part in both indoor and outdoor activities and sampled the delicious local cuisine, gaining firsthand experience of the unique charm and hospitality of the area. Participants also

had the chance to network with fellow industry professionals, exchange ideas and forge valuable partnerships.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Valerie Harte said, "The purpose of the familiarisation tours was to create an awareness amongst the industry of what there is to do and see for visitors. The tours were more than just a sightseeing venture, they

were a learning journey and extremely important as a catalyst for collaboration.

"As ambassadors for our area, it is essential to be well-informed about the attractions and amenities we have to offer visitors. During the trips, participants got to uncover the hidden gems, embrace the authentic experiences and hear the stories that will captivate visitors from around the globe, leaving a lasting impression on all who venture here."

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Mourne Gullion Strangford Hosts Tourism providers from Neighbouring aspiring Geopark

In a recent exchange trip funded by the Shared Island Civic Society Fund, tourism providers from the Joyce Country and Western Lakes aspiring Geopark, on the west coast of Ireland, travelled to meet their counterparts in the Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark.

Internationally, UNESCO Global Geoparks promote the economic development of Geoparks through sustainable tourism. UNESCO also encourages networking between geoparks to improve collaboration, particularly across borders where it can help peace-building processes.

An important opportunity for knowledge sharing and learning, this partnership between the two Geoparks aimed to create stronger and sustainable cross-border civic relationships, opening opportunities for collaboration and partnership working.

During their visit, the representatives from the Joyce Country and Western Lakes aspiring Geopark, visited tourism operators, businesses and locations across Mourne Gullion Strangford discussing the challenges of sustainable tourism, learning about tourism experiences that are currently being successfully delivered and the difficulties that they have overcome during the process.

After meeting with the tourism representatives



Newry, Mourne and Down Council District Council Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Gareth Sharvin welcomes tourism business representatives and staff from the Joyce Country and Western Lakes and Mourne Gullion Strangford Geoparks, who came together in knowledge exchange trips funded by the Shared Island Civic Society Fund.

of both Geoparks, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Gareth Sharvin, said, "The tourism businesses who operate within our Geopark are vitally important to us. Mourne Gullion Strangford has internationally significant geology but one of the things that makes it so special is that we have such a vast array of

tourism providers delivering authentic experiences. They act as ambassadors for the Geopark, promoting an appreciation for our natural, built, and cultural heritage while supporting the sustainable economic development of the area. It is the passion, commitment and drive of our local tourism ambassadors which is so special to the visitor experience in Mourne

Gullion Strangford Geopark. He continued, "I was delighted to meet the group from the Joyce Country and Western Lakes aspiring Geopark, this exchange is a wonderful way for the two to share the successes and learn with and from each other, enhancing both our tourism offerings." For more information see website - <https://mournegullionstrangfordgeopark.com/>

New Visitor Amenity Facility Announced for Tyrella Beach

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is delighted to announce the appointment of an Integrated Design Team to deliver new visitor facilities at Tyrella Beach to assist with improving the overall Visitor Experience.

The Council's vision is to enhance the visitor experience at Tyrella Beach, and this project will help achieve this through the provision of a new amenity building. It is essential that Council continues to deliver and provide quality infrastructure to service visitor requirements within the district. The investment in Tyrella Visitor Amenity will support new toilet facilities, exterior showers, a first aid room and storage facilities which can be used by lifeguards and other essential services. It is anticipated that the new visitor facilities will be operational and open for the summer of 2025.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Valerie Harte said, "This is an important project that will support Council in delivering a quality outdoor experience for both visitors and locals. Tyrella Beach is an important natural resource to showcase the Geopark and important local flora and fauna whilst providing a quality beach landscape for a wide range of outdoor activities."



Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Valerie Harte is pictured (L-R) with Andrew Donald-Gleeds, Caolain Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital Projects and Procurement-Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Alan Simpson - Gleeds and Michelle Boyle, Head of Tourism Development and Visitor Experience at Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Tyrella has been awarded the prestigious Blue Flag Award annually since 1997 in recognition of high levels of beach cleanliness, safety, water quality and management. Tyrella Beach and Dunes, is also a designated Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). With a wide, flat, sandy beach two kilometres long and backed by 25 hectares of mature dunes

in a conservation area, throughout the year visitors can enjoy scenic walks and gain an insight into the habitat of local flora and fauna. Our district is fortunate to have achieved Blue Flag Status at 3 beaches, Cranfield, Murlough and Tyrella and each year during the summer period, the Council provides a Lifeguard Service at these

facilities, which attracts a significant number of visitors. Council is keen to promote the district as a premier outdoor destination, and the recent UNESCO Global Geopark status for Mourne Gullion Strangford helps showcase the 600 square miles of premier outdoor landscape and 100 miles of coastline, with the district offering a wide menu of activities and tourism

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Local Woman's Inspiring Career Shift

For Ballynahinch woman Emma Smyth, being a social worker wasn't something she had thought she would be. Her journey to get where she is now happened in a more organic way.

It was when she was in school and had to look at her options for the future, social work was first mentioned to her. Up to that point, Emma had been working on a deli counter, and it was there where she was inspired by other people.

She explained: "I felt a bit stuck. I worked on a deli counter when I was in school and met all kinds of people. The more I worked there the more I got to know all of the people who came in and I began knowing their needs.

"I met people with learning disabilities and with physical and mental health challenges' I had a real affinity for all of them and I would do whatever was needed to help them. Then when I was talking to my careers teachers they suggested social work because I had natural empathy."

After applying for the course at Queen's, Emma was fortunate to be accepted on her first try. However, after becoming pregnant with her daughter, she decided it was best for her to defer for a year so she could complete the course in full without time off.

Speaking about the direction she thought she would go in social work, Emma explained: "I've

been lucky as I have been qualified for ten years this year, so I have had opportunities to work in different sectors. But at the beginning my interest was actually piqued by the criminal justice side of social work, so I thought I would be a probation officer."

What always kept Emma from giving up on her goals was her daughter. After having her at a young age, Emma had a lot of responsibility and determination to prove people she could do it.

After completing her last placement in children's services, she was offered a permanent position in the physical disability team in Downpatrick, where she gained her first experience with palliative care and stayed for the next two years.

After this Emma landed what she thought was her dream job in probation. However, she explained things don't always go the way you think they will, around this time Emma's mum passed away and she experienced a negative experience with her treatment and care.

Emma used her mum's death as a driving force to motivate her on her journey



into palliative care. Her perspective began to change.

She explained: "Because of how blindsided we were by my mum's death, I started to look into palliative care and I wanted to be a part of that."

When a role came up working in hospice care with Marie Curie, Emma knew it was perfect for where she wanted to be in social work.

She said: "It's so nice to know our support is wanted and appreciated. There's such a feeling of privilege to work in palliative care. A lot of the people in my field are here because it's more than a job to them."

The Bereavement Cafe is a new project of Marie Curie, where people can come together and help support

one another during their grief journey.

Emma said: "Grief is a natural emotion and it's something we have to go through. Just because you're in the process of grieving doesn't mean you need counselling, but the cafe was a way of creating support in an informal setting. It is peer-led and you don't need to sign up for it. People can come to as many or as few as they like."

Making a difference is something Emma feels like she is doing most days at Marie Curie, having a positive effect on lives.

For more information on how you can train to be a social worker in Northern Ireland go to <https://niscc.info/degree-in-social-work>



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Acorns are the jay's primary food, and there would be no jays without acorns. Indeed, there would be fewer, maybe no oaks, without jays.

They are members of the smart crow family, about the size of jackdaws, and like their 'cousins' the magpies, have beautiful feather colours, in the case of jays mostly pink, black, white, and distinctive electric-blue wing

panels. They live year-round in mainly broadleaf woodland, but also sometimes in heavily wooded suburbs. But you're more likely to hear than see one (they screech), because they are notoriously secretive.

The best time to see them, other than as a flash of colours, is about October in woodland, where, if you stand stock-still and are lucky, you might

watch them feeding on the ground; if you twitch at all, they will be gone, almost literally in a flash.

They are feeding mainly on acorns but may be seen carrying them off in their beaks, because, being smart, they have a cunning plan to see them through the winter months by hiding them, mostly in the ground. They are expert at relocating

their caches, but will not find them all, meaning some acorns will germinate and develop as new trees.

When acorns fall from oaks, they are food, not just for jays, but squirrels, mice, deer, even wild boar back in the day, and if the jays didn't cache them far from the parent oak, they might all get eaten. Also, of course, if acorns did germinate beneath an adult parent oak, they

wouldn't thrive and probably would die in the shade.

Oaks need jays to distribute their offspring, and jays need oaks to provide their food.

Nature is interwoven, and there are many examples of plants and animals which evolved critical relationships, what scientists call a symbiosis. The oak, acorn and jay combo is just one of them.

JVA



New tax year sees changes to the support available to families

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Employers For Childcare

The Spring Budget announced which impact saw a number of changes families, including a

reduction in National Insurance Contributions for most employees, changes to Child Benefit and an uplift to benefits and pensions.

National Insurance From April, there has been a cut in the main rate of Class 1 National Insurance from 10% to 8%. Following the previous reduction from 12% in January, this means that someone on the average salary in Northern Ireland of around £33,000 will see a reduction in their National Insurance contributions of £817.

However, parents who use Childcare Vouchers to pay for registered childcare will see the level of savings they can make through this scheme reduced as a result of the cut to National Insurance.

Child Benefit From April, the lower threshold at which families lose some of their Child Benefit has risen from £50,000 to £60,000 meaning that parents earning up to £60,000 will now receive the full Child Benefit amount. Child Benefit will not be fully withdrawn until individuals earn

£80,000 or higher. Uplifts in benefits and National Living and Minimum Wages

From April 2024 benefits, including Universal Credit and Tax Credits, have been uplifted by 6.7%.

There has also been an increase in the National Living and Minimum Wages of approximately 9.8%, with the age threshold for the National Living Wage lowering from 23 to 21.

The State Pension and Pension Credit have also been updated, in line with

average earnings growth of 8.5%.

We are here to help you. We know it can be difficult to work out what financial support is available for your family and to interpret what these changes mean for you. We want to make sure all families are receiving everything they are entitled to. For free, impartial and confidential advice, call our Family Benefits Advice Service on 028 9267 8200 or email hello@employersforchildcare.org.

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Situated along the Mourne Coast they operate 4 award winning caravan parks. Regularly featuring in the UK's top 100 parks, and recent winner of the Staycation Awards they provide top class facilities. Waking up to the sound of the sea

or drawing your curtains to the Mourne mountains in the morning or both, is a real possibility.

Whether you are interested in touring, camping or caravan hire, or would prefer to own your own holiday home, there is sure to be a holiday experience to suit you!

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family and friends, then contact Chestnut Holiday Parks.

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Hundreds of Local Families celebrate World Autism Acceptance Week

Northern Ireland's autism charity, Autism NI, recently welcomed hundreds of local autism families to celebrate World Autism Acceptance Week at W5 in Belfast.

The event saw families come together to celebrate and show their support for our autistic community.

The Family Fun Day was the final event in a week of celebrations hosted by Autism NI. The Charity organised several activities and campaigns with local businesses, schools, families and the wider public during World Autism Acceptance Week, which is taking place from 2nd – 8th April 2024.

Autism NI CEO, Kerry Boyd said, "Our key message this World Autism Acceptance Week is to 'Be Kind To Different Minds'. It is vital that everyone within our society takes the time to understand autistic people and learns how to support our autistic community, whether that is within the classroom, at work or within the local community. Our Charity's mission is to build an inclusive society in Northern



Ireland where autistic children and adults have the best support and opportunities to live fulfilled lives, and we need the general public to help us achieve this.

Ms Boyd continues, "It was fantastic to see so many families across Northern Ireland come together for our Family Fun Day. Nearly a thousand children and families came together to enjoy the fun

interactive activities on offer. It was a day where our children could really be themselves in a safe setting, and I would therefore like to thank our amazing volunteers that made this possible."

Local Mum, Pauline Taggart, adds "Days like this let my child be free and enjoy time with other children without fear or judgement, and it is also good to interact

with other families and share experiences."

With over 35,000 autistic people in Northern Ireland, the local charity is encouraging everyone to get involved and show their support for our vibrant autistic community.

To find out more or for further information please call 028 9040 1729 or visit www.autismni.org

The Little Green Allotments BIG DAY OUT

You are invited to attend The Little Green Allotments BIG DAY OUT 3F White Mountain Road, Lisburn.



All proceeds will be in aid of Lost Paws NI & Make a Wish UK. There's also the chance to Win a £100 cash prize at our talent show! There's also lots of Workshops, Food and a really Fun Dog Show!

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Tullywest Manor features a large lounge, dining room, entrance hall with seating area and a spacious conservatory, where residents can circulate and meet with each other and relatives.

Each tastefully decorated bedroom, most with ensuite, offers complete privacy where residents are encouraged to express their own personal tastes.

Tullywest recognises the need for a person-



centred approach to care. Encouraging staff to learn more about the Residents lives helps us tailor our care to each individual need.

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WAYS TO ENJOY YOUR GARDEN EVEN MORE THIS SUMMER

Summer is the perfect time to enjoy your garden, and there are several ways to make the most of this season.

Here are some easy tips to help you create a beautiful and enjoyable outdoor space!

Water Effectively:
 Thoroughly water the soil surrounding your plants rather than doing it little by little. This encourages deeper root growth and reduces the need for frequent watering.

Create small pools of water around your plants to allow proper absorption. Well-hydrated plants will thrive in the summer heat, giving you more time to relax and enjoy your garden.

Feed Your Plants:
 Regularly feed your plants to keep them

healthy and vibrant. Use a general-purpose plant food for most plants, but choose one specifically designed for edible plants if you're growing fruits or vegetables.

Set a reminder to feed your plants according to the instructions on the packaging.

Add Instant Colour:
 As summer progresses, some plants may stop flowering, leaving gaps in your garden. Summer bedding plants are an excellent solution.

These low-cost plants add instant colour and work well in containers. Position them near outdoor seating areas or your front door to enjoy

their showy blooms.
Refresh Your Garden Furniture:

Old, worn-out garden furniture can affect the overall look of your outdoor space. Consider investing in new pieces such as a dining set, outdoor sofa, parasol, or deckchairs.

Fresh furniture creates a welcoming atmosphere for family gatherings and guests. Choose comfortable and stylish options to enhance your garden's appeal.

Host a Summer BBQ:
 Invite friends and family over for a barbecue. Set up a cozy outdoor dining area with fairy lights, cushions,



and a grill. Enjoy delicious food, good company, and the warm summer evenings in your garden.

Grow Your Own Fruit and Vegetables:
 Use a small corner of your garden or even containers to grow your own produce. Tomatoes, herbs, and strawberries are great choices.

Harvesting fresh fruits and veggies from your garden adds a rewarding touch to your summer experience.

Create a Relaxing Nook:
 Set up a quiet corner with comfortable seating, perhaps under a pergola or near a water feature.

Add soft cushions, potted plants, and maybe a good book. It's the perfect spot to unwind and enjoy the tranquility of your garden.

Outdoor Lighting:
 Install outdoor string lights, lanterns, or solar-powered path lights. Illuminate your garden for cozy evenings and magical nights.

Lighting creates a warm ambiance and extends your garden enjoyment into the late hours.

Remember, your garden is your personal oasis, and these simple steps will help you make the most of it during the sunny months!

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FUTURE-PROOF YOUR HOME

Is your home geared up to support the needs of you and your family in the coming years?

Ensure a sound structure. There's little point investing in smart tech and eco-improvements to upgrade your home if the basics have not been met. Future-proofing your home starts with a sound structure that will last for many years.

With a solid structure, the next step in future-proofing your home is to make sure it can be flexible to meet your needs, both now and in the future. You need a home that can evolve as needs change. In practical terms, this means a home that has the potential to accommodate the needs of multigenerational living, that can offer versatility and accessibility.

Here are four popular ways to do this: Broken-plan layouts. The open-plan layout is hugely popular in the UK. However, as property prices rise and people live longer, more families will likely come together under one roof. A broken-plan layout helps to accommodate the needs of a multigen-

eration family in the same home. While cooking and dining together in an open-plan kitchen-diner is great, older generations might appreciate a quieter living area to relax. Similarly, many family members might crave a calm, tech-free zone. Broken-plan layouts help to create zones within an open-plan setup, offering a sense of separation within a shared space. This can be done with structural elements such as partition walls or sliding, moveable walls. It can also be done with distinct features such as furniture or different flooring.

An extension. With the potential to house more family members under one roof in the future, an extension could be a worthy investment. A well-designed extension will typically add value to your home while also making the most of unused space. A side-return extension is a good example of this. Consider how your family will use the newly

extended space and build these factors into your plans. For example, in a kitchen extension, make the layout as spacious as possible to give everyone plenty of room to move around. You could also build accessible elements into your kitchen design. If a home extension is not possible, why not consider a garden room? A garden room offers tremendous versatility, extra space (outside of the main hubbub of the house), and they tend to add value to your property.

A conversion. Remember, your home setup doesn't have to remain static. Rooms can be converted to service different requirements as the need arises. Many of us will appreciate how our homes adapted during the pandemic to allow working from home. Going forward, you may wish to consider conversions that offer greater accessibility. For example, a second reception room could become a ground-floor bedroom,

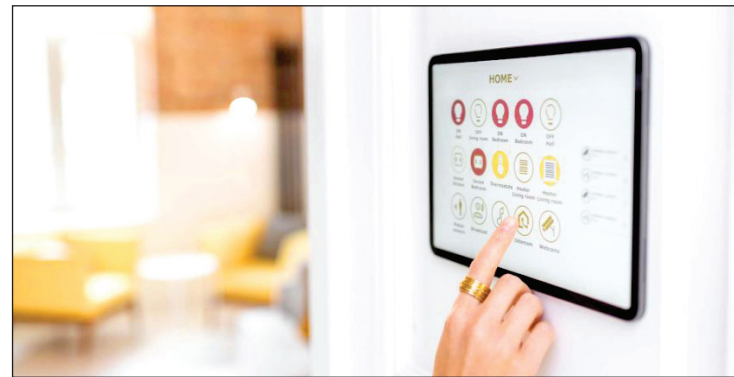
and a downstairs WC could be changed into an accessible wet room. Or perhaps you're able to consider more major changes such as a loft, garage, or basement conversion.

Exterior landscaping. It's not just the inside of your home that might need to offer greater flexibility in the future. The outside of your property may also need some consideration. Younger family members will enjoy space to play and run around in the garden. However, older family members may appreciate a paved area in a sunny corner for a morning coffee, and a raised bed to plant some veggies. Pathways and gentle slopes are good forward-planning moves as an alternative to steep steps. Meanwhile, careful planting will make sure your garden design brings everyone joy with the desired amount of maintenance. And remember, your garden is a natural extension of your home – the perfect

space to enjoy as a family. Outdoor seating, lighting, and even heating can help everyone to make the most of what it has to offer.

Finally, if three generations (or more!) all inhabit the same home, where will they all park their cars? If you don't have a driveway, consider adding one. It can add between 5-10% to the value of your home as well as being more convenient than on-road parking.

Incorporate smart technology. Smart home technology includes a range of internet-connected systems that we use in the home on a daily basis. This includes our heating, lighting, security, home entertainment systems, and more. Smart technology is becoming increasingly popular, offering greater control, versatility, and cost savings to homeowners. And with multiple generations in a household, smart home tech can offer peace of mind and



help to make life easier. For example, being able to turn the heating on and off remotely to help lower your heating bills, setting reminders on smart devices, checking who's at the door with a video doorbell, or installing a smart lock for keyless entry.

Make eco-improvements. Future-proofing your home with eco-improvements does require an initial investment. But you will save money on your energy bills

in the long run. If you have multiple generations in one home, this decision will pay dividends in the future. In addition, a sustainable home is environmentally friendly and a major draw for home buyers, no doubt adding value to your home. There are various ways to future-proof your home with eco-improvements: Outside, install solar panels to generate your own energy, a solar battery storage system to store and use any excess electricity,

and an EV charger. Inside, major eco upgrades include renewable heating systems, underfloor heating, retrofitting insulation, and double-glazing. Less disruptive options include choosing energy-efficient appliances, low-flow sanitaryware, LED lighting, and a boiling water tap.

For this and more information and inspiration see <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/expert-advice/future-proof-your-home/>






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GO COUNTRY IN THE KITCHEN!

If you're hoping to add a touch of country style to your home, you're in the right place.

Here, we share a selection of our favourite country style home ideas. We've put together some of our favourite farmhouse kitchen ideas, to set you off on the right foot.

Florals
Florals are synonymous with country cottage decor. You can incorporate blooms into your home through a number of innovative ways. Choose cushions, throws and curtains that are adorned with a floral fabric that you love. Alternatively, a big vase full of beautiful fresh blooms definitely does the trick.

Vintage furniture
One of our favourite farmhouse decor ideas is using vintage furniture to add style and personality to your home. You can source vintage pieces from a multitude of different places but Facebook Marketplace is definitely one of our favourites - and you'll be able to bag a true bargain! Go on an adventure to your local antique stores to see what goodies you can pick up. Look past the colour of your chosen

piece of furniture as you can always give it a new lease of life by upcycling it with a pot of paint.

Incorporate green
Spice up a country kitchen by incorporating colour. Sage green is popular for farmhouse interiors. It feels warm and comforting as well as evoking images of the natural world. So, why not reinvigorate your current kitchen design by painting your kitchen cabinets sage green, giving it an instant refresh? Alternatively, if you don't want to make permanent changes, introduce sage green into your kitchen through your choice of accessories and plants.

Rustic wood
A key element of countryside interiors is wood. Choosing a kitchen design that is made out of raw timber is a popular choice for rustic lovers. However, if you're looking for ways to update your current kitchen space, you could instead add wooden touches with open shelving, chopping boards and rustic utensils



If you have the space, add a 'bootility' area to your kitchen. Put simply, this is a designated space for you to take off your shoes and store your bags and coats. Having this functional area means you won't clutter other areas of your home. Style up a country style boot room with classic checked floor tiles, wall panelling and handy wall hooks.

Exposed brick
Exposed brick in a kitchen is effortlessly

chic and stylish. It's a popular feature for a country kitchen look and will add a rustic touch to any space. If you don't have red brick behind your plaster, then you can install brick slips. Brick slips are basically a thinner version of bricks - a brick tile as it were - that creates the same look without the requirement of stripping your walls.

Farmhouse accessories
Style up a plain kitchen design with farmhouse

accessories to create a country inspired space. Lay a hessian runner over a kitchen island or dining table for added texture.

An oversized candle or two will not only look great but will fill your kitchen with your favourite scent. Decorate open shelves with rustic kitchen accessories and ceramics.

Article used courtesy of <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/ideas/country-style-home-ideas/>



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CLEAR THE DECKS!

Maintaining your decking is essential to keep it looking great all summer long and to prolong its lifespan.

Here are some tips for decking maintenance:

Before starting any maintenance, remove any furniture, planters, or debris from the deck surface. Clearing the area allows you to focus on cleaning and treating the wood effectively.

Avoid dragging furniture along the boards to prevent damage.

Sweep and Wash:

Begin by sweeping the deck to remove loose dirt, leaves, and debris.

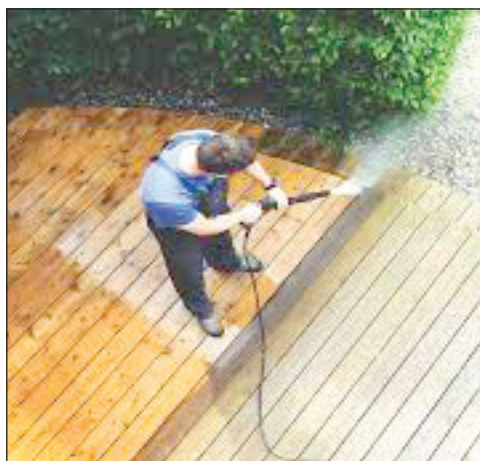
Use a power washer or hose to wash the deck thoroughly. If there's any algae or moss, blast it off with the power washer.

For stubborn stains, consider using a decking cleaner or restorer.

Inspect and Repair:

Regularly inspect the deck for signs of wear, such as loose boards, protruding nails, or rot.

Replace any damaged boards promptly to maintain the deck's integrity.



Choose the Right Treatment:

The type of treatment depends on the deck's condition:

Untreated Deck: If the boards look dry, grey, or silver, they are likely untreated. Consider using a decking preserver or oil to protect the wood.

Previously Treated Deck: If the deck has a coloured finish (like a coating-type decking stain), check for signs of cracking, peeling, or flaking. You might need to reapply a similar treatment or switch to a different one.

Mould and Algae: Shaded

decks may require better protection from mould and algae due to falling leaves and damp conditions. Choose treatments that address these issues.

Annual Maintenance:

Twice a year (in spring and autumn), give your decking a thorough cleaning to remove dirt, grease, and slippery algae. Apply a decking stain, oil, or protector once a year to restore its appearance and protect it from UV damage.

Remember, regular maintenance will add years to your deck's life and keep it looking fantastic!

BRING A TOUCH OF COUNTRY CHIC INTO YOUR HOME

If you're looking to infuse your home with the timeless charm of the countryside, here are some tips for creating a warm and inviting country-style interior:

Relaxed, Natural Colour Scheme:

Start by choosing earthy tones such as creams, greys, and pastel hues. These colours create a light, open space that promotes a sense of calm. Imagine the tranquility of a country retreat!

For a bolder touch, don't be afraid to incorporate bright vintage reds and pops of deep blue. This quintessentially old-fashioned palette adds interest to neutral rooms.

Mix and Match Patterns and Textures:

Embrace an eclectic, casual style by combining different patterns, textures, and colours.

Think checks, chintz, and velvets. These elements lend charm to country interiors and create a welcoming atmosphere.

Bring the Outdoors In: Celebrate the natural



world by incorporating elements like animal prints, botanical motifs, and organic materials. Consider using florals and cotton-rich fabrics to evoke the beauty of rural aesthetics.

Vintage Accents and Treasured Knickknacks:

Let your country home reflect your character. Introduce zany accessories and proudly display treasured possessions on rustic mantelpieces or upcycled shelves.

These personal touches create the perfect homely welcome.

Remember, country style is all about warmth, authenticity, and a connection to nature. Infuse your living space with these elements, and you'll create a timeless and inviting atmosphere that celebrates the beauty of rural aesthetics!

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Why Outdoor Play Matters for Kids!

Playing outside isn't just about fun—it's a crucial part of a child's development.

From newborns to toddlers, the great outdoors offers a wealth of experiences that contribute to their growth and well-being. Let's explore why outdoor play is so important:

Better Sleep for Babies
Research shows that babies sleep better at night if they've had some fresh air and sunshine during the day. So, that stroll in the park or playtime in the backyard isn't just enjoyable—it also promotes better sleep for your little one.

Fun Learning Opportunities

Outdoor play is a brilliant sensory experience for babies and toddlers. The ever-changing nature of the outdoors stimulates their senses, allowing them to see, explore, and learn. As they touch leaves, pinecones, and puddles, they're gaining valuable experiences through all their senses.

Motor Skill Development
Young children need opportunities to use their whole bodies and develop both gross and fine motor skills. Whether it's crawling, toddling, running, or jumping, playing outdoors provides the space for physical exploration. Picking up natural treasures



like leaves and fir cones also hones their fine motor skills.

Encouraging a Healthy Lifestyle

Outdoor play helps children burn off energy, promoting a healthy lifestyle. Physical activity supports better sleep, healthier eating habits, and overall well-being. These positive habits established during childhood can last a lifetime.

Environmental Awareness
Being outdoors allows children to connect with nature. They become aware of the environment, appreciate its beauty, and learn about the world around them.

Making Friends and Building Social Skills
Outdoor play helps children grow socially. They learn to form friendships,

knowledge and appreciation are more likely to become environmentally conscious adults.

Positive Impact on the Whole Family

Fresh air has a magical effect on parents too! Even a short walk outside can lift spirits, blow away the cobwebs, and improve everyone's mood. It's especially helpful after a sleepless night or during grumpy moments at home.

So, the whole family benefits from outdoor adventures. Remember, the benefits of outdoor play extend beyond the playground—it's an investment in your child's health, happiness, and future.

Outdoor play helps children grow socially. They learn to form friendships,

respond to physical interaction, and use their imaginations to entertain each other. Problem-solving, relationship-building, and respect for nature all happen naturally during outdoor play.

In summary, outdoor play isn't just about swings and slides—it's a gateway to holistic development. So, grab those wellies, head outside, and let your little ones explore, discover, and thrive in the great outdoors!

Remember, the benefits of outdoor play extend beyond the playground—it's an investment in your child's health, happiness, and future.

Take the Plunge – Wild Swimming

For many, swimming in the ocean is reserved only for far flung locations where the water is more akin to a bath than a glass of icy water.

However, the benefits of wild swimming are manifold and doing so can have a long-lasting positive impact on your health.

The majority of the benefits associated with open swimming are based on the cold temperature of the water – something that those in Northern Ireland are familiar with. The cold water often found in the oceans is proven to stimulate your parasympathetic nervous system which promotes a sense of relaxation and can deliver a better night's sleep.

Whilst it might be a nightmare for some, submersing your body in cold water forces the brain to release certain endorphins which have been shown to boost the mood and increase general happiness. Another consequence of the cold temperatures is the positive impact that it can



have on ones metabolism. The cold water forces your body to work harder to keep warm, which in turn, increases the calories that you burn. As the temperature of the water decreases, the amount of energy that your body will burn to stabilise the core temperature increases, thus accelerating your metabolism.

For those seeking the secret to naturally youthful skin, open water

swimming could be for you. The cold water is known to exfoliate the skin, removing impurities and smoothing out blemishes.

Alongside aesthetic benefit, spending one hour in cold water can shock your immune system and help produce more white blood cells as well as antioxidants – leaving your body better able to combat illness.

Finally, wild swimming

is good for promoting better circulation. The cold water forces out body to rush blood to our organs in order to retain a core temperature, making the heart work harder as more blood needs to be circulated. The increased blood flow through your capillaries, arteries and veins promotes good health and enables the body to both better fight infection and repair damage.

Rosie's Space Hypnotherapy

Rosie Maguire, a specialist hypnotherapist, offers effective and friendly hypnotherapy services for anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbance.

Her practice is based at Down Business Centre outside Downpatrick, Northern Ireland. Rosie provides both face-to-face and online sessions, where clients learn how to use hypnotherapy to find solutions tailored to their unique situations and circumstances.

As someone with experience dealing with chronic illness and disability within her immediate family, Rosie has found solution-focused hypnotherapy to be the most effective and long-lasting therapy. She is passionate about supporting and guiding people back to their smiles.

Rosie's approach is gentle, encouraging, and personalized, making her a trusted resource for those seeking relief from anxiety, depression, and sleep issues.

Here are some details about Rosie's Space Hypnotherapy:
Services and Pricing:
General Therapy Session (60 mins): £35
Stop Smoking Session (90-120 mins): £65
Introductory Package (Initial consultation and 4 sessions): £130
Shamanic Session (60 mins): £35

All new bookings receive a follow-up phone call to introduce the therapy.

Contact Information:
Phone: 07736 151708
Email: rosie@rosies-space.co.uk

Practice Address: Office 6, Knowledge House, Down Business Park, Belfast Road, Downpatrick, Co Down, Northern Ireland, BT30 9UP1.

Whether you're seeking relief from anxiety, depression, or sleep



Rosie Maguire Specialist Hypnotherapist in Anxiety, Depression and Sleep Disturbance AfSFH, NCH, KGH, Nurturing Birth

disturbances, Rosie's Space Hypnotherapy provides a supportive and effective environment to help you on your journey toward

well-being. If you'd like to learn more or book an appointment, feel free to reach out to Rosie directly!



Specialist Hypnotherapist in Anxiety, Depression and Sleep Disturbance



Find your smile!

Life happens to us all. Sometimes we lose our way, and sometimes events in our lives knock us off our feet and we can find it difficult to get back up again. This can leave us feeling that we are no longer in control of our lives, of our future, and that we are stuck somewhere we don't want to be. We can lose our smile. We can find ourselves in a lonely place where we don't feel understood, and where no-one else can reach us. But don't worry.

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With 'Bags go Free' HANNON Coach & Sail is perfect for city shopping in Glasgow!

Direct Belfast – Glasgow Express now departing from Belfast, Europa Bus Station.

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

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

Scotland's premier shopping destination.

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

With a simple flat fare of £44 which includes the cost of the ferry and your bag, our Belfast – Glasgow Express offers a really attractive, convenient and low-cost alternative to flying.

The service is operated by HANNON Coach and

leaves twice a day from Belfast, Europa Bus Station and drops visitors right in the heart of Glasgow's 'Style Mile'. The simple flat fare allows passengers to pick and mix dates and times of travel to suit and with no luggage charges it makes a perfect travel option. There are also a great range of hotels just minutes from Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station.

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

the city centre.

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

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

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



Introducing Padel54 – the new activity just down the road in Moira!

Ever thought about trying Padel for your next friends, family, team-building, customer or corporate event? Whatever your preference, we're here to make it happen.

Played by celebrities and sports-stars padel is the fastest-growing racquet sport across Europe. The BBC recently highlighted the sport and its growth across the UK & Ireland.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-68607780>

It's perfect for team building because it combines fun and physical activity in an easy-to-learn game suitable for all ages, fitness levels, and skill sets. And, it's great for socializing and networking.

Situated in Moira, less than 20 minutes from Belfast with easy access from the

motorway, Padel 54 has six indoor courts ensuring your team event takes place no matter the weather.

At Padel54, our primary mission is to ignite the passion for Padel by introducing this sport to as many members of the community as possible.

Our special focus lies in introducing the game to the younger generation, and we're actively seeking sponsors for our youth and local school programs.

https://www.instagram.com/padel_54/

<https://www.facebook.com/Padel54NI/>
www.padel54.com

Arts and Heritage Summer Programme Unveiled

Ards and North Down Borough Council proudly presents its Arts and Heritage Summer Programme, spanning the May to August period.

Bursting with an array of events, exhibitions, and creative classes, alongside exciting events at Ards Arts Centre and North Down Museum, the diverse programme offers cultural experiences for everyone.

Highlights from the Arts and Heritage Summer programme include the popular Friday Night Live series of events which will see musicians Brigid O'Neill and Wilkie Gilbert take to the stage at Ards Arts Centre. The Ulster Orchestra return

to Bangor Abbey in June for another enchanting evening of classical music presented by a small ensemble.

The picturesque setting of Bangor Castle's Walled Garden will host the acclaimed ForM Sculpture Exhibition in June, showcasing the works of artists from all around the island of Ireland. World-famous magician and household name, Joel M will appear at Space Theatre, SERC, Bangor in July where audiences can witness the

impossible as he shows off his latest and greatest illusions!

The annual Creative Peninsula festival in August offers an abundance of opportunities to try your hand at arts and craft practices. Featuring workshops from talented local artists, studio visits and the fantastic Creative Peninsula in the Square event, there's plenty to get involved with!

For anyone wishing to learn a new skill or perhaps develop

existing skills, Ards Arts Centre has lots of creative classes on offer – from silversmithing to calligraphy, drawing to ceramics and lots more! Enrolment for classes opens online booking is now open.

North Down Museum also has a busy Summer ahead. Highlights of their programme include a series of Ulster Scots events for children, taking place in August. From the Children's Ceilidh, where kids can learn traditional group dances,

to the lively Wiggly Weans event where little ones will delight in singing rhymes and mastering ceilidh moves. The museum will also host the RNLI's 200th Anniversary exhibition, opening in June. The exhibition will explore the important role played by the RNLI and their volunteers since the first lifeboat station opened in the borough in 1858.

Speaking about the programme, Emily Crawford, Arts and Heritage Manager with

Ards and North Down Borough Council said: "We have a really exciting and varied programme of arts and heritage activity with music, exhibitions, hands-on classes and lots to entertain younger audiences. We hope you'll visit us at Ards Arts Centre and North Down Museum this Spring/Summer."

Tickets are now on sale. To view the full programme and to book, visit: www.andculture.org.uk/whats-on

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Lisburn Hearing Centre – Celebrating a Year of Transforming Lives!

It's one year since Scottish audiologist, Colin l'Anson, bought Lisburn Hearing Centre business.

David Parkinson founded the company in 2006 which has been serving the community continuously ever since. Colin celebrated the anniversary on April 6th.

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

Colin first qualified as a hearing aid audiologist in 2007 and has 17 years of experience working at House of Hearing in Edinburgh specialising in the fitting of bespoke hearing solutions and wax removal.

In addition to Colin's audiology credentials Lisburn Hearing Centre has access to a wide



Colin l'Anson is celebrating 1 year of making a difference at Lisburn Hearing Centre

range of brilliant hearing aids ideally suited and matched for the needs of each individual customer.

"Lisburn Hearing Centre is a well established and customer focussed business.

As has always been the case we strive to ensure that customers and families always

continue to receive a first class service from us. Both wax-removal and hearing-aid-fitting dramatically improve a person's quality of life. Doing that while providing a personal and consistent service continues to be our priority and I hope that this will continue to set

us apart for many years to come.

For more information Tel: (0)28 9264 0302, email hello@lisburnhearing.com or see www.lisburnhearing.com.

Lisburn Hearing Centre is located at 2a Smithfield Square, Lisburn, just between Greens and McCalls.

to make the most of their summer break. Spaces fill up fast, so don't wait! Enroll your child today and watch them flip, tumble, and soar to new heights at Gymnastics Summer Camp!

You are also welcome to join us for a day of excitement, entertainment, and endless family fun as we celebrate the spirit of gymnastics under the summer sun at our Summer Fayre!

Dive into summer fun at Rainbow Gymnastics!

Summer Camp and Summer Fayre are both on the horizon

Looking for an exciting way to keep your kids active, engaged, and entertained this summer? Look no further Rainbow Gymnastics Summer Camp offers the perfect blend of gymnastics training, outdoor adventures, and endless fun.

Led by our team of experienced coaches, campers will embark on a thrilling journey of skill-building and discovery as they explore the exciting world of gymnastics. From learning basic tumbling techniques to mastering advanced flips and tricks, there's something for every skill level and interest.

But the fun doesn't stop there! Campers will also enjoy a variety of activities, games, and crafts designed to promote teamwork, creativity, and confidence. Whether they're conquering our obstacle courses, working in teams to defeat our games or creating masterpieces in arts and crafts, every day is an adventure at Gymnastics Summer Camp.

With flexible scheduling options and a safe, supportive environment, our camp is the perfect choice for families looking



to make the most of their summer break. Spaces fill up fast, so don't wait! Enroll your child today and watch them flip, tumble, and soar to new heights at Gymnastics Summer Camp!

You are also welcome to join us for a day of excitement, entertainment, and endless family fun as we celebrate the spirit of gymnastics under the summer sun at our Summer Fayre!

Watch in awe as our gymnasts showcase their skills with gravity-

defying flips, twists, and tumbles, sure to leave you breathless. Then, dive into the action with hands-on activities and challenges for all ages, from mini-obstacle courses to bounce houses and inflatable games.

Explore our vendor booths offering delicious treats, colourful merchandise, and exciting giveaways. Plus, don't miss out on the chance to win fantastic prizes in our raffles and contests throughout the day.

Whether you're a

gymnastics enthusiast or simply looking for a day of outdoor fun, our Gymnastics Summer Fayre promises to be an unforgettable experience for the whole family. So gather your loved ones, pack your sunscreen, and join us for a day of sunshine, smiles, and summer fun at Rainbow Gymnastics!

Further info about the Summer Camp and Tickets for Summer Fayre can be purchased online on our website www.rainbowgymclub.com



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TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR 2024 NUFFIELD FARMING CONFERENCE IN BELFAST

Tickets are now available for the 2024 Nuffield Farming Conference, to be held in Belfast on 19-21 November 2024.

The organisation's flagship event will be held at several iconic locations throughout the city including the Belfast Assembly Rooms, Europa Hotel, and Titanic Belfast. "Delegates at Belfast 2024 can look forward to a packed agenda covering the length and breadth of UK food, farming, rural and land-based industries," says Wyn Owen, Chairman of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust.

The conference provides the opportunity to explore the future of agriculture, as well as the chance to network and socialise with other forward-thinking individuals from all corners of the industry. Tickets are open to all, and we invite anyone with an interest to join us for this special event."

The three-day agenda features presentations

from around 30 Nuffield Scholars, talks from the first ever Next-Gen Scholars, a welcome buffet, local business tours and a formal annual dinner. Tickets to 'Belfast 2024' are not just restricted to Scholars and are available to anyone with an interest in agriculture and associated industries.

The conference includes presentations from Nuffield Farming Scholars based in Northern Ireland, including Dr Jonny Hanson presenting 'Large Carnivore reintroductions to Britain and Ireland: Farmer's perspectives and management options' plus local Next-Gen Scholars Bronagh Dempster, Ewan McCracken, and Kirsten Henry.

A full list of presenting scholars and their topics can be found at <https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/belfast2024/presenting-scholars>.



For the second year running, AHDB have partnered with Nuffield Farming as the conference's main sponsor. The conference is also

supported by Visit Belfast, Northern Ireland principal sponsor Fane Valley and media partner Farmers Guardian.

Full details about the conference, including ticketing information,

can be found on the Trust's website at <https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/belfast2024>. Tickets are now available to purchase at a discounted "early bird" price until 1st September.

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Industry invests in CAFRE Agriculture students

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) was delighted to host the Bursary and Scholarship Awards Ceremony for Agriculture degree students at Greenmount Campus on Friday 19 April 2024.

Over the years students at CAFRE have greatly gained from strong partnerships and generous financial backing from Agri-Food companies.

The 2024 Industry Support Programme at Greenmount Campus awarded £29,500 to students studying on Ulster University validated Bachelor's Honours Degree and Foundation Degree courses, and Queen's University Belfast BSc (Hons) Degree in Agricultural Technology students studying at CAFRE.

Sixteen companies presented awards to students which included ABP, Calor Gas Ltd, Dale Farm, Danske Bank, Fane Valley, Genus ABS, Gibson Trust, Irish Farmers Journal, John Thompson and Sons Ltd, Lakeland Dairies, LMC, Moy Park, Tyrone Farming Society, Ulster Farmers' Union, Ulster Grassland Society and Yara.

Thirteen first year students

degree courses, received a combined total of £19,500 in Bursary awards. Additionally, four second-year students were presented with a total of £10,000 in Scholarship awards, resulting in a substantial overall financial contribution of £29,500 from CAFRE's industry partners.

In recognising the industry support offered to Greenmount Campus Agriculture students, second year, Honours Degree student Matthew Hall thanked the business representatives for their contribution to the programme.

Matthew commented: "Today, we extend our gratitude to all the organisations that support us through Bursaries and Scholarships at Greenmount Campus in addition to the ongoing support you provide throughout the year. From organising farm visits, to hosting guest speakers, participating in Careers Fairs, conducting mock interviews, and involving



us in challenging projects, your contributions are truly valued.

"Your support plays a significant role in our development as we strive to become effective leaders to drive sustainability, react to climate change and address industry challenges."

CAFRE offers full-time and part-time Agriculture courses from Level 2 through

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Roy Lyttle has been growing vegetables in Ards and North Down for over 45 years. Scallions, and Leeks are the main crops with Scallions continuing to be harvested until October. 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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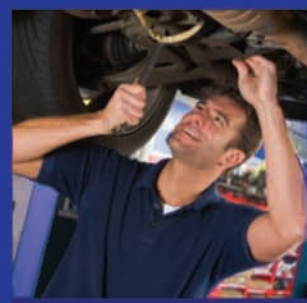
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THINGS TO DO FROM COUNTRY TO COAST IN COUNTY DOWN

The entire County of Down offers a delightful blend of countryside and coastal experiences.

Whether you're an outdoor enthusiast, a history buff, or simply seeking relaxation, there's something for everyone. Let's explore some of the best activities to enjoy in this picturesque County!

Tollymore Forest Park:

Nestled at the foot of the Mourne Mountains, Tollymore Forest Park is Northern Ireland's first state forest park. It feels like a scene from a fantasy movie, complete with fairytale-like bridges and lush forests.

Explore various trails, such as the Arboretum Path (25 minutes), the River Trail (1.5-2 hours), and the Drinns Trail (3-4 hours).

Slieve Donard:

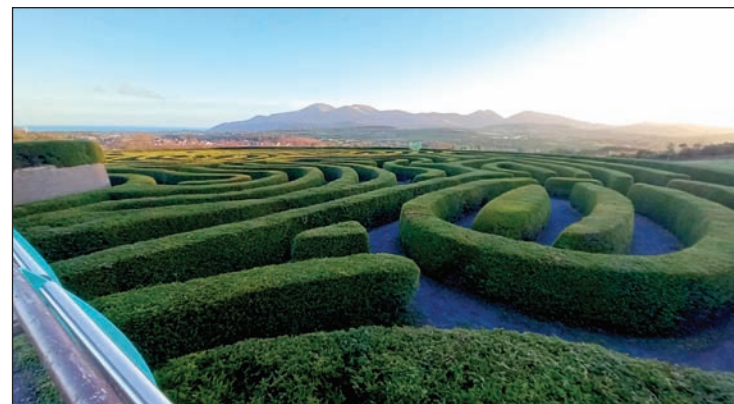
As the highest peak in Northern Ireland, Slieve Donard offers rewarding hikes. The Glen River trail (4.6km one-way) is a popular choice, taking around 4-5 hours to complete. Proper planning and fitness are essential.

Castlewellan Forest:

Perfect for family outings, Castlewellan Forest covers a whopping 460 hectares. Explore the Peace Maze (around 40 minutes to complete), the 18th-century National Arboretum of Northern Ireland, and various walking trails.

Beaches Galore:

County Down boasts several stunning beaches along its coastline. While Newcastle Beach and



Helen's Bay Beach are well-known, don't miss these hidden gems:

- Rossglass Beach;
- Ballywalter Beach;
- Ballyholme Beach;
- Tyrella Beach;
- Murlough Beach
- Millisle Beach;
- Kilclief Beach and Cranfield Beach.

Slieve Binnian:

The Slieve Binnian walk covers 11.2km and takes 3-4 hours. It's a challenging trail that rewards you with breathtaking views. Make sure you're fit and prepared for this adventure!

Whether you're hiking, cycling, or

simply enjoying the coastal breeze, County Down promises unforgettable experiences.

For more details, check out The Irish Road Trip's guide or explore the official Ards and North Down or Newry and Mourne Area Council websites.

Some sustainable practices and materials worth incorporating in your New Build

Let's explore some of the most sustainable building practices and materials that you can consider for your new home.

These options not only contribute to a greener environment but also create healthier living spaces. Here are some key elements to consider:

Bamboo: Bamboo is a remarkable sustainable material. It grows rapidly and can be harvested without causing deforestation.

Its tensile strength rivals that of steel, making it suitable for both residential and commercial structures. However, it is worth noting that bamboo



requires specific treatments to enhance durability and prevent decay.

Recycled Steel: Using recycled steel diverts it from old buildings and scrap materials, significantly reducing the industrial carbon footprint.

Recycled steel is energy-efficient, using around 60-75% less energy compared to producing new steel.

Its inherent strength and durability make it ideal for construction, especially in areas prone to natural disasters.

Solar Energy-Based Buildings: Incorporate solar panels into your home's design to harness renewable energy.

Solar energy has been around for decades and is a well-established sustainable practice.

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Abarth reveals the New Abarth 600e, the most powerful ever

The New Abarth 600e recently its first public debut in Milan, where the new commercial was shot. Ready, exciting, muscular, and aggressive, the first pictures instantly reveal the "evil" essence of the Abarth 600e Scorpionissima launch version, which will be produced in a limited edition of 1,949 units.

Designed to leave Abarth fans speechless, the Scorpionissima model is built around three main features: a design to reach maximum performance, a car structure to make it the most powerful Abarth ever, and a competitive spirit to attract motor enthusiasts. Thanks to its loaded equipment, the New Abarth 600e will be able to thrill enthusiasts, giving them the possibility to drive safely without giving up on the aggressive and muscular look of their car.



Equipped with 240HP, the New Abarth 600e Scorpionissima is fiercely competitive and powerful. There has never been a more powerful Abarth. In addition, the equipment of this new Abarth proves that performance is the mantra that inspired Abarth engineers. Made to be unique in the field of electric cars, the Abarth 600e will feature a mechanical limited-slip differential that guarantees excellent driving stability, improved handling, and traction.

The exceptional performance of the limited-slip differential takes the car to new heights, especially when combined with its high-performance tyres, which were jointly developed with the supplier for Formula E to ensure maximum grip and guarantee excellent racing dynamics in all kinds of conditions.

A harmonious equilibrium is attained by balancing performance and limited resistance, ensuring an improved range in an electric vehicle.

From the exterior, it is clearly an Abarth! The exclusive Hypnotic Purple, the launch color inspired by the post-puncture hypnotic effect, highlights its aggressiveness, while the aerodynamic rear spoiler is designed to maximize performance. It also features a large footprint, expansive wheels, a low profile, and 20-inch wheels designed to accommodate an extensive brake system. Moreover, the New Abarth 600e

Scorpionissima will come with an authenticity certificate. And of course, there is more to come. Stay tuned. Abarth's goal - to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary - is once again achieved with the most challenging yet performing project developed in recent years. The new jewel in Abarth's house is a combination of knowledge, tradition, innovation, and performance coming from different expertise and partnerships.

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Transform the appearance of your exteriors and improve the security of your home all in one by updating to a Garolla garage door. Handmade by a team of skilled craftsmen, every Garolla garage door is made from only the very best materials and to your home's exact specifications. From start to finish you will only work with your own local installer, guaranteeing no pushy salesmen

in sight. As well as installing your garage door, your local installer will also conduct the initial survey of your property and will always be on hand to answer any questions you might have. Offering style as well as substance, Garolla electric garage doors are available in 21 colours and come in two different sizes to perfectly fit any opening. Avoid any hidden charges with

Garolla, where an instant quote comes inclusive of measuring, fitting and VAT. For more information visit their website www.Garolla.co.uk or, alternatively, give them a call on 028 9246 0041.

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ALL-NEW DACIA SPRING

Dacia's first all-electric model, Spring is widely credited for making electric mobility accessible to all. First launched in 2021, it was the third most sold electric car to retail customers in 2022 and 2023. In total, more than 140,000 Dacia Spring have been registered worldwide since its launch.

Spring's energy efficiency and carbon footprint were particularly praised in 2022, when it was awarded the maximum 5-star rating from the independent European organisation Green NCAP.

Dacia Spring is the perfect solution for people looking for simple, affordable and efficient zero-emission mobility. Data collected via the vehicle's on-board connected systems shows that the average daily trip made by Spring drivers covers just 23 miles, at an average speed of only 23 mph.

In 75% of cases, cars are recharged at home.

It is even more attractive than ever, with an entirely renewed and more robust design, and yet still as practical, with exceptional interior storage space for its segment. It is more efficient, thanks to carefully managed weight, while remaining the most affordable full-electric model on the market. Pre-ordering for the All-New Dacia Spring is now open.

Dacia continues its mission to be the best value for money car brand that constantly redefines the essentials. Applying this to Spring, Dacia wants to encourage drivers to make the shift to all-electric cars in an accessible way. A car's design - along with efficiency, price and practicality - is one of the essential pieces in the puzzle.

The All-New Spring features the new Dacia design, first seen on the latest generation Duster. It is a robust and assertive style that makes the Spring more attractive than ever. The interior has undergone a spectacular transformation with a complete overhaul of the entire space, just as the only part of the exterior body to remain unchanged is the roof.

The highly structured, highly constructed volumes of Dacia's new design style give renewed strength to Spring. A powerful look that comes from a clean, simple, pared-back silhouette, such as that seen on the highly sculpted bonnet.

The new Dacia identity is evident in the two



black bands, one at the front, the other at the rear, which meet in a glossy finish, with specific matte stripes at the rear. The two strips are framed by the brand's iconic Y-shaped light signature, which is particularly striking with the full-LED daytime running lights at the front and the parking lights at the rear.

The All-New Spring is available in a range of six shades, including newly introduced Brick Red and Beige Safari colours.

Smart yet practical accessories further optimise storage capacity in the All-New Spring. Consumers can opt for additional space housed under the front bonnet, providing an extra 35 litres of storage space.

The centre console can fit an exclusive cup holder, made using cutting-edge, flexible, and resource-efficient 3D-printing technology.

The All-New Spring also works with Dacia's innovative YouClip system. The simple and clever system invented by Dacia engineers can be used to attach various dedicated accessories, practically and robustly, to key places inside the car.

For an easier driving experience, every All-New Spring features a customisable digital dashboard with a 7-inch display.

Located behind the new height-adjustable steering wheel, the colour display shows essential information in a simple and efficient manner.

The All-New Dacia Spring is equipped as standard with a 7 kW AC

charger that can charge the battery from 20% to 100% on a domestic outlet in less than 11 hours, or in just 4 hours on a 7 kW wall box. A 30 kW DC charger enables fast charging from 20% to 80% in 45 minutes.

More practical than ever before, the New Dacia

Spring now features a bi-directional V2L (vehicle-to-load) charger so it can be used as an energy source to power electrical devices. A specific adapter that plugs into the car's charging connector, located under the grille, acts as a traditional 220V/16A socket.

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Affordable Warmth Scheme in Northern Ireland

Let's delve into the Affordable Warmth Scheme in Northern Ireland.



This initiative aims to address fuel poverty and energy inefficiency, particularly for low-income households. Here are the key details:
 Eligibility Criteria: The scheme is directed at low-income households. You may qualify if you:
 Live in Northern Ireland, Own and occupy your property as your main home, Have your day/life interest in the house, Rent from a private

landlord and Have a total annual gross income of less than £23,000.
 Note that it's not available for tenants living in social housing or Housing Executive/housing association tenants.
 Grant Aid and Energy Efficiency Measures: The Affordable Warmth Scheme provides grant aid to improve energy efficiency measures within your home. The

property must not be a holiday home, bed & breakfast, or commercial establishment.
 Measures covered include boiler replacements, insulation, and other energy-saving improvements. The scheme is subject to availability of funding.
 Application Process: To apply, contact The NI Energy Advice Service (NIEAS):
 Tel.: 0800 111 44 55
 E m a i l : NIEnergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk

Pack specifying grant aid amount, approved measures, and work completion deadline.
 Starting Work: Do not start work until you receive written confirmation of grant eligibility.
 The approval letter outlines the measures your property qualifies for and the grant amount.
 Remember, the Affordable Warmth Scheme aims to make homes more energy-efficient, reduce fuel costs, and enhance overall comfort for eligible households in Northern Ireland.

HOME IMPROVEMENT JOBS YOU DEFINITELY NEED AN EXPERT FOR!

If you've got a problem at home and are wondering if it's something you should or shouldn't tackle, then take a look at our list of jobs you definitely need a professional for.

This list by no means covers everything, but it does answer the most common queries we get on whether to hire a pro or not for a job.

Fixing a gas leak. In fact, anything to do with gas. You must legally be on the Gas Safe Register to deal with any gas appliances. Attempting to fix anything gas related can have serious effects on your health and the safety of others around you, not to mention the potential of an explosion

Removing asbestos. Asbestos is dangerous, so removing it is best left to the professionals. Asbestos comes with serious health risks. So much so that in 1999, the dangers of asbestos were officially recognised in the UK. All use of asbestos was banned. To have asbestos removed, you will need a qualified surveyor to carry out an inspection. This costs in the region of £200-£1,000 (small flat - detached home) and they will identify the type of asbestos in your home and any associated risks.

Fitting a new bath. Whether you're upgrading your entire bathroom, or you're having issues with your current bathtub, you should definitely leave the installation of a new tub to a professional. Failure to do so could result in a leak in your home and a very unrelaxing soak in the tub! Many DIY bathtub installations have resulted in the bath not being sealed correctly, leading



to severe leaks. Another bathtub DIY fail is the tub not being secured in place, so it ends up moving around or falls through the floor.

Foundation work. The foundations of any building are the most important part of the structure. If the foundations are wrong, then the subsoil can spread and the structure can settle unevenly, leading to structural problems down the line. Good foundations are a lot more than just digging a hole and pouring some concrete in, it needs to be exactly right. The average cost to lay foundations will depend on the type of foundations needed.

Window installation. A poorly fitted window leads to lots of problems. These include: Injury to yourself, your family, and people passing by Reduced home efficiency (energy loss, draughts and leaks) Lack of security Legal and insurance ramifications

Structural issues and a poor finish (mould and mildew may appear) Avoid these risks and work with a professional window fitter.

Tree removal. Cutting down a tree is dangerous work. Especially when you don't know what you're doing, lack the experience of removing a tree, and do not have the right equipment to do the job. Although there's a risk of falling from a height, there's also the risk of being hit by debris. And even if the falling debris misses you, other people, houses and vehicles nearby may not be so lucky.

Electrical work. Electrical work, similar to gas work, requires a highly qualified professional to take on the job, due to safety reasons. Incorrect or unsafe wiring is dangerous. Not only is it a massive fire risk, but it could electrocute you, a member of your family, or guests

only if it has been installed or repaired correctly. Keeping it watertight and making sure there are no leaks is so important. A damaged roof can lead to lots of problems in your home, from damp, leaking ceilings to severe structural damage. Patching it up yourself can be dangerous without the correct safety equipment. Getting up onto the roof is a risk to yourself. Then once you're there there's also the risk that you do not patch up the roof correctly, meaning the damage will worsen over time

Pest infestations. Spotting a pest in your home can be enough to make you want to lock up and throw away the key, never to return again. But don't do that, the mice and rats haven't won yet. Long gone are the days of having to set your own traps. Pest control specialists can have your home cleared of unwanted visitors quickly without you having to live in fear of living with whatever pest it may be. Prices usually start at around £120 to have mice and rats removed. Pest controllers can also remove bedbugs, cockroaches and ants.

Article used courtesy of: <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/expert-advice/home-jobs-you-shouldnt-do-yourself/>

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HOW MUCH VALUE DOES A DRIVEWAY ADD TO A HOUSE?

There are many benefits of having a driveway; providing easy access to your property, easily able to keep an eye on your car, effortlessly hop in and out whenever you need to, and they tend to be far easier to maintain than gardens or lawns.

Having a driveway can also potentially lower your car insurance premiums, compared to parking on the street. But the key question is – does a new driveway add value to a house?

In most cases, yes it does. On average, it's estimated that laying a driveway can add between 5-10% to the value of a property. So, depending on the factors above, this could mean the chance to add thousands of pounds to the listing price of your home.

Paved driveway value.

A paved driveway is an excellent choice for adding value to your home, as well as providing you with a great looking, highly functional driveway. Paved driveways create a smart first impression for any home. They offer a smooth, flat surface, but with the finer detail that

comes with using a skilled craftsman. When laid and finished correctly, they simply scream quality. This says to future buyers that this is a quality driveway that will last for years, requiring hardly any maintenance. However, paved driveways aren't the cheapest option, compared to the cost of other driveway materials.

They take some time and skill to lay. However, you should end up with a quality finish that lasts for years and adds value to your home.

Concrete driveway value.

Concrete is much quicker to lay than other types of driveway, such as block paving for example. It can be easily poured into whatever design you have in mind, and even finished with an appealing

imprinted pattern. The relative cheapness of concrete driveways means that it can initially be seen as good value for money. However, concrete lacks the craftsmanship and fine detail of other paving types. Plus, concrete can often look as cheap and cheerful as it is. Unless maintained or resurfaced, its appearance can deteriorate significantly over time. This can affect its value, and the kerb appeal of your house.

Block paved driveway value. Block paved driveways have some serious kerb appeal. If installed with skill and care, they can look amazing.

You'll have a huge range of design, colour and style options to choose from, all of which can enhance the exterior appearance of your property.

Needless to say, this can add value.



Block paving and cobblestones are also known to be very long-lasting and quite easy to maintain.

If any pavers come loose, they can be easily repaired or replaced in small

patches. Durability is another plus point for potential buyers, along with low maintenance. So, how much value does a driveway add when it's made from block pavers? It all

depends on how much you spend – as it can be quite labour intensive to build a block paved driveway – and the quality of the finish.

Asphalt driveway value. Asphalt or

tarmac driveways are quite cheap and quick to lay, and they can be a handy option if you need a basic solid flat surface without much fuss. In short, they provide a uniform appearance and can be a good short-term solution. But they don't look as appealing as other driveway types when finished.

A major issue is with maintenance and deterioration. This can affect how much value they add to your property, and how appealing your home will be to potential buyers.

Gravel driveway value. Gravel is one of the cheapest types of driveway to install, and it can also look very attractive. Gravel driveways are also good from a security perspective.

Many people like them because they aren't permanent, unlike tarmac or concrete, so you could choose

a different driveway later on. You'll need to find a way to manage the stones, so they don't end up all over the street, and gravel driveways are no use at all on sloping sites. In terms of adding value to your property, gravel is a pretty decent option. You won't spend much on it, there aren't any worries about durability and it can be aesthetically pleasing to buyers.

And there's always the opportunity to install a different driveway later on.

How much would it cost to re-do your driveway? The cost of your driveway will really depend on the size of your drive and the style of driveway you choose. Costs vary from £30 – £90/m².

For this and more home inspiration see <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/expert-advice/how-much-value-does-driveway-add-house/>

Summer is on it's way!

We can begin to look forward to long sunny days, evenings in the garden and alfresco lunches.

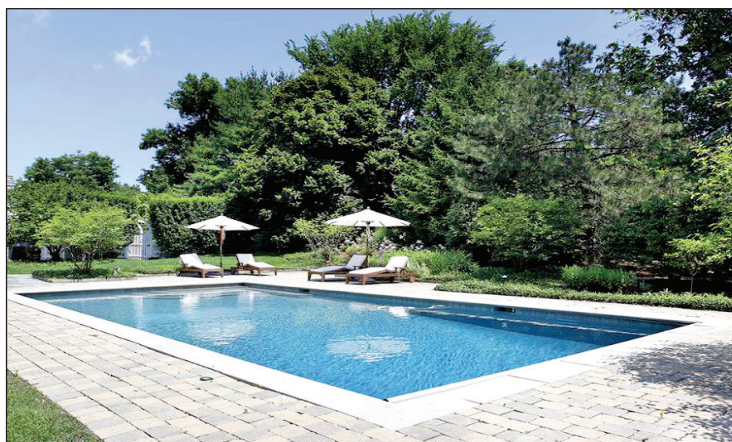
To help you make the most of the (hopefully imminent) he atwawe, we've compiled a list of the most popular jobs currently for homeowners across the UK.

Installing air conditioning
Air conditioning has hugely risen in popularity in the UK over the last few years. With heatwaves becoming more intense, people have needed a way to keep cool on those hot evenings in bed. And with more people now finding themselves working from home, air conditioning is a lifesaver for hot home offices.

The cost to install air conditioning in a house will depend greatly on the house itself and the type of air conditioning system you want to install, but on average, installing air con in a small home office is between £1,750 – . For a double bedroom, you're looking at an average installation cost of £2,250 – £3,000.

Fitting a ceiling fan
If air con isn't your bag then consider installing a ceiling fan. Ceiling fans are a great way of circulating air around the room and creating a breeze to cool you down. They're very economically friendly to run, costing less than a 100w bulb to run and equating to just pennies for a few hours of use. A ceiling fan could set you back in the region of £275 for both the fan itself and installation.

Add window coverings.



Whether it be blinds, shutters or curtains, window coverings are a great way to stay cool in the summer. Shutters could set you back around £240 per m².

Installing a swimming pool

Picture this; it's sizzling hot, the music's playing, you've got a cold beverage and your toes are dipped in a refreshing pool. It's no secret that swimming pools are the hottest accessory of the summer. If you fancy building your own slice of paradise without the need to jet off abroad to enjoy the poolside lifestyle, then you can expect to pay, on average, £105,000 for an outdoor pool and £152,500 for an indoor pool dive into.

Fitting a hot tub
Okay, we get it, a hot tub is hot, and not exactly the best way to cool down,

but a hot tub is brilliant for those summer nights when the sun goes down and you want to make the most of the garden. A hot tub can cost between £2,800 – £21,700 to purchase. And if you want to take it to the next level, why not consider turning your garden into a Love Island paradise?

Installing an irrigation system

Take the labour out of wa-

tering your garden and treat your plants to an irrigation system. Not only does it take on a job for you, but it also provides plants and lawns with the care they need over the warm summer months. The cost of installing an irrigation system will depend on the size of your garden, where it's being installed and if you're having a sprinkler system or drip irrigation system. You should look to budget between £250 – £315

for a drip irrigation system per zone, plus labour.

A fun idea for your pooch Last but not least, and arguably, the most important project of them all, is to install a dog shower. A dog

shower is the perfect way to keep your pooches not only cool, but clean too.

Article used courtesy of <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/cost-guides/stay-cool-this-summer/>

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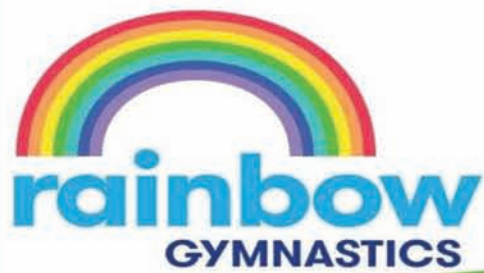
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