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First Minister Michelle O'Neill and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly welcomed the completion of Loftlines at Belfast's Titanic Quarter

£190M BUILD TO RENT DEVELOPMENT AT TITANIC QUARTER

First Minister Michelle O'Neill and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly have welcomed the completion of Loftlines, Northern Ireland's first large-scale Build-to-Rent (BTR) development, in Belfast's Titanic Quarter.

The 627 BTR homes were funded through a £150 million investment by L&G, its first Build-to-Rent investment in Northern Ireland and the largest residential investment in the region. The first residents moved into their new, professionally managed homes in early September.

The wider £190 million Loftlines scheme comprises

778 homes across BTR, social, discounted market rent and private rental accommodation. With new public realm, green space and commercial space, it has transformed a previously underdeveloped waterfront site into a new mixed-use neighbourhood within Titanic Quarter.

More than £105 million was spent locally during

construction, supporting more than 650 jobs directly and through the wider supply chain.

During a visit to Loftlines, First Minister Michelle O'Neill said:

"Loftlines is a major addition to Belfast and demonstrates what can be achieved when investment is matched with ambition and a commitment to creating

better places for our people. At a time when we need more homes, it is great to see this waterfront site transformed and the first residents now moving in and beginning to make Loftlines their home.

**Continued on
page 6**

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October is Positive Ageing Month 2026. You can join get your walking boots or trainers on and uncover the story of the 1941 Belfast Blitz with a **FREE** guided walking tour of East Belfast.

This tour focuses on the experiences of those who lived through the air raids on Belfast found within our Oral History collection. These voices capture the chaos and confusion of the air raids, the danger survived as well as emphasising the devastating impact and lasting legacy of the four nights Belfast was 'blitzed'.

The tour will take place on Tuesday 13 October 2026 will begin in Westbourne Street, outside the former Belfast Tool Library at 1pm (What3Words: Sage.

Boost.Punt), and finish at the Northern Ireland War Memorial Museum at approximately 3pm. The tour will last around 2 hours in total and so appropriate clothing and footwear is essential.

To book a **FREE** ticket, please email info@niwarmemorial.org or call 028 9032 0392 - option 1.

For more information on Positive Ageing Month, visit Belfast City Council's website: <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/events/positive-ageing-month>

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Belfast City Airport returns as sponsor of Eastside Awards

Nominations are now open for the 11th Eastside Awards in association with Belfast City Airport as the search is on for the people, businesses, community organisations, local heroes, volunteers and young people who are making a difference across East Belfast.

The awards ceremony has become a major fixture in the Belfast events calendar, recognising the achievements, innovation, dedication and community spirit of people and organisations across East Belfast.

Following the milestone tenth anniversary celebrations in January, which brought more than 450 people together to celebrate the best of East Belfast in Titanic Belfast, the 11th Eastside Awards in association with Belfast City Airport will build on a decade of recognising the people and organisations that make East Belfast such a vibrant place to live, work and visit.

This year's awards will once again shine a spotlight on achievements across business, community, arts and culture, education, sport, health and wellbeing, tourism and volunteering, alongside a range of public vote categories celebrating local favourites.

Jonathan McAlpin, Chair of the Eastside Awards Committee and Chief Executive of East Belfast Enterprise, said:



“The tenth Eastside Awards was a very special milestone for everyone involved, but what makes me particularly excited is that we are now looking ahead to our 11th year. “For more than a decade, these awards have provided an opportunity to award people who are making an outstanding contribution to East Belfast. These people give of themselves to make East Belfast a better place, often quietly and without seeking recognition. “From entrepreneurs and

enterprises, community champions, volunteers, teachers, young people, artists, sportspeople and those working tirelessly behind the scenes, there are so many incredible stories of achievement across East Belfast.” The winner of The 2026 Eastside Award for Outstanding Contribution, sponsored by East Belfast Enterprise, will be selected by the Eastside Awards committee and will recognise an individual whose contribution has made a significant and

lasting difference to the community. At the glittering awards ceremony in Titanic Belfast on Friday 29 January 2027, hosted by broadcaster Tara Mills, finalists will enjoy a drinks reception sponsored by Catalyst, guests will be treated to entertainment sponsored by Ballyhackamore Credit Union and table wine will be sponsored by the Eastside Awards venue partner, Titanic Belfast. Visit www.eastsideawards.org for more information

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During our recent ETI Inspection Report (May 2025), they reported that:

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BELFAST DAD TAKES ON WORLD RECORD ROWING CHALLENGE

A Belfast Dad and school Vice Principal, is preparing to take on a gruelling 22-mile solo rowing challenge, from Carrickfergus to Portpatrick in Scotland, in an attempt to break the current world record and to raise funds for the Neo Natal Unit

In June, Rory and Victoria O'Connor's son Patrick was born four weeks prematurely and developed respiratory distress syndrome, requiring seven days of specialist care in the Neo Natal Unit.

For the family, it was a "terrifying time", but now, baby Patrick is thriving at home with his mum, dad and big sister Mollie, thanks to the dedicated care and compassion of the Ulster Hospital Neo Natal Team.

Rory, an international rower and member of Lagan Scullers Club, said the care Patrick received during those difficult early days left a lasting impression on him.

Rory explained, "When Patrick was born, he was quite unwell. He was struggling to breathe and spent time in the Neo Natal Unit. The care and compassion he, as well as my wife Victoria, received was unbelievable. It really blew me away. They saved Patrick's life."

"I remember coming home and saying to Victoria, 'We need to give something back'."



Vice Principal of Strangford Integrated College, Rory is now preparing to put his rowing experience to the ultimate test, as he attempts to row from Carrickfergus to Portpatrick in Scotland - and attempt to break the current world record!

The existing record stands at three hours and 35 minutes and was set in 1997 by Belfast man John Murray.

Rory said his passion for rowing provided the perfect opportunity to raise funds and give something back to the team who

cared for his son, "Given my background in rowing, I thought it was a perfect vehicle to use to fundraise and ultimately give back to the Neo Natal Unit."

"I am hoping to break the current world record of three hours and 35 minutes. I am now waiting for the right weather window to complete the challenge."

With Patrick now very much settled at home with mum dad and big sister Mollie, Rory reflected on how emotional it was coming back to the Neo Natal Unit to meet with staff ahead of his rowing

challenge.

"All funds raised from the row, minus the boat safety costs, will go directly to the Ulster Hospital Neo Natal Unit. We cannot thank the staff enough."

Neo Natal Sister Gemma Cummins stated, "It is such a generous donation that Rory is going to provide for us. It means a lot to us and will enable us to enhance our care and experience to families that are already going through their own Neo Natal journey and for the families to come."

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All prospective new families welcome

Orangefield Primary School Open Event -
Thursday 26th November 2026 at 9.15am

To register attendance please contact school on 028 90 704 822

Individual guided tours with the Principal can be arranged by contacting the school office on - 028 90 704 822

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Looking ahead to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2027

Many of the key partners and stakeholders involved in delivering the Comhaltas Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 have met recently to reflect on the success of the event and discuss opportunities to build on its legacy, ahead of Belfast hosting the All-Ireland event again in 2027.

Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald and Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins led the meeting which brought together representatives from government, tourism and cultural organisations whose partnership helped deliver one of the largest cultural events ever hosted in Belfast.

The session was hosted by Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Róis-Maire Donnelly, on behalf of lead partners Belfast City Council,

who delivered this summer's successful event, along with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Ards CCÉ.

Discussions focused on the impact of the 2026 Fleadh, lessons from its delivery and how partners can work together to build on its success when the event returns to Belfast in August 2027.

Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Róis-Maire Donnelly, said: "It was great to take the opportunity today to

share our experiences of co-ordinating and delivering such a large-scale event and to discuss how we can work together with all partners as we look ahead to 1-8 August 2027.

"Our council teams worked incredibly hard to deliver a Fleadh which will live long in the memory, together with our partners at Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Ards CCÉ.

"Co-operation and input from our musicians, city centre partners, local

businesses, the creative, tourism and hospitality sectors, sponsors and all our statutory agencies was also vital – go raibh míle maith agaibh to everyone who got behind our bid to bring Fleadh to Béal Feirste and helped to make it such a huge success.

"While our plans for 2027 are still in development, I'm delighted to see such enthusiasm and excitement for next year's event from all those around the table."



Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald, Brendan McAleer, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Diaspora and International Development Officer, Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Róis-Maire Donnelly, and Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins pictured before a meeting of partners and stakeholders involved in delivering Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026.

TITANIC BELFAST COMPLETES FIRST PHASE OF EVENTS SPACE INVESTMENT

Titanic Belfast has completed the first phase of a major investment programme across its event and hospitality spaces, with the iconic Titanic Suite reopening following an extensive refurbishment.

Home to the famous replica Grand Staircase, the Titanic Suite has been transformed with a range of new features including bespoke carpet, wall panelling, joinery and curtains, LED screens and a striking new colour palette.

Working in partnership with Garuda Design, the refreshed interiors draw inspiration from the distinctive architecture of Titanic Belfast and the decorative heritage of RMS Titanic, combining contemporary design with

Belfast's rich shipbuilding story.

Among the bespoke features is an Irish linen wallcovering created by a third-generation decorator whose grandfather worked on Titanic, providing a unique connection to the city's shipbuilding heritage and local craftsmanship.

The new carpet takes inspiration from the angular shape and scale of Titanic

Belfast, with geometric patterns influenced by decorative flooring aboard RMS Titanic, while Art Nouveau and Art Deco references feature throughout the design.

The investment comes during a period of continued growth for Titanic Belfast's events business, with 60 domestic, national and international events scheduled between

September and December.

Further phases of the investment programme will continue across Titanic Belfast's Level 5 and 6 event and hospitality spaces, further strengthening the venue's events offering within Titanic Quarter.

Find out more about the refurbishment and Titanic Belfast's event spaces at TitanicBelfast.com.



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Continued from page 1

"I want to see our towns and cities continue to grow and develop, attracting investment that delivers for our people, supports local jobs and strengthens our communities for years to

come. Developments like this have an important part to play in that."

The BTR homes offer professionally managed rental living, with dedicated on-site management and a range of resident amenities including fitness and wellness facilities, co-working spaces, resident

lounges, private dining areas, a games room and landscaped rooftop terraces. The wider development also creates new spaces for the community, including South Yard Square, a play park, urban sports courts and a waterside promenade.

The BTR homes have also been designed with sustainable living in mind, with an all-electric energy-efficient building design, air-source heat pumps, solar panels and green spaces incorporated throughout the scheme. Residents also benefit from sustainable travel options, with a new Beryl Bike station, dedicated cycle routes and secure on-site cycle storage, alongside easy access to Glider and rail services.

Loftlines has been delivered through a partnership between L&G, co-developers Lacuna Developments and Watkin Jones, with Titanic Quarter Ltd as estate owner. The BTR homes are operated by urbanbubble, while Clannmil Housing Association manages the social housing and Fresh manages the discounted market-rent and private rental homes.

For more information about Loftlines, visit www.loftlines.com.

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BELFAST GIANTS AND STENA LINE EXTEND PARTNERSHIP

The Belfast Giants have announced the continuation of their long-standing partnership with Stena Line, with a new two-year agreement confirmed ahead of the 2026/27 season.



The new agreement marks another milestone for one of the Giants' longest-standing partnerships, with the upcoming season representing the 18th season that Belfast Giants and Stena Line have worked together. Over the years, Stena

Line has become a familiar part of the Giants' experience, supporting the team both on and off the ice and helping transport the Giants across the Irish Sea for fixtures in Scotland. As part of the renewed partnership, Stena Line branding

will continue to feature throughout Belfast Giants game nights at The O2 Belfast, including on the team's jerseys, rink boards and on-ice branding. Fans can also look forward to the return of the popular Stena Line Chuck-a-Puck at home games.

The announcement comes as excitement builds for the Giants' 2026/27 campaign, he team returned to home ice last month. Congratulations to the Belfast Giants and Stena Line on this latest chapter in a fantastic long-term partnership!



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Sat 19th 7:30	Wed 30th 7:30
Sun 20th 3:00	Thu 31st 3:00
Mon 21st 7:30	
Tue 22nd 7:30	January 27
Wed 23rd 3:00	Fri 1st 3:00
Wed 23rd 7:30	Fri 1st 7:30
Sat 26th 3:00	Sat 2nd 3:00
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Belvoir Theatre to Host Panto Spectacular this Christmas!

Belvoir has produced traditional family pantomimes for over fifty years! Located in the Belvoir estate, the venue seats up to 200 people and this years Panto is a must see for all the family.

Over 200 shows have been staged in more than five decades. Productions range from classic comedies and West End musicals to searing dramas.

This Christmas Belvoir Studio Theatre brings back their annual tradition with the timeless tale of Cinderella: The Pantomime. The show runs from the 16th December 2026 until 3rd January 2027, with a choice of matinee and evening performances throughout the festive period.

Written by Alan P. Frayn each performance offers a world of magic and family fun with this timeless tale with of course the glamour

of a royal ball, a sprinkle of magic and plenty of dreams coming true. Bringing together a stellar cast and crew of talented amateurs and professionals the audience will be treated to sterling performances with fantastic live music, stunning sets and dazzling costumes.

For more details of this and other performances scheduled for Winter 2026/27 Tickets and information are available at www.belvoirplayers.org.

Did you know? Last years Panto SOLD OUT For the entire run of 21 performances so it's wise to book early or you may miss out!



Applying for a School Place at Leadhill Primary School

Visiting a school is an important step in choosing a school, and this personal touch reflects Leadhill's approach in supporting families.

As a smaller, nurturing school in the Castlereagh area, working to support parents and children is central to what Leadhill has to offer. Leadhill parents recognise the value of a primary school setting where every adult knows every child. Leadhill welcomes and supports children from all backgrounds and promotes inclusivity and child-centred approaches.

This year, Leadhill are offering a range of flexible opportunities to visit.

Bring your nursery-age child to 'Stay

and Play' sessions on Fridays from 2:30pm to 3pm on 20 and 27 November. Come along to one or both of the sessions – whatever suits best. Parents can enjoy a cuppa and a chat while children enjoy a range of activities in the P1 classroom.

Come along to our Open Days on 1 December or 7 January, or arrange for a visit at a time that suits you, throughout December and January. Mrs Millis, the Principal will take the time to tailor your visit to address the things that matter to

your family. Visiting Leadhill during the school day gives a fantastic opportunity to experience the nurturing, family atmosphere and meet the fabulous staff and pupils.

For younger children, Toddler Time - Leadhill's toddler and adult group, meets every Wednesday during term time from 9 - 11am.

The Leadhill Website provides a useful window into life in Leadhill. Visit us on www.leadhillps.com.

Leadhill would love to welcome you for a visit. Contact the



school office on 028 90401101 or email Mrs Millis on amillis370@c2kni.net to arrange for a suitable date and time.

Autumn: Season of mists and mellow...fruiting bodies?

In his famous line of poetry, John Keats used the word 'fruitfulness', but besides all the apples, pears, rosehips and other fruits of autumn, there are also what scientists call the 'fruiting bodies' of lots of fungi (or funguses if you prefer), particularly in woodland.

What we mostly call mushrooms and toadstools which appear at this time of year in a multitude of shapes, sizes and colours, are for fungi reproduction

including a simple mechanism to spread far away from the original organism, with tiny spores (the equivalent of plant seeds) falling from their

undersides to blow away on a breeze.

But of course, there are variations, and for instance, puffballs (pictured) lack an opening below the cap, so that when they break or are kicked emit clouds of dust-like spores, hence their name. An average Giant Puffball (not common here) can produce seven trillion spores. Thankfully, very few geminate, because, if they all did, it has been calculated that they would produce a mass of fungi 800 times the volume of the earth!

There are about 5 million fungi species in the world (an estimated 9,000 in Ireland) and they are hugely important



underground where their main 'bodies' live, extensive thread-like masses called mycelium, which, we're learning, connect trees and other plants, exchanging nutrients and even carrying chemical or electronic messages which appear to be understood by plants.

This phenomenon has been termed 'the wood wide web'.

So, when you're out walking in the countryside this autumn, keep a lookout for puffballs, and many other fungi fruiting bodies, bearing in mind that what you're seeing are only the short-lived reproductive organs and that what the network parents are doing under your feet is amazing, and possibly vital for plants and all natural life on earth.

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FIRST BESPOKE COMMUNITY-FOCUSED APP

Titanic Quarter has launched Northern Ireland’s first community-focused app, embracing technology designed to enhance how people Live, Work, Visit and Stay in the city’s iconic waterfront district.

The free-to-use app is designed to enhance everyday life across Titanic Quarter. It brings together a range of useful services and information including active and sustainable travel options alongside the latest event listings, retail and leisure discounts, general updates and more in just a few taps.

Titanic Quarter attracts more than 3.5 million visitors each year, is used by around 20,000 people daily and is home to major visitor attractions, including Titanic Belfast, SS Nomadic and Titanic Distillers to name a few.

The launch comes as Titanic Quarter continues to grow as a mixed-use district, with increasing numbers of people living, working, visiting and staying in the area.

This app initiative has been developed jointly by Titanic Quarter Limited and Belfast Harbour.

James Eyre, Chief Executive of Titanic Quarter Ltd. said:

“This app is a first for Northern Ireland and reflects how Titanic Quarter continues to lead the way on innovation and transformation.

“It has been developed using the best practices adopted in other world-leading regeneration sites, and will be a useful communication tool as we continue to grow a district that tens of thousands of people use every day, whether they Live, Work, Visit or Stay.”

Tim Boyle, Development Manager at Belfast Harbour said:

“This app reflects the continued evolution of Titanic Quarter as a connected, modern waterfront destination.

“By embracing digital innovation, we are making it easier for residents, workers and visitors to access

services, discover what’s happening in the area and enjoy everything this iconic site has to offer.”

With a residential community already established in Titanic Quarter, including The ARC which is home to around 1,000 residents, the number of people living in the area is set to increase to over 2,700 by the end of 2026.

Built on the Equiem platform, used in major developments including London’s Canary Wharf, the Titanic Quarter app is information rich, encouraging health and wellbeing through the promotion of active and public transport options along with connecting users to all that is available and happening in Titanic Quarter.

Ben Wilson, Regional Director – EU at Equiem said:

“Titanic Quarter is more than a development, it’s a



destination. Our platform is uniquely suited to bring this vision to life by connecting every group within the estate through a seamless, intelligent experience. We’re proud to support Titanic

Quarter’s ‘Live, Work, Visit, Stay’ strategy and play a role in its continued regeneration.”

The Titanic Quarter app is available to download now on iOS and Android.

Public consultation on Belfast City Airport potential £200 million draft investment proposals open

Belfast City Airport has announced details of a public consultation on its potential £200 million draft investment proposals, following the submission of Proposal of Application Notices (PANs) to Belfast City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Alongside consultation on the planning applications, the airport will also undertake a voluntary public consultation on proposed changes to its current Planning Agreement, which is governed by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), providing the community with an opportunity to comment on the full package of draft proposals.

During the consultation period, which runs from 29th September to 27th October 2026, residents, businesses and stakeholders will be able to learn more and share their feedback in a number of ways:

- In person, at one of the airport’s public consultation events
- In writing, by sending feedback to: Master Plan Team, Belfast City Airport, Sydenham Bypass, Belfast BT3 9JH

- Via its dedicated consultation website: belfastcityairport.com/vision
- Via email, by sending feedback to: masterplanteam@bca.aero

The feedback provided will be used to inform any future planning applications.

Matthew Hall, Chief Executive at Belfast City Airport, said:

“This is an exciting time for Belfast City Airport, as we move from setting out our vision for the future to beginning the formal consultation process on our draft proposals.

“These proposals have been designed to help accommodate the future demand for air travel across the island of Ireland, which is set to double by 2040, in a way that is responsible, sustainable, and mindful of our neighbours.

“As an airport in the

heart of Belfast, we are proud to be part of our local community, and we recognise the importance of listening to those who live and work alongside us.

“We encourage local residents, passengers, and businesses to attend one of our consultation events, find out more about our draft proposals, and share their views. The feedback received will help inform any future planning applications and we look forward to hearing from everyone with an interest in the airport’s future.”

It is anticipated that Belfast City Airport will need to grow to carry 7 million passengers annually by 2040.

To support that growth, the airport’s draft proposals would enhance passenger facilities, improve airport operations and invest in critical infrastructure, strengthening Northern

Ireland’s connectivity and economy.

In parallel with the draft infrastructure proposals, Belfast City Airport will be seeking amendments to its existing Planning Agreement.

These amendments will ensure it can meet the forecast increase in demand and unlock the associated benefits, including increased connectivity to the UK and Europe.

Matthew finished:

“This potential investment represents a significant long-term commitment to Belfast and Northern Ireland. By planning ahead for future demand, we can ensure the airport continues to support connectivity, tourism, trade and economic growth, while delivering the infrastructure needed for future generations of passengers and businesses.”

For more information

about Belfast City Airport’s consultation period and how to get involved, visit: belfastcityairport.com/vision.

THE CAUSEWAY HOTEL IS AN IDEAL AUTUMN RETREAT

As the days grow shorter and the crisp sea air settles along the North Coast, The Causeway Hotel invites you to relax, recharge, and embrace the season with our popular Winter Warmer package.

Nestled beside the world-famous Giant’s Causeway, our historic hotel offers the perfect setting for a cosy two-night escape. Surrounded by breathtaking coastal scenery and steeped in history, The Causeway Hotel is an ideal retreat for those seeking comfort, tranquillity, and unforgettable views.

Available from £185 per person based on two people sharing midweek and £190 per person based on two people sharing on Friday and Saturday nights, the Winter Warmer package includes two nights’ accommodation, a three-course dinner on both evenings in the hotel’s elegant 1836 Ballroom Restaurant, breakfast each morning and complimentary access to the Giant’s Causeway Visitor Experience.

Away from the crowds

of summer, the season offers a chance to truly appreciate the tranquillity and natural beauty that make this corner of Northern Ireland so special. Explore the coastline at your own pace, breathe in the fresh Atlantic air, or simply sit back and enjoy the ever-changing views from this unique clifftop location.

Whether you

are planning a romantic getaway, celebrating a special occasion or simply craving a change of scenery, The Causeway Hotel offers the perfect opportunity to leave the everyday behind and enjoy a memorable coastal escape for two.

For more information or to book, call 028 2073 1210 or visit www.thecausewayhotel.com.

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AN UNFORGETTABLE NIGHT OF MUSIC AND SONG TO LAUNCH ACTION CANCER CAMPAIGN

Action Cancer’s Paint the Town Pink fundraising campaign will officially launch this year with an unforgettable evening of music and song in the magnificent surroundings of Stormont’s Great Hall on Friday 25 September.

For one night only, Comber Silver Band and Fortwilliam Musical Society will join forces in a special musical collaboration to mark the beginning of Action Cancer’s annual Paint the Town Pink campaign, supported by Action Renewables.

Taking place annually during Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, Paint the Town Pink raises vital funds for

Action Cancer’s unique, free breast screening service – the only one of its kind available in the UK and Ireland. Every £120 raised funds one potentially life-saving breast screening appointment for well women aged 40–49 and 70+, groups not covered by the NHS screening programme.

Businesses across Northern Ireland are encouraged to ‘go pink’

and host fundraising events throughout October, from coffee mornings and bake sales to dress-down days and pink-themed pub quizzes. Action Cancer will provide participating businesses with a fundraising pack including pink bunting, balloons, collection boxes and creative fundraising ideas.

As the charity receives no government funding for its breast screening

programme, it relies heavily on support from the local community and business sector to continue delivering this vital service.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Northern Ireland, accounting for 30% of all female cancer diagnoses. On average, 1,516 women are diagnosed each year and 310 die from the disease.

Action Cancer has been

at the heart of cancer prevention, detection and support in Northern Ireland for more than 50 years. Its services are free to the user but cost the charity £4 million annually to deliver. These include an early detection breast screening clinic, therapeutic support for people living with a cancer diagnosis and those supporting a loved one, and a range of health improvement programmes.

Services are available at Action Cancer House in Belfast, at 13 regional locations and onboard the Big Bus, supported by SuperValu and Centra, which visits 175 locations each year.

If you or your workplace would like to take part in Paint the Town Pink, please contact Mark Irwin-Watson in the fundraising team on 07580 133752 or email pttp@actioncancer.org



Representatives from Fitzwilliam Musical Society, Action Renewables, Action Cancer and Comber Silver Band pictured at Stormont for the launch of Action Cancer’s Paint the Town Pink 2026 campaign, which raises vital funds for the charity’s breast screening service.

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Discover Glasgow the Easy Way with HANNON Coach & Sail

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

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

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

With a simple flat fare of just £49, including ferry travel and luggage, the Belfast–Glasgow Express delivers outstanding value. With no hidden costs and flexible travel options, passengers can pick and mix dates and times to suit their plans—making it ideal for a spontaneous spring getaway or a longer city break.

The service operates twice daily from Belfast Grand Central Station (Stand 18) and drops passengers at Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station, close to the Style Mile and a wide range of excellent city-centre hotels.

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

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

Bookings can be made online at www.hannoncoach.com, or by phone through HANNON’s friendly booking team on 028 9265 0700 (Monday–Friday).

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Healthcare 2000 - Your Trusted Weight Loss Consultant.

In 1988 the name Healthcare 2000 was registered with an eye on the 21st century.

Based in Bloomfield Avenue, the vast majority of people know how difficult it is to lose weight and we have all seen hundreds of diets, meal replacements, pills and potions, and more recently fat burners that produce healthy weight loss in your sleep!

Slimming at Healthcare 2000 is forever and that is why we are still thriving after 35 years. Forget gimmicks that do not work – surely we all know that by now! The best way to lose weight safely is to change your eating habits, eat fewer calories than you burn and get more exercise. If you cannot achieve this by yourself then Healthcare 2000 can help you reach your goals.

Patients work with a fully qualified Doctor on a weekly basis and with the

help of suitable medication to control your appetite you will feel less hungry and therefore it will be easier to make the necessary dietary changes. We do not use meal replacements or milky drinks or advocate any diet that you cannot continue with for the rest of your life.

The doctors at Healthcare 2000 have carried out thousands of consultations and have a wealth of experience to help you lose weight successfully.

Hundreds of patients have transformed their lives with the help of healthcare 2000. From shedding stubborn weight to boosting confidence, the clinic has made a lasting difference – and you could be next! Some Belfast patients commented:

L McIlwaine said: Healthcare 2000 have really



helped me lose the weight. They have encouraged me throughout my weight loss and have helped me make a lifestyle change towards my diet.

L Preece commented: Having tried many different diets and not being able to keep the weight off I decided to give Healthcare 2000 a go. The doctors have given me great advice about eating the right and wrong kinds

of food. I have noticed a change not only in my body shape but I now feel I have more energy than before. Healthcare 2000 can help you reach your weight loss goals, so feel free to get in touch and book your consultation with one of our Doctors on 028 90455556 or visit our website www.healthcare2000.co.uk for more information.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Small Steps can boost a BIG Growth in Confidence!

Taekwon-Do NI is helping children and adults across Northern Ireland grow in Strength & Confidence!!

The Organisation is part of the United Kingdom Taekwon-Do Council and affiliated to the World ITF Taekwon-Do Council. It runs Clubs in Community Centres, Leisure Centres & Church Halls across Northern Ireland. The President for Northern Ireland is Mr Leo Maguire, VI Degree. Leo is also the National Coach and a member of the Northern Ireland Council of Taekwon-Do.

Tiger Cubs is the level for primary school age children. No experience is necessary to join and classes welcome small children from Age 3 right up to adulthood. Mums and Dads can join in too with the children, training together builds family confidence and a shared achievement.

There's also Little Tiger Cubs (3 to 5 years) and Active Tigers (5 to 8 years).

Taekwon-Do for the more senior class age ranges from 9 years to adulthood. We also offer a six week Female Self-Defence course, led by Female Instructors and is perfect for young girls leaving home or going to University or for adults to combine get-fit as a new skill.

The course gives practical skills and confidence for independent living away from home. Adult classes focus on fitness and self defence and beginners are always welcome. The Clubs welcomes everybody and adapts sessions to suit all abilities and needs.

Grading is by Leo Maguire himself. This ensures consistent standards across the region. Taekwon-Do NI also provides a GCSE in Taekwon-Do with the Education Authority. It offers free trials to secondary schools as a PE



alternative and FREE Taster Sessions run from Nursery level through to High School Education.

The Active Tigers programme sums up its Ethos! Small steps bring big confidence and discipline and fun! Students learn to watch their confidence

grow with each class and for more information contact Taekwon-Do NI on 07891191494 or visit taekwondo-ni.co.uk.

A brighter, stronger tomorrow starts with the first class.

<http://www.taekwondo-ni.co.uk/>



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The Power of the Local Pound

Walk down any thriving high street and you will feel the energy of a real community. From the smell of freshly baked bread to the warm greeting at the corner greengrocer, local businesses form the backbone of our towns.

Yet as digital convenience expands, these vital independent shops face an unprecedented challenge. Choosing to shop locally is far more than a simple errand. It is a vital investment in our shared future.

Boosting the Regional Economy

When you buy from an independent retailer, a significantly higher percentage of your money stays within the local economy. Small business owners buy from local suppliers, hire local staff and pay taxes that fund essential community services. A single purchase at a neighbourhood butcher or bookshop creates a ripple effect. It directly supports local families, drives regional growth and keeps high streets vibrant.

Unmatched Quality and Expertise

Independent traders offer specialized knowledge that algorithms and giant supermarket chains simply cannot match. A local cheesemonger or florist takes deep pride in their craft, offering personal recommendations and tailored service. Furthermore, local food traders often source produce from nearby farms. This reduces transit times, cuts plastic packaging and ensures fresher, better-tasting food on your table.

Preserving Community Identity

Beyond the economic advantages, independent shops give our towns their unique character and charm. Unique storefronts turn bland streets into welcoming places to gather and connect. Shopkeepers know their customers by name, fostering a strong sense of safety and belonging.

Every time you choose a high street shop over a massive online retailer, you vote for the kind of community you want to live in. By spending locally, we preserve our town centres and secure a resilient future for everyone.

Make half term the time to check your child's sight

Half term is a busy week for families, but it can also be the perfect opportunity to tick an important health check off the list - your child's eye test.

The Olde Mill

Garden Centre and Farm Shop

Join us for... 'The Great Pumpkin Hunt'

Every Pumpkin wins a prize, Star Prizes include Food/Sweet Hampers, Lunch in Aroma, Vouchers and more!

Starts Monday 19th October and runs right up to Halloween!

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AROMA

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Good vision plays a vital role in a child's learning, confidence and everyday development. From reading the board in class and concentrating on homework, to enjoying sport, screen time and hobbies, children rely on their eyesight more than they may realise. Yet many children will not know something is wrong, because they have nothing to compare their vision with.

Paula Cunningham, Ophthalmic Director at Specsavers Connswater says: "That is why regular eye tests are so important. An eye test can help identify short or long sight, focusing issues, squints and other concerns that may otherwise go unnoticed. Spotting these early means children can get the right support sooner, helping them feel more comfortable at school and at home."

Parents should also remember that children do not need to be able to read letters to have their eyes tested. The local experts at Specsavers Connswater use age-appropriate kids' eye tests including pictures and simple activities featuring their exclusive Optomonster family, making appointments straightforward and reassuring for younger children.



Paula continued; "Half term is the most practical time to visit without having to work around the school day, and it gives families peace of mind before the busy term continues. With the first couple of months of the new school year over us, eyes can already be tired or showing signs of needing a check-up."

Children under 16 are entitled to free NHS-funded eye tests, and young people aged 16 to 18 in full-time education may also be eligible. To arrange an appointment, contact Specsavers Connswater via specsavers.co.uk/stores/belfastconnswater.

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The Character Co: Bringing smiles and joy across NI

If you're looking to turn an ordinary party or event into an unforgettable experience, The Character Co. brings joy, wonder and interactive entertainment to people across Northern Ireland and beyond.

Providing professional character performers for birthdays, seasonal celebrations, community events and special one-to-one visits, they create magical experiences and lasting memories for guests of all ages.

At the heart of The Character Co. is a passion for imagination and their premium costumes are carefully crafted with exceptional quality and attention to detail. From the moment a character makes their entrance to their signature music, the atmosphere comes alive with laughter, excitement and amazement as guests see their favourite characters brought to life!

What truly sets The Character Co. apart is their focus on authentic interaction. These aren't simply costumes

— alongside a party host, their characters can engage with guests through photo meet and greets, dancing, games and playful activities, creating endless fun for children. The team also take bespoke custom requests and make dreams come true!

The Character Co. is also passionate about spreading joy throughout the wider community, attending charity events and fundraisers and offering free visits to hospitals and nursing homes during the festive season.

Each year, the company selects a charity to support through volunteer appearances and fundraising, helping bring smiles where they are needed most. For 2026, they are an official charity partner for the NI

Children's Hospice.

With over 20 characters to choose from, there is something to suit every occasion and theme. The team takes care of everything from arrival and set-up to performance and the final magical farewell. Fully insured and DBS-checked, with a growing collection of 5-star reviews, The Character Co. combines professionalism, expertise and theatrical flair to deliver a safe, high-quality experience and have quickly established themselves as a leading choice for children's entertainment in Northern Ireland.

To find out more or to make a booking, visit www.thecharactercompany.co.uk or follow @the_characterco on Instagram.



The Character Co Director, Chantelle

Future secured of one of Northern Ireland's most important heritage collections

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has officially opened a new archive facility for the Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland (HERoNI) at the former Belfast War Room in Mount Eden Park, Belfast.



Communities Minister Gordon Lyons and Rhonda Robinson, Department for Communities archaeologist examines the restored generator at the Belfast War Rooms. The War Rooms is the new archive facility for the Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland (HERoNI).

The project secures the future of one of Northern Ireland's most important heritage collections while giving new life to a significant Cold War landmark. The repurposed facility will provide a permanent, sustainable home for HERoNI, which documents more than 45,000 historic sites through maps, plans, records and photographs.

The facility will now serve as the permanent home of HERoNI, a key public resource documenting Northern Ireland's rich and diverse historic environment. The archive contains records relating to more than 45,000 historic places, including archaeological sites, historic monuments and buildings, as well as industrial, marine and defence heritage sites.

Its collections include drawings, maps, plans, documents and hundreds of thousands of photographs spanning all periods of Northern Ireland's history.

The transformation of the War Room demonstrates the potential for the sustainable

reuse of historic buildings. While the structure's original design posed significant challenges for redevelopment, its distinctive features, including 1.5 metre-thick reinforced concrete walls, a windowless design and a

network of small internal rooms, have proven highly suitable for archival storage. These characteristics help maintain stable environmental conditions essential for the long-term preservation of sensitive historic records.

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COULD YOU HOST A YOUNG PERSON IN YOUR HOME?

Many young people leaving care or arriving as refugees face a steep path to adulthood. The STAY supported lodgings scheme provides temporary accommodation for young people aged 16 to 21. Hosts offer a spare bedroom alongside guidance to help these individuals gain vital independence.

Becoming a host is not the same as traditional foster care. Young participants are generally settled individuals preparing for work, training or education. Hosts simply provide a safe environment while helping them learn essential life skills like cooking, budgeting and domestic chores.

Anyone with a spare room can consider applying to the scheme. HSC NI guidelines confirm there is no upper age limit for hosts, provided they are healthy. Working

individuals can also participate if they maintain sufficient flexibility to support a young person with essential appointments.

The matching process is conducted carefully at a comfortable pace for everyone involved. Both the host and the young person must agree before a placement begins. This ensures a suitable fit and fosters a supportive dynamic for everyone in the household.

Hosts receive continuous training and professional guidance throughout the process.

Hosts receive a monthly financial allowance to assist with rent, food and utility costs. A multi-professional team remains available to offer wraparound support during the entire journey.

If you have a spare room and want to make a genuine difference, consider reaching out today. Contact HSC NI on 0800 0720 137 or complete an online enquiry form at <https://adoptionandfostercare.hscni.net/foster-care/about-supported-lodgings/to-start-the-journey>.

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A STRONG START THAT LASTS A LIFETIME

Good nursery and pre-primary care shapes far more than early ABCs. It builds confidence, language and the social skills children carry into school.

Research shows high quality early childhood education and care can have positive and long lasting impacts on outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children. Benefits grow when care is warm and responsive and when staff are well trained and stable. The Study of Early Education and Development followed 3,930 children and families. Children who attended more hours per week between ages two and four had significant cognitive and socio-emotional advantages. Those benefits were felt regardless of family disadvantage. Quality matters most. Children in high quality formal group settings such as nursery and playgroup showed increased non-verbal cognitive development and fewer behavioural problems by age four. They showed better self-regulation and fewer peer problems. Children who spent more time with childminders were also found to have fewer emotional difficulties such as

fears and worries.

There is a link to later learning too. Studies of early years provision found children who attended early education were almost eight months ahead in literacy and numeracy compared to those who did not. That early advantage helps future achievement in primary and secondary school.

Social and emotional growth is central. Early interventions were found to have lasting benefits in

preventing mental health issues and fostering positive relationships. Emotional competence at three to four years contributes to social competence in kindergarten and beyond.

Good settings work closely with families. Relationships play a huge role and home learning still matters. The best nurseries share routines, listen to parents and support independence, curiosity and wellbeing every day.



Choose a place and where play school feel less daunting and far more exciting. where staff know has purpose. That makes foundation makes

DISCOVER CREGAGH PRIMARY – A SCHOOL WHERE EVERY CHILD BELONGS

Open Night – Wednesday 13 January 2027

Choosing the right school for your child is an important decision – and there is no better way to discover what makes a school special

than to come through the doors and experience it for yourself.

Cregagh Primary School and Deaf Unit warmly invites prospective families to its Open Night on Wednesday 13 January 2027. A quieter session for prospective P1 families will run from 5pm–6pm, followed by the main Open Night from 6pm–7.30pm.

There will be plenty for our younger visitors to enjoy too! Children can meet and enjoy the animals at our on-site petting zoo and follow a special adventure trail around the school, while families explore our classrooms, meet our staff and discover what Cregagh could offer their child.

Serving children and families since 1939, Cregagh is a caring,

friendly school where children are known, valued and encouraged to Aspire, Believe, Belong and Achieve. It is also the only primary school in Northern Ireland with a specialist Deaf Unit, with deaf and hearing children learning, playing and growing together as part of one inclusive school family.

Our children enjoy excellent facilities for 21st-century learning, including extensive digital technology, a 4G sports pitch, beautiful gardens, sensory provision and generous outdoor learning spaces. A Breakfast Club from 8am and a wide range of after-school clubs also provide valuable support for busy families.

In its May 2025 inspection, ETI highlighted the

high expectations for behaviour and engagement, the strong culture of care and supportive relationships, and the “carefully planned and highly effective integration” between the Deaf Unit and mainstream classes.

A SPECIAL MORNING FOR OUR FUTURE P1 CHILDREN

Prospective P1 children starting school in September 2027, along with their parents and carers, are also warmly invited to a special Belfast PlayBus event at Cregagh Primary School on Saturday 16 January 2027.

It will be a fun and relaxed opportunity for children to enjoy the PlayBus while families can visit the school, meet our staff and get

another feel for life at Cregagh.

Places for the PlayBus event must be booked online in advance. Booking will open at the beginning of January 2027, so keep an eye on the Cregagh Primary School Facebook page in the New Year for full details and the booking link.

Come and discover Cregagh for yourself – we would love to welcome you.

OPEN NIGHT: Wednesday 13 January 2027 | 5pm–6pm & 6pm–7.30pm

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A NEW CHAPTER FOR VICTORIA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Victoria Park Primary School has welcomed Mr Jonathan Bleakley as its new Principal, marking a new chapter for the East Belfast school where he has taught for the past ten years.

With over 15 years of teaching experience, alongside wider work in educational leadership, innovative curriculum enhancement and teacher development, Mr Bleakley brings a wealth of experience and a strong personal connection to the school and its community.

Speaking about his appointment, Mr Bleakley said:

“Having been part of the Victoria Park family for the past ten years, it is a real privilege to take on the role of Principal. Our wonderful children, families and staff make this school such a

special place to be and I am incredibly proud to have the opportunity to lead our school community into its next chapter.”

“At Victoria Park, we believe that every child deserves the very best start in life. As a nurturing and inclusive school, we place great importance on ensuring that every child feels safe, happy, valued and supported.”

“For me, providing the highest quality of pastoral care goes hand in hand with providing the highest quality of teaching and learning. We want our children to

develop a genuine love of learning, experience success and grow into confident, kind and resilient young people.”

“Our vision is for every child to be inspired to learn, nurtured to grow and ready to flourish. We want every child to leave Victoria Park with happy memories, strong friendships and the knowledge, skills and confidence they need for the next stage of learning and life.”

Looking ahead, Mr Bleakley is committed to building upon the excellent foundations already established at



Victoria Park, working alongside staff, families and the wider community to ensure that every child has the opportunity to achieve their full holistic

potential.

Victoria Park Primary School is holding an Open Day on Tuesday 8th December from 10-11am www.victoriaparkprimaryschool.co.uk



Bethlehem Nursery School

OPEN DAY

TUESDAY 4TH JANUARY 2027
9.30AM - 11AM

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Braniel Primary School & Nursery Unit Builds Belonging through Nature and Nurture

Braniel Primary and Nursery School in east Belfast is building success under the Principalship of Mr Niall Manogue. Mr Manogue guides a caring and stimulating community where children are prepared for life as well as learning.

The School's mission aims to establish an environment where each child is respected and valued. Children learn mutual self-respect and gain a strong sense of belonging. They are equipped for today and empowered for tomorrow!

This ethos is built on clear values of 'belonging, respecting and aspiring'. The School creates a happy and positive climate where all children feel encouraged. Learning is effective and inclusive and self-esteem is nurtured. Needs are paramount and children are supported physically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and socially.

A key strength is the Nursery Unit attached to the main School. It offers full-time and part-time places and ensures a smooth transition into Primary One.

Innovative outdoor learning sets Braniel Primary School & Nursery Unit apart. The campus includes a sloped woodland transformed into adventurous play. A custom agility trail leads to a robust Jungle Dome climbing structure. The space encourages physical challenge and mental engagement while blending with nature.

The curriculum is broad balanced and relevant. It focuses on holistic development and key life skills. Literacy and numeracy remain central alongside citizenship and community.

Earlier this year Belfast City Airport's Community Fund supported a new garden project. The initiative transforms an unused area into a vibrant learning space where children will garden together and build confidence as well as



sustainability skills.

Families can learn more about Braniel Primary School and Nursery Unit at the forthcoming Open Days on Wednesday

2nd and Saturday 5th December.

For more information visit www.branielps.co.uk and discover the Braniel difference!

Braniel Primary & Nursery School

Open Day

Wednesday 2nd December
10.00am – 11.00am & 5.30pm – 6.30pm

Saturday 5th December
10.00am – 11.00am

Discover the Braniel difference at our Open Days and see why families choose us as the perfect place for their Nursery and Primary 1 children to learn and grow.

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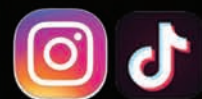
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THE CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN THAT SAVES YOUR PURSE

Christmas costs creep up fast when you count down without a plan. British households spend about £106 on going out, £172 on food and £76 on experiences during the festive period. A clear countdown budget stops that spend turning into January debt and stress.

Start eight weeks out by listing income and fixed bills to find your festive pot. Check last December statements to spot pinch points like parties or travel. Split what you can afford into food, gifts and activities rather than wish lists. That pot must include personal extras that often get forgotten. Book your pre Christmas hair and beauty slots now and set the budget aside. A wash, cut and blow dry is the most popular treatment amongst UK adults

before Christmas. Research shows adults in Northern Ireland budget £171.50 on average for festive hair and beauty appointments. Lock in your cut, colour or up-style early and set aside £40 to £60 for it. Add nails, brows or beard trims into the same beauty pot so you avoid last minute panic spends. At six weeks tackle home decoration with a tight limit. You do not have to spend a lot on decor to make your home look festive. Check what you

already own before buying anything new. Thread ribbon through cookie cutters and hang them from hooks for a cheap touch. Shops like The Range, B&M and Ikea offer good Christmas decorations at low cost. Use clear vases filled with baubles, greenery or fairy lights to create cosy displays. Save gift bags, tissue paper and ribbons from earlier purchases to reuse for wrapping. Five weeks out plan food, travel and social life. Book trains early and look at split tickets



to cut fares. Freeze essentials bought on offer and use up store cupboard items like stock cubes. December is the most popular

month for overdraft use with Brits borrowing £178 on average. Prioritise needs over fear of missing out and budget for each social

event separately. Create a present pyramid with special gifts at the top and cards at the bottom to keep it fair. Work extras need

their own small pot. The national average for Secret Santa is £13 with many spending £21 to £25 in generous trades. Suggest a £10 cap to keep it friendly for everyone. Thoughtful under £10 gifts can feel personal without breaking the limit. Budget for the office party outfit, taxi and contributions to collections too. Hunt real bargains on voucher sites but avoid buying just because something is in a sale. In the final three weeks go granular with separate pots

for presents and socialising. Remember buy now pay later can push debt forward and a quarter of users miss repayments. Keep long term goals in sight so a spontaneous meal does not derail savings. In the last week wrap with saved bags and ribbons and use labels to cover old logos. Embrace staying in with films and homemade gifts to cut credit card debt into the new year. Seek free guidance from your bank if you feel overstretched and protect your future budget.



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Thinking of building a Garden Room? Here is what you need to know

Garden rooms have been a revelation in the property world. Making your outdoor area into valuable living space can both greatly improve your quality of life as well as increasing the value of your property.

Garden rooms can range in shapes, sizes and designs – each one made specifically for the garden in which it is situated. These rooms give you the ideal place to take in the beauty of the seasons from the comfort and warmth of your home.

The most obvious benefit of building a garden room is the additional living space that it will provide. As populations continue

to expand and urban living becomes ever more popular, finding enough space in the home is a problem that many people face. In the past, extensions have been the obvious solution, however in recent times garden rooms are overtaking them as the go to renovation trend.

One benefit of a garden room is that it is separated from the house. This physical separation

provides a sense of distance from the worries, stresses and concerns of the home; creating the ideal retreat to relax and unwind.

Garden rooms are also considerably more simple and cheap to construct. Unlike extensions, most garden rooms do not require planning permission unless you're deciding on an annexe that is designed for living in. Their construction can take a little as a week

and their costs remain minute in comparison to an extension.

Versatility is a huge benefit of garden rooms. If you value your own design flare and wish to put your own stamp on this space – then garden rooms are for you. The design options are seemingly endless and with each room build to fit the garden, there is plenty of space to leave your mark on this build.

Getting On the Property Ladder – Advice for First Time Buyers

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

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

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



worth asking your bank about these prices before making an offer and you can therefore factor them into your budget. First-time-buyers do have an advantage here as they will pay no Stamp Duty on the first £300,000 for properties valued up to £500,000.

When applying for your mortgage, the most important factor for your lender is to know that you will be able to meet your

repayments. You will need to provide documentation of all of your outgoing costs, including debts, household bills, or other costs such as car repayments, childcare or travel costs.

The amount that a lender will give you for a mortgage is directly related to both your income and outgoing expenses – so it is important to consider this when looking into homes that

you can afford.

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

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Ways to warm up this Winter

Winter shuffles in and turns your nose pink. You can outwit it without drama or a huge bill.

First master the art of layers. Several thin layers trap heat better than one chunky jumper. Think thermal vest plus fleecy mid layer plus woolly outer. Add socks and slippers with grip and you become a walking duvet. It looks eccentric but it works.

Next treat your house like a biscuit tin. Close curtains at night and keep windows shut after dark to keep heat inside. Use draught excluders around doors and window frames and keyholes. Open curtains by day for light then draw them before darkness falls. Simple steps like closing curtains and checking your boiler help keep homes warm and efficient.



Move a bit. Staying active boosts circulation and generates body heat. Move around at least once an hour and avoid sitting still for long periods. Try chair exercises or a hallway strut. Keeping active at home and moving every hour helps you stay warm.

Feed your inner furnace. Eat at least one hot meal each day and enjoy regular hot drinks. Porridge and stews and soup warm you from inside while tea or coffee lifts morale. Having hot drinks like tea or coffee will warm you from inside during a cold snap.

Finally be clever with heat. Keep the room you use most at around eighteen degrees if you can. Heat one room and spend time there and turn off radiators in unused halls. A hot water bottle or electric blanket keeps the bed cosy without heating the whole house.

Frost, Fun and Flawless Plans

Planning a Winter Break? – Whether its Christmas Shopping in Prague, soaking up the winter sun or skiing on Italian slopes or even a break closer to home - start with a clear purpose.

Do you crave rest, adventure or festive cheer? Set a realistic budget early and stick to it. Good planning helps you enjoy shared experiences without stress. Shared experiences are crucial. Confirm your travel documents and dates before you book anything, including passport validity and return details. A favourite drink and a quiet moment can help you focus on decisions.

Choose a destination that matches your energy and weather tolerance. A city break offers markets, galleries and cosy cafes within walking distance. For central exploration book accommodation as centrally as possible. Research suggests the location of

your accommodation makes a big difference to your break. Compare hotels, vacation rentals and hostels for value and warmth before committing. Once you have a gauge on flight costs look at available areas and costs. Consider restaurants you want to visit beforehand to avoid disappointment.

Packing smart is essential for cold weather comfort and confidence. Choose versatile layers, waterproof boots and a polished evening outfit. Experts advise planning outfits in advance so you pack less and feel polished every day. Keep your confirmations and driving licence in hand luggage for easy access. Build a loose itinerary with



one main activity per day. Leave space for spontaneity, hot chocolate and long lunches. You can also create a schedule that organises your area and sets new objectives.

A Winter break is a time for relaxation and recharging from a busy term. Balance sightseeing with sleep,

books and gentle walks. Take regular breaks to rest and recharge using short focused bursts. Take time to organise quality programmes that make everyone feel important. With documents checked, bags packed and plans loose you will return home refreshed.

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Some of the Best places to work in NI.

Recent workplace studies show local employers scoring highly for trust and growth. Belfast remains a hub for technology and finance investment.

Liberty IT in Belfast leads many national lists for culture. It is the only Northern Ireland organisation ranked in the UK top 50 medium companies. Staff report 86% positive experience compared with 54% in typical firms. Its team emphasises engineering quality and wellbeing awards. The firm also prioritises collaborative problem solving and staff development.

Kainos is another standout with strong employee satisfaction scores. Glassdoor data shows median pay around £60k and a 4.2 rating locally. Allstate Northern Ireland and Citi anchor the Belfast tech scene with large teams. Research notes global names like Citi and Allstate work alongside indigenous firms. Foreign investment has grown on the basis of skills and infrastructure. Both firms offer clear career paths and early talent programmes.

Professional services giants also score highly for development. PwC and Deloitte offer structured training and flexible working in Belfast. Deloitte leads the Best Managed Companies Awards with Bank of Ireland. EY provides strong mentorship and clear progression for graduates. Novosco and



Version 1 are praised for supportive teams and learning culture. First Derivatives and CME Group provide specialist fintech careers with international reach. These employers combine high skill work with good work life balance.

Indigenous manufacturers prove that great culture exists outside technology. A mineral processor and a building façade manufacturer and a waste management company recently joined the best managed list. Kilwaughter Minerals from Larne and Clarke from Ballymena and Re-Gen Waste in Newry all earned that title. These firms highlight investment in safety and long term careers. Henderson Group which owns Spar stores is recognised for local progression. Moy Park in Craigavon offers stability and strong team support in food production.

Health and public sector employers feature strongly too. Almac Group in Craigavon is a life sciences leader with global reach. Glassdoor data shows competitive pay between £29k and £38k for many roles there. Randox Laboratories in Antrim invests heavily in science and wellbeing. NI Water won best employee experience programme at recent industry awards. Thales won best apprenticeship scheme and supports early talent in the same awards.

What unites these twenty is people first leadership. They offer learning plans and flexible hours and genuine recognition. Many have been recognised by Great Place to Work and Sunday Times lists. For job seekers in Northern Ireland choice has never been better. Employers now compete on culture as well as salary.

Multi-million investment in new AI and Fintech Centre of Excellence at First Derivative

First Minister Michelle O'Neill, deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly and Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald have announced that First Derivative is investing £15.3 million in R&D and jobs at a new AI and Fintech Centre of Excellence.

First Derivative, an EPAM company, is a global consulting firm that provides a range of solutions for the financial services industry. Its client base includes many of the world's top financial institutions.

Welcoming the investment while visiting the company's HQ in Newry, First Minister, Michelle O'Neill said: "This investment is a huge vote of confidence in Newry, our people and the potential of this city. First Derivative has deep roots here and has shown that a world-class company can be built in Newry and compete globally.

The centre will bring together our expertise and specialist skills with AI software solutions that our clients can integrate seamlessly into their existing systems.

Speaking at the

announcement in Newry, deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly said: "This is great news for Newry and a real testament to the strength of our tech talent pipeline here in Northern Ireland.

Securing this project is a clear endorsement of the skilled workforce in Newry and Belfast, our competitive business environment and growing reputation as a centre for advanced technology.

First Derivative will carry out R&D to develop new process and technology solutions for blue chip clients that will enable the company to enhance its competitiveness.

Andrew Colhoun, Head of First Derivative said: "This investment reflects our tech-first strategy, where innovation is at the heart of how we operate and deliver for our clients.



Pictured (L-R) are Economy Minister, Dr Caoimhe Archibald; First Minister, Michelle O'Neill; Andrew Colhoun, Head of First Derivative; deputy First Minister, Emma Little-Pengelly and Kieran Donoghue, CEO, Invest NI.

We see a significant opportunity to harness advanced technologies, particularly AI, to modernise operations and improve efficiency.

"Establishing our Centre of Excellence is an important step in realising that vision.

The centre will bring together our expertise and specialist skills with AI software solutions that our clients can integrate seamlessly into their existing systems."

Invest NI has offered the company an R&D grant of £3,204,190,

helping to secure this significant investment for Northern Ireland ahead of other potential locations.

Invest NI's R&D support for this project is part funded by the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).

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RENAULT 5 TURBO 3E AND TWINGO E-TECH ELECTRIC WIN AT CAR GENIUS AWARDS

Renault’s latest electric models have come top of the class at the inaugural CAR Genius Awards, with the spectacular Renault 5 Turbo 3E named ‘Idea of the Year’ and the new Renault Twingo E-Tech electric crowned ‘Small Car of the Year’.

The two awards recognise very different expressions of Renault’s approach to electric cars. Renault 5 Turbo 3E turns one of the brand’s most celebrated performance icons into a phenomenal 555 hp electric ‘mini-supercar’, while Twingo E-Tech electric brings clever technology, character and accessible pricing to the heart of the small-car market. Created by the extended editorial team at CAR, the new Genius Awards recognise “innovative thinking, brilliantly i m p l e m e n t e d”, celebrating standout ideas across the industry. Renault 5 Turbo 3E praised for performance and

concept Renault 5 Turbo 3E secured the ‘Idea of the Year’ title after impressing the judges with both its extreme performance and the ambition of bringing such an uncompromising car to production. Reimagining the spirit of the legendary Renault 5 Turbo and Turbo 2 of the 1980s, Renault 5 Turbo 3E combines dramatic retro-futuristic design with cutting-edge electric performance. Two rear-mounted in-wheel motors produce a combined 555 hp and 4,800 Nm of torque, making it the most powerful road-going Renault ever created. Custom-made to order and priced from £140,000, Renault 5 Turbo 3E is limited



to 1,980 individually numbered examples, referencing the year in which the original Renault 5

Turbo was launched. Reservations are open now, with customers able to select from an extensive range

of exterior liveries, interior materials and finishes. At the other end of the electric-car

spectrum, Renault Twingo E-Tech electric was named ‘Small Car of the Year’, with CAR praising

the personality, value and sense of occasion it brings to an increasingly important part of the market. With its bright green paintwork and expressive, wide-set headlights, Twingo E-Tech electric has already earned the nickname “Le Frog”. Its cheerful design is combined with a compact, city-friendly footprint and modern electric technology, creating a small car designed to be as useful and accessible as it is characterful. Targeting a starting price below £20,000, Twingo E-Tech electric offers a WLTP driving range of up to 163 miles* from its LFP battery and is powered by a lively 60 kW electric motor.

Features associated with larger cars include One Pedal driving and the availability of the OpenR Link multimedia system with Google built-in (depending on version). Customers keen to secure early access can now purchase a Twingo R Pass for £100. This provides priority ordering ahead of the general public, exclusive model updates, a dedicated concierge service, a miniature Renault Twingo E-Tech electric model and a distinctive green Renault key cover. For more information about Renault Twingo E-Tech electric, visit: <https://www.renault.co.uk/electric-vehicles/twingo-e-tech-electric.html>

AUTUMN MOTORING GUIDE

Autumn brings stunning golden landscapes but also introduces treacherous driving conditions.

Sharper chills, fallen leaves and sudden downpours test both drivers and vehicles. Preparing your car beforehand ensures safety throughout this unpredictable transition period. Routine maintenance becomes critical as temperatures drop. According to the RAC, battery failures spike dramatically during colder months as heating and lights draw extra power. Drivers should test their battery strength early to avoid unexpected breakdowns on chilly mornings. Tyres also require urgent attention before wet weather sets in. The AA recommends maintaining a tread depth well above the legal 1.6 mm limit to guarantee proper grip. Checking tyre pressure regularly is equally vital because cooler air causes pressure drops. Visibility drops significantly during autumn due to shorter daylight hours and low sun glare. Drivers should clean windshields thoroughly inside and out to eliminate streaks that worsen glare. The Driver and Vehicle

Standards Agency advises replacing worn wiper blades immediately if they smear water across the glass. Keeping screenwash topped up with a suitable winter additive prevents fluid from freezing on frosty mornings. Checking that all exterior bulbs operate correctly ensures you remain visible to other road users. Fallen leaves pose a hidden hazard that many motorists underestimate. Damp leaves create a slick surface with traction comparable to ice. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents warns drivers to reduce speed when approaching leaf-covered bends. Sudden braking on wet

foliage can easily cause skid risks and loss of control. Clearing leaves from the base of the windscreen prevents blocked air intakes and drainage channels. Navigating heavy rain and sudden autumn floods requires patient driving technique. Entering standing water at high speed risks severe engine damage and aquaplaning. National Highways urges drivers to double their stopping distance on wet surfaces. Extending the gap to the vehicle ahead provides vital extra time to react to hazards. When driving through large puddles, choose the highest point of the road and move slowly in a low gear.

Low autumn sun creates blinding glare that severely impairs forward vision. Keeping a clean pair of sunglasses in your glovebox helps maintain clear sight during early morning commutes. Drivers must slow down immediately if dazzled rather than continuing blindly forward. Keeping your distance from cyclists and pedestrians remains essential as poor light makes vulnerable road users harder to spot. By performing basic vehicle checks and adapting driving habits, motorists can safely navigate autumn roads. Thorough preparation prevents costly mechanical repairs and protects everyone on the road.

All-new Toyota Hilux now available with two-seat conversion

The all-new Toyota Hilux is now available as a two-seat model, offering more versatility and load-carrying capability for people wanting a pick-up that’s tailor-made to meet their business needs.

Launched earlier this year, the ninth generation of Toyota’s world-renowned Hilux is presented exclusively in a Double Cab body style, in line with the market’s strong preference. Customers now have the option of a new factory conversion that removes the three-seat bench from the rear section of the cabin and creates a large, flat and secure load area. Measuring 1,290mm wide and 640mm deep, it’s suitable for carrying tools and equipment, easily accessed via the Double Cab’s rear doors. The conversion in no way compromises performance, safety or standard equipment specifications. Hilux also remains compatible with Toyota’s extensive range of accessories and customisation options. In addition to the convenience of extra load space, the conversion brings potential savings in ownership costs for business users. It also enables flat rate benefit-in-kind taxation

and a 100 per cent plant and machinery allowance, where applicable. There’s further peace of mind with Toyota’s market-leading warranty which provides cover for up to 10 years or 100,000 miles, subject to an annual vehicle service at a qualifying Toyota workshop*. In line with Toyota’s multi-pathway approach to giving customers powertrain options that meet customers needs and help reduce carbon emissions, the all-new Hilux range includes both a Diesel 48V engine and a battery electric system. The BEV version has been designed and engineered to ensure authentic strong performance, with permanent all-wheel drive and the ability to tackle a wide range of off-road conditions, including wading through water up to 700mm deep. Commercial vehicle on-the-road prices (excluding VAT) are from £36,815 for the Diesel 48V and £49,356 for the battery electric model, including

a £5,000 discount funded by the Government’s OZEV large electric van grant.

*Terms and conditions apply; for details visit <https://www.toyota.co.uk/owners/toyota-warranty>.



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Spotting Household Electrical Danger Signs

According to Electrical Safety First, electrical faults cause over half of domestic fires in the United Kingdom. Recognising early warning signs prevents property damage and protects residents from severe electric shocks.

Frequent circuit breaker trips indicate severe circuit overloads or short circuits within underlying wiring. Guidance from the London Fire Brigade highlights that flickering lights or buzzing switches reveal loose electrical connections inside fittings.

Heat and discolouration

offer vital visual clues of dangerous overheating. Sockets must never feel warm to touch. Brown scorch marks indicate arcing behind plasterwork and a fishy chemical odour signals melting insulation inside switch boxes.

Physical defects and unusual sensations demand



immediate attention. Wobbly sockets loosen internal wire terminals over time. Reports from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service stress that tingling sensations when touching appliances signal critical earthing faults.

When identifying any

concerning symptoms, immediate action remains essential. Unplug affected appliances and switch off power at the main consumer unit. Always instruct a registered electrician to conduct thorough safety checks before restoring electricity.

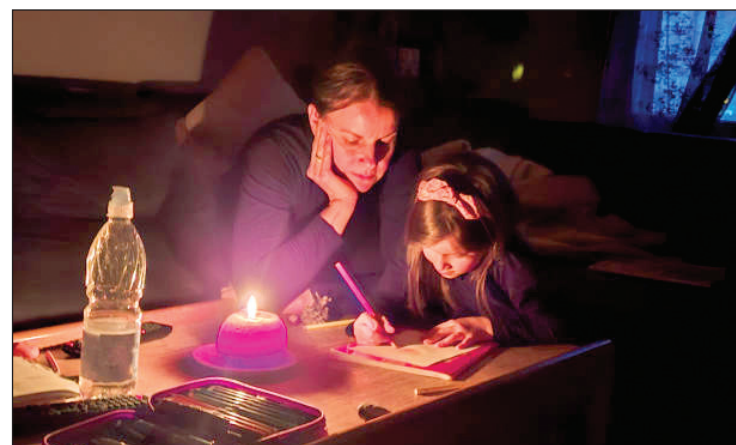
LIGHTS OUT? BE READY

Winter storms can cut power with little warning and a dark cold house is no fun. A small kit kept in one easy place saves stress and keeps you safe.

Build it gradually and add one item at a time when you do your weekly shop.

Start with light and information. Put together an emergency kit in a backpack containing battery operated torches with one for each member of the family. Include spare batteries and a battery powered radio and a phone power bank. Choose bulbs that have lithium batteries that charge on your electricity supply and will remain illuminated for several hours in the event of a power cut. Keep candles and matches as backup but never leave them burning alone.

Next sort food and



warmth. What should be in a household emergency kit includes long-life food and water and a torch and batteries and a wind-up or

battery radio. Add warm layers and blankets and copies of key documents and essential medication. A flask of hot water helps and a camping stove can make tea safely. Keep some cash handy as card terminals and ATMs and online banking can fail in a power cut.

Plan what to do when lights go out. Here is a handy checklist you can refer to so you know what to do when there is no electricity. Locate your torch and power cut survival kit if you

have one and check it is a power cut and not a tripped fuse. Report the power cut to your network distributor. Store the number now in your mobile phone with the name Power cut.

Include a list of emergency contact numbers as a paper copy incase your phone loses power. Include essential medication and a first aid kit and backup power for medical equipment if needed. Also essential medication and a first aid kit.

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Waking Up To Wet Windows?

If you wake to dripping windows every winter morning you are not alone. Condensation forms when warm moist air touches a cold surface like window glass.

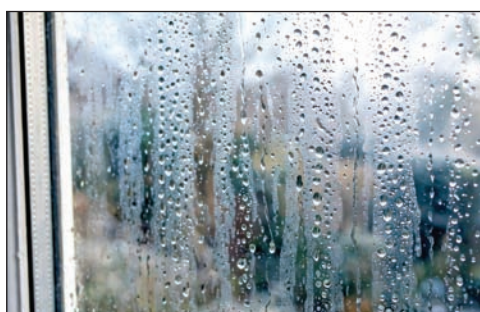
In winter this is worse because glass stays much colder while heating and daily life create more moisture inside.

The problem is simple physics. Cooking and showering and drying clothes indoors all add vapour to the air. When that moisture has nowhere to go it settles on the coldest surface in the home which is often your windows. That is why condensation appears in the morning and why only interior glass is wet. Condensation issues always increase during winter when external temperatures are low and

internal temperatures tend to be high.

Left alone it causes more than a wet sill. Lots of condensation can lead to dampness which can cause mould growth on blinds and walls and ceilings. When a surface has condensation on it this can provide ideal conditions for growth of mould spores.

You can reduce it without major work. Open windows each day to ensure good airflow and try to do this in the morning. If your home is not well ventilated that moisture settles on cold surfaces and eventually causes mould and damp. Use extractor



fans when cooking or bathing and dry clothes outside whenever you can. Wipe condensation off windows and surfaces each morning to stop moisture sitting.

Heat also helps. It is important to keep rooms heated to prevent

condensation as this keeps water vapour from cooling too much. Keep heating on low and steady and keep trickle vents open. Doing this while keeping windows or vents open will help excess moisture escape

LOOK UP BEFORE THE STORM HITS

You do not need ladders to spot winter roof trouble. You can get an idea of your roof's condition with both feet on the ground by looking for obvious damage. A quick check now prevents leaks and costly repairs later.

Start with binoculars from the front and back garden. Scan from the ground with binoculars and check for cracked and slipped or missing tiles and slates.

Often this can safely be undertaken from the ground using binoculars and you should look for any loose or missing tiles and cracks or signs of wear. Pay attention to ridges and valleys and around chimneys. A slipped slate or cracked

ridge tile may not be obvious but one storm can worsen it.

Next look at gutters and downpipes. Blocked gutters and downpipes are a common cause of storm damage during the wettest months. Make sure your gutters are free from excess debris when you know a storm is coming to make sure any water drains correctly. You should also check from the ground for signs that

your gutters are sagging and have them repaired or replaced. Look for debris on the ground that may have come from the roof as this signals loose material.

Do not forget inside. Once it is safe visually inspect from the ground and look for damage to guttering and torn or missing roof tiles and debris. Take a look inside and see if there are any signs of water damage or leaks.

Check the loft if you have one as this will likely be one of the first areas to show signs of damage. Preparing your roof is not only about aesthetics but about ensuring its durability to withstand the weight of torrential rain and snow and ice.

If you spot anything book a roofer early. You do not need to climb up ladders to keep an eye on your roof and simple checks can be done safely from ground level.

Boiler Dead? Check This First

A cold house in winter is miserable and a boiler breakdown always feels urgent. Before calling out a gas engineer for a boiler breakdown carry out a few simple checks beforehand.

These quick checks can save a callout fee and get heat back faster.

Start with the basics that often get missed. Follow this checklist to diagnose the problem with your broken boiler. Check the electricity supply and check the gas or oil supply and check the water supply. Look at the fuse box and the boiler switch and make sure the gas meter has credit. Low pressure is a common cause so check the boiler pressure and top up if the gauge is below one bar.

Next check the controls. Check the thermostat and programmer and make sure timers have not reset after a power cut. Many modern units have a fault code display so check for boiler fault codes and note them for the engineer. Does the boiler have a reset button and if the boiler has a permanent pilot light has it been extinguished. Press reset once and wait to



see if it relights.

In freezing weather check for frozen pipes as this stops the boiler firing. The condensate pipe outside often freezes and you can thaw it with warm water. Listen for gurgling and look for dripping. Clear the blockage and reset the boiler again.

If nothing works call a professional. Have your boiler inspected and serviced by a Gas Safe registered

engineer ideally before the cold weather kicks in. An annual service is part of healthy boiler maintenance and will help reduce the risk

of a breakdown when you need it the most. Regular checks clean main components and ensure the boiler is ready for use.

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£100 Home Heating Oil Support Scheme goes live for applications

The £100 Home Heating Oil Support Scheme, announced recently by Communities Minister Gordon Lyons, is now live for applications.

The £100 digital pre-paid card scheme will support around 340,000 households who use oil as their main source of heating.

Minister Lyons is urging anyone who may be eligible for the support to make an application.

Minister Lyons said: "The £100 Home Heating Oil Support Scheme is now live for applications. I am urging all those who believe they may be eligible, or those assisting them, to check the criteria on nidirect and make an application. The process is easy and fast.

"The digital pre-paid card will go

some way to meeting the challenge of rising fuel costs and will benefit those who need it most as we head into the colder months."

One digital card per household will be payable where applicants use oil as their main source of heating and receive a qualifying income-related benefit, or a disability benefit, or have an annual income for single people or couples (including pensioners) of less than £30,000 after allowable deductions.

The scheme is now open for applications and will close for new applications on March 31, 2027.

Noyona Chundur, Chief Executive of the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, said: "Now that the £100 Home Heating Oil Support Scheme is open, we would encourage all eligible households to apply. With household budgets continuing to be stretched by ongoing cost pressures, this support can help ease some of the financial burden and contribute towards the cost of home heating oil which has gone up in price over the last few days.

"Consumers can also use the Consumer Council's free daily Home Heating Oil

Price Checker to compare prices across Northern Ireland and help ensure households are making a more informed decision when ordering home heating oil."

To apply or for more information on the scheme go to nidirect: Home Heating Oil Support Scheme

Those needing more assistance can contact staff across the Jobs and Benefits Office network or contact the Home Heating Oil Support Scheme helpline on 0800 072 0266.

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