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ONE MURAL TO RULE THEM ALL

A new mural has recently appeared on the gable wall of a prominent business building in Bangor.

The Lord Of The Rings inspired artwork has been created on the premises of Robinson Goldsmiths. The business owners the Robinson Family told EDA Media.

“The Lord of The Rings inspired us, craftsmanship and storytelling sit at the heart of what we do, so collaborating with Bangor artist Jossie Pops felt like a natural fit. Inspired by the iconic ring from The Lord of the Rings, the mural brings together our passion for creating bold iconic Jewellery.

We wanted to create something a little unexpected for the town, celebrating local talent while adding a

new talking point in Bangor. We hope it encourages people to visit, take a selfie with the wall, and enjoy a small bit of magic right here on the High Street.”

Mural artist Jossie Pops, whose real name is Johnny Hamilton, gained popularity after Hollywood a-lister Gerard Butler visited Bangor to see a mural that he had painted of him while he was recently filming in Northern Ireland.

The artist has also created striking murals recently featuring local icons such as Liam Neeson, Gary Lightbody and Rory McIlroy.



The Robinson family pictured with the Lord Of The Rings themed mural by Jossie Pops which has been created on the gable wall of Robinson Goldsmiths in Bangor.

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CHOIR CELEBRATES 50 YEARS WITH CONCERT

Peter Corry and his Band will be the special guests at their Anniversary Concert on Saturday 16 May 2026 in Bangor Elim, Balloo Road, Bangor.

Also featuring in the Concert will be Bangor Grammar Jazz Band as well as other local musicians and we have a treat in store as BBC Presenter Barra Best will comper the show.

The Choir which was established in Bangor in 1976 will take a musical trip down memory lane, visiting the past five decades and performing songs learned under the guidance of past Musical Directors – each very different but each bringing a unique style from the era. Peter was one of the first guest artists with the choir and it was only fitting for the occasion that the Choir invited him to help celebrate their 50th anniversary with them.

Christine Crutchley, Musical Director, said “We are really looking forward

to a fabulous evening of music and song, performing many choir favourites, and also to looking back at how far we have progressed musically but also looking forward to an amazing future for Bangor Ladies Choir”. She continued, “We are very fortunate in having recruited many younger members over the past number of years and they will take Bangor Ladies choir into the next decade and beyond”.

Tickets, priced £27.50, are moving fast! To purchase please contact any choir member, or email: info@bangorladieschoir.com OR purchases can be made online at www.trybooking.com/uk/FABE or by scanning the QR code on the leaflet located on the front page of the choir website.

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Charity Golf Day Tees Off to Support Local Animal Sanctuary

Golfers are invited to tee off for a great cause at a Charity Golf Day in support of Assisi Animal Sanctuary on Friday 22nd May at Clondeboye Golf Club, Bangor.

The event promises a full day of golf, entertainment and fundraising, with £400 per four-ball, which includes a two-course meal following play. To ensure fair play for all participants, golfers are required to have an official Golf Ireland Handicap. Players can also look forward to fantastic prizes, along with a raffle, charity auction and lots of entertainment on the day.

Adding to the atmosphere, the day will be hosted by local comedian and charity ambassador Andrew Ryan, who will be on hand to keep spirits high and help raise vital funds for the sanctuary.

Music will also be provided on the course, with Andrew's colleague and friend, DJ Connor Brennan bringing the energy at the first hole.

All funds raised will go directly towards supporting the animal sanctuary's work caring for and rehoming animals in need within the local community.

Places are limited, and early booking is advised.

Founded in 1997, Assisi Animal Sanctuary is one of Northern Ireland's largest independent animal welfare charities. Based in County Down, Assisi rescues around 700 animals each year, including dogs, cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs. The animals in the charity's



care receive shelter, food, veterinary treatment, and most importantly, love and the chance of finding their forever home.

Animal welfare is at the heart of everything Assisi does. No matter an animal's age, background, or health, the team is committed to providing the best possible quality of life —

something many have never experienced before.

As Assisi receives no government funding, it relies entirely on the generosity of individuals, businesses, and the wider community to continue its vital work. The charity must raise over £3,280 every day — around £1.2 million annually — to sustain its

operations and continue to find animal companions their forever home.

For more information or to book a team, please contact Assisi Animal Sanctuary's Fundraising Manager Grace Williams via golf26@assisi-ni.org For more information on Assisi Animal Sanctuary, visit: www.assisi-ni.org



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TURNING OLD INTO GOLD: HOW ROBINSON GOLDSMITHS ARE REDESIGNING HEIRLOOMS SUSTAINABLY

What do you do with a broken chain that belonged to your mum? Or a gold ring that's not your style but holds a lifetime of family stories?



Jennifer and Gillian Robinson Goldsmiths.

At Robinson Goldsmiths in Bangor, the answer is simple: melt it down and begin again without losing what matters.

This isn't just recycling. It's memory-making, reborn.

In their family-run workshop, old jewellery is given a second life through a thoughtful and skilled process. The gold is melted down - a mesmerising sight - not to erase its past, but to prepare it for a new chapter.

"Working with customers to design and create unique jewellery is a real privilege," says Jennifer Robinson, partner at Robinson Goldsmiths. "Often, inherited jewellery is just sitting in a box somewhere, unseen and unused, as it's not the right style or size. By using these items to create something new, the customer gets a custom piece of jewellery which is all the more special knowing the history behind it."

Once molten, the gold is poured into a mould, cooled, then carefully rolled, shaped, and crafted into something entirely fresh.

Whether it becomes a sleek new ring, a modern pendant, or a bespoke design co-created with the team, each piece is reimagined but still deeply rooted in your story.

"Over the years we've turned broken and unloved jewellery into rings, necklaces and brooches," adds Gillian Robinson, shop manager. "These pieces are lovingly designed and created in our workshop from our family to another. By reusing these precious metals and stones, we're also offering a sustainable option for eco-conscious shoppers."

This is sustainable jewellery at its most meaningful: no new mining, no waste just precious materials already rich with history, transformed into something you'll wear every day and perhaps pass on one day yourself.

So if there's old gold tucked away in a drawer, maybe it's time to bring it in, melt it down, and start a new chapter.



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Local Producers Recognised at Taste Ards and North Down Food Heroes Awards

Local food and drinks producers have been recognised at the fifth annual Taste Ards and North Down Food Heroes Awards, hosted by Ards and North Down Borough Council at Bangor Castle.

The event, recognising the local industry's achievements during 2025, brought together a wide range of producers from across the Borough, along with invited guests, including representation from Food NI.

2025 was the most successful year on record for the Borough's food and drink sector since the formation of Taste Ards and North Down, with 112 accolades received across regional, national and international awards.

Local producers, restaurants and independent food retailers contributed to this strong performance. Ards and North Down currently rank second among Northern Ireland's local authorities for the number of awards won by its producers, and third for awards secured by hospitality and restaurant businesses.

This year's Taste Ards and North Down Food Heroes Awards celebrated



The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum presenting the Local Food Champion Award to Chef Lecturer Brian Magill of South Eastern Regional College.

19 producer winners, two retailers and 10 restaurant winners, who collectively secured 112 awards from some of the most respected national and international competitions.

The evening's top honours were awarded to Chef Lecturer Brian Magill of South Eastern Regional College, who received the Local Food

Champion Award, and Counter Culture Real Bread, which won the prestigious Lady Dufferin Producer of the Year Award, judged by the Clondeboy Estate.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum, said: "These awards shine a spotlight on an exceptional year for our food and drink

sector. Our Borough is home to an increasingly vibrant and ambitious community of producers who continue to make us incredibly proud. The Taste AND Food Heroes Awards highlight the innovation, determination, and resilience that define our local industry, and I'm delighted to celebrate their achievements."

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ALLIANCE MEETS WITH COMMUNITY OVER LOSS OF SWINELEY BAY TREES

Alliance representatives Andrew Muir MLA and Alderman Martin McRandal have met with concerned residents to discuss the loss of a wooded area at Swineley Bay, Bangor, as part of a property development.

There has been public outcry over the felling of mature trees near the North Down Coastal Path to facilitate a view of the sea for three new luxury houses. The development was granted planning permission by delegated authority by officials in 2021 and 2022, meaning it was not heard by

councillors on Ards and North Down's Planning Committee.

Speaking after the public meeting, Alderman Martin McRandal said, "As a regular user of the North Down coastal path myself, I share the distress and huge sense of loss over the cutting down of these trees. There seems to have been

no good reason for the slope to have been denuded.

"I have spoken with planning officers to express my frustration over this debacle and emphasise the need to rectify the environmental and aesthetic damage as much as is feasible. I await with interest the outcome of the enforcement



Louise Mackey, Louise McCartney, Andrew Muir MLA, Alderman Martin McRandal, Patrick Cregg.

appropriately with protections for nature and public amenity going forward. As a local representative, I'll be advocating for the zoning of areas such as this to be re-examined as part of the Local Development Plan process and my Party will continue to lobby for the introduction of a right to appeal for objectors to approved planning applications."

North Down MLA, Andrew Muir added,

"It was good to see so many people at the event demonstrating significant and sincere concern about what's unfolded at Swineley Bay, which

I share. The case for third-party right of appeal has again been demonstrated as a result of the works occurring.

"It is maddening to see trees stripped away. Many lessons must be learnt from what has happened. We need to see more protection for trees in the planning process, given how fundamental they are for our well-being, our climate and our environment. As such, I look forward to my colleague Peter McReynolds MLA's bill on tree protection hopefully progressing through the Assembly soon."

investigations which are ongoing regarding potential breaches of

tree protection orders.

"Clearly, Council from this and ensure that the need for housing is balanced

TRUST BIDS FAREWELL TO SURGERY SPECIALIST AFTER A LIFETIME OF CARE & DEDICATION

After four decades of dedicated service to Health and Social Care, the South Eastern Trust's Director of Surgery, Elective, Maternity and Paediatrics, Maggie Parks has retired.

From Bangor, Co Down, Maggie began her nursing career in January 1986 as a Student Nurse at the Royal Victoria Hospital. Her commitment, skill and expertise saw her rapidly progress through a series of roles, both internationally in Australia and here in Northern Ireland.

Maggie was appointed Director of Surgery, Elective, Maternity and Paediatrics in the Trust, in February 2023. In this role, she was responsible for the delivery of services in Surgery, Women and Elective Care across the Ulster Hospital, Lagan Valley Hospital and Downe Hospital sites. Her remit also included Theatres, Anaesthetics,

Critical Care, Pharmacy, Laboratory and Radiology Services.

Reflecting on her remarkable career, Maggie said, "Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of working with many brilliant people and I wish to thank them all. I am proud of everything we have achieved together and I hope that this has made a difference to our patients and staff. When COVID hit, nothing could have prepared us for those years, but I will always be proud of how we pulled together, staff at every level, working under pressure like never before, united in purpose!

"Undertaking the role as Director has been a huge challenge,



but it also has been an incredible privilege."

"It is not easy to say goodbye.

It has been an honour to work alongside you all."

South Eastern Trust's Consultant Anaesthetist Dr Bob Darling praised Maggie's relationship

with the medical staff and her patient centered focus. "It was a pleasure to work with you, to chat things through. You have always been calm, you have always been supportive. I want to say thank you on behalf of us all."

Wishing Maggie well in her retirement, South Eastern Trust, Chief Executive,

Roisin Coulter, added, "Maggie's dedication, leadership and expertise have made an extraordinary impact on our services and on the countless patients and staff she has supported over the years.

"I am incredibly grateful to Maggie for her commitment and I wish her a long and happy retirement."

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Celebrating 36 Years at The Hub Additional Needs Disco

Ards and North Down Borough Council has marked an incredible milestone — 36 years of the much loved Additional Needs Disco, a long running programme delivered by the Council's Community Development team to support and engage individuals with additional needs.



The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum alongside the participants of the Hub Additional Needs Disco, at their Annual Awards Evening.

The anniversary was celebrated with a special Awards Night at the Hamilton Road Community Hub, where members, carers, volunteers and staff came together to recognise more than three decades of music, friendship and community spirit.

Birdland in the Library at Ward Park has continued to grow and evolve, moving to The Basement, then Hamilton House, before finding its vibrant and welcoming home at the Hamilton Road Community Hub.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down,

Councillor Gillian McCollum, praised the dedication of everyone involved:

"I'd like to congratulate the Council's Community Development team, staff and volunteers for the remarkable achievement of 36 years of service. Your commitment ensures

this programme continues to run safely, joyfully and with immense impact.

And to the participants – you are to be congratulated for the fun, laughter, happiness and energy you bring every week. You are at the heart of what makes these discos so special."

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Real Living Wage campaign

UNISON's Real Living Wage campaign in Northern Ireland is challenging low pay and improving living standards for workers across public services and the independent sector. Built on a clear principle—that every worker should earn enough to cover the real cost of essentials such as food, housing, heating and transport—the campaign promotes the Real Living Wage, currently £13.45 per hour, which is independently calculated to reflect actual living costs rather than government minimums that often leave workers in “in-work poverty.”

This issue is especially urgent in Health and Social Care, where many committed staff continue to endure chronic low pay. UNISON works directly with employers to support accreditation as Real Living Wage employers, ensuring fair and decent pay for all workers, including those in the independent care sector. The union also campaigns for fair pay structures within the NHS, protecting Agenda for Change staff on Band 3 and above from pay compression. UNISON emphasises that the Real Living Wage delivers benefits beyond individual workers. Fair pay strengthens wellbeing, morale and job satisfaction, helping employers retain skilled staff and reducing turnover in vital services. A fairly rewarded workforce is more stable, more motivated and better equipped to deliver high-quality care and service provision.

UNISON's Real Living Wage campaign is rooted in dignity, fairness and financial security for those who deliver essential public services.

By championing real pay for real living across Northern Ireland, UNISON remains committed to building a more equal and sustainable society—one where workers are paid not just to survive, but to live.

Gillian Foley, UNISON Branch Secretary & Trade Union Chair

Why UNISON's Campaign for Low-Band NHS Pay Matters More Than Ever

In the current financial climate, the efforts of UNISON representatives, to secure better pay for low-band NHS staff are not only justified, they are essential.

Low-band staff, such as healthcare assistants, domestic staff and support staff, are the backbone of the NHS. Yet they are so often the most financially vulnerable. Delivering more for less. Working in one of the most demanding and essential services.

For many staff, including myself, this is about more than just a wage. It's about whether we can afford to properly support and provide for our families. This impacts on home life, when left worrying if the weekly food shop will stretch far enough. Whether the heating can stay on a bit longer during colder months. Whether there is anything left over after bills are paid. For us members with children, it can mean difficult choices. The nature of NHS work itself is often exhausting. These are long shifts, full of emotional and physical demands that cannot simply be turned off when the shift ends. Many go home already drained, only to face financial stress on top of that.

This is why UNISON's efforts matter so much. They're not just arguing for a pay rise—they're standing up for a basic level of dignity. A Living Wage means being able to live without constant financial anxiety. UNISON's campaign is a reminder that behind every NHS role is a person, and behind that person is a family trying to get by.

Admin Member

I work full-time on minimum wage, yet every month feels like a struggle to get by. The cost of living keeps rising—rent, food, transport, and energy bills all take bigger pieces of my pay, while my wages barely change. There's little left after covering the basics, and saving money feels almost impossible.

It's exhausting not just physically, but mentally. There's constant pressure to make ends meet, to budget every penny, and to worry about unexpected expenses that could throw everything off. Simple things—like taking a day off, going out with friends, or planning for the future—feel out of reach.

Working hard used to mean building a stable life, but now it often feels like working to make ends meet. Many of us are doing everything we're supposed to—working long hours, showing up every day—and still can't afford a decent standard of living. It's frustrating and disheartening to feel overlooked and undervalued.

Living on minimum wage in these times isn't just about tight finances—it's about the stress, the uncertainty, and the feeling that no matter how hard you work, it's never quite enough.

Support Services Member



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A new service has been launched in Affidea Hillsborough Private Clinic to help patients suffering from Glaucoma, under the care of Mr Jonathan Bonnar, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon with a Specialist interest in Advanced Cataract and Glaucoma Surgery.

Proven Benefits of Glaucoma laser

- up to 70% of patients did not need drops at 6 years.
- Less likelihood for glaucoma to progress than those taking drops.
- Less likelihood to require glaucoma surgery than those taking drops.
- Effects can last up to 6 years, and the

procedure can safely be repeated if needed to try and keep you free from drops.

Data taken from a recent, extensive UK study.

Unlike invasive eye surgery, this laser option:

- Causes no permanent tissue damage
- Has a low risk of complications

- Doesn't require incisions— return to normal activities the next day.

Who is it for?

SLT laser is now the NICE recommended first line treatment for open angle glaucoma and high eye pressure (OHT), in preference to drops. The majority of patients with open angle glaucoma or OHT are eligible.



Talk to us to see if it's right for you!
028 92 280 103
Email: info.ni@affidea.com

AGEnda, a vital pillar for the community

AGE north down & ards (AGEnda), serves as a vital pillar for the community in the North Down and Ards area, focusing on the health and holistic wellbeing of local older residents.

The organisation's primary mission is to promote good health, financial stability, and overall wellness among the local older population, ensuring that the process of ageing is met with dignity and robust social support. Recently, the organisation has expanded its reach by launching a specialised Carers' Support Project. This initiative, made possible through significant funding from The National Lottery Community Fund Northern Ireland, specifically targets individuals aged 65 and older who find themselves in a caregiving role for family members or friends within the region.

AGEnda provides a lifeline for those who might otherwise feel disconnected from their community. To achieve these goals, the organisation facilitates various engagement opportunities, including personalised home visits and "Carers' Circles," which consist of small, informal groups that meet in local areas. Beyond these social meetings, AGEnda also hosts specific activities, workshops, and events tailored to improving wellbeing, while providing essential signposting to other relevant organisations and local community supports.



AGEnda's Carers' Support Project is designed to address the unique challenges faced by older caregivers, particularly the risks of loneliness and social isolation that often accompany such responsibilities. By fostering connection and focusing on improved mental health,

In addition to targeted carer support, AGEnda operates the "Good Morning Call," a service centred on the safety and independence of its clients. This program provides regular check-in calls that ensure clients are safe and well, allowing them to remain in their own homes for as long as

possible. The value of this service extends beyond the client, as it offers a friendly voice for conversation and provides family members with invaluable peace of mind knowing that their loved ones are being checked on. Furthermore, the Floating Support Service offers short-term advice and practical assistance to help clients maintain their independence both at home and within the wider community, effectively reducing social isolation.

For those wishing to support this vital work with local older people, the organisation accepts donations via cash, bank transfer, cheque, or a convenient QR code. Community members can access these services or learn more by contacting AGEnda at 028 91271968 or via email at agenorthdownards.co.uk. Their official website, www.agenorthdownards.co.uk, also provides additional information on their diverse range of services.

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Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT) is a quick, 5-10 minute, non-surgical laser treatment that lowers eye pressure with minimal discomfort, often reducing the need for daily drops and providing long-lasting results.

As well as glaucoma care we offer treatments for a wide range of different eye conditions:

- Cataract surgery
- Lid surgery
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- Cyst removal

Quick access to appointments with no referral required

- Innovative technology
- Comfortable surroundings
- Consultant-delivered care
- Affordable treatments

AGEnda
AGE north down & ards

Would you like to support our work with local older people?

AGE north down & ards offers Carers' support, to reduce loneliness and isolation, improve mental health and wellbeing and connect with others.

We facilitate:

- Home visits
- Carers Circles (small groups meeting in local coffee shops)
- Activities / workshops / events to improve wellbeing
- Support & Signposting to other organisations / services
- Share information on local community supports.

To donate please scan the QR code

We can also accept donations by cash/ bank transfer & cheque

www.agenorthdownards.co.uk
Tel: 028 9127 1968
agenda@agenorthdownards.co.uk

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust | COMMUNITY FUND | supporting people

North Down and Ards Women's Aid

North Down and Ards Women's Aid provides a vital service to women and children affected by domestic and sexual abuse.

Our vision for WA is the elimination of domestic abuse, but this is a collective responsibility. Domestic abuse is not just a legal or justice issue; it is a cultural and societal problem. We must all work together to end domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

Partnership working is vital in eliminating domestic abuse."

Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive Control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual



- Psychological and / or emotional abuse
- Physical or sexual abuse.

- Financial or economic abuse
- Harassment and stalking
- Online or digital abuse.

NDAWA offer safe, confidential and non-judgemental support for you, whether you are still in your relationship or have left. Not everyone wants to stay in refuges, but you can still get support if planning to leave an abusive relationship or help with safer coping strategies to stay.

If you would like more information about NDAWA services, or the One Stop Shop, please contact NDAWA on 028 9127 3196 or email info@ndawomensaid.org

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

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

Glasgow is a vibrant, stylish city with something for everyone. From world-class culture and nightlife to outstanding restaurants and bars, it's a destination that never disappoints. Shoppers are particularly well catered for—Glasgow is widely recognised as the UK's top shopping destination outside

London, with its famous 'Style Mile' offering unbeatable retail therapy.

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

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



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

"People love the fact that it's so hassle-free compared to flying, no airport transfers and with no extra charge for

luggage it is a massive help with keeping the cost of a break down."

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

Members' Dining Room

Parliament Buildings, Stormont Estate

The Members' Dining Room is open for lunch between 12 noon and 2pm every Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) and for Afternoon Tea between 2pm – 3.30pm.

Our mouth-watering dishes are lovingly prepared by talented and award-winning chefs - served in the majestic surroundings of the Members' Dining Room at Parliament Buildings.

Why not join us for a leisurely lunch or afternoon tea to enjoy the ambience and the delightful views over the Stormont Estate and Belfast city?

We are committed to using fresh, locally-sourced produce in our meals and serve locally crafted drinks to complement your dining experience. Add to that excellent service and friendly staff – and we can guarantee you a day out that is second to none!

During the summer season, we are extremely busy, so please book in advance to avoid disappointment.

For reservations and general enquiries, please call: 028 9052 1041
 View the menu here: <https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/members-dining-room/mdr-menu>
 or for more details on visiting Parliament Buildings: <https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/visit/>

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Ricardo Boal celebrates 26 years at Deja Vu

Situated in the heart of Newtownards, on Francis Street, Deja Vu Hair has been a feature of the local business scene for 26 years – under the ownership of Ricardo Boal.

The journey of salon owner and creative lead, Ricardo Boal of the salon has over 42 years industry experience. His journey began on the island of Madeira. Portugal born Boal brought a Mediterranean flair and a rigorous European training standard to Newtownards – realising his vision of customers being able to access a high-end, fashion-forward salon

outside of Belfast! Boal is frequently cited by peers and clients alike for his technical precision and his ability to adapt global trends—from the sleek “continental” styles of his roots to the bold, textured looks favoured in UK editorial styling. Deja Vu Hair & Beauty stands as a testament to business longevity in an era where high streets are constantly evolving.

The salon is designed to offer a “city centre” experience without the commute to Belfast, featuring a sleek, modern aesthetic that mirrors Boal’s professional philosophy. The salon provides a comprehensive range of services, including: Precision Cutting & Styling: Tailored to individual face shapes and hair types; Advanced Colour Chemistry:

Specialising in balayage, highlights, and corrective colour and Luxury Treatments. Special occasion hair styling is always in demand such as upstyles and Bridal packages can be provided. Ricardo Boal’s influence extends beyond the salon chair. He participates in the competitive circuit, with Deja Vu often making the shortlist

for prestigious industry awards. Notably, the salon has been a repeat contender and regional finalist in the L’Oréal Colour Trophy, the longest-running live hairdressing competition in the world. Ricardo and his team are constantly upskilling, bringing “runway-ready” techniques back to the customers at Deja Vu! In an industry known for high staff turnover, Boal has cultivated a team that shares his dedication to client care. This “human touch” has seen the salon survive various economic shifts, maintaining a loyal clientele that spans generations. For the people of Newtownards, Ricardo Boal represents the successful fusion of international expertise and local commitment. Whether he is mentoring a new apprentice or executing a complex colour transformation, his focus remains on the “Deja Vu” promise: a style so good, you’ll want to see it again. For an appointment Tel: 028 9182 6888

Your Ultimate Carlingford Escape

The Carlingford Lough Greenway stretches from King John’s Castle and Carlingford Marina towards Newry, offering a safe and scenic route perfect for walkers, cyclists, and families looking to explore at their own pace.

Bike hire is readily available in the village, making it easy to set off on a relaxed coastal cycle or a fun family adventure.

Located just minutes away, the newly renovated Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford is the ideal base for a break that blends outdoor adventure with comfort and relaxation.

Beyond the Greenway, Carlingford is packed with activities with something for everyone. Spend a sunny afternoon at the beach, where little ones can paddle safely while thrill-seekers enjoy pier jumping and refreshing sea swims. For something truly memorable, experience the popular Hot Box Sauna beside the staircase straight into the sea for an invigorating dip. If you prefer to stay on land, there are beautiful hiking trails and scenic picnic spots all around the Cooley Peninsula, ideal for laid-back afternoons with breathtaking views. The nearby Carlingford Adventure



Centre offers even more excitement with kayaking, paddleboarding and land-based adventures to keep all ages entertained throughout the summer months. Back in the medieval village, explore winding streets steeped in history, browse independent boutiques, enjoy a visit to King John’s Castle, or treat yourself to one of the many welcoming cafés and restaurants. As evening falls, soak up live music in a cosy pub or enjoy a relaxed dinner together. After a full day of adventure, retreat to the Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford, where guests can enjoy complimentary access to the hotel’s leisure facilities, including the swimming pool and sauna — the perfect way to unwind and recharge. With warm hospitality and cloud-soft beds awaiting you, it’s a destination that offers the perfect balance of fun, summer adventure, and peaceful relaxation.

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Good Buoy Dog Training NI introduces Park Pals Initiative!

Good Buoy Dog Training is a brand new business, run by Kaye Jenkins, helping local families create better bonds with their dogs.

Founded on the principles of positive reinforcement and science-backed behaviourism, Good Buoy Dog Training focuses on building a foundation of trust rather than fear. Whether navigating the early "land shark" phase of a new puppy or managing the boisterous energy of a teenager, Good Buoy Dog Training offers a structured and empathetic approach to canine education.

The heart of Good Buoy's success lies in its commitment to ethical, force-free methods. By moving away from outdated "alpha" or "dominance" theories, the training prioritizes a deep understanding of dog psychology. Trainers reward desired behaviours and manage the environment to set dogs up for success,

helping owners cultivate a lifelong bond with their pets rooted in mutual respect rather than correction.

Good Buoy offers specialised programs tailored to specific developmental milestones. The Puppy Package covers essential socialization and basic manners for dogs between eight weeks and six months old, while the Adolescent Package helps owners navigate the challenging "teenage" phase for dogs up to two years of age.

The company shows a strong commitment to animal welfare through its Rescue Package, which focuses on decompression and confidence-building for re-homed dogs. As part of this mission, ten percent of the proceeds from every Rescue Package are donated

back to local animal rescues. Beyond formal lessons, clients can gain access to the Park Pals Community, a supportive network for practicing skills in real-world environments. Running throughout the summer (May-August) this is an initiative designed to provide a safe environment to socialise dogs and learn dog training skills, from 12 week old puppies to dogs with reactivity issues - there's room for everyone - an inclusive space for everyone regardless of ability, age or background and there will be sessions set up aimed at families and their dogs during the summer holidays.

As part of this, a WhatsApp Group has been set up (18+) so that people can meet other dog lovers, arrange their own meet ups etc.

Connect through the QR code on our colour advert. Good Buoy Dog Training makes professional expertise accessible through a variety of formats to suit busy lifestyles. In-person services are available across North Down, Ards, and Belfast, while owners everywhere can access support via online Zoom consultations. With flexible hours including evenings and weekends, the company ensures that high-quality training is within reach for everyone. Visit www.goodbuoytraining.com or connect with the team on Facebook and Instagram.



Kaye and her 'Good Buoy' Keats

Taekwon-Do NI: a discipline for all ages!

Offering classes for everyone aged 3 into late adulthood Taekwondo offers a wealth of health and well being benefits across the board! In addition to physical fitness and control, improved core balance, mental focus, and discipline can all be achieved!

Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland, under the esteemed leadership of Master Leo Maguire, is a prominent force in the martial arts community, shaping the lives of children and adults across the province. Master Maguire, a VII Dan Degree Black Belt and President of the International Taekwon-Do Federation Northern Ireland (ITF N.I.), has established a network of schools dedicated to fostering confidence, discipline, and self-defense. His distinguished career as a national coach has led the Northern Ireland team to numerous medal victories at both national and international competitions.

The Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland schools offer a comprehensive program tailored to all ages, beginning with the "Little Tiger Cubs" for children aged 3 to 5. This "Learn Through Play" program introduces basic martial arts skills through a fun mixture of games and fitness drills, helping children



improved balance, coordination, and respect.

For slightly older children, the "Active Tigers" class (ages 5 to 8) allows students to develop their Taekwon-Do skills at a more relaxed pace. The core "Tae-Kwon Do" program, for students aged 9 to adult, is designed to be safe, practical, and fun.

It focuses on the fundamental tenets of the art, including self-defense and self-discipline, while building confidence and physical fitness.

Taekwon-Do NI are working towards sponsorship and fundraising for other international competitions in the coming year of 2026!

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



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NEW PODIATRY CLINIC NOW OPEN IN HOLYWOOD

Claire Badger is the fully qualified Podiatrist at The Foot Doc. Claire has over six years of clinical experience in foot health and lower limb care,

She graduated in 2019 and spent the first five years of her career working within the Northern Health & Social Care Trust. This time in the NHS provided her with extensive exposure to complex cases and high-risk foot conditions, giving her a solid foundation in medical-grade podiatry. Claire opened The Foot Doc earlier this month with a new clinic on High Street and also offering a mobile service! Says Claire, "I established The Foot Doc to bring that same level of professional rigour to a local, community-focused clinic. My goal is simple: to help people maintain their independence and live pain-free lives through expert care.

Every set of feet is unique. Whether you are visiting for a routine check-up or a complex injury, I ensure every treatment plan is evidence-based and

fully personalised to your lifestyle. I take the time to listen to your concerns, diagnose the root cause, and explain your treatment options clearly."

Whether you are managing the daily wear and tear of life or navigating a specific injury, the clinic's philosophy centres on a patient-focused, tailored approach within a supportive and discreet environment. Their General Podiatry services address common but often painful issues such as nail cutting, ingrown toenails, hard skin, callus, and verruca removal. For patients suffering from more complex conditions like persistent heel pain, flat feet, or sports-related injuries, the clinic provides in-depth Biomechanical Assessments. These evaluations allow the podiatrist to diagnose the root cause of discomfort and implement long-term solutions that



go beyond surface-level symptoms. The Foot Doc also provides a dedicated mobile service every Tuesday, offering house visits to patients across East Belfast, Dundonald, Holywood, and the surrounding areas.

Taking the first step toward better foot health is

designed to be as seamless as possible. Patients can easily book an appointment by visiting the official website, emailing the clinic, or calling their Holywood office. 53B High Street, Holywood, BT18 9AB, Tel: 07923 068 528; Email: info@thefootdoc.co.uk www.thefootdoc.co.uk

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Balmoral Show 2026

The 157th Balmoral Show is set to return to the Eikon Exhibition Centre from Wednesday, 13th May to Saturday, 16th May 2026, marking another milestone for Northern Ireland's premier agri-food event.

As the largest celebration of its kind in the country, the showgrounds at Balmoral Park will once again transform into a bustling hub of activity, drawing

over 100,000 visitors who come to soak up the famous "Balmoral Buzz." Whether you are a lifelong farming enthusiast or a first-time visitor looking for a quintes-

sential family day out, the 2026 program promises a balanced blend of traditional agricultural competition and high-octane modern entertainment.

In the Main Arena, the headline attraction for 2026 is the Bolddog FMX team, whose gravity-defying freestyle motocross stunts are sure to provide a

heart-pounding spectacle. For those who prefer the elegance of equine sports over revving engines, the International Show Jumping competitions remain a crown jewel of the show, featuring top-tier riders competing for prestigious titles. The arena schedule is packed from morning until evening, ensuring there is a constant rotation of action, from the thundering hooves of the heavy horse displays to the precision of the sheepdog trials.

Food lovers will find their sanctuary in the NI Food Pavilion, which remains the beating heart of the show's gastronomic offering. This

year, the pavilion will feature an array of artisan producers showcasing everything from award-winning cheeses and local spirits to handcrafted desserts. Visitors can enjoy live cooking demonstrations and learn about the important "field to fork" journey, highlighting the sustainability and quality of Northern Ireland's local produce. It is a fantastic opportunity to sample new flavours and chat directly with the makers behind the province's most successful food brands.

At its agricultural core, the show will host over 3,500 animals across hundreds of competitive classes. From the majestic Clydesdale horses and sleek beef cattle to various breeds of sheep, goats, and pigs, the livestock displays offer a masterclass in breeding and animal husbandry. As you prepare for your visit, it is worth noting that the show maintains a strict no-dogs policy, with the exception of assistance animals, to ensure the safety and comfort of both visitors and the valuable livestock on display. The gates open at 9:30 am each morning, staying open until 7:00 pm from Wednesday to Friday, and closing slightly earlier at 6:00 pm on Saturday. With 65 acres of site to cover, comfortable footwear is your best friend—because "fashionable" wellies are hardly practical if they can handle several miles of walking.

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THE RISE OF LIVED-IN LUXURY

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

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

The Palette: Deep Teals and Sun-Kissed Earth

Forget the washed-out pastels of yesteryear. This season, designers are embracing colours with serious gravitas. Transformative Teal has emerged as a powerhouse shade, sitting right between blue and green to offer a look that is both dramatic and grounding. It works particularly well when used in velvet upholstery or as a bold “colour drench” on walls. To balance this depth, we are seeing a surge in Amber and Burnt Caramel. These warm, unctuous tones replace the flat beiges of the past, bringing a sense of a sun-bleached Mediterranean retreat to any room. Perhaps most surprising is the breakout duo of Icy Blue and Burgundy; the

crispness of the blue lifts the weight of the deep red, creating a look that feels both retro and avant-garde. “Texture-Maxxing” and Materiality

The primary goal this season is to make every surface worth touching, a movement we’ve dubbed “Texture-Maxxing.” Light Scandi oak is taking a backseat to richer woods like walnut and chocolatey mahogany, which provide a traditional anchor to otherwise modern rooms. We are also firmly in a new Stone Age. Travertine and Calacatta marble are no longer reserved for countertops; instead, they are appearing as stone-base lamps, fluted side tables, and heavy marble trays that add physical and visual weight to your decor. To soften these hard surfaces, natural fibers remain essential. While linen is still the king of summer, it is now being joined by heavy bouclé, wool, and even wrought iron for a mix of textures that feel high-end yet entirely approachable.

The Shape of Things: Curves and Postmodernism Sharp angles are officially out, replaced by fluid, undulating lines that feel more organic. The “skirted sofa” has returned with a vengeance, proving that what was once considered “grandma style” can be reimagined as romantic and sophisticated with the right piping and fabric. This flows into a massive revival of European Postmodernism from the 1970s through the 1990s.

We are seeing a preference for low-profile modular sofas and space-age fiberglass coffee tables that prioritize comfort and flow. The trend of “sofa-scaping” has also taken hold, where homeowners choose one massive, curved statement piece and design the entire room’s energy around its silhouette.

Folk Bohemia and Fruit Motifs Decor accents are becoming more whimsical and artisan-focused this year. We are seeing



a move toward Folk Bohemia, which is far removed from the “boho” trends of a decade ago. This version is more colourful and craft-heavy, featuring Kelim rugs, intricate lattice patchwork cushions, and hand-painted ceramics. Adding a theatrical flourish to these spaces is the rise of fruit motifs. From pear-shaped paperweights to pomegranate-shaped glass ornaments and oversized

apple sculptures, these playful nods to the bounty of summer add a sense of humor and vitality to bookshelves and coffee tables.

The New Direction of Home

The overarching theme for 2026 is intention. Whether you are adding a splash of chartreuse to a bathroom or layering rugs for extra depth, the focus is squarely on how a space makes you feel

rather than how it looks in a photograph. We have reached a point where we are done decorating for “the grid” and have finally started decorating for the human beings living inside. The transition from cool, clinical whites to rich, lived-in layers marks a return to the home as a true sanctuary of personal expression.

A Checklist for Your Home Refresh

Spring has sprung, and with it comes the urge to refresh and revitalise our homes. After a long winter, it’s time to shed the dust and embrace the warmer weather with a clean slate.

Inside the Home:

Deep clean your home by washing windows, cleaning blinds, and thoroughly cleaning carpets and rugs. Dust every surface, wash or dry clean curtains and bedding, and de-clutter and organise closets and drawers.

Perform essential home maintenance by checking smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, inspecting and cleaning gutters, repairing any winter weather damage, and servicing your heating and cooling systems.

Freshen up your home by painting walls or touching up trim, rearranging furniture, and adding fresh flowers or vibrant houseplants.

Outside the Home:

Tackle yard work by raking away debris, mowing the lawn, trimming hedges, weeding and fertilizing gardens, and planting spring bulbs and flowers.

Maintain your outdoor spaces by cleaning and repairing outdoor furniture, washing or replacing outdoor rugs and cushions, inspecting and repairing fences and decks, and cleaning and preparing the grill.

Create a cosy outdoor oasis by adding comfortable seating, a fire pit, string lights, and colourful plants and flowers. By tackling these spring-time home jobs, you can create a fresh, inviting space for the warmer months ahead. Enjoy the process of revitalising your home and welcoming the new season with open arms!

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Caravanning and Camping in NI

If you are planning to spend your summer under canvas or in a caravan within Northern Ireland, the most critical step you can take right now is to finalize your bookings immediately.

Many of the premier council-run sites along the Causeway Coast, including Benone, Juniper Hill, and Carrick Dhu, are open for reservations and are seeing high demand. Private parks in "honeypot" areas like Newcastle and the Fermanagh Lakelands are also reporting high occupancy for July and August, meaning that those who wait until the first signs of warm weather to book may find themselves limited to less central locations or smaller, inland sites.

The regional landscape for 2026 is defined by a distinct move toward specialized "experience" camping. In the Sperrin Mountains, which recently secured renewed global recognition as a Dark Sky location, sites like Dungannon Park and various "almost-wild" spots are seeing a surge in popularity from stargazers. Meanwhile, the Fermanagh region remains a primary draw for water-based holi-

days. However, travellers should note that the popular Crom campsite has confirmed a closure for the 2026 season, which has redirected a significant amount of traffic toward Castle Archdale and the Kinnego Marina on Lough Neagh. Planning your route around these shifts in availability is essential for a smooth trip.

Vehicle preparation in the early spring is particularly vital for Northern Ireland's unique terrain. Whether you are navigating the steep, winding roads of the Mourne Mountains or the coastal gusts of the Antrim plateau, ensuring your towing mirrors are correctly adjusted is a legal requirement that carries heavy fines if neglected. This is also the time to conduct a "damp check" on your caravan or motorhome, as the high humidity of the past winter can lead to costly repairs if issues aren't caught before the summer heat. There



can be long lead times for servicing, so booking a mechanical and habitation check this month is a wise move to avoid a pre-holiday breakdown.

Finally, 2026 is seeing a significant push toward sustainable, low-impact touring across the country's forest parks and coastal reserves. Many sites are now offering discounted rates for campers who arrive by bike or foot, or those who utilize portable solar arrays rather than rely-

ing on traditional electric hook-ups. Investing in a high-quality leisure battery or a portable power station now will not only save you money on "pitch-plus-electric" fees but will also grant you more freedom to stay at smaller, more remote sites that lack full infrastructure. By combining early bookings with a few key gear upgrades, you can ensure your Northern Irish summer holiday is both environmentally friendly and stress-free.

Mervyn Stewart Suzuki: 60 years of quality cars and quality customer care

With a legacy spanning sixty years, Mervyn Stewart has established itself as a cornerstone of the automotive industry in Northern Ireland and the Bangor dealership is a premier destination for the Suzuki brand.

The company has built its reputation on the traditional values of respect and integrity, ensuring that every customer is treated with a superb level of care. This commitment to excellence was officially recognized on a national scale when the team secured the prestigious title of UK Number 1 Retailer for Customer Service, a testament to their "guest in our home" philosophy that defines the experience at their dedicated Suzuki facility in Bangor.

The showroom at South Circular Business Park is a modern hub for the entire Suzuki line-up. Visitors can explore a diverse range of vehicles that cater to every lifestyle, from the nimble and iconic Suzuki Swift to the rugged, high-performance capability of the Across and the S-Cross. The arrival of the

e VITARA marks a new chapter, offering a fully electric option for those looking to embrace the next generation of motoring.

Mervyn Stewart Suzuki is deeply committed to inclusivity and accessibility through its Motability services. The dealership boasts a team of trained specialists who assist customers in navigating the Motability Scheme, ensuring that individuals can find a vehicle tailored to their specific needs.

Maintenance and long-term care are handled through the Suzuki Service Promise. Only genuine Suzuki parts are used and clear, pre-approved pricing for all work undertaken provided. By combining state-of-the-art diagnostic technology with old-fashioned personal service, the dealership maintains



a high standard of vehicle health and customer satisfaction.

The used vehicle offers an "Approved Used" selection that undergoes a rigorous inspection process. Every pre-owned Suzuki is subjected to a comprehensive workshop check and a full valet,

backed by a minimum six-month warranty to provide buyers with confidence in their investment. This paired with flexible finance options and a straightforward part-exchange service, has made Mervyn Stewart a trusted name for generations of drivers.



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All-Ireland economy driving tourism growth - Archibald

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

According to statistics released by the Central Statistics Office, there were 1.3 million trips in 2025, compared to 1.1 million in 2024. In addition, there was a total of 2.7 million overnight nights taken in Northern Ireland by these visitors last year compared to 2.5 million in 2024 – up by nine per cent. Furthermore, the money spent by the visitors increased from just over £242.7 million in 2024 to almost £317.1 million last year – an increase of 31%. The Minister said: “These latest figures show that the all-Ireland economy is driving growth in our tourism industry. More people from the south are visiting the north, bringing increased spending into our local economy. With Belfast hosting the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann this August we can expect this positive trend to continue.” Tourism NI continues to work to drive visitor growth by encouraging prospective visitors to embark on a giant adventure in Northern Ireland through investment in marketing and promotion, and by growing the range of visitor attractions and experiences and enhancing the

accommodation offer. Tourism NI’s 2026 Spring marketing campaign has already been hugely successful to date, and is on track to deliver 125 million opportunities to see or hear the activity in ROI. The TV, radio, press and social media campaign has been showcasing a broad range of attractions, experiences and events in Northern Ireland as well as ideas on where to stay, building on the knowledge of what the region has to offer – highlighting value for money and delivering clear and compelling reasons to book a short break. Carmel Scott, Head of Marketing at Tourism NI, said: “This growth reflects the impact and importance of our sustained marketing focus in this key market, highlighting what our industry has to offer and driving demand. “ROI visitors continue to enjoy our stunning landscapes and coastlines, vibrant food and drink scene, and world class attractions, experiences and accommodation – all delivered with the giant welcome Northern Ireland is known for. “Our heavyweight marketing campaign continues in ROI until 31 March. We will maintain a strong focus on this market and encourage industry partners to do the same, ensuring Northern Ireland continues to achieve marketing cut through and remains top of mind for short breaks all year round.”

WHITESPOTS LINE CONNECTS BANGOR AND NEWTOWNARDS

Ards and North Down Borough Council is celebrating the completion of works on the new Whitespots Line of the Comber Greenway. A transformative 5.4-kilometre active travel route linking Newtownards and Bangor.

The milestone was marked at an event attended by project partners, funders, contractors and community representatives. Speaking at the launch, the Deputy Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Vicky Moore, said the project represents “a significant step forward for sustainable travel, community wellbeing and connectivity across the Borough, reflecting the vision, teamwork and dedication invested in creating a route that strengthens opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling while showcasing our natural environment; an important investment in our communities, our environment and our collective future.”



to see the progress that has been made as the scheme enters the final stages before opening to the public.

“Greenways and active travel in general can help make our lives better. Whether people are walking, wheeling or cycling to work, school, or for leisure, high quality active travel infrastructure can help facilitate a positive change in our lives. This new Greenway will provide improved travel choices, providing people with the opportunity to travel more sustainably as part of their everyday journeys.

“I was pleased that my Department could contribute £2.9m to this project and would like to congratulate everyone involved on the collaborative efforts that have brought the project to this point.

“It was great to see the pupils from West Winds Primary School today out enjoying their bikes along a section of the route. I hope they share their experience here today with family and friends and encourage them to make use of this fantastic outdoor facility which provides an opportunity to combine exercise and fresh air with our everyday activities.”

Work is now underway on a section of the Newtownards to Comber “Scrabo Line”, which is the first phase in a project that will connect Bangor to Ards, on to Comber, and join the established Greenway running right through to Belfast.

While the Whitespots Line marks a major milestone, the Council emphasised that the expansion of the Greenway network is

progressing at pace. Work is now underway on a section of the Newtownards to Comber “Scrabo Line”, which is the first phase in a project that will connect Bangor to Ards, on to Comber, and join the established Greenway running right through to Belfast. Plans are also advancing for a Bangor to Donaghadee connection, further strengthening sustainable travel options and community links.

The Whitespots Line will soon open to the public, and the Council remains committed to building an interconnected, accessible and environmentally responsible Greenway network across Ards and North Down.

For more information see www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/Greenways

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BMW Unveils the All-New iX3

BMW has officially signaled the start of a “new era” with the premiere of the all-new BMW iX3, the first series-production model of the Neue Klasse.

This next-generation Sports Activity Vehicle (SAV) introduces a radical shift in design, sustainability, and digital architecture, aiming to skip an entire vehicle generation in terms of technological advancement.

Performance and Ultra-Fast Charging

The iX3 50 xDrive will launch as the longest-range battery electric vehicle (BEV) in the UK, boasting a WLTP range of up to 500 miles. This is made possible by sixth-generation BMW eDrive technology, featuring high-voltage batteries with new cylindrical cells that increase energy density by 20%.

Key performance and charging metrics include:

- Output: 469 hp and 645 Nm of torque.
- Acceleration: 0 to 62 mph in 4.9 seconds.
- Charging: An 800-volt architecture allows for 400 kW rapid charging, adding 231 miles of range in just 10 minutes.
- Bidirectional Charging: The iX3 debuts Vehicle-to-Home (V2H) and Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) capabilities



for the brand.

A Digital “Superbrain” Architecture

The iX3 debuts a “digital nervous system” powered by four high-performance computers known as superbrains. The “Heart of Joy” unit manages driving dynamics, processing data 10 times faster than previous systems to coordinate braking, steering, and power delivery.

Inside, the cabin is defined by the BMW Panoramic iDrive and Operating System X. This setup features a full-

width windscreen display (Panoramic Vision) that projects information across the driver’s entire field of vision, paired with a newly designed 3D Head-Up Display.

Sustainability and Design

BMW has adopted a “secondary first” approach, with approximately one-third of the iX3 constructed from recycled materials, including marine plastics and PET textiles. Consequently, the vehicle’s lifecycle carbon footprint is 34% lower than its predecessor. The iX3 will be manufactured

at the fossil-fuel-free Plant Debrecen in Hungary.

The exterior introduces a “reduced” design language, featuring vertical kidney grilles and flush door handles, while the interior is entirely leather-free, utilizing Eceer materials.

Pricing and UK Availability

The BMW iX3 50 xDrive is priced from £58,755 OTR. While series production begins in autumn 2025, the first UK customer deliveries are scheduled for 7 March 2026

Hyundai All-Electric Concept THREE

Concept THREE, Hyundai Motor’s first compact EV concept under the IONIQ sub-brand, embodies Art of Steel design language and signals the brand’s planned expansion into the European compact EV market.

Hyundai Motor Company unveiled Concept THREE, its first compact electric vehicle (EV) concept under the IONIQ sub-brand, at IAA Mobility 2025 in Munich.

The debut represents Hyundai Motor’s commitment to offering exceptional EVs in a rapidly evolving global market, where the focus shifts from technological advancement to experiences of emotional fulfillment.

As the first compact EV concept under the IONIQ sub-brand, Concept THREE signals Hyundai Motor’s future expansion into a new vehicle category, complementing its existing midsize and large EV models.

With Europe experiencing a surging demand for compact EVs — driven by urbanization, sustainability regulations and the growing need for space-efficient solutions — the Concept THREE demonstrates Hyundai Motor’s vision for meeting this demand by drawing on its advanced electrification capabilities.

Complementing its strategic positioning, Concept THREE’s innovative design also underscores the brand’s commitment to delivering a meaningful, emotionally

resonant experience in an accessible and practical package.

Hyundai Motor anticipates the introduction of Concept THREE to set the tone for its next chapter of design innovation and strengthen its competitive position in the electrification journey.

Art of Steel transforms the strength and flexibility of steel into a language of sculptural beauty. Inspired by Hyundai Motor’s advanced steel technologies, the material’s natural formability reveals flowing volumes and precise lines that evoke the distinctive aesthetic quality of steel — powerful, gentle and timeless.

Aero Hatch: The sculpted body creates enveloping forms using three main surfaces, while intersecting lines add visual tension. The Aero Hatch profile delivers aerodynamic efficiency and a distinctive roofline combined with a vertical tailgate, emphasizing urban versatility.

Parametric Pixel: Parametric Pixel lightings are featured on both front and rear of the Concept THREE. The pixels are now more expressive, forming a gradient



that adds depth and visual rhythm to the overall design.

Material-driven design: The exterior wears an anodized-effect finish that channels the spirit of Hyundai’s Art of Steel design language—a celebration of material as muse. Lemon-tinted glass and matching wheels forge vibrant links between exterior and interior, the cabin defined by soft yellow and grey tonalities that play across shifting textures to create a space that’s both calm and expressive.

Furnished Space: The cabin design creates environments that feel warm, intuitive, and calming. By embracing soft volumes and user-focused layouts, it fosters a sense of serenity and clarity.

Customizable Experience: Modular ‘Bring Your Own Lifestyle (BYOL)’ widgets offer tailored experiences

that allow customers to personalize their journey.

Mr. Pix: A symbolic character integrated throughout the car evokes curiosity, joy and emotional connection, offering playful storytelling through ‘hidden surprises’ and interactive design elements.

Sustainability: The interior envisions the use of sustainable materials such as ocean waste textiles and lightweight aluminum foam. These materials underscore Hyundai Motor’s long-term vision to reduce environmental impact while delivering premium design.

Compact EVs play a critical role in addressing Europe’s urban challenges, as exemplified by the debut of the Concept THREE, underscoring Hyundai Motor’s mission to make electrification accessible and attractive for European consumers.

Convertible Cruise Control

With the NI summer finally on the horizon, there is no better way to soak up the fleeting sunshine than from the driver’s seat of a drop-top.

Whether you are looking for a nimble weekend toy for country lanes or a refined cruiser for a trip to the coast, the current UK market offers a fantastic range of options that balance style, performance and open-air thrills. From affordable legends to the latest electric disruptors, here are the top five convertible cars to buy for the 2026 summer season.

1. Mazda MX-5

The Mazda MX-5 remains the gold standard for anyone seeking pure, unadulterated driving pleasure without breaking the bank. Now well into its current generation, it continues to champion the

“less is more” philosophy with its featherweight chassis and perfectly balanced rear-wheel-drive setup. The manual soft-top can be tossed back in seconds with one hand, making it ideal for the unpredictable UK weather. While it isn’t the most practical car for a weekly shop, its legendary reliability and mechanical connection make every trip to the corner shop feel like a stage in a rally. On the road price from: £28,585

2. MINI Cooper Convertible

For those who want a bit more personality and room for more than one passenger, the new MINI

Cooper Convertible is a quintessential summer choice. It retains the iconic “go-kart” handling that has made the brand a staple on British roads, but with a more sophisticated interior and updated tech for 2026. The Union Jack-themed fabric roof can be opened partially as a sunroof or retracted fully in under 20 seconds, even while driving at low speeds. It is the perfect urban-friendly convertible—stylish, zippy, and surprisingly premium inside. On the road price from: £28,715

3. BMW 4 Series Convertible

If you are looking for a “proper” four-seater

that doesn’t compromise on luxury or motorway refinement, the BMW 4 Series Convertible is difficult to beat. It has moved away from the heavy folding hard-tops of the past in favour of a sophisticated fabric roof that is significantly lighter, helping the car feel more agile in the corners. The interior is a masterclass in ergonomics, featuring BMW’s latest curved display and high-quality materials throughout. With the “Air Collar” system blowing warm air around your neck, you can even enjoy roof-down driving on those cooler British summer evenings. On the road price

from: £53,785

4. Mercedes-Benz CLE Cabriolet

The Mercedes-Benz CLE Cabriolet is the newest addition to the brand’s lineup, effectively replacing both the old C-Class and E-Class convertibles to offer a single, highly refined package. It focuses heavily on comfort and elegance, making it perhaps the best long-distance cruiser on this list. It comes as standard with the Aircap system—an electric wind deflector on the windshield—and the Aircarf neck-level heating, ensuring the cabin stays calm and warm even at motorway speeds. It is the definitive choice for those



who want to arrive at their destination feeling as fresh as when they left. On the road price from: £54,495

5. MG Cyberster

The MG Cyberster is the “wildcard” of 2026 and represents a bold new era for the British-born brand.

As a fully electric two-seater sports car, it offers a silent, high-performance alternative to the traditional petrol-powered roadster. Its most striking features are undoubtedly the electric scissor doors and the futuristic, wrap-around

digital cockpit. With a 0-62mph time that can rival genuine supercars in its top-spec GT trim, the Cyberster proves that the future of open-top motoring can be just as exciting as its heritage-filled past. On the road price from: £54,995

Save money while motoring

Unless you’ve decided to power your car with Flintstone-style footwork, getting from A to B has likely become a significant line item in your monthly budget.

In 2026, with fuel prices and maintenance costs always on the move, driving frugally is less about being “cheap” and more about efficiency engineering. It’s about understanding the physics of your vehicle and making small, tactical adjustments that keep more money in your pocket.

Your right foot is the most important component of your car’s fuel system. If you treat your pedals like binary switches—either 100% on or 100% off—you are essentially throwing cash out of the exhaust pipe. Real efficiency begins by pretending there is a literal egg under the gas pedal; you want to accelerate smoothly and gradually to avoid “gulping” fuel. Similarly, the “coast is clear” method

is your best friend. If you see a red light a quarter-mile ahead, take your foot off the gas immediately. Let friction and gravity do the work for you, rather than maintaining speed only to slam on the brakes at the last second.

Most vehicles hit their peak fuel-efficiency “sweet spot” between 45 and 60 mph. Once you cross that 65 mph threshold, aerodynamic drag increases exponentially. At higher speeds, your car essentially transforms into an aerodynamic brick, fighting against the air and burning significantly more fuel just to maintain its pace. Slowing down by just 5 or 10 mph on the highway can often save you 10% to 15% on fuel over a long trip.

A car that has to work harder uses more energy,

so keeping your vehicle in peak physical condition is non-negotiable. Start by checking your tire pressure at least once a month. Under-inflated tires create higher rolling resistance, which forces the engine to work harder just to keep the wheels turning. Keeping

them at the manufacturer’s recommended PSI (usually found on a sticker inside the driver’s door) can improve your mileage by up to 3%.

Plan your route to minimize stop-and-go traffic and idling. Even the way you park matters. Don’t waste five minutes

circling a crowded lot for a spot near the door. Park in the first open space you see and walk; you’ll save fuel, reduce frustration, and get a bit of extra movement in your day.

Use apps like GasBuddy or Waze to scout the cheapest stations

along your existing route. For insurance, consider telematics programs that monitor your driving habits; if you’re already driving gently to save gas, you might as well get a discount on your premiums for being a safe driver.

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Kitchen renovation planning guide:

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

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

Colour has a huge impact on how we engage with a space. And it's the combination of colours – otherwise known as a colour palette – that will achieve a desired look or feel. A colour wheel is a helpful tool when deciding a colour palette for your new kitchen. Here are some of the most common options. Tonal. Choose one colour as your 'base colour' and add various tones of that colour throughout your room. Harmonious.

Choose a colour on the colour wheel and work its neighbouring colours into your scheme. The colours complement each other without being too similar. Complementary. Choose a colour on the colour wheel and find its complementary colour on the opposite side of the wheel to make a statement with your colour scheme.

Lighting design. Lighting has many functions. Of course, its main purpose is to light a space, but well-considered lighting can add to the style of your kitchen and have a major impact on the mood and atmosphere too. Kitchen lighting should aim to marry design and function. When planning the lighting for your kitchen renovation, aim to tick off at least one from each of these categories: General lighting. General (or ambient) lighting

will spread light around the whole kitchen, via a ceiling light or spotlights, for example. Task lighting. You need task lighting in your kitchen to help perform certain tasks. For example, lights above the worktops where you'll prep food. Spot lighting. Spot (or accent) lighting works to draw your attention to a particular area, for example, artwork on a wall, a bookcase in a recess, or glassware in a cabinet. Atmospheric lighting. Atmospheric (or decorative) lighting will help to achieve the right mood for your kitchen space, by using dimmable lamps above a dining area, for example.

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



material, the finish you opt for, and special features (wine racks, spice drawers etc) will all have an impact on your budget. To help you select the best kitchen cabinets for your kitchen renovation, take a look at the six main styles available. Shaker-style. An affordable, classic, and traditional style of kitchen cabinet that has always been popular. Glass-fronted. Glass-fronted cabinets help to

display the items within, and bounce light around the room too. It's common to mix and match glass-fronted cabinets with other styles. Tongue and groove. The texture and warmth of tongue and groove cabinets give the feel of a relaxed, country cottage style kitchen. It's also a popular design element in a Scandi-style kitchen. Flat-fronted. For a simple and minimalist look in a contemporary

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

Your kitchen worktop needs to be tough and hard-

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

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

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DRIVEWAY IDEAS FOR MAXIMUM KERB APPEAL

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

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

Resin driveways. Resin driveways have become increasingly popular with UK homeowners looking for modern front driveway ideas as they offer a contemporary appearance and incredible durability. The mixture of resin and aggregates creates a seamless surface that's resistant to weeds and cracking, with an array of colours and patterns available, you can easily match your home's exterior. Resin driveways naturally drain water and are environmentally friendly. Resin's neat

and smooth finish is stunning all by itself or with a few key features. Consider the shape of your resin driveway and whether you'd like any cut-outs for plants, trees, water features, or decorative edging. Due to resin's versatility, the sky is your limit.

Tarmac driveways. Tarmac or asphalt driveways are durable and long-lasting. Tarmac is a mix of aggregates and tar, whereas asphalt is a mix of aggregates and bitumen. The latter offers a better finish and smoother surface compared to tarmac. The finish of tarmac can be enhanced through 'chip sealing'. This is when tar is poured onto a gravel base, stones are added, and it's pressed with roller equipment. Tarmac and asphalt are cost-effective to install and pair well with a number of aesthetics: They look great alongside patterned bricks. Create a stunning look by contrasting tarmac or asphalt with lighter stone. Soften the dark tones by including a lush lawn or greenery in your tarmac driveway design.

Concrete driveways.



Poured concrete is one of the most common driveway materials on the market. It's used to create low-maintenance driveways that require minimal upkeep. Coloured concrete is great if you want to add dimension and interest, such as a cream border or chequered patterns. It's also malleable when

installed correctly. For example, it can make patterns when poured into moulds and can be sectioned and paired with other materials, such as aggregate or slate.

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

Block paving driveways. Block paving creates a classic and elegant first impression. It's usually made from concrete, which is engineered in a factory for consistency and accuracy. For this reason, block paving is a durable and versatile option for your driveway. A

popular design trend with block paving is using light grey blocks to border and 'edge' the drive and any central features, such as a roundabout, lawn, water feature, or pathway. A dark grey paving block is then used to fill in the remaining area, offering a great aesthetic that stands

the test of time. Whether you use one type of block, two-tones, mixed, or a combination of materials, block paving is a decorative option that offers a lovely finish. Monoblock paving driveways incorporate two-tones

of block paving to create patterns and interest. The two tones can be two different materials or two colours of the same material.

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

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