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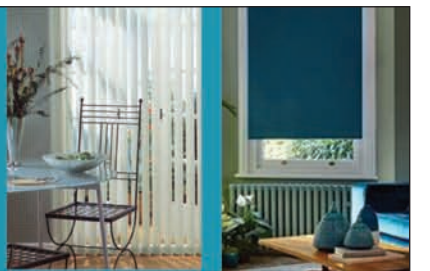
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The refurbished play park in Donaghadee was officially launched by pupils of Donaghadee Primary School.

CHILDREN HELP SHAPE NEW £170,000 PLAY PARKS

Children from local primary schools were at the heart of two major play park refurbishment projects officially launched recently.

The first of the new facilities was unveiled at Northfield, Donaghadee, with pupils from Donaghadee Primary School joining representatives and project partners to celebrate the opening. A second refurbished play park at Islandview in Greyabbey was officially launched, with the Mayor in attendance.

Both play areas received investments of £170,000, transforming facilities that

were due for refurbishment and providing modern, inclusive spaces for children and families to enjoy.

A key feature of both projects was the involvement of local schoolchildren throughout the design process. Engagement sessions were held with pupils, giving them the opportunity to view proposed designs, learn about different types of play equipment, ask questions and vote on their preferred options.

The feedback gathered during these sessions played an important role in shaping the final designs, ensuring the new facilities reflected the wishes and needs of the young people who would use them most.

Following completion of the works, pupils were invited back to the finished play parks to see how their ideas had been brought to life and to enjoy a morning of play on the new equipment.

The projects highlight the

value of engaging children in community developments and demonstrate how their voices can help create welcoming and enjoyable spaces for future generations.

The refurbished facilities at Northfield and Islandview now provide enhanced opportunities for outdoor play, physical activity and social interaction for local families, representing a significant investment in community wellbeing across the area.

New Considerate Parking Campaign

A new Considerate Parking Campaign has been launched to highlight how small parking decisions can significantly affect others' daily lives. The campaign is community-led, created by those most affected - with support from the Council.

The campaign is community-led, created by those most affected - with support from the Council.

At the heart of the campaign is its powerful strapline: "You have a choice - we don't."

This message highlights that while many people are not impacted by where they park, others - such as older people, wheelchair users, parents with prams, and individuals with visual or mobility impairments, may face real challenges.

Importantly, the campaign is not about blame, but about building awareness, empathy, and shared responsibility.

Developed through a collaborative co-design process, the campaign draws directly on the lived experiences of members of the Over 50s Council and Disability Forum. These

advisory groups work with the Council to highlight and address issues affecting older people and those with disabilities.

The campaign supports the Council's ongoing commitment to building inclusive, age-friendly communities, ensuring public spaces - particularly footpaths, drop kerbs and crossings areas are safe and accessible for all.

Under the Borough's Community Plan, the Welcoming Spaces priority brings together partners and community groups to create environments where people of all ages and abilities can participate fully in everyday life.

For more information about the Considerate Parking Campaign, visit

<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/considerate-parking>

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Your Place, Reimaging Our Space Launches with Strong Community Support

Ards and North Down Borough Council has officially launched Your Place, Reimaging Our Space, a new PEACEPLUS-supported community growing and skills development programme designed to bring people together through shared activity, learning and the creation of welcoming outdoor spaces.

The launch event, held on 9 June in the Castle Chamber, brought together community gardeners, Community Sheds, volunteers, and partner organisations. Guests heard from project speakers who outlined how the programme will help strengthen community connections, support local skills and create new opportunities for people to engage with nature and with each other. Participants also took part in discussions that will help shape the next stages of delivery, ensuring the programme reflects the needs and ambitions of local groups.

Over the next two years, the programme will establish a learning network linking community gardens, allotments and sheds across the Borough. It will support the creation of new growing spaces, offer hands on workshops in food growing, biodiversity and practical skills, and provide opportunities for cross border learning and cultural exchange. The initiative will also contribute directly to the Council's Let's Grow Together Strategy,



The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Craig Blaney, alongside (L-R) Miriam Turley, Community Garden Support, Mark Hammond, Heather Kent and Dawn Hammond, Friends of Linear Park and Amy Kelly, BBC Radio Ulster Gardeners Corner Contributor and YouTuber

which highlights the importance of accessible growing spaces and the role they play in community wellbeing, environmental awareness and local resilience.

Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Craig Blaney said:

"This programme as an important investment in people and place. It emphasises its potential to strengthen relationships, build confidence and create

shared spaces that everyone can enjoy."

A summary of the programme's aims, strategic alignment and delivery approach was shared with attendees, marking the beginning of an ambitious and collaborative two year journey.

For more information on this project, or if you or your group would be interested in being a part of the project, visit <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/Your-Place-Reimaging-Our-Space>

www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/Your-Place-Reimaging-Our-Space

This project is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

PEACEPLUS is co-funded by the European Union, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government of Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Executive.



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CREATIVE PENINSULA 2026 – A CELEBRATION OF ARTISTS AND MAKERS

Ards and North Down Borough Council has launched the Creative Peninsula 2026 programme, marking 25 years of showcasing the Borough's artists and makers.

This established festival highlights the strength and diversity of the local creative sector, offering visitors the chance to engage directly with artists and their work. Running throughout August, the programme includes a mix of free

and bookable events, including open studios, exhibitions, workshops and demonstrations. This year's featured artist is Lisa Ballard, whose landscape paintings explore colour, light and scale, inspired by her surroundings in Donaghadee and her travels. Lisa will open her studio on 15 and 16 August as part of Open Studios Weekend.

Seacourt Print Workshop, Bangor, will host Imogen Donegan as its resident artist for 2026/27 through the inaugural Artist in the

Community Residency, supported by Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. As part of Creative Peninsula, Seacourt are holding an Open Studio Week (10–15 August), where visitors can meet Imogen and take part in a series of free activities including printmaking, storytelling sessions and a sketchbook workshop.

To celebrate the arrival of the All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil, Ards Arts Centre will host a special Musical Instruments Meet the Maker event showcasing beautifully hand-crafted musical instruments by three acclaimed local makers – William Smyth Harps, Boardman Violins and Avalon Guitars. Taking place on Wednesday 5 August from 7pm to 9pm,

this informal evening offers audiences a unique opportunity to hear directly from the makers about their craft, see how their instruments are created and played, and engage in conversation with the artisans behind the work.

Highlights also include the popular Twilight Market and Arts Night in Conway Square, Newtownards on Friday 7 August, featuring live music from the Rare Aul Stuff and Jordan Lively, craft stalls and local food and drink, and a free Heritage Craft Afternoon at North Down Museum on Sunday 2 August, showcasing traditional skills such as knitting, natural dyeing and woodwork.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Craig Blaney said: "Creative Peninsula is



a highlight of our Arts calendar and an important celebration of the talent within our Borough. I encourage residents and visitors alike to explore the programme, visit local studios and support our creative community." "The Creative Peninsula programme continues

to showcase the quality and variety of creative practice across the Borough," said Emily Crawford, Arts and Heritage Manager at Ards and North Down Borough Council. "It provides valuable opportunities for people to experience and engage with local artists

and makers." The full Creative Peninsula will go live and tickets to bookable workshops and events will go on sale on: Thursday 25 June at 12noon. For more information, visit: creativepeninsula.andculture.org.uk

New Local Action Groups Launched to Drive Positive Change

Ards and North Down Borough Council has officially launched a new network of Local Action Groups (LAGs), bringing together community representatives, local Chambers of Commerce, elected members and key stakeholders to shape the future of the city and towns across the Borough.

The launch event took place at the Signal Centre in Bangor on Friday, welcoming partners from across Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards to mark the beginning of a collaborative approach to regeneration and placemaking.

The Local Action Groups will focus on strengthening connections between

communities, encouraging local leadership, and supporting practical actions that enhance urban centres, boost economic growth, and improve quality of life.

Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum, said, "I am delighted to launch the new Local Action Groups, which will bring together key



Community representatives, local Chambers of Commerce, elected members and key stakeholders form the new network of Local Action Groups.

stakeholders from across our communities to identify issues, collaborate on solutions and promote positive change.

This is a model built on partnership, local insight and shared commitment, and that is exactly what makes it so valuable. By working together, we can ensure every one of our

towns and city continues to thrive and realise its full potential."

The groups play an important role as a two-way communication hub, helping to shape local strategies, champion city and towns and drive forward tangible improvements.

The initiative is supported by the Department for Communities and Department of Infrastructure, which work in partnership

with councils to deliver regeneration and placemaking outcomes.

The Ards and North Down Business Forum, a key stakeholder representing the collective voice of local businesses, welcomed the initiative.

The Council's Local Action Groups will now begin their work, focusing on delivering practical actions, supporting regeneration projects and championing the unique strengths of the Borough's city and four towns.

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A fresh new name for Gransha Road takeaway

The popular Bangor takeaway formerly known as The Phat Fryer has officially rebranded. The establishment is now operating under the exciting new name Batter Box.

The new identity marks a brand new chapter for the popular eatery. While the name has changed the commitment to excellent food remains. The business has a strong passion for quality. The business uses sustainably sourced fish and locally grown potatoes across its menu.

The rebranded shop at Unit 2 Gransha Road in Bangor, welcomes walk-ins and collections. Food lovers can also enjoy a convenient delivery service to get their meals straight to their doorstep. Batter Box opens from Tuesday to Saturday between 4pm and 8.30pm. Deliveries are available during these times.

Placing an order with the new brand is simple and straightforward. Technology plays a big part in the new Batter Box experience. The takeaway is now active on Deliveroo. Dedicated Android and iOS applications are now completely live for mobile users. The official website also notes that customers can secure a twenty per cent discount on their first online order. This exciting rebrand brings a vibrant modern feel to a beloved local establishment. Customers can call 07510 990959 directly to order their favourite meals.



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VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATED AT RECOGNITION EVENT

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Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Craig Blaney, alongside Volunteers recognised on the night.

The annual Volunteer Celebration and Recognition Event took place during Volunteer Week and brought together individuals representing a wide range of community groups and organisations from across the Borough. The evening created a vibrant and positive atmosphere, with attendees enjoying the opportunity to connect, network and celebrate their shared commitment to community service. The event allowed an opportunity for volunteers to build relationships and share experiences. In his first official engagement of the year, the Mayor of Ards and North Down attended the event and personally presented certificates to each volunteer.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Craig Blaney said: “It is a privilege to recognise the outstanding contribution of volunteers here in our Borough. Their dedication, compassion and commitment are the foundation of our communities. This celebration event is an opportunity to thank each of you for the difference you make every day - your work does not go unnoticed, and it is deeply appreciated.”

The strong turnout of over 90 volunteers highlights the continued growth and resilience of community spirit. It also shows the vital role volunteers play in supporting and enhancing life in Ards and North Down, while reaffirming the Borough’s commitment to recognising and supporting ongoing contributions.

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HOW GAME LOCKER IS REVOLUTIONIZING ENTERTAINMENT

The entertainment landscape is undergoing a massive transformation, and Game Locker is leading the charge by engineering high-performance, immersive gaming experiences across Northern Ireland.

Far more than just a typical gaming company, this innovative venture blends entertainment, state-of-the-art technology, and skill development into a cohesive community package. By designing elite esports arenas, cutting-edge virtual reality environments, and advanced driving simulators, Game Locker delivers unparalleled excitement, learning, and unforgettable engagement for any audience.

One of Game Locker's standout offerings is its complete mobile flexibility, bringing premium gaming

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managing full gaming suites for Allstate's Employee Fun Days in Belfast and Derry, as well as delivering high-profile eventing at the Waterfront Hall.

For those looking to host an exclusive party, Game Locker features a state-of-the-art private arena room located at Inspire Business Park in Dundonald. This venue is the ultimate destination for unforgettable birthday parties, friends' get-togethers, and high-energy game nights for up to twenty-five guests. This package includes a dedicated host, a customizable food

zone, and full access to consoles, VR, and sim racing. Additionally, their specialized Apex Racing Simulators division offers mobile simulator hire and structured e-sports coaching sessions for competitive racing enthusiasts.

To secure a booking, contact the team at Unit 5 Inspire Business Park, Dundonald, BT16 1QT. You can reach them by phone at 07519 312338, via email at gl.gamelocker@gmail.com, or online at www.gamelocker.online. You can also connect with them on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram.

Taekwondo Classes in North Down benefit from instruction of UKTCNI National Coach

UKTC (UNITED KINGDOM TAEKWON-DO COUNCIL) IN NORTHERN IRELAND is affiliated to the World ITF Taekwon-Do Council.

UKTCNI clubs follow the ITF syllabus and are closely affiliated to Grand Master Harkess (IX degree) who is President of the World ITF Taekwon-Do Council. The President for Northern Ireland ITF is Mr. Leo Maguire (VII degree) and is a member of Scottish Council of Taekwondo (SCoT). Mr. Maguire is also the Northern Ireland National Coach and has brought both the junior and senior teams to medal victories in both national and international competitions.

UKTC Northern Ireland, a prominent branch of the United Kingdom Taekwon-Do Council is dedicated to fostering a community of martial artists who embody the core tenets of the sport: Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self-Control, and Indomitable Spirit.

Under the leadership of Northern Ireland National Coach Mr. Leo Maguire, a VII Degree Master, the organisation provides a welcoming environment for students of all fitness levels and ages to improve their health, learn self-defence, and build lasting confidence. Leo Maguire is the main instructor for classes in Bangor and across the North Down Area.

Those interested in joining a class or learning more about the upcoming seminars and championships can visit the official website at taekwondo-ni.co.uk. For direct inquiries, potential members can contact Mr. Leo Maguire at 07891191494 or via email at taekwondoni@msn.com.

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KEEPING YOUR COOL

The “Cool House” isn’t just an aesthetic choice; it is a strategic approach to living that blends historical design with modern sustainability.

By focusing on how heat enters and moves through a building we can create a sanctuary that feels refreshing without relying solely on the hum of a cooling unit and the resulting spike in the electricity bill.

One of the most effective ways to lower indoor temperatures is to stop the sun before it ever touches the glass. Traditional awnings and external shutters are making a significant comeback in contemporary design

because they address the root of the problem. While interior blinds provide privacy they often allow solar heat to pass through the window and become trapped behind the fabric. By installing external louvres or deep eaves we can block the harshest rays during the peak of the day and ensure that the interior remains naturally shaded. This approach prioritises the “envelope” of the home and transforms the facade into a functional layer of climate control.

Nature offers its own ingenious cooling system through the process of transpiration. Incorporating an “indoor jungle” is more than just a decorative trend; it is a way to actively humidify and cool the air within a room. Large-leafed plant varieties such as Peace Lilies and Rubber Trees act as natural evaporative coolers. They release moisture into the atmosphere and helping to break up stagnant heat. When strategically placed near windows or in breezy corridors these plants create a microclimate that feels significantly fresher and more revitalising than a



sterile air-conditioned environment. The tactile experience of a home changes dramatically with the seasons and the swap from winter wools to summer linens is essential for thermal comfort. Heavy velvets and synthetic blends should be packed away

in favour of breathable natural fibres like hemp and cotton. These materials allow for far better airflow and do not trap body heat against furniture or bedding. Even the visual palette plays a role as lighter colours reflect light rather than absorbing it. By stripping back the layers and opting for a minimalist approach to textiles we create a sense of visual “cool” that translates into physical comfort.

Managing the airflow of a house is an art form that requires understanding the daily rhythm of the sun. The most effective low-tech hack is often the most counter-intuitive: closing the windows and drawing the curtains during the hottest hours of the afternoon. By sealing the house when the outdoor air is warmer than the indoor air we preserve the thermal mass of the building. Once the sun sets and the outside temperature drops opening windows on opposite sides of the house creates a cross-breeze that flushes out the day’s warmth and replaces it with the crisp air of the evening. This rhythmic approach to ventilation ensures that the home remains a true refuge from the summer heat.

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Backyard Beauties – Butterfly spotting in NI

The United Kingdom is home to fifty-nine native species of butterflies, but a select few have truly captured the public’s heart.

Topping the charts as the nation’s favourite is the spectacular peacock butterfly. This garden resident is easily recognized by the large, colourful eyespots on its deep red wings. The bright orange-tip follows closely behind, heralding the arrival of spring with its vibrant tangerine

wing edges. Claiming third place is the iconic red admiral, which sports bold red bands across striking jet-black wings. These three species are frequent visitors to suburban parks and urban green spaces alike. The delicate holly blue secures the fourth spot, enchanting nature lovers

with its shimmering, powder-blue wings. It is closely followed by the sulphur-yellow brimstone, a beautiful insect believed by many to inspire the word butterfly itself. Next on the popularity list is the comma, famous for its uniquely scalloped wing edges that resemble

autumn leaves. The widespread common blue also ranks highly, alongside the small tortoiseshell with its beautiful orange and yellow patterns. These resilient insects thrive in variety of habitats, making them a common sight for walkers. Rounding out the top

ten are two magnificent travelling species that fascinate British watchers. The exotic swallowtail ranks ninth, though this giant is mostly restricted to the unique wetlands of the Norfolk Broads. Finally, the painted lady claims the tenth spot after completing an epic

migration from North Africa to reach British shores. Together, these ten popular butterflies create a colourful tapestry across the countryside during the warm summer months. Watching out for them offers a wonderful way to connect with local nature.

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Summer Barbeque Guide

With the sun beating down and heat slowly rising, it is clear to see that barbeque season has finally arrived. However, if you are thinking of investing in a barbeque, there is a great deal to consider.

Prices for barbeques can range from very inexpensive to the multiple thousands and the extensive range has something to cater for every possible need. Depending on the number of grills, number of additional features and quality of its production – there is a lot to consider when choosing your perfect barbeque.

The timeless debate which has been had over many a family barbeque once again raises it’s head on this occasion – gas or charcoal?

In many cases your budget might well dictate your choice for you as charcoal barbeques tend to be significantly more cost effective. For those barbeque stalwarts, nothing will compare to a traditional charcoal barbeque and using a gas equivalent is as good as cheating. It is also widely held that the taste from cooking



on a charcoal barbeque is distinctive and cannot be reproduced by a modern gas counterpart. Charcoal does, however, take a considerable length of time to heat up whereas with gas, you can begin cooking almost immediately – providing an obvious advantage. For the

sheer convenience of instantaneous cooking, gas barbeques are hard to beat. In terms of running costs, with gas barbeques you will often ‘rent’ a cylinder and pay for each refill of gas that you require. Other factors that should be considered include if the barbeque has a lid, the number of

people you are likely to be cooking for and what type of food you intend to be cooking. Buying a barbeque with a lid brings a degree of versatility to your barbequing that is not otherwise available. It grants you far greater control over the heat and allows you to cook food more thoroughly as opposed to burning

the outside whilst leaving the inside underdone. If you are sticking to traditional burgers and sausages then perhaps charcoal is for you, however if you wish to branch out and cook chicken or pork then gas may be the safest option.

If you have a large family or intend on cooking for guests on a regular basis, it might be worth investing in a gas barbeque as it will give you the reliability and accuracy that is required when hosting for numerous guests. It also brings unrivalled convenience that allows its owner to mingle freely knowing that the cooking is fully under their control. More upmarket barbeques will also come with various features such as heating racks that allow food to sit above the heat of the grill whilst still in the barbeque to ensure that it will remain warm.

BIRD SPOTTING

Have you ever seen a white blackbird, or one that looks like it got splattered with whitewash?

Then they probably had a condition called leucism. Leucism (from the Greek for white) is not common, but in the UK and Ireland is most often found in blackbirds, house sparrows, dunnocks and some crows.

Very occasionally they may be completely white, but more often only in spots or patches.

Feathers contain melanin, a substance which makes them dark, but occasionally there are genetic variations where melanin is absent, resulting in white feathers, either in whole or in part, which don’t change as the bird ages. Of course, this makes them more vulnerable to predators, and in extreme cases unfamiliar to birds of the same species.

Even more rare are albino birds. Sometimes a bird with a few white feathers is referred to as ‘partial albino’, which is not possible; albino birds are totally white because of the complete absence of melanin pigments.



Also, they have Bird plumage can have variations, but as incidentally, limit their lifespan because of poor eyesight. JVA

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Stay safe this summer: essential tips from NIFRS

As temperatures rise and more people head outdoors to enjoy the summer season, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) is reminding the public to remain vigilant and follow simple safety measures to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Group Commander David Shortt said:

“Summer is a time to enjoy the outdoors, but it also brings increased risks, particularly during periods of warm and dry weather. If you are planning to enjoy a swim, visit your caravan or mobile home, or host a barbecue, we are asking everyone to take simple precautions to help prevent avoidable emergencies.

“Jumping into a body of water may look inviting to cool down but it can be dangerously cold and unpredictable. You can get ‘cold water shock’ which hinders your ability to swim. Always ensure you have a safety plan before entering the water and stick to lifeguarded beaches.

“Whether you’re having a barbecue at home or at a designated picnic area, ensure it’s set up well away from flammable materials. Remember to never leave it unattended

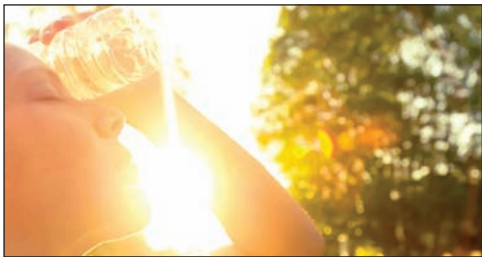
and ensure it’s fully extinguished after use, especially disposable barbecues.

“Fires in our countryside do happen and can almost always be prevented.

Dry conditions can allow fire to spread quickly putting lives, wildlife and property at risk. You should avoid lighting open fires

and only barbecue in designated areas. Always dispose of cigarettes properly and never throw them on the ground or out of car windows.”

“If you’re visiting a caravan or mobile home, make sure all smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are working, and only smoke outside to minimise any risks.



“If you spot a fire or see someone in danger, call 999.”

To read more of NIFRS’s safety advice, please visit www.nifrs.org

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Three generations help tackle loneliness among older people

As Northern Ireland’s population ages, two Bangor families are helping to address one of the biggest challenges facing older people today: loneliness.

To mark Loneliness Awareness Week (15-21 June 2026), Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association, which has 45 very sheltered units in North Down, is celebrating the volunteers who help create connection and community across Northern Ireland. This year’s theme, ‘Giving Loneliness a Voice’, encourages people to speak openly about loneliness and build stronger, more connected communities.

The issue is becoming increasingly important. Recent projections from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency suggest the number of people aged 65 and over will increase by almost 45 per cent over the next 25 years, while the number of people aged 85 and over is expected to more than double. As society ages, organisations such as Abbeyfield & Wesley believe

creating opportunities for meaningful connection will become more important than ever.

The not-for-profit housing association provides family-style accommodation for older people, combining independent living with companionship, home-cooked meals and community links designed to reduce isolation and support wellbeing.

At its Ballyholme house in Bangor, three generations of one family have experienced first-hand the power of community.

Fourteen-year-old Meredith volunteers at the house as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. Her grandmother, Ellen “Nell” Hire, 89, moved into the Ballyholme home following the death of her husband last year, while Meredith’s mother Hilary also volunteers.

Hilary said: “What start-

ed as supporting Meredith with her volunteering has become something we both genuinely look forward to every week. The residents have so many wonderful stories to share and it’s lovely to see the enjoyment the activities bring.”

Meredith added: “I love spending time with the residents. The music and quizzes are always popular and it’s nice seeing everyone joining in and having fun together.”

Nell said: “Moving into Abbeyfield & Wesley has given me companionship and friendship when I needed it most. There’s always someone to talk to and plenty going on if you want to join in.”

A short walk away at Abbeyfield & Wesley’s Ward Avenue house, another Bangor family is making a similar difference.

Fifteen-year-old Cara Chapple began volun-

teering to gain valuable experience and make a difference in the community. Her mother Emily joined her and Cara’s Nana, Pru Bates, also signed up as a willing volunteer, ready to help out when needed. Pru loves listening to, and sharing in, all the residents’ stories.

Emily Chapple said: “Volunteering has been such a positive experience for our family. The residents are great company and we’ve built some lovely friendships.”

Cara added: “I love planning the activities and seeing how much the residents join in. It’s amazing how something as simple as a quiz or a game can brighten someone’s day.”

Patrick Thompson, Chief Executive of Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association, said: “Loneliness can affect anyone, but older people can be particularly

vulnerable following bereavement, retirement or health challenges.

“As Northern Ireland’s population ages, creating opportunities for meaningful connection will become increasingly important. Our volunteers play a vital role in helping residents feel valued, included and part of a community. It’s what living with Abbeyfield & Wesley is all about.

“The volunteers we see in Ballyholme and Ward Avenue demonstrate the power of community and the positive impact that intergenerational relationships can have on wellbeing.”

As Abbeyfield celebrates its 70th anniversary this year, the Association hopes that Loneliness Awareness Week will encourage more people to think about the importance of good housing and social connections in later life.

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glare can disrupt productivity and comfort. Blinds allow you to shield your space from onlookers and harsh sunlight without making rooms feel dark or isolated.

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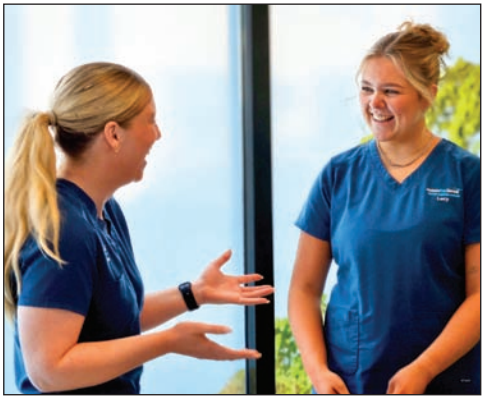
Recent five-star reviews tell the story better than anyone could. Nervous patients

describe feeling completely at ease. Others praise the warm welcome from the reception team, the gentle care from the hygienists and the time the dentists take to explain every step of treatment. Patients who have completed implant treatment talk about smiling in family photographs again, while others simply appreciate knowing they have a practice they can trust in an emergency.

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combine genuine personal relationships with the latest digital technology, allowing the delivery of comfortable, predictable treatment in a relaxed environment. Whether you need a routine examination, hygiene care, cosmetic dentistry or life-changing dental implants, you’ll be treated as a person, not just another appointment.

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Over 2,500 young people inspired through Future Founders

Northern Ireland's enterprise support service Go Succeed, in partnership with Young Enterprise NI, has inspired over 2,500 young people to explore entrepreneurship and develop the skills needed to be among the next generation of business leaders.

The 'Future Founders' programme, delivered in partnership with all 11 councils across Northern Ireland and the region's six further education colleges, was launched one year ago. Since then, it has engaged 2,583 students through a series of interactive workshops delivered across the region.

The programme was structured across three key sessions: an introduction to entrepreneurship, an Innovation Camp where students worked in teams to create a business idea and pitch it in a Dragons' Den-style format, and an Entrepreneurship Hub where participants met and learned directly from local entrepreneurs, complementing their academic studies.

Alderman Thomas Gordon, Mayor of Mid and East Antrim, which is leading the programme on behalf of Go Succeed, said:

"We are incredibly proud to deliver programmes like Future Founders, which give young people in Northern Ireland the confidence to explore

entrepreneurship and consider launching their own businesses, knowing they have the support of initiatives like Go Succeed NI and Young Enterprise NI behind them.

"By providing young people with the tools, networks and confidence to explore enterprise, we are building the foundations for a stronger, more innovative economy across the region."

Carol Fitzsimons MBE, Chief Executive, Young Enterprise NI, said:

"Over the past year, we have seen first-hand the creativity, confidence and potential that exists within young people across Northern Ireland. Future Founders has provided a platform for students to develop essential skills such as teamwork, problem-solving and communication, while also opening their eyes to the opportunities that entrepreneurship can offer.

"This programme is not just about creating future business owners – it's about nurturing a generation of innovative thinkers and



leaders who can make a meaningful impact within their communities and beyond. We are proud to work alongside Go Succeed and our partners to continue inspiring the next generation."

Joanne McCourt, Principal Lecturer and Entrepreneurship Hub Manager for the FE Sector at Northern Regional College, added:

"The success of Future Founders over the past year highlights the importance of embedding entrepreneurship within further education. Our students have greatly benefitted from engaging

directly with entrepreneurs, gaining practical insights and developing skills that will support them in their future careers.

"Programmes like this help to bridge the gap between education and industry, ensuring that young people are not only inspired, but also equipped with the knowledge and confidence to succeed in an ever-evolving world of work."

Future Founders took place in campuses across all six further education colleges in Northern Ireland: Belfast Metropolitan College, North West Regional College, Northern Regional College, South Eastern Regional College, South West College, and Southern Regional College.

QUEEN CAMILLA VISITS NORTH DOWN & ARDS WOMEN'S AID

Her Majesty the Queen visits North Down & Ards Women's Aid to highlight support for women, children & young people affected by domestic abuse.

North Down & Ards Women's Aid were honoured to welcome Her Majesty The Queen during a special visit to learn more about the essential services the charity provides to women, children, and young people affected by domestic abuse across the Ards and North Down area.

During her visit, Her Majesty met with staff, volunteers, women, children and partner agencies to gain insight into the organisation's frontline work supporting women, children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. The visit offered an opportunity to highlight the breadth of services delivered by North Down & Ards Women's Aid, including safe refuge accommodation, outreach support, advocacy services, and therapeutic programmes for women, children and young people.

Chief Executive Officer, Emalyn Turkington, welcomed Her Majesty and shared the organisation's mission to provide safety, support, and empowerment



NDA Women's Aid and One Stop Shop agencies with Her Majesty the Queen.

for those impacted by domestic abuse.

"We are deeply honored to welcome Her Majesty The Queen to North Down & Ards Women's Aid. Her visit shines an important spotlight on the reality of domestic abuse in our communities and recognises the vital work our team does every day to support women, children, and young people on their journey to safety and empowerment."

Her Majesty was given

a guided tour of the outreach facilities and had the opportunity to meet with frontline staff and partner agencies to hear first-hand about the critical importance of accessible, compassionate support services in local areas.

North Down & Ards Women's Aid serves the Ards and North Down area, providing confidential, specialist support tailored to the needs of all women, children and young people who use the service.

The charity continues to advocate for increased awareness, funding, and collaborative action to address domestic abuse at both local and national levels.

"This visit is a powerful recognition of the resilience of those we support and the dedication of our staff and volunteers. We hope it encourages continued community support and strengthens understanding of the impact of domestic abuse."

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SUMMER ALLERGY SURVIVAL

Mid-summer in Northern Ireland brings beautiful green landscapes, but it also triggers intense misery for thousands of hayfever sufferers.

The absolute worst pollen producers during June and July

are perennial grasses, which dominate our rural pastures, road verges, and lawns. Highly allergenic species like ryegrass, Timothy grass, and cocksfoot release billions of microscopic grains that easily become airborne in the breeze. While spring tree pollen has mostly subsided, summer also

sees a massive surge from weeds like nettles and dock leaves. These plants thrive in our damp maritime climate, creating a double threat when combined with the peak grass season.

Beating the mid-summer pollen surge requires a proactive strategy focused on

reducing your daily exposure. You should try to stay indoors during the early morning and late evening because pollen counts naturally peak during these times. When you must venture outside, wearing wraparound sunglasses helps create a physical barrier that keeps floating allergens out

of your eyes. Smearing a small amount of petroleum jelly just inside your nostrils can also trap pollen before you breathe it in.

Your home should be a safe haven from seasonal allergens, so keep windows firmly closed during high-count days. After spending time outdoors, change your clothes immediately and wash your hair to remove trapped particles before getting into bed. If you have a lawn, delegate the mowing to someone else or keep it tightly clipped to prevent the grass from flowering. Finally, tracking daily forecasts from the Met Office allows you to plan your outdoor adventures when the atmospheric risk is lowest.

Independent Unionist
Cllr Wesley Irvine

07791 516755

wesley.irvine@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Wesley Irvine available to be contacted on X and facebook



Donaghadee Summer Festival

Hundreds of people gathered at Donaghadee’s picturesque harbour recently, for the official launch of the 2026 Donaghadee Summer Festival.

The event attracted residents and visitors from across the area, with the harbour side bustling with activity as the town celebrated the start of another exciting summer programme.

The launch event also coincided with the RNLI Open Day, providing visitors with an opportunity to learn more about the vital work carried out by the local lifeboat crew and volunteers. The event celebrated the town’s strong connection to the sea while recognising the invaluable contribution made by the RNLI to the local community.

Throughout the day, visitors enjoyed a wide range of activities and entertainment, creating a vibrant atmosphere across the town. The successful launch marks the beginning of a packed Summer Festival programme 20 June – 9 September combining much-loved traditions with exciting new events and attractions that will take place throughout the summer months.



Among the returning favourites is the ever-popular Horse Relay, which takes place on 29 August on the beach at the front of the town.

The event continues to attract large crowds and is one of the most eagerly anticipated fixtures in the festival calendar.

Food enthusiasts can also look forward to the fourth Ulster Fry World Championship on 15 August. The competition has become a

firm festival favourite and this year will be judged by renowned food personality Jenny Bristow.

New additions to this year’s programme include the introduction of the Town Cryer, who has already become a popular figure at the festival launch and will continue to promote events, welcome visitors and help create excitement throughout the summer.

Another exciting addition arrives on 8 August when

the All-Ireland American Flag Football League comes to Donaghadee Rugby Club. Hosted by the North Down Dragons, the event will bring together 12 teams from across Ireland for a major competition in one of the country’s fastest-growing sports.

Spectators can also enjoy an all-American-style BBQ and live music, creating a festival atmosphere for all ages.

The North Down Dragons continue to play an important role in the growth of American Flag Football in Northern Ireland through youth development programmes, women’s taster sessions and community outreach initiatives. Their involvement in the festival reflects the growing popularity of the sport across the island.

The 2026 Summer Festival programme has been designed to offer something for everyone, celebrating Donaghadee’s rich heritage, vibrant community spirit and unique coastal setting. From family events and sporting competitions to cultural performances and community activities, the programme aims to attract both local residents and visitors to the town throughout the summer.

For full event details and the complete Summer Festival programme, visit [www.visitdonaghadee.com] (http://www.visitdonaghadee.com).



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Milne adds two more sites to Holiday Park Portfolio

Milne Holiday Parks has recently expanded its portfolio with the exciting acquisition of two new holiday parks, now known collectively as Groomsport Bay.

This significant development further solidifies Milne Holiday Parks’ position as the leading provider of high-quality holiday destinations along the stunning Northern Irish coastline.

Milne Holiday Parks now boasts a collection of seven beach-front parks, offering an enviable selection of locations for those dreaming of owning a home by the Sea. The addition of Groomsport Bay complements their existing parks: Cranfield Bay, Mourneview, Silvercove, Pebble Beach, Cranfield House and Shanlieve All 12x month holiday parks. Each of these parks offers unique characteristics and access to the beautiful beaches and landscapes that Northern Ireland is renowned for.

The appeal of owning a holiday home at a Milne Holiday Park is further enhanced by the attractive financial options available. Prospective owners can step into their dream with deposits starting from as little as 10%. Flexible finance options are available at low rates, making holiday home ownership more accessible than ever. This allows families and individuals to invest in a lifestyle of relaxation and coastal enjoyment without undue financial strain.

Currently, Milne Holiday Parks offers an impressive selection of over 200 new and pre-owned holiday homes for sale. This extensive range ensures that there is something to suit various tastes and budgets. Adding to the appeal, Milne Holiday Parks is currently offering



Cranfield Bay Caravan Park

free site fees for 2025 & 2026 on new purchases, representing a significant £6000 saving for new owners. This limited-time offer presents a compelling reason to explore the opportunities available at their six beach-front locations.

Owners at Milne Holiday Parks can enjoy their holiday homes ALL Year Round, allowing

for extended breaks and the flexibility to visit whenever they desire. This extended season maximizes the value of ownership and allows for enjoyment across different seasons, from summer beach days to cosy autumn retreats and refreshing spring escapes with the added bonus of being able to rent out their holiday homes with great returns.

For those interested in learning more about owning a holiday home at any of the Milne Holiday Parks, including the new Groomsport Bay, further information can be found on their website: www.milneholidayparks.com. Additionally, individuals can text “HOLIDAY HOME” to 07860 617 616 to request a call-back and speak directly with

a representative who can provide personalised assistance and details on available properties and financing options.



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AIR AMBULANCE NI GETS ITS FIRST-OWNED HELICOPTER

A long held ambition for Air Ambulance Northern Ireland has been to own its primary helicopter, and now, the charity is proud to announce the purchase of a new AW109SP.

Representing a major milestone in the new aircraft has Air Ambulance NI's been procured through its journey since its Sloane Helicopters

and manufactured by Leonardo Helicopters, and it's scheduled to become Air Ambulance NI's primary helicopter from later summer 2026.

Following years of financial planning and supporters' generosity, including contributions from Gifts in Wills, the new aircraft is currently in the final stages of testing and medical fit-out. The new aircraft, which will carry the registration G-HMNI, is due to take flight as the Air Ambulance NI's primary helicopter by late Summer 2026.

For nearly nine years, Air Ambulance Northern Ireland, working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, has been a vital lifeline for communities, responding to over 5,500 emergency call-outs and saving countless lives. On average, the service responds to 60 calls per



Pictured at the announcement of Air Ambulance NI's purchase of its first helicopter and launching the charity's Lift off Together Campaign are: Dr Nigel Ruddell (Medical Director, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service), the first AANI patient, Conor McMullan and Dr David McManus (Chair AANI) with the new helicopter that's due to take flight as the Air Ambulance NI's primary helicopter by late Summer 2026.

month. Commenting on this next phase in Air Ambulance NI's journey, Dr David McManus, Chair of Air Ambulance Northern Ireland, adds: "Securing a new helicopter represents a transformational moment

for Air Ambulance NI and a vital commitment to saving lives across Northern Ireland. This aircraft will offer us a significant gain in operational capability in terms of automation, operations in adverse weather, hours of

darkness, speed and payload.

"Through the recent advances in aviation technology, our new primary aircraft will improve patient outcomes, ultimately save more lives and support the future

development of the service."

Since its establishment, Air Ambulance NI has operated two leased aircraft – a primary and a backup. With this new investment, the main helicopter, G HEMZ, will move into a backup role, and the current reserve aircraft, G RSCU, will be stood down from service.

The new helicopter will operate on the same shift patterns as Air Ambulance NI's current service, which is 7am to 7pm daily.

"Air Ambulance NI plays a vital role in enabling NIAS to reach patients in hard to access locations and in the most time critical emergencies. The purchase of this new helicopter is a significant and welcome development, strengthening a service that remains crucial to the people of Northern Ireland," adds Maxine

Paterson, Interim Chief Executive Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

Today, Air Ambulance NI is also launching its new fundraising appeal, Lift Off Together, giving the public the opportunity to have their name, or that of someone special, featured on the underside of the new aircraft for a donation of £200. With limited space available, this is a rare chance to be part of the charity's next chapter and help Air Ambulance NI's new aircraft to 'lift off together'.

To register your interest in the Lift Off Together campaign, please visit <https://airambulancenir.org/lift-off-together/>

You can also follow the journey of Air Ambulance NI's new helicopter as it prepares to take flight this summer across all Air Ambulance NI social media channels.

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Top Tows: Best Horse Trailers

Transporting horses safely is a priority for equestrians. According to transport safety surveys published in *Animals*, around half of UK riders regularly use trailers to travel to events.

The Ifor Williams HB series remains an absolute staple on British roads. Renowned for its classic aluminium build and robust galvanised steel chassis, the HB511 model offers exceptional durability. Its signature front offload ramp simplifies exiting, which makes it a top choice for nervous loaders.

Another dominant competitor in the UK market is Cheval Liberté, particularly their Touring Country model. This brand focuses heavily on rider convenience and equine comfort. It features a unique Pullman 2 coil-spring suspension system that significantly reduces road vibrations. This design ensures a much smoother ride for your horses. The

trailer also boasts an aerodynamic polyester nose cone and aluminium side walls, which keep the unit lightweight and highly fuel-efficient.

Nugent is fast gaining significant traction across the UK, especially with their innovative Spirit 25 model. This manufacturer heavily prioritises heavy-duty structural integrity by utilising a rugged stainless steel skeleton frame alongside a fully welded, galvanised chassis. A major selling point for Nugent is their patented Dual Drive suspension system. This technology uses parabolic leaf springs to eradicate road chatter and suspension bounce, which ensures a remarkably tranquil towing experience for highly sensitive horses. The interior is also incredibly user-friendly, featuring multi-directional forced air vents for precise ventilation control and



cushioned breast bars that can be safely released from outside the vehicle during an emergency.

Finally, the Equi-Trek Apollo stands out as a premier British-manufactured

Unlike traditional front-facing models, Equi-Trek has popularised side-loading and rear-facing travel. Many equine behaviourists suggest this orientation reduces transport stress and helps

horses maintain better balance during heavy braking.

The Apollo offers a bright, spacious interior with a low ramp. This inviting layout provides a stress-free loading environment for larger horse breeds.

Choosing the right trailer ultimately depends on your budget, towing vehicle capacity and your horse's specific travel preferences. Equine transport research emphasises that regular trailer servicing, optimal ventilation and sturdy internal partitions are vital to prevent injuries (Hall et al., 2020). Investing in any of these top three market leaders ensures safety and peace of mind on every single journey.

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Host a Breast Friends BBQ this summer and save lives

Julie Ellison believes Action Cancer saved her life. Now she's encouraging others to help fund a service that detects six breast cancers for every 1,000 women screened.

Action Cancer, Northern Ireland's leading local cancer charity, is calling on people across Northern Ireland to host a "Breast Friends BBQ" to raise vital funds for Action Cancer's life-saving breast screening service.

The campaign encourages friends, families and neighbours to come together this summer around the BBQ to enjoy good food and meaningful conversations, all while supporting a great cause.

Action Cancer is the only charity in Northern Ireland providing free breast screening to well women aged 40-49 and over 70 (outside of the NHS screening age range). When it comes to breast cancer, the earlier it is detected the better. For every 1,000 breast screenings, six breast cancers are detected.

Each screening is free to the woman but costs the charity £120 to deliver each appointment. Screening takes place at Action Cancer House and on board the Big Bus mobile unit (supported by SuperValu and Centra). Fundraising generated

from the Breast Friends BBQ campaign will help fund appointments for local women in your community.

Julie Ellison is a barrister and mum of three from Hillsborough, whose breast cancer was detected by Action Cancer in May 2024, when she was aged 43. Thanks to the charity's state-of-the-art screening service, Julie's cancer was identified at an early stage, allowing her to undergo less invasive treatment, avoiding the need for chemotherapy.

Speaking about the Breast Friends BBQ campaign, Action Cancer Ambassador Julie Ellison said:

"I believe Action Cancer saved my life by detecting my breast cancer at an early and treatable stage. Last year, my husband and I, alongside our three girls, hosted a Summer Solstice Garden Party and raised £1,770 for Action Cancer as a way of saying thank you.

"This year, we want to go even bigger. With bouncy castles and BBQs at the ready, we've set ourselves a fundraising

target of £2,000 through a day filled with music, laughter and community spirit.

"I would encourage everyone to get in touch with Action Cancer to find out how you can get involved. By firing up the BBQ, you can help raise vital funds and awareness of breast cancer and the importance of early detection. This campaign could help save the life of a local woman, a mum just like me, in your community."

Barbecue enthusiast Romilly Moore from Newtownabbey has joined Julie in encouraging people across Northern Ireland to get involved. Romilly, who creates food and lifestyle content through her social media channel @only.rom and works alongside her husband Jim Moore of @onlyslaggin, whose books have achieved Sunday Times bestseller status, has created a series of exclusive pink-themed recipes to help inspire fundraisers. The recipes will be available to everyone who signs up to receive a Breast Friends BBQ fundraising pack.



Romilly explains why she has chosen to support Action Cancer's breast screening service:

"Breast cancer touches so many lives. Over the last few years, three of my close friends have been diagnosed with breast cancer, so I've seen first-hand the impact it can have on individuals and their families.

"That experience encouraged me to attend Action Cancer's breast screening programme for women in their 40s. Following my first screening at the age of 45, I left feeling reassured and empowered, knowing everything was as it should be.

"Last year, at the age of 47, I booked another routine screening and again came away with that same reassurance. It's so important to attend every two years until the age of 50, when the NHS breast screening programme begins.

"Early detection saves lives, and that's why I'm proud to support Action Cancer's Breast Friends BBQ campaign and encourage other women to make their breast health a priority."

For a Breast Friends BBQ Fundraising Pack, which includes special pink themed recipes created by Romilly, please email breastrfriendsbbq@actioncancer.org or call Lisa McClenaghan, Breast Friends BBQ Campaign Manager on 07825 266951.

If you would like to donate to Julie Ellison's family fundraiser please visit: [Pete Lonton](https://www.actioncancer.org.uk/fundraising) is fundraising for Action Cancer

MASTER THE SUN THIS SUMMER

Staying safe in the sun is essential for protecting your skin from painful burns and premature ageing.

The easiest way to defend yourself is by applying a broad-spectrum sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays. You should also seek shade during the hottest parts of the day when the solar radiation peaks.

Wearing a wide-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses adds an extra layer of vital physical defense.

Understanding Sun Protection Factor numbers is the key to choosing the right level of skin defense. The number tells you how much longer your skin can resist burning compared to using no protection at all. If your unprotected skin usually begins to redden after ten minutes then an factor fifteen lotion theoretically grants one hundred and fifty minutes. However real-world conditions like sweating and swimming mean you must reapply the cream every two hours regardless of the number.

For reliable safety in the UK climate you should always opt for an factor thirty or higher. Apply the cream generously to all exposed skin about twenty minutes before you step outdoors so it can bond properly. Taking these simple precautions ensures you can enjoy the beautiful summer weather without risking your long-term health.

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Met Office experts present evidence on climate change

DAERA Minister Andrew Muir recently welcomed an event organised with the Met Office on the science and evidence behind climate change.

Leading experts from the Met Office were in Stormont to highlight the importance of deploying science and evidence to understand and respond to climate change and its impacts globally and in Northern Ireland.

At the event jointly hosted by DAERA in Parliament Buildings, the Met Office presented the latest data and analysis on projected climate trends, including the anticipated local impacts of a warming climate on infrastructure, public health and the natural environment.

Attendees heard about the specific challenges facing Northern Ireland's agriculture sector, with changing weather patterns, prolonged wet periods and increasing temperatures expected to have significant implications for our agri-food sector.

Professor Jason Lowe OBE, Met Office Principal Fellow Applied & Climate Science, said: "The role of the Met Office is to provide the very best climate intelligence through world leading science, enabling decision makers, business and individuals to make evidence-based decisions in response to the challenges of our changing climate."



DAERA Minister Andrew Muir is pictured attending a Met Office climate change event at Parliament Buildings. Pictured (left to right) with Minister Muir is DAERA Permanent Secretary Katrina Godfrey, Met Office representatives Tom Crocker and Jason Lowe, DAERA Deputy Secretary Jane Corderoy and DAERA Official Claire Cockerill.

"The evidence is clear that our climate is changing, and we know that reducing our greenhouse gas emissions will help prevent the very worst impacts of climate change. However, it is also critical to adapt to the changes we're going to see, and an evidence-based approach to assessing the risks will help ensure the most effective action is taken."

The session included a question-and-answer panel, providing participants with the opportunity to engage directly with experts and explore the evidence in greater depth.

The event forms part of ongoing work by DAERA to raise awareness of the impacts of climate change and support informed, evidence-based action across all sectors.

Action Cancer Calls on Supporters to Champion Final Therapy Rooms

New campaign seeks business and philanthropic support to secure sponsorship for the final rooms in the charity's flagship Therapeutic Suite

Action Cancer hosted a corporate engagement event at Action Cancer House in Belfast to launch its "Champion a Room, Change a Life" campaign brochure and issue a clear call to action to businesses, foundations and philanthropic partners. Support is urgently needed to secure sponsorship for the final therapy rooms in the charity's flagship Therapeutic Suite.

The event brought together senior leaders, funders and stakeholders to hear how room sponsorship partnerships can directly sustain Action Cancer's therapeutic support and detection services. These services include counselling and integrative holistic therapy for adults and children from the age of five, acupuncture, scar therapy and a skin cancer detection service. Together, they support thousands of people across Northern Ireland each year and receive no regular government funding.

Speakers outlined the strategic importance of securing long-term investment for the remaining Oak, Walnut and Larch rooms, each of which delivers hundreds of specialist therapeutic sessions annually. The newly launched brochure highlights that a one-year donation of £5,000 can help to fund an average of 780 therapeutic support sessions. As the brochure states: "Behind every therapy room door is a life being

changed. A moment of courage. A new beginning."

Dr Terry Cross OBE from The David Cross Foundation said:

"Sadly, in 2010, our family experienced the devastating loss of my son David, who passed away from malignant melanoma at just 33 years of age. Losing a child is something no parent ever truly comes to terms with."

"I am delighted that The David Cross Foundation has committed £30,000 towards the Beech Room, which will support the Skin Cancer Detection Clinic here at Action Cancer. I would encourage everyone here today, and indeed the wider business community, to dig deep and consider becoming a Room Champion. Your contribution can make a real and tangible difference to local people and families facing cancer."

Chris Birch, Trust Liaison Manager from The Grace Trust said:

"Action Cancer is an incredible charity that is improving the mental health of men, women and children affected by the devastation of a cancer diagnosis."

"We have committed £15,000 to sponsor The Willow Room for the next three years. During this time, 2,400 scar therapy and integrated holistic therapy sessions will be delivered to 402 people."

"We would like to encour-



age you to join us in making a difference to local people affected by cancer in Northern Ireland."

Geraldine Kerr, Head of Action Cancer's Professional Services, added:

"Action Cancer offers the most extensive range of mental health and rehabilitative support services for people impacted by a cancer diagnosis in Northern Ireland. These rooms are where strength is restored, pain and restrictions are eased, and stories begin again."

"We are so thankful to The David Cross Foundation and The Grace Trust for getting behind this campaign, and they have recently been joined by our long-term supporter Gordons Chemists through the business's sponsorship of the Elm Room. Gordons' co-founder, Neil Gordon, sadly passed away from colon cancer 12 years ago. The local pharmacy business has strengthened

its partnership with Action Cancer by championing a room in Neil's memory, ensuring his legacy continues to make a difference."

"Securing sponsorship for the final three rooms: Oak, Walnut and Larch is essential to protecting service capacity at a time when demand continues to rise."

Guests toured the Therapeutic Suite, including the Oak, Walnut and Larch rooms, and received briefings on the measurable outcomes associated with each space. The brochure outlines that, depending on the room, a partnership can support between 720 and 800 sessions per year, reaching up to 134 clients annually.

Organisations wishing to explore partnership opportunities or request a copy of the brochure are invited to contact Lucy McCusker at lmccusker@actioncancer.org or call 028 9080 3344 (Option 2).

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GUIDE TO PREVENTING AND CURING TRAVEL SICKNESS

Few things ruin the excitement of a trip faster than the sudden, cold sweat of travel sickness.

Whether you are navigating winding mountain roads, catching a flight, or stepping onto a cruise ship, motion sickness can quickly turn a dream vacation into a miserable endurance test.

Fortunately, you do not have to be at the mercy of your inner ear. By understanding why travel sickness happens and adopting a few evidence-based strategies, you can prevent it from starting or kill it in its tracks if it does strike.

Why Do We Get Travel Sickness?

Travel sickness is essentially a “hardware conflict” in your brain. It happens when there is a mismatch between what your eyes see and what your inner ear (the vestibular system) feels.

Your vestibular system—specifically the semicircular canals in your inner ear—detects movement, tilt, and acceleration. If you are reading a book in the back

seat of a moving car, your eyes tell your brain that you are sitting perfectly still. However, your inner ear feels every bump, turn, and acceleration.

This sensory mismatch confuses the brain, triggering a stress response that leads to classic symptoms: dizziness, cold sweating, headaches, and ultimately, nausea and vomiting.

How to Avoid Travel Sickness (Prevention)

When it comes to motion sickness, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Once the nausea pathway fully activates, it is much harder to reverse. Try these tactical adjustments before you depart:

1. Choose Your Seat Wisely

The goal is to sit in the area of the vehicle that experiences the least amount of movement and allows you to look out at the horizon.

- In a Car: Drive if you can (drivers rarely get



carsick because their brains anticipate every turn). If you are a passenger, sit in the front passenger seat.

- On a Boat: Request a cabin in the middle of the ship, close to the waterline. This is the ship’s natural pivot point and experiences the least rocking.
- On a Plane: Secure a seat over the front edge of the wing, which is the most stable zone during turbulence.
- On a Train: Always sit facing forward—never backward.

2. Fixate on the Horizon

Keep your eyes on a stable point in the distance. This aligns your visual

signals with the physical movement your inner ear is feeling, instantly reducing that internal “hardware conflict.” Avoid looking at phones, tablets, or books.

3. Manage Your Diet Before Departure

What you put in your stomach matters. Avoid heavy, greasy, spicy, or highly acidic foods for a few hours before you travel. At the same time, do not travel on an empty stomach; a light, bland snack like crackers or toast can help stabilize stomach acids.

How to Cure Travel Sickness (Quick Relief)

If you are already in

transit and begin to feel that familiar wave of unease, do not panic. Use these fast-acting interventions to settle your system:

1. Change your view and get fresh air: Immediate.

Stop looking down immediately. Fix your eyes on the horizon or a distant, unmoving object. If you are in a car, roll down the window to get cool, moving air blowing directly onto your face.

2. Stabilize your head: Within 1 minute.

Lean your head back firmly against the headrest or a travel pillow. Keeping your head as still as possible minimizes the fluid movement inside your inner ear’s semicircular canals.

3. Apply acupressure: Within 2 minutes.

Locate the P6 (Neiguan) point, which is about three finger-widths down from your wrist crease on the inner forearm, right between the two large tendons. Press firmly on this point with your thumb for a few minutes, or use elastic acupressure wristbands.

4. Deploy ginger or peppermint: Within 5 minutes.

Chew on a piece of crystallized ginger, swallow a ginger capsule, or sip a ginger ale. Clinical studies show ginger is remarkably effective at reducing nausea. Alternatively, sucking on a strong peppermint sweet or inhaling peppermint essential oil can relax the gastric muscles.

The Medicinal Toolkit

If natural remedies are not cutting it, pharmaceutical options are highly effective. Keep in mind that most of these are best taken 30 to 60 minutes before you start traveling.

A Note on Drowsiness:

Many over-the-counter travel sickness medications cause drowsiness. While this can be a bonus if you want to sleep through a long flight, avoid them if you need to drive or stay alert upon arrival.

The Great Summer Holiday Escape

The annual summer getaway is one of the most anticipated events of the year, yet it routinely places the highest amount of stress on our vehicles and our patience.

As motorists take to the tarmac simultaneously, transforming smooth motorways into sluggish bottlenecks, the key to a successful road trip shifts from speed to strategy. Preparing your vehicle, mastering the physics of towing, and maintaining harmony in the cabin are the three essential pillars of stress-free summer motoring.

Long-journey preparation should always begin well before the suitcases are packed, focusing on elements most vulnerable to seasonal heat. High temperatures dramatically accelerate tyre degradation and exacerbate existing structural

weaknesses, making a rigorous pressure and tread depth check mandatory for safety. Under the bonnet, engine coolant levels must be topped up to prevent the engine from overheating while idling in seasonal gridlock, and windscreen wash should be filled to clear the heavy coating of dust and insects that intensifies dangerous sun glare.

Drivers must also protect their own performance by keeping a plentiful supply of water accessible in the cabin, scheduling mandatory rest breaks every two hours, and wearing supportive, road-appropriate footwear rather than loose summer sandals or

flip-flops.

For those expanding their holiday by towing a caravan or a tent trailer, preparation demands an entirely different layer of mechanical awareness. Towing alters a vehicle’s handling characteristics completely, meaning drivers must strictly verify their car’s maximum towing capacity and legal weight limits before departure.

When packing the trailer, heavy items must be positioned low down and directly over the axle to establish a stable centre of gravity and mitigate “s n a k i n g ” — the dangerous side-to-side swaying triggered by crosswinds or passing heavy goods vehicles.

Furthermore, extension towing mirrors are a strict legal requirement to eliminate the substantial blind spots created by a wider load, and drivers must adhere to reduced national towing speed limits, which drop to 60 mph on dual carriageways and motorways.

Even with a mechanically flawless vehicle, a summer road trip can quickly unravel if the passengers in the back seat succumb to the frustration of holiday traffic. Keeping children occupied requires a tactical balance of digital entertainment, classic interaction, and structured downtime to stave off restlessness. While



fully charged tablets and offline playlists provide a welcome shield during extended delays, breaking up the monotony with traditional observation games like “I Spy” or cooperative word puzzles keeps the family engaged together. Crucially, parents should manage the cabin climate carefully to prevent heat-induced irritability, pack an abundant supply of mess-free snacks, and intentionally frame the inevitable traffic delays as a patient, shared part of the holiday adventure.

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GET A FAN-TASTIC NIGHTS SLEEP

Installing a electric ceiling light fan could be tempting during warm summer nights, but is the investment worth it?

Upgrading your bedroom with a combined electric ceiling light fan is a fantastic way to improve comfort and air circulation, but installing one involves several critical structural and electrical steps. Unlike a basic light bulb change, a ceiling fan is a heavy, rotating motorized fixture that requires a professional touch.

When you hire a local electrician, their primary task is ensuring structural stability. Because standard plastic ceiling boxes cannot handle the continuous vibration and weight of a 5kg to 15kg motorized fan, the electrician will first check your ceiling joists. If a joist isn't perfectly aligned with your desired location, they

will need to install a timber support block or an adjustable metal brace, usually by gaining access from the loft or room above. Once the ceiling is reinforced, they will safely isolate the power circuit, fully assemble the fan unit, and mount the motor housing.

Finally, they will wire the fixture—often installing a digital receiver if the fan uses a wireless remote—and balance the blades using tiny clip-on weights to guarantee silent, wobble-free operation.

In terms of cost, your total investment will depend on the complexity of the wiring and your location.

If the electrician is simply swapping out an existing, centred

light fitting where the joists are already strong enough, the job is straightforward. This typically takes one to two hours and will cost between £50 and £150 in labour.

However, if the electrician needs to head into the loft to install timber reinforcements, or if you want complex new wiring chased down the walls for separate light and speed switches, the labour can quickly rise to between £120 and £350+.

Remember that these estimates cover professional labour and basic electrical materials only; you will need to purchase the ceiling fan fixture separately, which generally ranges from £60 for entry-level



models to over £250 for stylish options with integrated smart remotes. To get the most accurate quote from a local trader, always confirm whether

they have clear access to the space directly above your bedroom ceiling, as restricted access can add time and plasterboard repair costs to the final bill.

Creating a Resort-Style Patio

You don't need a boarding pass to escape the daily grind.

With the right design choices, you can easily transform an ordinary backyard patio into a high-end, resort-style sanctuary. The secret lies in treating your outdoor area with the same editorial care as your living room, focusing on three foundational elements: weather-resistant sectionals, outdoor rugs, and strategic lighting.

First, anchor the space with a deep-seated sectional. To capture that luxury hotel aesthetic, skip the flimsy folding chairs and opt for a generous L-shaped configuration. Look for frames made from durable powder-coated aluminum or synthetic teak, paired with high-performance fabrics like Sunbrella. These materials resist fading and repel water, ensuring your oasis handles summer storms



effortlessly.

Next, define your "outdoor room" with a premium outdoor rug. A large, flat-weave polypropylene rug acts as a visual anchor, instantly warming up cold concrete or stone pavers. Opt for a subtle geometric pattern or a sandy neutral tone to mimic a high-end cabana vibe underfoot.

Finally, layering your lighting is what takes the patio from day to night. Avoid harsh overhead floods. Instead, string

warm LED Edison bulbs overhead for a festive, starry-night ambiance. Complement them with battery-operated, weather-proof floor lanterns tucked into corners, and solar-powered uplighting hidden in nearby planters.

By grounding the space with a plush sectional, softening it with a textile rug, and washing it in a warm, amber glow, you create a private destination you will never want to check out of.

Why now could be best time to invest in Solar Panels for your home

The decision to transition a residential property to solar energy is increasingly attractive as the technology matures and installation costs fall.

Investing in a home solar photovoltaic system offers substantial financial and environmental rewards, making it one of the most effective ways for homeowners to take control of their energy

consumption and reduce their overall carbon footprint.

The primary benefit of home solar panels is the significant reduction in monthly electricity bills. By generating power directly on-

site, a household decreases its reliance on the central grid, effectively protecting the homeowner against fluctuating utility prices.

Furthermore, when modern systems are paired with battery storage, properties can achieve high rates of energy self-sufficiency by storing daytime power for evening use. Financially, excess energy can often be sold back to the national grid through export guarantee schemes, creating a steady passive income that shortens the initial investment payback

period.

However, the transition requires a clear understanding of the accompanying drawbacks. The most prominent hurdle is the upfront financial investment, which covers high-efficiency monocrystalline panels, smart inverters, and potential battery systems. While costs have decreased substantially over recent years, the initial payout remains high. Additionally, a home's structural geometry dictates its solar viability; properties with heavy surrounding shade

or north-facing roofs generate minimal power. Solar generation is also inherently variable, fluctuating based on seasons and daily weather conditions, meaning a total disconnection from the traditional power grid is rarely practical for the average home.

For homeowners whose properties are structurally unsuited for traditional rooftop panels, several viable alternative renewable technologies exist. Building-integrated photovoltaics, such as solar roof tiles, offer a seamless visual

alternative to standard glass modules, though they typically operate at a slightly lower efficiency. If the goal is strictly to reduce heating bills rather than generate electricity, a domestic heat pump or a solar thermal system can be deployed to extract environmental warmth for hot water and home heating.

Ultimately, while individual roof layouts and budgets vary, investing in solar panels represents a reliable pathway toward long-term financial savings and sustainable independent living.

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THE HIDDEN DANGER IN YOUR GARDEN THIS SUMMER

As Northern Ireland enjoys warm summer weather, households are warned about hidden dangers lurking in their hosepipe when using garden hoses.

The common garden hose could pose a hidden danger this summer, as families across Northern Ireland reach for paddling pools and sprinklers during a warm spell.

With families looking to cool off, WaterSafe Register, the free directory of approved plumbers, is warning households about a little-known risk lurking in the garden: the humble hosepipe.

If the end of a hosepipe is left underwater in a paddling pool, pond or watering can, dirty water can be drawn back into the home's internal plumbing - a process known as

backflow.

Warm water left sitting in a hose over a hot week can also allow Legionella bacteria to build up, which can cause Legionnaire's Disease if contaminated water droplets or mist are inhaled. The risk increases significantly during prolonged heatwaves, when garden hoses can reach high temperatures in direct sunlight.

According to the Drinking Water Inspectorate Northern Ireland, more than 99% of tap water produced by Scottish Water meets strict legal safety standards - but many reported water quality events

in homes are linked to poor plumbing, such as missing or faulty backflow protection.

WaterSafe Register is urging households to fit a simple safety device called a double-check valve to every outside tap and to follow a few easy habits when using water outdoors during the heatwave.

Top tips for safe water use this summer:

- Don't submerge the end of the hose in water, such as a pond, paddling pool, bucket or watering can
- Keep a visible gap between the end of the hose and the water surface
- Disconnect the hose from the tap and store

it in a cool, dry place when not in use

- Run it briefly without an attachment before each use, until the water feels cool - this is especially important after a hot day

- Fit a trigger nozzle so it isn't accidentally left running unattended
- Fit a double-check valve to the tap and replace it every 10 years

- Better still, use a bucket or watering can instead, where possible - and help save water during what is also set to be a very dry spell

Jonathan Samuel, Director of WaterSafe Register, said: "We are fortunate in the UK to have extremely

high-quality drinking water, but it's easy to introduce bacteria if our plumbing is in poor condition or we're not mindful of the potential dangers.

"Warm weather anywhere in the UK is enough to allow bacteria to build up in a garden hose left sitting in direct sun. The simple precautions we're sharing apply wherever you are - and are good habits to keep all summer long.

"If you do use a hosepipe, make sure your tap has a double-check valve and follow important safety precautions to help avoid the risk of contamination and potential illness.



"If you're not sure your tap has the right protection, ask a

WaterSafe-registered plumber to check it for you."

To find a WaterSafe-registered plumber, visit watersafe.org.uk.

CREATE A WATER FEATURE IN A SMALL GARDEN

A water feature can completely transform a compact backyard, turning it into a peaceful sanctuary.

Even in a small garden, the gentle sound of trickling water masks ambient city noise, while the reflective surface tricks the eye into thinking the space is larger than it actually is.

When space is at a premium, you have to be clever about design.

Large, dug-out ponds are rarely practical, but there are plenty of space-saving alternatives. A simple, self-contained plug-and-play water fountain is an excellent choice. These units come with a built-in reservoir and pump, meaning they take up very little floor space and can be placed directly on a patio or tucked into a flower bed.

If you prefer a contemporary aesthetic, water walls or blade fountains are brilliant. They utilize vertical space, allowing water to cascade down a wall or fence panel into a hidden gravel trough below. For a more traditional, wildlife-



friendly approach, you can create a container pond (often called a "patio pond") using an old stone trough, a ceramic pot, or half a wooden wine barrel.

To create a successful small-scale water feature, keep these core practicalities in mind:

- Power Access: Most fountains require an outdoor electrical outlet for the pump. If running a cable isn't feasible, opt for a solar-powered pump. Just ensure the solar panel is placed in a spot

that gets reliable, direct sunlight.

- Sun and Shade: Place your water feature where it receives partial shade. Too much direct sunlight accelerates algae growth—which turns the water green—while too much deep shade will cause fallen leaves to rot and foul the water.

- Greenery and Balance: Frame your water feature with plants to blend it naturally into the garden. Use dwarf water lilies or floating fairy moss inside a container pond, and surround the exterior with lush ferns, hostas, or ornamental grasses to soften the edges.

Adding water to a small garden doesn't require a massive budget or a major construction project. By choosing a style that complements your layout and keeping up with

basic maintenance—like topping up the water during hot spells—you can easily bring the soothing, therapeutic benefits of water to your outdoor doorstep.

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