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Derek McClure was recently presented with the AND In Bloom Volunteer of the Year award by Mayor Alistair Cathcart and TV presenter Colin Stafford-Johnson

NEWTOWNARDS VOLUNTEER HELPS OUT IN BANGOR CASTLE WALLED GARDEN

World Soil Day and International Volunteer Day were celebrated recently.

To mark the occasion, volunteers who work in Bangor Castle Walled Garden revealed why they decided to take up a volunteering role in the Garden...

Derek McClure recently won the Ards and North Down In Bloom Volunteer of the Year award for his volunteering efforts. Until recently, he was a voluntary Director of

the Accept Care group of companies and was Chair of North Down YMCA, as well as volunteering on Saturdays in the Cancer Focus charity shop in Newtownards, not to mention his volunteering work in Bangor Castle Walled Garden.

Derek started volunteering in various capacities around 60 years ago, when he

was 14 years old, but his hobby has always been gardening.

He can recall digging in his grandfather's garden when he was just four years old, and a few years later, his father built a greenhouse for him for his eighth birthday.

"I've continued gardening throughout my life," Derek said. "When the

opportunity arose to become a volunteer within Bangor Castle Walled Garden, I jumped at the chance. Not only did it allow me to develop my horticultural skills but it also allowed me to put something back into the local community.

Continued on page 4

NIFRS recruiting for On-Call Firefighters

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) is calling on those who want to make a real difference in their community to become On-Call Firefighters.

If you live or work within 5 minutes of your local On-Call Fire Station and you want to serve your community, we could have the role for you!

On-Call Firefighters work part-time and carry a pager to alert them to emergencies in their local area.

This rewarding role offers a unique opportunity to save lives, protect property, provide advice and serve your local community – all while fitting around you and your existing commitments. NIFRS offers a range of contracted hours to suit you and your lifestyle.

NIFRS is recruiting for On-Call Firefighters across 43 stations in Northern Ireland, including Newtownards and

Portaferry.

On-Call Firefighters are paid a retaining fee, emergency call-out payments and a payment to attend a weekly drill night, 2 hours per week in the evening.

Our On-Call Firefighters are trained to the highest standards and take part in 12 days of training each year to ensure we have the most highly skilled Firefighters to help protect our local communities.

Candidates can apply online and download application packs from NIFRS's website at www.nifrs.org.

The closing date for applications is Friday 14 February 2025 at 12noon.

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Former Mayor's Charity Cheque Presentation

Councillor Jennifer Gilmour, the former Mayor of Ards and North Down (2023/24), presented a cheque to the three charities that she supported during her term as Mayor.



The total amount raised was £13,961.79 which will be shared between K9 Search and Rescue Northern Ireland, the Royal British Legion's branches in Ards and North Down, and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) stations in Ards and North Down.

Every year, the Mayor of Ards and North Down selects charities that they support during their term. This year, residing Mayor, Councillor Alistair Cathcart, is raising funds for Action Cancer, the Sea Cadets (Ards and North Down units), and St. John Ambulance (Dufferin Cadets and Bangor and Ards Adults ambulance unit).

Mayor Alistair Cathcart said: "I am delighted to see the success of these fundraising efforts. Charities in our Borough provide a lot of assistance to the people of Ards and North Down, and the work that they do is invaluable. I am determined to raise as much money as I can

for the charities that I am supporting during my Mayoral term. With everyone's support, we can help make a positive difference." Several fundraising events will take place during the Mayoral year and donations can be accepted online at www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/mayorscharitydonation.

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#MILESFORMISSIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE-MAKERS: TWO FROM ARDS AND NORTH DOWN AMONG KEEP NORTHERN IRELAND BEAUTIFUL'S 30 UNDER 30

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful has announced the latest cohort for its 30 Under 30 Climate Change-Makers programme.

The initiative continues to play a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of climate leaders across Northern Ireland, and this year, two outstanding young individuals from the Ards and North Down Borough Council area have been selected to take part. These local climate champions will join an inspiring group of young people from across the region, each committed to making a meaningful impact in the fight against climate change.

The two members from the Ards and North Down Borough Council area include Gina Black from Bangor and Orla Kearney from Holywood.

Gina said, "I'm honoured to be included as one of this year's 30 Under 30 Climate Change-Makers. As a long-term advocate for sustainable solutions, I have become increasingly concerned with the rapid escalation of the climate crisis and the risks to the future if serious steps aren't taken. I am therefore

committed to using this platform to advance impactful initiatives locally while inspiring action globally."

Orla shared, "I'm delighted to have been given the incredible opportunity to be part of this programme. It's been fantastic meeting others who share my passion for sustainability and who are equally committed to making a difference. My background is in sustainable buildings, and this programme provides me with an exciting opportunity to expand my knowledge beyond carbon reduction in design and work with my cohort and industry leaders to find innovative solutions to the climate crisis."

The 30 Under 30 programme offers a unique platform for young people to develop leadership skills and become advocates for environmental change. Participants will take part in workshops covering key



topics, such as biodiversity, health, and wellbeing, with opportunities to learn from influential leaders.

The series, which began in December with Alice Thompson's inspiring workshop on Purpose and Finding Your Why,

continues this year with six engaging workshops and a dedicated Summit. The next workshop, focusing on Wellbeing & Confidence, is set for January 23, followed by the Summit on February 28—a key event bringing participants together. The

programme will run through to June, with additional workshops designed to foster collaboration and deliver practical strategies for tackling climate challenges.

As a key strategic programme, it has become

central to Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful's mission to drive meaningful environmental change. Jenna Potter, 30 Under 30 Programme Manager, said, "With the ambitious targets set out in the 2022 Climate Change Act, including achieving net zero emissions by 2050, there is no time to sit back on our commitments. The 30 Under 30 programme equips young people with the skills and knowledge they need to help meet these targets and drive real change."

"The participants in our third year are highly engaged, conscientious, and deeply aware of the urgency of the climate crisis. Gina and Orla are already taking action to address the challenges we face. This year's programme will not only deepen their understanding but also foster collaboration, idea exchange, and the creation

of practical strategies to tackle the pressing climate issues of our time. We're excited for the months ahead as these inspiring young leaders gain the skills and confidence needed to create lasting change in their communities and beyond."

The programme, delivered by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and Event Management and Business Consultancy firm Podiem, is sponsored by Coca-Cola HBC and supported by Garfield Weston, with additional backing from Ulster Garden Villages (UGV), LFT Charitable Trust, Invest NI, Arup, Danske Bank, Northstone Materials, Queens University Belfast, Belfast City Council, Pinsent Masons, and Share Energy.

The Class of 2024/25 was officially selected in December 2024, with each participant joining a prestigious alumni network.

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Continued from page 1

"I've always grown a few vegetables on a small plot in my own garden so it seemed like a perfect match to develop more of my skills in the Walled

Garden's vegetable patches. Never in my wildest imagination did I think that my biggest problem would come from the crows and pigeons that basically eat everything that's green above the level of the soil!"

Liam Harrington joined

the Walled Garden team to spend more time outdoors and contribute to the community. His volunteering work has helped him to expand his gardening knowledge, which he now applies to his own garden.

"I particularly love working in the vegetable plots," Liam said, "especially with some of the more unusual vegetables that are grown in the Walled Garden. It is very rewarding to see everything blossom over spring and summer after putting the effort in during winter. It's a wonderful space to spend a few hours."

Noel Poots has enjoyed Bangor Castle Walled Garden for many years. Shortly after pandemic restrictions eased, Noel was invited to become one of the volunteers at

the Garden. He jumped at the chance to get to know more about plants and gardening in general.

"I enjoy being part of the volunteer team," Noel said. "They are a great bunch of people and good fun to work with. I also enjoy getting involved in the wide variety of work in the Garden and enjoy working alongside the knowledgeable and helpful council team. At this time of year, there is a lot of hard work such as cutting back plants, digging out weeds and mulching but then spring arrives and everything in the garden comes alive again!"

Heather Shiell returned to Northern Ireland in 2019 after living abroad for several years. Having previously enjoyed tending to her mother-in-law's garden during

the 1990s, complete with vegetable plot and fruit bushes, she returned to her passion after walking through Bangor Castle Walled Garden with a friend.

"I had definitely missed the garden during all the years that I'd been away," Heather said. "In autumn 2022, I was walking with a friend through Bangor Castle Walled Garden and was enjoying the wonderful planting schemes and the autumn colours. We chatted to some people who turned out to be volunteers and I couldn't believe it when they said there was a slot free to become a volunteer."

"I am learning a lot about plants but there are extra benefits like making new friends and being outdoors. We also helped at events such as the springtime 'Awake the Garden', fun and games days for kids, music nights for adults, helping with wildlife education and sustainable garden practices. Generally, though, every week we're busy digging, cutting, mulching, trimming, planting or cropping. We also meet a wide range of visitors who we love to chat to. It's very heartening to see so many people

enjoying the garden and I love being a part of it all."

Taylor Boyd was recently forced to retire from his window cleaning business after 35 years and found he missed working with many of his customers. However, he decided to volunteer and has found a lot of enjoyment in working outside and being with other like-minded individuals.

"I needed something to do and volunteering at Bangor Castle Walled Garden suits me as I was used to being outside. I knew I would be interested in gardening as I created my own garden from scratch. I enjoy making things grow, especially when sometimes I don't know what was going to appear in my garden! I am going to keep volunteering and that will allow me to make new friends and keep busy. I love it."

Ards and North Down Borough Council is currently developing its volunteering opportunities in parks and cemeteries across the Borough. If anyone is interested in volunteering, email ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk or phone 0300 013 333.

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Co. Down customers praised for bringing joy to children at Christmas.

Kind-hearted shoppers in Co. Down have been thanked for contributing to the 125,000 toys donated to children in need during the run-up to Christmas.

Before the festive celebrations, the Tesco stores in Banbridge, Bangor, Newcastle, Newry and Newtownards called on shoppers to support a collection of toys so that families whose children would otherwise not receive a gift wouldn't miss out on the big day.

People across the community responded enthusiastically to the campaign, with 2,172 of brand-new toys being gifted to the Salvation Army and the Children's Cancer Unit at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, bringing a smile to many children's faces on Christmas Day. A total of 8,230 toys were donated in NI.

Claire De Silva, Head of Communities at Tesco, said: "We really can't thank our customers enough for their kind contributions to this great cause."

"Throughout the year our stores give support



to children and their community, and without fail local people support us in our efforts.

"So once again we are grateful to the people of Co. Down for showing that the magic of Christmas is very much alive and well.

"They have made a

great many children so happy at a time of year that can be difficult for some families, so thank you so much again for your support."

The Toy Donation campaign ran in stores across the UK in December, with more than 125,000 items

being given.

In addition to the toy collection, Tesco donated £25,000 to the Salvation Army to support its ongoing efforts in providing essential services and support to vulnerable families during the festive season

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SERC APPRENTICE SET FOR YOUNG CHEFS OLYMPIAD IN INDIA

A culinary arts apprentice at South Eastern Regional College (SERC) has secured a place in the final of the International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM) Young Chef Olympiad which takes place in Goa, India recently.

Gabby Harrison, 21, from Newtownards, who is completing the Level 3 Apprenticeship NI in Professional Cookery at SERC's Bangor Campus and is employed by the Stormont Hotel as Commis Chef, will represent Northern Ireland in the prestigious international competition. Gabby and her lecturer and mentor, Friedrich

Machala, have been funded to attend the competition by The Savoy Educational Trust which supports education, training and skills development in hospitality for students and professionals.

The Young Chef Olympiad will see 60 competitors from across six continents showcase their knowledge, skill and creativity which will be assessed by 25 international judges as they compete for the Young Chef Olympiad title 2025. Judges include Chef Cyrus Todiwala - Café Spice Namaste and a regular guest on James Martin's Saturday Morning show; Chef Sarah Hartnett- renowned pastry chef and chocolate consultant; Chef Stephen Carter- Boodles; Chef Henri Brosi - Lansdowne Club, and Chef Mario Perera - The Dorchester

Hotel. Speaking ahead of the competition Gabby said, "I am thrilled and delighted to have secured a place in the Young Chef Olympiad, and for the funding support from The Savoy Educational Trust which will allow me to showcase my skills and our little corner of Northern Ireland on the world stage. I am also looking forward to meeting other competitors from across the globe, and to learn about different foods, tastes and techniques from my peers, as well as networking with leaders in the industry."

Angela Maher FIH, Chief Executive of The Savoy Educational Trust, commented: "We are delighted to support this opportunity for Gabby to represent Northern Ireland at the Young Chef Olympiad in India. It is

an exciting opportunity for her to showcase her talent on a global stage. This competition will not only allow Gabby to demonstrate her skills but also gain invaluable experience and connections that will benefit her future career. We wish her and Friedrich every success in February!"

Lecturer Friedrich Machala said, "The opportunity for Gabby to participate in the Young Chef Olympiad has been made possible with a grant from The Savoy Educational Trust. The support for this once in a lifetime opportunity will have far reaching benefits for Gabby as she embarks on her career in the industry, and on the SERC community and subsequent students on our return."

He concluded, "Gabby is a great ambassador



Gabby Harrison & Friedrich Machala

for SERC, for Northern Ireland and the hospitality industry. She is a fantastic student and apprentice and has already achieved so

much to get through the qualifying round. Her culinary knowledge and creativity alongside her organisational skills and commitment

to the industry has put her in good stead for this international competition." Visit www.serc.ac.uk #BetterOffAtSERC.

Kellie Armstrong MLA celebrates 60 year anniversary of Carers UK

Kellie Armstrong MLA celebrates the 60th anniversary of Carers NI and the launch of 'The reality and hopes of unpaid carers in NI' report.

Kellie Armstrong MLA, a carer herself, is dedicated to supporting unpaid carers and the work of Carers NI who support those caring for loved ones.

"In 1965 Reverend Mary Webster, a carer herself, founded the first ever carers organisation - The Council for the Single Woman and Her Dependents and the carers movement. It then became Carers UK in 1988 with the Carers NI branch joining thereafter.

"In the intervening 60 years there have been significant changes. Many steps have been made in policy and in legislation, and yet there remains a gender imbalance in caring, a lack of understanding and value, of unpaid carers, and substantial gaps in service provision and support."

"The numbers of unpaid carers across Northern Ireland has grown to over 220,000. That's 1 in 8 of the population."

"The increase in the number of Carers over recent decades is likely to continue as our population ages, and people live longer with more complex illnesses. This coupled with a social care system that is on its knees has increased the pressure on unpaid carers."

Helen Walker, Chief Executive, Carers UK confirmed

"Unpaid carers are the backbone of the health and social care system, providing care worth £5.8 billion a year and yet for many, providing this care comes at significant personal cost in

employment opportunities, finances, and their own health and wellbeing."

"The last few years have been particularly challenging. The Covid-19 pandemic hit carers hard with increased pressure from lockdown and shielding, closure of services and the financial impacts of a cost-of-living crisis. The aftermath of the pandemic still remains with many services and support still not fully resumed."

"Carers UK wants to create a society that recognises, values and supports carers. However, we can see from the experience's carers have shared with us in this book the huge challenges they currently face in their everyday lives. As a society we must work together to



change this. We need to value the unpaid care that hundreds of thousands of people in Northern Ireland are providing and support them, not just in their caring role but also in achieving a balance where caring is not at the expense of their own opportunities and health and wellbeing."

"It is vital that we look forward and plan for the future focussing on our theme for our anniversary year - equality today and tomorrow. A future where life is better for unpaid carers"

Government almost £6billion per year. I will continue to work with colleagues and Economy spokespersons David Honeyford MLA and Kate Nicholl MLA as they work to deliver paid Carers leave, for Carers who also are employed, in the Good Jobs Bill.

I will continue to fight for recognition and support for unpaid Carers who also need rest breaks, removal of all barriers to information and help to deal with the complexity of Health and Social care systems.

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Hagan Homes Proudly Sponsors Irish International Swimmer Grace Davison Fresh from Her Olympic Debut

The two-year partnership will support the athlete's training efforts as she gears up for more competitions

Ballyclare-based Hagan Homes has announced its sponsorship of Grace Davison, the Irish International Swimmer from Bangor, who made her Olympic debut at the 2024 Paris Games.

The partnership will see Hagan Homes support Grace over the next two years, providing essential funding towards her training and development as she prepares for the next Olympic Games, in Los Angeles, 2028.

Grace, who trains with Ards Swimming Club and splits her time between the Ards Leisure Centre and Bangor Aurora, has been making waves in the international swimming scene since the age of 14. Her impressive track record includes seven Irish Junior Records, two Ulster Senior Records, eleven Ulster Junior Records, three Irish Senior Relay Records, and two Ulster Senior Relay Records.

At just 17 years old, she has already represented Ireland and Northern Ireland on multiple prestigious platforms, including the Commonwealth Games, European Championships, and World Swimming Championships.

The partnership between Hagan Homes and Grace is built on shared values of commitment, determination,

and the pursuit of excellence, Founder and Chair of Hagan Homes, James Hagan said.

He added, "We are incredibly proud to support Grace as she continues to excel in her swimming career. Her dedication to her sport and her achievements at such a young age are truly inspiring. At Hagan Homes, we believe in nurturing our talent and supporting our local communities. Grace embodies the spirit of perseverance and excellence that we value, and we are excited to be part of her journey towards the next Olympics."

Grace's recent performance at the Paris 2024 Olympics showcased her potential on the world stage. Competing in the Women's 4x100 Medley Relay, her team finished 13th overall, setting a new Irish Senior Record.

Grace said "Competing at the Paris Olympics was a dream come true and an incredible learning experience. Setting a new Irish Senior Record with my teammates in the 4x100 Medley Relay was a proud moment, and it has fuelled my determination to continue improving and representing Ireland on the global stage. I'm already focused on the next four years, with my sights set on



the Los Angeles Games in 2028."

The sponsorship from Hagan Homes will be instrumental in Grace's preparations for upcoming competitions, the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow and the next Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 2028. The funding will help her access essential support services, including coaching, strength and conditioning, dietetics, physiotherapy, sports psychology, and physiology, which are crucial for competing at the highest level.

Speaking about the partnership, Grace said, "I am so grateful to Hagan Homes for their support over the next two years. This sponsorship will make a significant difference in my ability to train and compete at the highest level. Having the backing of a respected local company like Hagan Homes means a lot to me, and I'm excited to represent

them as I work towards my goals in swimming."

Grace's dedication to her sport is evident in her numerous accomplishments, including a gold medal in the 400 Individual Medley and a silver in the 200 Individual Medley at the 2023 Youth Commonwealth Games in Trinidad, as well as a bronze medal in the 100 Freestyle at the 2024 European Junior Championships in Lithuania.

Her achievements highlight her as one of Ireland's brightest swimming talents, and with the support of Hagan Homes, she is well-positioned to continue her upward trajectory in the sport.

James Hagan added, "We are delighted to play a part in her journey and look forward to celebrating her future successes. Supporting local talent like Grace is at the heart of what we do, and we are excited to see what the future holds for her."

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Set in the heart of the County Down countryside with views of the Mourne mountains and the rolling fields, this was once the bakery for the local area. An ideal tranquil location for exploring the Mourne Area of Outstanding Beauty but also with easy access to Belfast. Whether you want to relax and unwind in peace and soak in the 6 person hot tub or explore the numerous local attractions The Bakers Cottages is your perfect base.

Fully refurbished in 2019, many of the original site features have been sympathetically restored, including the Bakers Hole well. Beautiful granite kerbing entices you along the drive leading up to the private accommodation and grounds. An idyllic location where tradition meets modern 5* awarded accommodation. The Bakers Cottages has it's own private wild flower gardens, sweeping towards the restored well. A covered BBQ area means you can grill outside whatever the Northern Irish weather may bring. Across the courtyard brings you to the hot tub house, with it's 6 seater tub. This building also offers a cosy sitting area with a wood burning stove that opens out through double glass sliding doors to an outdoor dining area overlooking the tranquil rolling hills, with the Mourne Mountains in the distant background. The perfect setting to relax and enjoy the sunset. An outdoor play area for the children is located within sight of this outdoor living space, and the dog building is also here, allowing your whole family to enjoy making memories at The Bakers Cottages.

WINTER WILDLIFE IN THE WOODLAND

JV Allister spots the first green shoots of spring on a winter woodland walk.

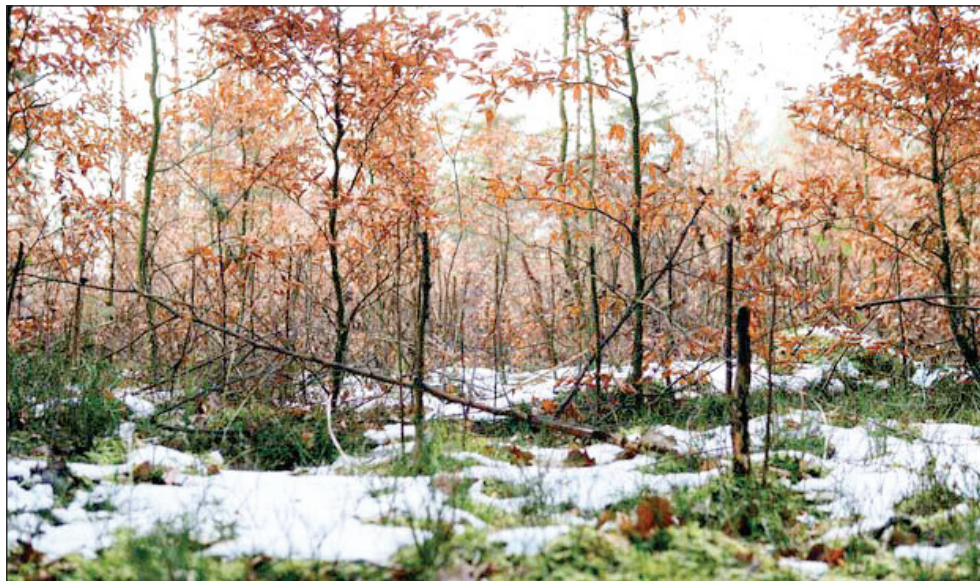
I park at the roadside, hopefully leaving room for cars or tractors to pass, but this place is a bit off the beaten track, so it should be OK. Although the snow has mostly disappeared from the road, it's still heaped on the grass verges, one more than the other, indicating the wind direction, and it's on the least affected one that I spot the wild garlic coming into bloom, and chew a stalk. While I know they're native plants which happen to bloom early, I don't remember them from my childhood days, so possibly they're good colonisers.

The wood which I intend to explore is mostly deciduous, although adjoined by a larger plantation, more like a forest, of Sitka spruce, aliens in regimented rows, shadowing needle-covered ground, providing habitat mostly unsuited to native creatures and plants, although I

suppose crossbills and coal tits might be attracted to the seed cones and reclusive sparrowhawks to it as a nesting site from which they can emerge at speed to predate the birds of the nearby native woodland edge and hedgerows.

A robin sings, then another further along the woodland edge, territorial competitors, and, as I stand to listen, typically one flutters down to say hello. The woodland edge rather than the darker barer interior attracts most wildlife, whether birds such as robins or blackbirds, and warblers in spring, and field mice, bees and butterflies in season, to feed and nest because the sunlight, particularly along this south face, encourages trees such as hawthorn, hazel and mountain ash, and wildflowers such as daisies, dandelions and honeysuckle.

The slight path I follow up the hill might have been made by



badgers or humans, or both, weaving between grey trunked beech, gnarled oak and smooth elegant ash, along ditches and over small hills, at least one of which looks like it might contain a badger family. It is still and silent other than the sound of my laboured breathing and uncertain footsteps, breaking twigs and crushing

dead leaves, but I stop to allow my senses to settle, to see and listen, and am rewarded by a sharp call 'tsurp', frequently repeated, and watch a family party of long-tailed tits, siblings, parents, cousins, maybe in-laws, pass by above, flying quickly from twig to twig, tree to tree, searching for minuscule invertebrates.

After they pass, I

relish the silence and the company of the trees, already budded, ready for spring, before making my way back down. A magpie cackles nearby, up to mischief no doubt, and the robins are still singing, joined by foraging blue tits excitedly calling to each other.

I will visit again during the year to enjoy

this place, to look, listen, smell, touch and feel woodland and its inhabitants, and, when the leaves are back, to breathe in the oxygenated air. But even today, as it becomes chilly and there are snow clouds gathering, I feel refreshed in body, mind and spirit, and am grateful.

JVA

Muir welcomes ban on single use vapes

A ban on the sale and supply of single use vapes will come into force on 1 June 2025, Minister Muir said.

The Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister Andrew Muir has announced that, from 1 June 2025, selling and supplying single-use vapes will no longer be allowed in Northern Ireland.

The Scottish, Welsh and UK Governments have also introduced equivalent legislation, with the same implementation date of 1 June 2025.

It is estimated that as many as five million single use vapes are simply thrown away in residual bins or littered every week across the UK, rather than being recycled.

The Minister said: "The environmental damage created by the rise in the littering and incorrect disposal of used vapes, as well as their poor recyclability, is a key concern for me. Single use vape waste can have a devastating impact on our environment and biodiversity and I welcome this ban which will have better benefits for our environment and consequently for our general health and well-being."

"The ban follows strong support from the Northern Ireland public in response to the UK wide consultation on 'Creating a Smokefree Generation and Tackling Youth

Vaping'. 90.4% of individual respondents from Northern Ireland agreed there should be restrictions on the sale and supply of single use vapes and 84.9% agreed that restrictions should take the form of a ban on their sale and supply."

The Minister concluded: "My Department, UK Government, Scottish and Welsh Governments have committed to separately developing legislation to ban single use vapes, with an agreed UK wide ban coming into operation from 1 June 2025."

"Alignment of approaches will reduce environmental harms associated with the incorrect disposal of single use vapes and will help provide clarity for businesses which are currently selling single use vaping products."

Businesses have six months to prepare for the change by selling any existing stock of single-use vapes. During this period, DAERA will work with retail organisations and other stakeholders to ensure those affected understand the ban and their new subsequent responsibilities.

UK-wide guidance for businesses is being prepared and is due to be published on DAERA's website later this month.

County Down author Kate launches her first pony book for children!

County Down horsewoman turned author Kate Russell has launched her first equestrian themed children's book.

Kate, a well known figure in the NI world of equestrianism and equine therapy has published 'Peanut gets his sparkle back'.

Kate says: "I have always wanted to write a children's book from an early age. I have stories whirling in my head and usually inspired by the ponies dogs and cat. My friend had two young boys who would listen to my stories – they encouraged me to write a book and what's more - asked if they could be in it!

Working with children and the ponies through equine facilitated learning I could see the very real benefits of the interaction with the different pony personalities."

The book is based on the main characters Peanut an 8hh Falabella cross pony and Tobi a 27 yr old rescue pony. In real life this odd couple have struck a very strong friendship and became pretty much inseparable! Peanut is young, curious and cute and everyone who meets him falls in love with him. Tobi is older, a little bit stiff but calm with the kindest nature. They are both very much loved for being themselves! In real life Tobi & Peanut are also fully qualified therapy ponies who like nothing better than helping others!

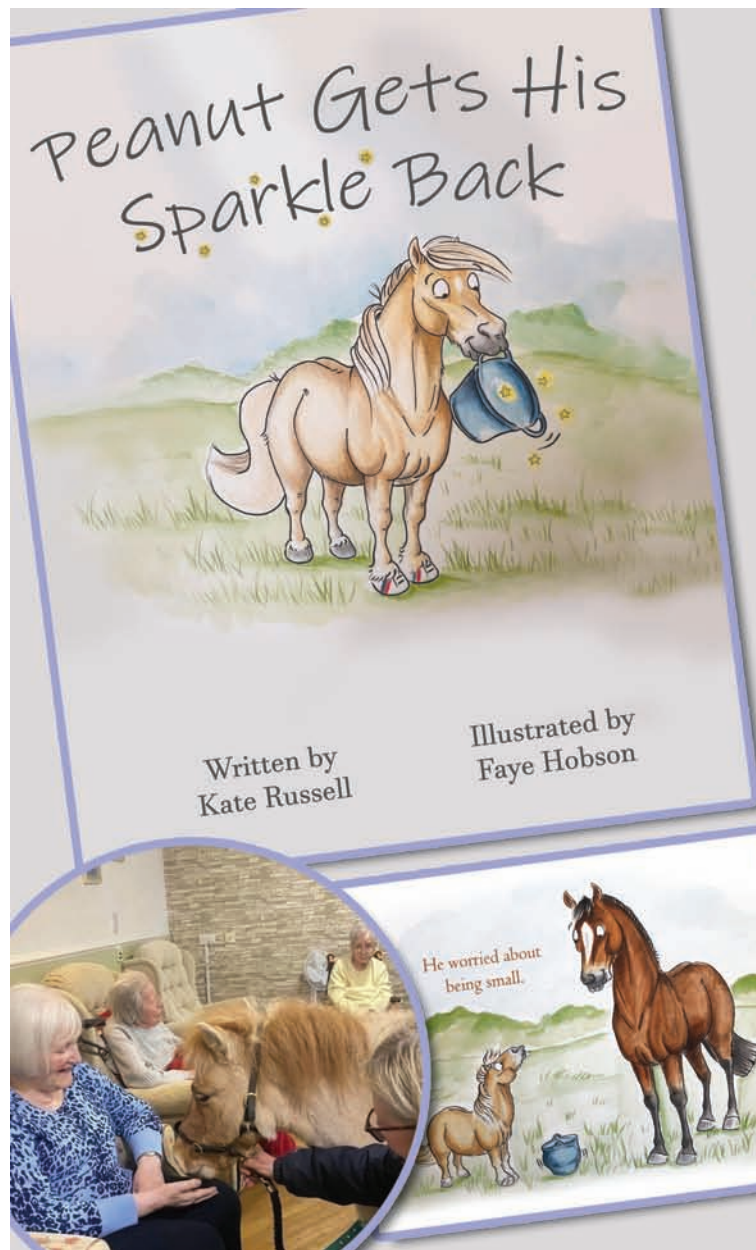
The story aims to help children with anxiety and worries and show that that it is ok to have worries but not to let them build up. 'Peanut, gets his sparkle back' is a heart-warming children's book about overcoming fear and finding the courage within oneself.

With charming colour illustrations by the talented Faye Hobson, and a relatable story, young readers will be inspired to face their own worries and become brave little ponies themselves!

'Peanut gets his Sparkle Back' is ideal for children 3-9 with coloured text suitable for children with dyslexia, teaches valuable lessons about perseverance, self-confidence and the power of friendship.

It's a must read for parents, teachers and children alike and is sure to become a beloved addition to any child's bookshelf! Join Peanut and his friends on their journey to bravery and show your little ones that they too can conquer their worries and be the courageous heroes they've always dreamed of being.

You can find out more about Tobi, Peanut and friends and also purchase a copy of the book direct online at <http://www.tobianpeanut-therapyponies.com/product-page/peanut-finds-his-sparkle-children-s-story> Book priced £10, (postage fees apply).



Don't miss the financial support you are entitled to with childcare costs – check now what's available for your family

Parents often find it difficult to remain in work after having children, due to the challenges of finding and paying for the childcare they need.

Employers For Childcare

This can be especially difficult when children are very young and requiring full-time childcare, but is also an issue for families of older children requiring 'wraparound' childcare outside of school hours and during holidays.

There is help available with the cost of registered childcare for most working parents. This includes registered childminders, day nurseries and out of school clubs. Details of registered childcare in your area can be found on the Family Support NI website www.familysupportni.gov.uk.

Support with registered childcare for working parents includes Universal Credit, Tax-Free Childcare, Childcare

Vouchers or Tax Credits. For parents with children below primary school age who are using Tax-Free Childcare, additional support is currently available through the Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme. It has been confirmed by the Education Minister that funding for this scheme will continue into the next financial year.

Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme

Parents who are using Tax-Free Childcare can make a saving of 20% towards their registered childcare costs up to a maximum of £2,000 per year per child. However, if these parents have children under primary



school age, they can also receive a 15% reduction in their childcare costs, up to a monthly maximum of £167 per child, through the Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme. This is not available for older children (at primary school) and is only for families using Tax-Free Childcare.

Get the right childcare support for your family. It can be difficult for

parents to work out what childcare support is best for their family. We would encourage anyone applying for childcare support for the first time or whose circumstances have changed (eg moving into work or working more hours) to call the Family Benefits Advice Service on 028 9267 8200 or email hello@employersforchildcare.org for free, impartial and confidential advice.

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FIT Northern Ireland: Building Belfast's Tech Talent for the Future

FIT NI in the heart of East Belfast, is delivering high-quality IT training and career support to equip local people with the skills needed to pursue a career in the tech industry.

With dedicated training facilities in Portview Trade Centre, East Belfast, FIT offers a hub for learning, growth, and opportunity, offering a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environment where participants can gain confidence and develop valuable technical skills.

Empowering the Community with In-Demand Tech Skills

FIT offers tutored training across a diverse range of tech disciplines, from complete beginners to those ready to explore more advanced areas of IT. Courses include:

- Basic Computer Skills and Microsoft Office for Work
- Fundamentals of Programming using Python / Java

- Software Development
- Cyber Security
- Web Development
- AI Fundamentals
- Data Analytics

Each program is carefully designed to provide marketable in-demand digital skills, catering to a variety of interests while preparing participants for real-world job opportunities.

More Than Just Training—A Pathway to Employment

FIT also provides employability support to help job seekers bridge the gap between education and employment. This includes:

- One to one mentoring
- Career & professional development workshops
- CV & interview

skills preparation

- Work experience placements & industry networking

FIT's free training programs and specialised academies in tech, modern manufacturing, and emerging technologies are open to anyone aged 16 and above.

With all programmes we also offer childcare support contributions, travel cost assistance, and training allowances for eligible programs.

If you or someone you know is interested in developing IT skills and accessing life-changing career opportunities, get in touch with FIT today to learn more.

For more information, contact Katie Slevin T: 028 9592 2159 katieslevin@fit.ie

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'100,000 LIFE-SAVING DEFIBRILLATORS NOW VISIBLE TO THE EMERGENCY SERVICES IN THE UK

Health organisations have been campaigning for defibrillator owners to register their device so more people can be helped if they have a cardiac arrest

More people than ever before could have their lives saved from cardiac arrests thanks to campaigning by the British Heart Foundation (BHF) and other health organisations, as the locations of more than 100,000 defibrillators in the UK are now visible to the emergency services.

This means that when someone has a cardiac arrest (when the heart stops pumping blood around your body) and a bystander calls 999, the ambulance services can direct them to the nearest registered defibrillator while they wait for the ambulance to arrive.

There are over 1,400 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests every year in Northern Ireland. Tragically, less than one in ten people

survive. This is partly because public access defibrillators are not used often enough.

Performing quick CPR and defibrillation in the event of a cardiac arrest can be the difference between life and death.

The BHF has registered 100,000 defibrillators on The Circuit, with almost 3,700 registered in Northern Ireland, but there are many more out there that remain unregistered.

Before The Circuit was launched by BHF, tens of thousands of defibrillators in schools, sports clubs, pubs and businesses across the country were invisible to the emergency services.

Now, two years after all 14 UK ambulance services became part

of The Circuit, it has reached a 'momentous milestone' - 100,000 defibrillators are now registered.

Health organisations are urging guardians (those responsible for defibrillators) to register them if they are not yet on The Circuit. BHF is also urging people to learn CPR for free in just 15 minutes using RevivR, an online tool you can access via your mobile phone or tablet.

Head of British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland, Fearghal McKinney, said:

"It is just incredible that we have reached a major milestone of 100,000 defibrillators mapped on The Circuit. When someone has a cardiac arrest, knowing where a defibrillator is can be the difference between life and death, so I have no doubt this will help save lives.

"We are so grateful to everyone who has played their part in this, from the guardians who have registered their defibrillator to the partners who



John Deery (centre) from South Belfast thanks to a life-saving defibrillator and CPR performed by Peter O'Hare (right holding the defib, also from South Belfast). John and Peter are pictured alongside Head of British Heart Foundation NI's Fearghal McKinney.

have supported this pioneering database.

"But our work isn't done. There are still thousands more defibrillators out there that remain invisible to the emergency services. If you have a defibrillator, please take a moment now to register it - this one simple action could help save someone's life."

John Deery, 64,

a retired business banking manager from Eglinton, who now lives in South Belfast, had his life saved because of quick CPR and defibrillation and has since supported British Heart Foundation's campaign to get as many defibrillators registered on The Circuit as possible.

In May 2024, John, an experienced long-

distance runner, was taking part in the Belfast Marathon and had a cardiac arrest at the halfway point around Finaghy crossroads.

Mr Deery credits the use of a defibrillator for saving his life and his four "angel bystanders".

"My angels were all aligned that day - from the wonderful cardiac nurse who started CPR, Peter who continued

with it and had the defibrillator which saved my life, the police officer who immediately got medical help and protection around me and all the other people who helped that day. My friends Paul and Regina who rang my wife Janet. The paramedics and the hospital staff. It's miraculous what happened, I feel that the marathon actually saved my life with all of those people there with such expertise."

John said: "I'm very lucky to be alive and the positive is that a lot more defibrillators have since been registered on The Circuit because of what happened to me, and it's fantastic to hear there are now 100,000 defibrillators registered.

John added: "It's reassuring that there are so many defibrillators in schools, pubs and sports clubs in case someone has a cardiac arrest, but people can't access them unless the emergency services know where they are.

"If anyone is responsible for a defibrillator please take

a few minutes to register it so more lives can be saved."

Michael Allen, Community Resuscitation Team Manager at Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) said:

"Having rapid access to a defibrillator is one of the key factors in improving the chain of survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. In Northern Ireland at present, less than 1 in 10 people survive an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. Strengthening every link, affords people the best opportunity to do this.

"This is why it is so encouraging to see The Circuit hit the 100,000 mark for defibrillator registrations. Increasing access to defibrillators across all communities will help to improve the chances of survival for us all. We hope this will be the catalyst for many more registrations in the future."

To find out if your defibrillator is registered on The Circuit or to register it visit thecircuit.uk

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Bringing the Countryside Indoors: Achieving Country Living Chic

Country Living Chic is more than just a decorating style; it's a feeling. It evokes a sense of warmth, comfort, and a connection to nature, even if you live miles from the nearest farm.

To infuse your home with this timeless aesthetic, embrace natural materials. Incorporate wood, such as rustic beams, reclaimed wood furniture, and woven baskets. Add stone accents like a fireplace surround, flooring, or a stone-topped table. Opt for natural fabrics like cotton, linen, and wool. Use them for cosy throws, textured rugs, and embroidered curtains.

Bring the outdoors in by filling your home with plants, from leafy ferns to flowering blooms. Consider a small herb garden on your windowsill. Incorporate natural elements like branches, dried flowers, and seashells into your decor. Maximize natural light by keeping windows uncovered and framing beautiful views with

curtains or blinds.

Create a cosy atmosphere with a fireplace, if you have one. If not, consider a wood-burning stove or even an electric fireplace. Layer lighting with table lamps, floor lamps, and soft-glowing candles to create a warm and inviting ambiance. Mix and match textures to add depth and interest. Think of sheepskin rugs, chunky knit throws, and velvet cushions.

Incorporate vintage and antique finds. Hunt for unique pieces at flea markets, antique shops, and estate sales. Add character with vintage china, antique mirrors, and old maps. Incorporate treasured family heirlooms to add a personal touch.

Keep it simple and uncluttered. Avoid overcrowding your space.

Keep surfaces clean and uncluttered for a relaxed and airy feel. Invest in high-quality pieces that will last for years to come. Embrace imperfections. A few scuffs and scratches can add character to your furniture.

Add personal touches. Display cherished family photos throughout your home. Incorporate souvenirs from your travels to remind you of special memories. Create a cosy reading nook with a comfortable armchair and a collection of your favourite books.

Country Living Chic is all about creating a home that feels both welcoming and stylish. By incorporating these tips, you can transform your space into a haven that reflects your love of nature and all things cosy!

Mulroy Woods Hotel: Your Perfect Wedding Venue in Donegal

Mulroy Woods Hotel is a stunning wedding venue nestled in the heart of Milford, Donegal.

With a commitment to providing personalised experiences, the hotel offers couples the opportunity to create their dream wedding, tailored to their unique vision.

Exclusively Yours
One of the most appealing aspects of Mulroy Woods Hotel is its exclusive approach to weddings. The hotel ensures that each couple receives undivided attention by hosting only one wedding per day. This allows for a truly intimate and personalised experience, free from distractions or crowds.

Customizable All-Inclusive Packages
Mulroy Woods Hotel offers flexible all-inclusive wedding packages that can be customized to suit your specific needs and preferences. Whether you're dreaming of a small, intimate

ceremony or a grand celebration, the hotel can accommodate your vision. From the menu to the décor, every detail can be personalised to create a truly memorable event.

Catering for All
The hotel caters to both small and larger wedding celebrations, ensuring that couples of all sizes can find the perfect venue. Whether you're planning a wedding for 20 guests or 200, Mulroy Woods Hotel can provide the ideal setting for your special day.

Civil Ceremonies
For couples seeking a convenient and hassle-free wedding experience, Mulroy Woods Hotel offers civil ceremonies on-site. This means you can enjoy the convenience of having your ceremony and reception in the same location, creating a seamless and stress-



free day.
Looking for a Break?
In addition to being a popular wedding venue, Mulroy Woods Hotel also offers a relaxing and enjoyable getaway. Enjoy a mid-week 2 night break for two people sharing (B&B), complete

with a delicious meal on the evening of your choice, for just €18.00 in total. This package is available from September to December, excluding all bank holidays. Mulroy Woods Hotel is the perfect choice for couples

seeking a personalised, exclusive, and unforgettable wedding experience. With its stunning location, customizable packages, and commitment to excellence, the hotel is sure to exceed your expectations.

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FARMER PHIL: A SOCIAL MEDIA SENSATION

In the heart of rural Ireland, a farmer named Phil Stewart is cultivating more than just crops.

His heart-warming videos showcasing farm life have captured the hearts of millions online, transforming him into a social media sensation.

Phil's journey to internet fame began innocently enough. He started sharing glimpses of his daily life on the farm, from tending to his animals to harvesting crops. His videos, filled with genuine humour and a love for the land, resonated with viewers seeking a connection to nature and a

simpler way of life.

Along with his father, known as Father Phil, and his long suffering partner Liv, Phil has embraced the platform, using it to educate viewers about farming practices, buildings maintenance, the renovation of a house on the farm and the importance of supporting local community agriculture. He also shared personal stories and insights into the challenges and joys of running a farm, offering a rare glimpse into a world



often hidden from public view.

Phil's authenticity, honesty and down-to-earth demeanor have endeared him to fans around the globe. His regular (3 times weekly) videos are a testament to the power of social media to connect

people and share stories that inspire and entertain. As he continues to cultivate his online presence, Farmer Phil is proving that there's more to farming than meets the eye.

Farmer Phil has over 54,000 subscribers on his YouTube channel.

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Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford to hold Wedding Open Day!

This Award Winning Venue located in Carlingford, is simply one of the most beautiful places to get married in Ireland!

Prospective Brides and Grooms can see this for themselves at the forthcoming Open day on Sunday 16th February, appointments are available from 11am to 5pm - reserve yours today!

Celebrate the beginning of your love story, along with your family and friends, at the Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford with Fairytales from your childhood, including the legend of Queen Meave, the Brown Bull of Cooley and Cuchulainn which were all based in the Majestic Cooley Peninsula.

Carlingford provides the perfect backdrop for Your Wedding. With Carlingford Lough and Cooley Mountains, the Old Abbey, King John's Castle and quaint cobbled streets, your photographs will be treasured forever.

The Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford provides an idyllic Wedding Venue in Carlingford boasting 58 well-appointed bedrooms and a Full Leisure Centre for your extended family and guests to enjoy, sitting quaintly beneath the Cooley Mountains overlooking Carlingford Lough.



The Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford lies peacefully under the inspiring Cooley Mountains, overlooking Carlingford Lough and only a stone's throw from the rambling streets of the beautiful medieval village of Carlingford.

A jewel in the crown of Ireland's Ancient East, Carlingford offers rugged landscapes, breath-taking sea views and something for all tastes to keep your days full of enjoyment. Everything from the Carlingford Lough Ferry to boutique shopping and cultural events, consistently bringing a buzz of holiday feel and fun factor to all visitors.

The hotel has recently undergone a

number of renovations including the fabulous new executive bedrooms and our classically decorated Lobby with a modern twist, featuring sphere hanging chandeliers and chic button tufted couches. At the Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford you will be assured a warm welcome, superb cuisine and exceptional service along with a destination holiday amongst the best in the Emerald Isle.

The Four Seasons Carlingford was Proud Winner of the RSVP Live Best All-in-One Venue last summer.

The Hotel team is also absolutely thrilled to have been awarded Highly Commended in Service at the Irish Hotel Awards recently!

This recognition reflects their dedication to providing top-notch service to every guest who walks through the doors.

The hotel's most recent awards also include:

- Best Large Hotel Wedding Venue in Ireland 2024 & 2023 - Save my Day Awards
- Best Scenic Venue Four Seasons Carlingford 2023 - RSVP
- Highly Commended Wedding Coordinator of the Year 2023 - Linda Scott - Leinster - Wedding Suppliers
- Hotel Venue of the Year - Leinster 2021
- The Venue Co-ordinator of the Year Leinster 2020 winner - Linda Scott

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FINDING YOUR WINTER WONDERLAND: WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A RELAXING RURAL HOTEL BREAK!

The winter months can often feel long and dreary. But with the right escape, at just the right time, you can transform the season with a cosy and rejuvenating experience.

A relaxing hotel break can be the perfect antidote to the winter blues, offering a chance to unwind, recharge, and enjoy some much-needed pampering.



When choosing your winter wonderland, consider the ambiance. A crackling fireplace is the epitome of winter cosiness. Look for hotels with inviting fireplaces in guest rooms, lobbies, or communal areas. Opt for hotels with warm and inviting interiors, featuring rich colours, plush textiles, and comfortable furnishings. While winter days may be short, ensure your chosen hotel maximizes natural light. Large windows and skylights can make a big difference.

Indulge in the hotel's wellness facilities.

Enjoy luxurious spa treatments like massages, facials, and body wraps. Escape the cold with a relaxing swim in an indoor pool, perhaps with a jacuzzi or sauna for added relaxation. Maintain your fitness routine with a well-equipped gym or take advantage of fitness classes like

yoga or Pilates. Savour delicious meals at the hotel's restaurant, perhaps enjoying a romantic dinner by candlelight. Look for cosy dining areas with warm lighting and inviting atmospheres. Treat yourself to a traditional afternoon tea, complete with delicate

sandwiches, pastries, and a pot of steaming hot tea. If you're looking for more than just relaxation, choose a hotel near winter sports destinations that appeal, in Northern Ireland we are fortunate enough to have a wealth of opportunities for

activities such as mountain or hill hiking, horse-riding, cycling, surfing, boating, shopping and simply walking. Explore the surrounding area with a scenic winter walk, enjoying the crisp air and

picturesque landscapes. Alternatively, enjoy a cosy night in with a good book, a glass of wine, and a roaring fire. Look for hotels that offer personalized service, going the extra mile to ensure

your stay is truly unforgettable. Many hotels offer special winter packages, including discounts, complimentary upgrades, and festive treats. If you're planning a romantic getaway, look for

hotels with intimate settings, such as boutique hotels or charming country inns. By considering these factors, you can find the perfect hotel break to escape the winter blues and create lasting memories.

March Madness at The Causeway Hotel

Looking for the perfect getaway this March? The Causeway Hotel has you covered with unbeatable offers to make your stay unforgettable.

Stay Longer, Save More
Embrace the magic of March with our Winter Warmer deal. Book two nights and enjoy the third night free! Savour a delicious breakfast each morning and indulge in dinner on your first two nights. With more time to explore the stunning coastline and iconic landmarks, there are endless reasons to stay longer.

Rest & Reflect March Weekend Getaway
Escape to the coast with our exclusive weekend retreat. Enjoy a bottle of complimentary prosecco waiting for you in your room and indulge in a late checkout (Friday-Sunday) for ultimate relaxation. Whether it's a romantic break or a solo recharge, we'll help you make your weekends truly memorable.

Family-Friendly March Break
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Don't miss out on these fantastic offers this March. Whether it's relaxation, adventure, or quality time with loved ones, The Causeway Hotel has something special for everyone. Book now and let your journey begin! To book your stay, contact our friendly reception staff at 028 2073 1210 or email reception@thecausewayhotel.com

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MICHAEL ENGLISH
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Create a Cottage Garden

The cottage garden, with its informal and romantic character, evokes a sense of peace and tranquility.

It's a style that embraces the natural world, celebrating a riot of colours, textures, and scents. To design your own enchanting cottage garden, embrace the natural by avoiding perfectly manicured lawns and straight lines. Opt for curving paths, irregular borders, and flowing

planting areas. Let your borders blend into the surrounding landscape, allowing plantings to spill over paths and create a sense of informality. Utilise natural materials like stone, brick, and wood for paths, edging, and garden features.

Fill your garden with a profusion of flowers in a variety of colours and heights. Think cottage classics like roses, peonies, delphiniums, and poppies. Include annuals like nasturtiums, petunias, and sunflowers to add bursts of vibrant colour throughout the season. Intersperse herbs and vegetables amongst the flowers for a truly productive and picturesque garden.

Create a sense of depth by planting a

mix of tall, medium, and low-growing plants to create layers and visual interest. Utilise climbing roses, clematis, and honeysuckle to adorn fences, walls, and arches. Plant low-growing groundcovers like ivy or sweet woodruff beneath taller plants to add texture and suppress weeds.

Incorporate unique features such as a small pond, a bubbling fountain, or even a simple birdbath to add a touch of magic to your cottage garden. Create shady seating areas and support climbing plants with charming arches and pergolas. Add rustic touches with antique garden tools, birdhouses, and decorative pots.

Finally, embrace



imperfection. Allow some weeds to flourish, and let nature take its course. Regularly spent blooms to encourage continuous

flowering and prevent self-seeding. Most importantly, enjoy the process. The cottage garden is all about enjoying the journey. Relax, observe your

plants, and let your garden evolve over time. By following these tips, you can create a charming cottage garden that is both

beautiful and inviting. Remember to let your personality shine through and enjoy the process of creating your own unique piece of horticultural heaven.

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Farmers urged to protect water resources when spreading slurry

As the slurry closed season comes to an end, NI Water are reminding farmers to ensure that they protect water resources when spreading slurry or manures this springtime.

We ask everyone to consider carefully before spreading slurry, or other organic manures, so that there is no risk of pollution to our watercourses. This is particularly important this year in light of the algae issues we have seen in many of our lakes in the

past year. During February organic manures (including dirty water) must not be applied:

- Within 250m of a borehole used for public water supply
- Within 50m of a borehole, spring or well
- Within 30m of lakes
- Within 15m of a waterway other than lakes (reduced to 5m when using LESSE)
- On waterlogged soils, flooded land or land likely to flood
- On frozen ground or snow-covered ground
- If heavy rain is forecast in the next 48 hours
- On steep slopes (with an average incline of 20% or more on grassland, 15% or more on all other land)

Roy Taylor, NI Water Catchment Manager, said: "Care in timing and placement of slurry, manure and fertiliser is essential to minimise the potential for loss from land to water. Steep slopes and soils with impeded drainage are vulnerable to runoff and losses



during rainfall events. A rainfall event lasting only a few hours can deliver a large proportion of the total annual loading of phosphorus to rivers and lakes. "If slurry is spread on poor, very wet ground or during or just before wet weather conditions, it can run off the land; this results in valuable nutrients ending up in our watercourses. Removing this from our water is difficult and expensive to treat, in order to provide

the high-quality drinking water we all expect." How you can help to improve Water Quality:
 • Only spread slurry and fertilisers when conditions are suitable
 • Use the DAERA online tools to calculate your farm's Phosphorus balance and manure Nitrogen loading
 • Check your farmyard for slurry run off and sources of pollution
 • Prevent cattle access to rivers causing erosion, sediment loss and

pollution
 • Nutrient Management Planning – if available use your Soil Nutrient Health Scheme results and run off risk maps
 • Minimise Phosphorus inputs – meet P crop requirements from manures. Each tonne of concentrate feed contains approx. 5 kg of P
 • Eliminate chemical P fertiliser. Save money and help the environment
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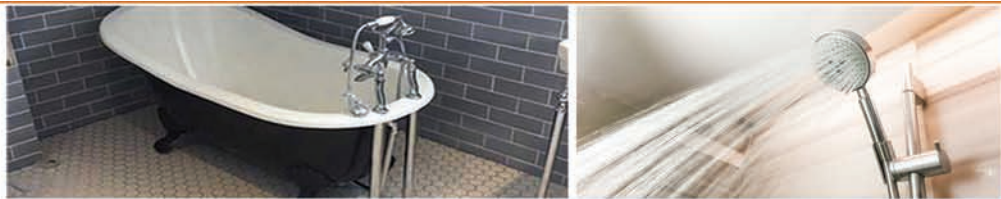
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SPRING HOME INTERIOR TRENDS FOR 2025

Embrace the New Season with These Vibrant and Inviting Trends

Spring is a time for renewal and rejuvenation, and this extends to our homes as well. As we bid farewell to the winter blues, it's time to embrace fresh, vibrant trends that will infuse our living spaces with a sense of warmth, energy, and optimism.

Here are some of the top spring home interior trends for 2025:

Bold and Bright Colour Palettes:

Say goodbye to muted tones and embrace a symphony of colours! This spring, we're seeing a resurgence of bold and vibrant hues. Think deep yellows, electric blues, and vivid greens. These colours add a sense of

excitement and vitality to any room.

Organic Modernism:

This trend seamlessly blends natural elements with modern aesthetics. Expect to see plenty of natural materials like wood, stone, and rattan, paired with clean lines and minimalist furniture.

The Allure of Chrome:

Chrome accents are making a comeback, adding a touch of glamour and sophistication to any space. From light fixtures to hardware, chrome elements can elevate the look of your home.

Chunky Porcelain Chic:

Think oversized vases, statement bowls,



and decorative plates. Chunky porcelain pieces add a touch of personality and visual

interest to any room. Retro Revival: Mid-century modern and vintage-inspired

pieces are making a strong comeback. Embrace this trend by incorporating retro

furniture, geometric patterns, and warm wood tones. Maximalism:

Embrace the maximalist trend by mixing and matching patterns, textures, and colours. This is a great way to express your personality and create a truly unique space.

Natural Stone Accents:

Bring the beauty of nature indoors with natural stone accents. Think marble countertops, stone backsplashes, and stone fireplace surrounds.

Statement Lighting:

Make a statement with your lighting fixtures. From bold chandeliers to sculptural pendant lights, statement lighting can add a touch of drama and elegance to any room.

Earthy Neutrals:

While bold colours are trending, earthy neutrals like beige, brown, and cream are still popular. These colours create a calm and inviting atmosphere, making them perfect for bedrooms and living rooms.

Sustainable Decor:

Sustainability is more important than ever, and this extends to home decor. Look for pieces made from recycled or eco-friendly materials, and support local artisans and businesses.

By incorporating these trends into your home, you can create a space that is both stylish and inviting. So embrace the new season and let your creativity shine!

Slash Your Energy Bills: Simple Steps for Big Savings

With energy prices on the rise, it's more important than ever to find ways to reduce your energy consumption and lower your bills. Fortunately, there are many simple steps you can take to achieve significant savings.

One of the easiest ways to reduce your energy consumption is to simply turn off lights, appliances, and electronics when you're not using them. Even leaving devices on standby can consume energy, so it's important to power them down completely.

Another easy way to save energy is to lower your thermostat by a few degrees. You may not even notice the difference in

temperature, but it can make a big difference on your energy bill. Additionally, taking shorter showers can help reduce your water and energy usage.

Investing in energy-efficient appliances can also help you save money in the long run. Look for models with high energy ratings, such as A+++. Additionally, a smart thermostat can help you control your heating remotely and optimize energy usage.

To further improve your home's energy efficiency, consider insulating your loft, walls, and floor. Proper insulation can dramatically reduce heat loss, keeping your home warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer. Sealing up any gaps around doors, windows, and skirting boards can also help prevent heat loss.

Replacing traditional light bulbs with energy-efficient LED bulbs is

another great way to save energy. LED bulbs use less energy and last longer than traditional bulbs.

Regularly maintaining your boiler is essential for efficient operation. Schedule regular maintenance checks to ensure your boiler is running at peak performance.

To avoid estimated bills, it's important to provide accurate meter readings to your energy supplier. Additionally, regularly comparing energy tariffs can help you find the best deal

for your needs. Finally, explore government schemes and grants that can help you improve your home's energy efficiency.

Switching your supplier could be a good move. Check out comparison websites for current deals. Do your research in a realistic and considered fashion.

By implementing these simple tips, you can significantly reduce your energy consumption and lower your bills. Remember, every little bit helps, so start making changes today.

A Guide to Wood Flooring Options

Wood flooring remains a popular choice for UK homeowners, adding warmth, character, and natural beauty to any space.

While the variety of options can seem overwhelming, this guide will help you navigate the key considerations.

Types of Wood Flooring

- Solid Wood: Crafted from a single piece of timber, solid wood is durable and refinishable, making it a long-term investment. However, it's sensitive to moisture and temperature changes.
- Engineered Wood:

Composed of multiple layers, engineered wood is more dimensionally stable than solid wood, making it suitable for areas with varying conditions. It's also generally more affordable.

- Reclaimed Wood: Offering a unique character and rustic charm, reclaimed wood is an eco-friendly option sourced from old structures.

Wood Species Popular options include:

- Oak: Durable, strong, and available in various colours, from light to dark.
- Ash: Light and airy, with smooth grain and subtle colour variations, ideal for contemporary interiors.
- Walnut: Luxurious with a rich, dark colour and striking grain patterns.
- Maple: Hard and dense, with a pale colour and fine grain, often used in modern and minimalist designs.

Finishing Touches Staining enhances the wood's natural beauty, while sealing protects it from moisture, stains, and wear and tear. Finishes like matte, satin, and gloss offer different levels of sheen.

Choosing the Right Wood Flooring

Consider your lifestyle (pets, children), budget, desired aesthetics, and installation method when making your decision.



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NEW £1 MILLION DAERA SURVEY VESSEL RENAMED IN HONOUR OF UNWAVERING CHAMPION FOR NATURE

Family, friends and ex-colleagues of the late Joe Breen OBE, met at Belfast Marina in Abercorn Basin for the renaming of the Department's new survey vessel to the 'Joe Breen'.

Minister Muir is pictured with members of the Breen family at the renaming ceremony. Pictured (L-R) are Joe Breen (Jr), Louisa Breen, Minister Andrew Muir, Anne (Huggy) Breen, Sarah Wynne (nee Breen) and Mark Wynne.



Minister Muir is pictured with members of the Breen family at the renaming ceremony. Pictured (L-R) are Joe Breen (Jr), Louisa Breen, Minister Andrew Muir, Anne (Huggy) Breen, Sarah Wynne (nee Breen) and Mark Wynne.

The renaming ceremony was hosted by Minister Muir along with members of the Breen family including his widow Huggy and children Sarah and Joe (Jr). Joe was a much-loved and highly respected member of the DAERA Marine and Fisheries team with a career spanning over 30 years in the Civil Service, primarily in the field of marine conservation and environmental protection. He died in June 2024 after a short illness.

Having heard of Joe's work from both officials and stakeholders, particularly the Rathlin Islanders, Minister Muir made the decision that the new DAERA boat would

be named after Joe.

Minister Muir stated: "It is most fitting that this new and innovative survey vessel is named after Joe, who spear-headed innovation in marine survey for so many years. Joe also pioneered the work on the first Marine Conservation Zones around Northern Ireland.

"He had that special gift of bringing complex science to life with other scientists

and the public alike through pictures, radio and television. I am so pleased that Joe's efforts both within the Department and in his expansive volunteering with Community Rescue, RNLI, the Naval Reserve and in other areas were recognised in October 2023 in his being awarded an OBE.

"Joe was an exceptional officer and leaves a strong legacy of innovation

in the many scientists that he worked with in the Department. It is so appropriate that this beautiful survey catamaran is also now part of that legacy."

Joe's wife Huggy said: "We are deeply honoured that Joe's legacy will live on through this survey vessel. His guiding principle was never to seek financial gain, but to be remembered for

his good initiatives and unwavering commitment to helping others. On behalf of our entire family circle, I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude for this great honour of renaming the Department's new survey vessel the SV Joe Breen.

"Joe had a deep love and passion for the sea and was an unwavering champion for nature.

His legacy in marine conservation science will hopefully shape the future for the next generation, ensuring that the complex balance between marine resource exploitation and sustainability is maintained. It is especially meaningful that his memory will continue on the sea, where he spent his happiest times and we are delighted that his name will live on, on the high seas."

Minister Muir spent some

time with the family aboard the Survey Vessel Joe Breen, emerging then to complete the naming ceremony with

Breen family members.

The event was watched from the shore by a wider collection of family,

friends and ex-colleagues, all of whom then had the opportunity to tour the SV Joe Breen.



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The Dangers of Blue-Green Algae: A Growing Concern

Blue-green algae, also known as cyanobacteria, are a type of bacteria naturally found in freshwater environments.

While some species are harmless, others can produce toxins that pose significant risks to human and animal health.

Contact with water containing high levels of blue-green algae can cause skin irritation, rashes, and eye irritation. Ingesting contaminated water can lead to gastrointestinal illness, including nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, and abdominal cramps. In severe cases, exposure to certain blue-green algae toxins can affect the nervous system, causing headaches, dizziness, weakness, and even liver damage. Dogs are particularly susceptible to the effects of blue-green algae. Drinking contaminated water or even licking algae off their fur can have serious, and potentially fatal, consequences.

Blue-green algae blooms often appear as thick, green, or blue-green mats or scums on the water surface. They can also make the water look like paint or pea soup. The water may appear discoloured, with unusual colours such as green,

blue-green, brown, or even red. The water may also have a musty, earthy, or even grassy odour.

If you suspect the presence of a blue-green algae bloom, avoid swimming, wading, or allowing pets to enter the water. Do not drink from any water source that may contain a blue-green algae bloom. Prevent pets from drinking the water,

swimming in it, or licking algae off their fur. If you observe a blue-green algae bloom, report it to your local health department or environmental agency.

Not all blue-green algae blooms are toxic. The level of risk varies depending on the type of algae present and the concentration of toxins. It can be difficult to visually distinguish between

harmless and toxic algae blooms.

This article provides general information and should not be considered medical advice. If you suspect exposure to blue-green algae, consult with a healthcare professional or veterinarian.

It's crucial to be cautious around any body of water that appears discoloured or has unusual odours.



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Your home, your style, your solution!

Check out the new curtain department at The Blind Spot

The Blind Spot is now offering made to measure curtains and also curtain rails, complete with a full measuring and fitting service, at their spacious new showroom in East Belfast.

The Blind Spot is already a well-established blinds and shutters company with over 30 years of experience.

Manager Krystina Bradford says:

"The original factory shop was opened in 1990 by my mum and Grandfather. We still specialize in manufacturing and fitting high-quality window coverings for both residential and commercial properties. This now includes venetian, vertical, roller and roman blinds but also embraces new technologies and advancements - today we also offer motorised blinds, shutters, multi-function Blindscreens as well as our new curtain department!"

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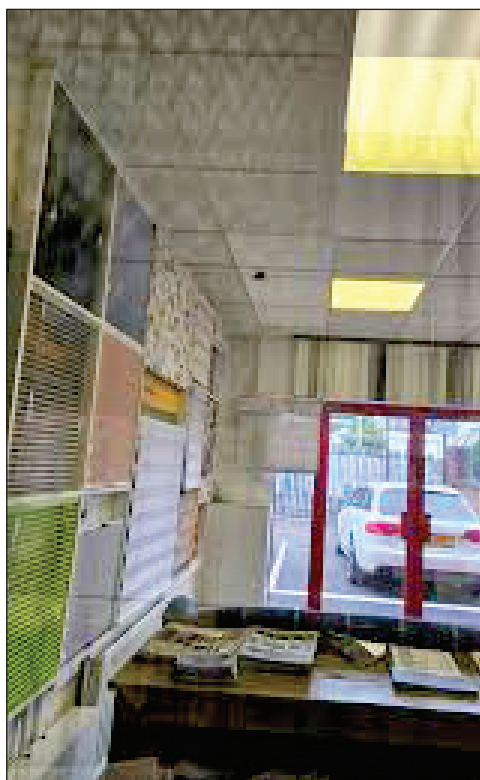
Did you know that investing in quality blinds can help improve your home's thermal insulation? Whether you prefer sleek roller blinds, practical #blindscreens, or classic shutters, The Blind Spot has you covered. Say goodbye to wasted heat and hello to a warmer, cosier home!

In addition to opening throughout the week, The Blind spot is also Open Saturdays: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM, the showroom is open and free for you to browse at your leisure. Explore a stunning range of blinds, shades, and shutters to find your perfect match. The office is ready to help schedule your home appointment for a personalised quote—no guesswork, just real numbers tailored to your space! Stop by and see them this Saturday they'd love to help make your home vision a reality!

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EVERYONE IS WELCOME AT RACE FOR LIFE BELFAST

BROADCASTER and DJ Adele Roberts is urging people to kick start the New Year by signing up for Cancer Research UK's Race for Life in Belfast.

The charity's much-loved events, which raise funds for life-saving research, are returning to the city and anyone who joins in January can claim 50 per cent off the entry fee as part of a special 'early bird' sale by using the code RACE25NY.*

Every year around 10,100 people are diagnosed with cancer in Northern Ireland. ** Money raised at Race for Life enables scientists to find new ways to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer - moving closer to a world where everyone can live longer, better lives free from the fear of the disease.

Entries are open now for the Race for Life 3K, 5K and 10K events which take place at Stormont Estate, NICSSA, The Pavillion, Belfast on Sunday May 25. People of all ages and abilities are welcome.

Inspirational Adele Roberts was successfully treated for bowel cancer in 2021 and now lives with a stoma* which she affectionately refers to as 'Audrey.' Just 18 months after completing surgery and chemotherapy, Adele set a Guinness World Record in London as the fastest woman to complete a marathon with an ileostomy.* Now she's on a mission to conquer all six World Major Marathons including Berlin, Chicago, New York, Tokyo, Boston and London to raise funds for Cancer Research UK

and the Attitude Mag Foundation. She is aiming to set the record for the fastest combined time for anyone with a stoma. And closer to home, Adele is inspired to Race for Life by her sister Lois Roberts.

Adele said: "I Race for Life because of my little sister Lois.

"Within the space of two years, my Auntie Ann had lost our Uncle Phil to cancer and then had to go through it herself-without her husband. Lois wanted to do Race for Life in tribute to Auntie Ann and Uncle Phil and to give back to the organisations that'd helped them. And she's inspired me to do the same."

Cancer Research UK's Race for Life, in partnership with headline sponsor Standard Life, part of Phoenix Group, raises millions of pounds every year across the UK to help beat cancer by funding crucial research.

Lisa Adams, Cancer Research UK's spokeswoman in Northern Ireland, said: "No matter how cancer affects us, life is worth racing for.

"Sadly nearly 1 in 2 of us will get cancer in our lifetime**** but all of us can help beat it. We're proud that Race for Life has already helped double survival rates in the UK. Every penny raised at



Race for Life truly makes a difference and powers progress.

"We'd love for as many people as possible across Northern Ireland to join us at Race for Life. There is an event for everyone and we mean everyone. Our events are strictly non-competitive which means everyone can have a go- and love every minute. There's no pressure to finish in a certain time, just give it what you can. Lace up and join in.

"January is the perfect time to commit to getting a little more active. Whether people are living with cancer, taking part in honour of or in memory of a loved one with cancer, in it for the medals or just for the fun of fundraising, there is a place for everyone."

Since it began in 1994, more than 10 million people have taken part in Race for Life, funding 30 years of hope and progress.

Cancer Research UK funded scientists led the development of the Human Papillomavirus Virus

vaccine, which is expected to prevent almost 90 per cent of cervical cancers in the UK. The charity also funded many large clinical trials looking at the effectiveness of the drug tamoxifen and the research shaped the way the drug is used to treat breast cancer today. Cancer Research UK played a leading role in the development of abiraterone - a drug that gives men with advanced prostate cancer more time with their friends and family.

Andy Curran, Chief Executive of Standard Life, part of Phoenix Group, said: "We are incredibly proud to continue as headline sponsor for Cancer Research UK's Race for Life, with the opportunity to encourage participation across the country.

"By working to raise funds for life-saving research, we can move towards a future where people live longer and healthier lives, free from the fear of cancer."

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A clean oven is not just about aesthetics; it's about safety, efficiency, and overall kitchen hygiene. While DIY cleaning can be effective, professional oven cleaning offers several significant advantages.

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damage caused by accumulated grease and grime.

Health and Safety Benefits

A buildup of grease and grime in your oven can pose a fire hazard. Professional cleaning can help mitigate this risk. Additionally, a clean oven can improve indoor air quality by reducing the release of harmful particles and fumes.

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When you hire a professional oven cleaning service, you can rest assured that your oven is being cleaned by experts who know what they're doing. Many professional cleaners offer guarantees on their work, ensuring your satisfaction.

While DIY cleaning can be a cost-effective option, it may not always provide the same level of cleanliness and efficiency as professional cleaning. By investing in a professional oven cleaning service, you can enjoy a cleaner, healthier, and more efficient kitchen.

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HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM LEAKS AND BURSTS

With recent low temperatures falling to lows of up to -7 degrees, NI Water would like to remind customers of some small things they can do to protect their pipes and properties from leaks and bursts.

Keep your home heated with a thermostat, insulate your pipes, open doors to allow warm air to circulate to unheated areas of your home and know where your stop valve is located in the event of a leak.

NI Water education officer Anna Killen said: "When a pipe bursts in freezing weather, it's similar to a frozen bottle of water cracking because the water expands as it freezes, putting pressure on the pipe and causing it to break. This might lead to a burst and possible flooding inside your home which can have a devastating impact on your property and belongings. A few simple steps can go a long way to help avoid this."

NI Water's top tips include:

- Check your inside stop valve - Check to ensure it can be opened and closed easily in the event of a leak. Most can be found under your kitchen sink but could also be located under the stairs or in the downstairs toilet. Also check everyone in the house knows where



the stop valve is located and how to turn it off. Receive a free stop tap tag by completing NI Water's online water audit at www.getwaterfit.co.uk

- Keep your home warm - Leave heating on for longer periods at lower settings, even while away. Doing this allows warm air to circulate, and will help prevent pipes and tanks from freezing in the cold weather

- Circulate warm air to unheated areas - Opening doors to unheated areas of your home (e.g. attics) occasionally to allow warm

air to circulate can prevent pipes and tanks from freezing in the cold weather

- Insulate water tanks and pipes - All exposed pipes, including attic pipes should be adequately insulated. Insulate or wrap a towel around outside taps to help prevent them from freezing over

- Check you have home insurance - check your insurance company offers you protection from the large scale damage that mother nature can sometimes cause

- Keep the name of a

plumber handy - type in your postcode at www.watersafe.org.uk to find your nearest accredited plumbing business

- Protect outdoor taps - consider using an insulated tap cover to add an extra layer of protection to outdoor taps. Receive a free outdoor tap cover by completing NI Water's online water audit at www.getwaterfit.co.uk

More helpful advice and tips are available on NI Water's website at www.niwater.com/winter-proof-your-home/

Preparing Your Home for Sale: A Seller's Guide

Selling your home can be stressful, but proper preparation can significantly increase its appeal to potential buyers and ultimately fetch a higher price.

To begin, de-clutter and depersonalise. Remove excess furniture, knick-knacks, and any items that make rooms feel cramped. Put away family photos, collections, and religious items, as you want buyers to envision themselves living in the space. Consider repainting walls in neutral colours like white, beige, or light gray to make rooms appear larger and brighter.

Next, deep clean and stage your home. Thoroughly clean every room, including floors, windows, and appliances. Eliminate any lingering odours with air fresheners

or by baking something delicious. Arrange furniture to maximize space and create a welcoming atmosphere. Consider adding tasteful décor like fresh flowers or plants.

Curb appeal matters significantly. Keep the lawn neatly trimmed and edged. Add colourful flowers to your garden or planters. Pressure wash the exterior of your home, including the driveway and walkways. Repair any broken fences, loose shingles, or peeling paint.

Highlight key features by opening blinds and curtains to let in natural

light. If you've recently renovated, showcase those features, such as new kitchen countertops or updated bathrooms. Ensure easy movement throughout the house by de-cluttering hallways and entryways.

Consider professional help from home staging professionals who can help you arrange furniture and décor to maximize appeal, and real estate photographers who can capture high-quality photos and videos that showcase your home's best features.

Small touches can make a big difference. A fresh coat of paint can do wonders

for the overall appearance of your home. Replace old doorknobs and cabinet hardware for a modern look. Enhance curb appeal with well-maintained landscaping.

Be patient and flexible. Be prepared to accommodate showings on short notice and be receptive to feedback from potential buyers and your real estate agent.

By following these tips, you can increase your home's marketability and increase the chances of a quick and successful sale. Remember, presentation is key!

Choosing the Right Window Blinds: Essential Questions to Ask Your Supplier & Installer

Choosing the Right Window Blinds: Essential Questions to Ask Your Supplier & Installer

To ensure you make an informed choice and have a smooth installation experience, it's crucial to ask the right questions to your supplier and installer.

Before you even start browsing, it's helpful to determine your budget and prioritise your needs. Consider factors like light control, privacy, insulation, child safety, and style. Accurate window measurements are also essential.

When interacting with the supplier, inquire about the types of blinds they offer, such as Venetian, roller, Roman, vertical, pleated, wooden, or bamboo. Ask about the available materials and finishes, including wood, fabric, aluminum, and PVC. Inquire about child safety options like cordless mechanisms, clutch mechanisms, and wand controls. It's crucial to understand the warranty on the blinds and request samples of fabrics and finishes. Ask if they offer a free consultation or in-home measurement service and inquire about the typical lead time for orders.

When discussing installation with the installer, ask about their experience with the specific types of blinds you're interested in. Inquire about their guarantee on installation work, the typical timeframe for installation, and whether



they remove and dispose of old blinds. Ask if they offer any after-sales support or maintenance advice and inquire about their preferred method of payment.

Don't forget to ask about motorization options if you're considering motorized blinds. Inquire about compatibility, costs, and remote control options. Determine if the blinds can be customized to fit unusual window shapes or sizes.

If you have pets, allergies, or specific needs (e.g., blackout blinds for bedrooms), be sure to discuss these considerations with the supplier.

Finance options may be available if you are ordering multiple blinds or window treatments.

By asking these questions, you can make an informed decision, ensure a smooth installation, and get the most value for your money.

Remember to compare quotes from multiple suppliers and installers to find the best deal.

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ROAD SAFETY CAMPAIGN NETS GIANT WINTER SIGN-UP

The Stena Line Belfast Giants have backed a road safety community engagement campaign to reduce road deaths as winter gets under way.

The Giants are the latest high profile sporting organisation to sign up to the Share the Road to Zero campaign, led by their Captain Mark Cooper.

Ulster Rugby, the Irish Football Association, the Northern Ireland Football League and Ulster GAA also backed the campaign this year.

Sadly, so far in 2024, 60 people have died due to road traffic collisions. Mark Cooper has now registered more than 180 appearances for the Giants since arriving in Belfast from Canada for the 2021/22 season.

He was appointed captain ahead of the 2023/24 season, during which he led the club to its successful Champions Hockey League campaign and the Elite League Playoff Final.

Speaking ahead of their game against Coventry Blaze on Wednesday evening, Mark said: "The SSE Arena sits between six and 8,000 people so we will have a bunch of families and people driving to the game.

"Leaving extra early and making sure you give yourself enough time is ideal to keep you and your family safe.

"Without question, road safety is of the utmost importance for everyone, so I'm pleased that we can lend our support to such a vital cause and the Belfast Giants are proud to be supporting the all-important Share the Road to Zero initiative."

Minister John O'Dowd said: "We are delighted to have The Belfast Giants sign up to our Share the Road to Zero Campaign and to encourage their fans who travel to games to take care and responsibility on the roads.

"The winter is on top of us and the roads can be treacherous with snow, frost and heavy rainfall and every action you take as a road user ensures you arrive home safely and your loved ones arrive home safely.

"One of the best ways to ensure safety



Infrastructure Minister John O'Dowd welcomes The Belfast Giants signing up to the Department's Share the Road to Zero campaign at the SSE Arena as the winter gets under way. Included with the Minister (from left) are Robert Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive Officer, The Odyssey Trust; Mark Cooper, Captain, Belfast Giants; Paul McMahon, Chief Operating Officer, The Odyssey Trust; and Steve Thornton, Group Head of Hockey and Commercial, The Odyssey Trust.

on our roads and fulfil our long-term goal of eliminating death and serious injury by 2050, is by changing road user behaviour.

"We all have a personal responsibility to behave in a way that keeps ourselves and others safe and my Department's Share the

Road to Zero campaign reminds us of that. The sad reality is that if we do not change our own attitudes when we are using the roads, our death toll will continue to increase.

"We can all potentially save a life if we RoadWise Up. Pay attention, slow down,

wear your seat belt, don't use your mobile phone while driving and never, ever drink or take drugs and drive."

Steve Thornton, Group Head of Commercial and Hockey at The Odyssey Trust, commented: "Undoubtedly, it's incredibly sad to hear that the number of people who have lost their lives on Northern Ireland's roads has risen.

"By signing up to the Share the Road to Zero campaign, we hope that the Belfast Giants can play a role in reminding people to be responsible on the roads at all times."

Pledging to 'Share the Road to Zero' can be done online via www.sharetheroadtozero.com as an individual or as an organisation.

DRIVING FORCE

From autonomous delivery vehicles to connected car technology, in this article we consider the impact of AI on the motor industry and new cars in 2025.

2025 is shaping up to be a pivotal year for the automotive industry, with several key trends and developments likely to dominate the headlines:

Electric Vehicles (EVs) Continue Their Ascent: Expect to see a significant expansion of EV models across various segments, from affordable city cars to high-performance sports cars. Advancements in battery technology will lead to longer driving ranges and shorter charging times, addressing key concerns of EV adoption.

Sustainable Materials and Manufacturing: Automakers will continue to prioritize sustainable practices, incorporating recycled materials and eco-friendly production processes. Expect to see more innovative materials derived from plants and other renewable sources used in vehicle interiors.

Connected Car Technology: Vehicles will become increasingly integrated with our digital lives, offering seamless connectivity to smartphones, smart



homes, and other devices. Automakers will leverage over-the-air updates to improve vehicle performance and add new features remotely.

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicles (FCEVs): FCEVs, offering longer ranges and faster refueling times than battery-electric vehicles, may emerge as a viable alternative in certain segments.

Governments and energy companies will invest in hydrogen fueling infrastructure to support the growth of FCEVs.

Autonomous Delivery Vehicles: Self-driving

delivery vehicles will become more common, revolutionizing the logistics industry and improving efficiency.

Cybersecurity Concerns: As vehicles become more connected, cybersecurity will be a top priority for automakers, with robust measures to protect against hacking and data breaches.

These are just a few of the major trends likely to shape the automotive landscape in 2025. The industry is undergoing rapid transformation, and the year ahead promises exciting innovations and challenges.

New Cars to Watch Out for in 2025

2025 is shaping up to be an exciting year for car enthusiasts in the UK, with a number of highly anticipated new models set to hit the roads.

Here are five of the most promising new cars coming out in 2025.

Renault 5
The Renault 5 is a highly anticipated electric revival of a classic French hatchback. It promises a fun, retro-inspired design with modern electric powertrain technology. The Renault 5 is expected

to offer a range of up to 248 miles and a starting price of around £20,000.

Mini Aceman
The Mini Aceman is a brand-new model that will slot into the Mini lineup as a small SUV.

It will offer a stylish, retro-inspired design with Mini's characteristic quirky touches. The Aceman is expected to be priced from around £25,000.

MG2
The MG2 is an upcoming budget-friendly electric supermini that aims to take on the likes of the Volkswagen ID.2 and Citroen e-C3. It promises affordable electric motoring with a range of around 200 miles and a

starting price of under £20,000.

Renault Twingo
The Renault Twingo is another iconic French model that is set to be revived as an electric city car.

It will offer a fun, quirky design with a focus on practicality and affordability. The Twingo is expected to be priced from around £15,000.

Suzuki eVX
The Suzuki eVX is the Japanese brand's first fully-electric car. It promises a stylish, SUV-inspired design with a range of up to 250 miles. The eVX is expected to be priced from around £30,000.

These are just a few of the exciting new cars that are set to be released

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