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ARDS CCÉ Chair Niall McClean was congratulated at an announcement event hosted by Belfast City Council at Belfast City Hall.

ARDS CCÉ ARE NAMED HOST BRANCH FOR ALL-IRELAND FLEADH 2026 IN BELFAST!

Dr Labhrás Ó Murchú, Director-General of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, formally announced recently at Belfast City Hall that Ards CCÉ will be the host Comhaltas branch for the All-Ireland Fleadh 2026 in Belfast in association with Belfast City Council! This really is history in the making as this is the first time ever it's been held in Belfast.

This is also a mind-boggling achievement and milestone for Ards CCE branch and a very proud moment for Donard McClean (co-founder and 'Grand Patriarch' of the branch), as the branch will also be celebrating their 50 years anniversary

in 2026. The All-Ireland Fleadh (Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann) is the world's largest celebration of Irish music, song, dance & culture and for Ards CCÉ to be invited as host branch is a fitting accolade to the commitment and dedication of all our branch

and committee members. The Fleadh is also a very inclusive event and will involve many artists from all cultural backgrounds performing throughout the week, so everybody is very welcome to come along and enjoy what will be an amazing cross-community

festival experience! It is envisaged that the event will attract record visitor numbers from all over the world to Belfast and surrounding areas of up to 1 million people.

Continued on page 4

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30 years of Game Changing Funding with Lottery

Kellie Armstrong MLA joined a host of National Lottery backed projects to celebrate three decades of game changing funding in Northern Ireland.

Since the first National Lottery draw in 1994, more than £1.5 billion has been awarded to local good causes, helping to improve lives, transform communities and promote positive change.

At a special event held in Stormont, both Ministers and MLAs met a wide range of organisations from grassroots community groups to large-scale institutions, all of whom have benefited from vital support provided by The National Lottery.

They heard how funding from The National Lottery has had a significant impact on arts, community, heritage and sporting sectors.

Among those in attendance were John Dummigan of Portaferry Regeneration and Martyn Todd of Saintfield Community Association.

Both organisations have benefited from Lottery funding to support development programmes.

Kellie Armstrong MLA said:

"National Lottery funding has made a positive and lasting difference to many people across the Strangford constituency.

Thanks to National Lottery players, more than £30 million is raised every week for good causes in the UK. In Northern Ireland the National Lottery has made 195 millionaires and 975 high-tier winners (over £50,000).

Thirty years of National Lottery funding has created an unparalleled legacy in Northern Ireland: powering sporting excellence, protecting cultural treasures, advancing artistic achievement and strengthening communities across the north.

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'Feed the Ducks' Initiative to Benefit Local Wildlife

Ards and North Down Borough Council is excited to announce the installation of a new bird feeder at Ward Park, Bangor, following the success of a similar feeder at Kiltonga Wildlife Reserve, Newtownards.

This initiative is part of ongoing research to promote and benefit local wildlife.

The 'Feed the Ducks' initiative allows visitors to feed wild birds healthily and sustainably. Unlike bread, which is often fed to ducks but lacks nutritional value, the feeder provides a varied diet essential for the birds' health. Bread can fill a duck's stomach, preventing it from foraging for its natural diet and potentially leading to malnutrition.

In addition to providing nutritious feed, the feeder offers educational information, particularly beneficial to young residents eager to learn about wildlife. The initiative was reported to the Council in December 2022 and has since gained popularity.

The modest income generated from the feeder is reinvested into the Parks and Cemeteries Service within the Council to support similar future projects.



Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Alistair Cathcart, expressed his delight: "I am delighted the feeder at Ward Park, Bangor has proved to be so popular since its installation in September 2024. It provides quality, nutritious feed that is healthy for local wildlife and helps to reduce the

amount of overfeeding. The feed is dispensed to hand so it can help reduce plastic litter waste too. "This is a fantastic initiative and one which has real benefits for our local wildlife and the environment. I trust the feeder will continue to grow in popularity in the coming months,

as milder weather encourages more residents in the Borough to make use of our parks and outdoor spaces. "Thanks once again to all those involved in implementing this feeder. I trust it will continue to be enjoyed by residents, young and old for many years to come."

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I'm Sarah, the founder of Rowan Tree Art Therapy, based in the Ards and North Down region. As a qualified and HCPC registered Art Psychotherapist (MSc), I am passionate about using art to support personal growth and emotional well-being. The Rowan tree, symbolising courage, wisdom, and protection in Celtic lore, mirroring the essence of therapy itself—helping individuals navigate life's challenges with support and strength.

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CONSTRUCTION ON £5.6M NEWTOWNARDS TO BANGOR GREENWAY UNDERWAY

Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins has marked the start of construction on the new £5.6m Newtownards to Bangor Greenway.

This project is funded by the Department for Infrastructure in conjunction with the Department for Transport (DfT) through the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The 5.4km long greenway utilises much of the old railway track and will run between Floodgates, Newtownards and Green Road, Bangor. It includes up to four-metre-wide paths for walking and cycling with accompanying

railings, fencing, lighting and planting. Attending the commencement of construction Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins said: "I am delighted that my Department could contribute £2.8m to deliver

this greenway project between Bangor and Newtownards and it is great to be here today to see work on the ground underway.

"Active travel is a key element in addressing climate change and creating cleaner and greener spaces that are open to everyone. By investing in greenways and other high quality active travel infrastructure we are giving people more options to think about how they travel and helping them embrace healthier lifestyles.

"This greenway will benefit both the local community and visitors to the area and will complement plans for further development opportunities in Ards and North Down, including opportunities that will arise through my Department's Active Travel Delivery Plan, which is currently out for consultation. Once completed this greenway will provide a safe alternative route for those who choose to leave the car at home and use it to travel



DfI Minister Liz Kimmins joins Ards and North Down Mayor Cllr Alastair Cathcart as construction work on the Ards North Down Greenway gets underway

to work or to study, to shop, to visit family and friends or simply just for leisure.

"By making small changes such as choosing to walk, wheel or cycle we can all make a big difference in beating congestion, reducing our carbon footprint, and improving our physical and mental wellbeing.

"This project is a fine example of the value of Government bodies working together to deliver for local communities."

The scheme will utilise the former railway track and will be completed in two stages. Stage one has now commenced between Belvedere Road, Newtownards and

Whitespots Country Park.

Stage 2 will be between Whitespots and Green Road, Bangor, passing Ark Open Farm, mostly following the former railway line in a north easterly direction towards Green Road, Bangor where it will link with the existing shared path along Green Road.

Minister Kimmins was joined by other funders, Ards and North Down's Mayor Councillor Alastair Cathcart and representatives from UK Government.

Mayor Cathcart said: "It is fantastic to see work progressing 'on the ground' on this new greenway. The 5.4km route will help to better connect the town of

Newtownards with the city of Bangor by providing a new safe path for those who want to walk, wheel or cycle. We expect it to be popular with leisure users, including those wanting to undertake exercise or to access Whitespots Country Park/Ark Farm, as well as those who are commuting to work or a place of study such as the South East Regional College campus in Ards. We are immensely grateful to our funders for their financial and technical support and to our contractors Charles Brand for their enthusiastic and innovative approach to delivering this exciting green infrastructure project."

DfT Local Transport Minister Simon Lightwood said: "I'm pleased to see construction begin on this greenway, which will make walking and cycling between Newtownards and Bangor easier, safer, and more accessible than ever before.

"We know investment in active travel helps people live happier and healthier lives. This is why we are funding Ards and North Down Borough Council £3.2m through the Levelling up Fund - £2.3m of which is going to support this important project."

The project is expected to take around 12 months to complete.

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Continued from page 1

It will also potentially generate up to £100 million for the economy. This will of course bring amazing

benefits and income for local businesses into Belfast, Bangor and surrounding areas, as major events are being planned for both cities.

Niall McClean (Chairperson of Ards

CCÉ) commented "Ards CCÉ are thrilled and honoured to be host branch and bring Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 to Belfast in association with Belfast City Council. This really is a monumental achievement and an amazing opportunity for Belfast and our branch. We also look forward to further promoting Comhaltas throughout Belfast and surrounding areas during the Fleadh and continue expanding our Belfast & Bangor music classes in all traditional instruments. Belfast will, without doubt, be an amazing venue for the Fleadh

and Comhaltas are committed and delighted to be part of this momentous occasion"

The dates for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann Belfast 2026 will be from SUN 2ND - SUN 9TH AUGUST 2026.

This year's Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is taking place in Wexford Town and will once more be so welcoming and a massive success...so be sure to get down there and enjoy the music and the craic.

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Ards child cuts first sod for new children's hospital

Belfast Trust has marked the start of construction works on the new children's hospital on the Royal Hospitals site.

Six year old Leyton Anderson from Newtownards, who is a patient at the current hospital, joined Health Minister Mike Nesbitt to cut the first sod on the project, alongside some of the Children's Hospital team and contractors GBHP.

The new state of the art hospital will be built on the former Bostock House site. It will have 10 floors, 155 beds, 10 theatres, and an emergency department capable of catering for up to 45,000 children per year. Eighty per cent of the beds will be in single rooms with private ensuite facilities, and each ward will benefit from social and play spaces, with parent facilities and separate staff areas. Construction for the new build is due to last five years.

The Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children will continue to provide care for children while the new hospital is being built. It is the only hospital in Northern Ireland dedicated specifically to the care of children. It provides general hospital care for children living in Belfast and provides most of the paediatric regional specialities (including palliative care) for children throughout Northern Ireland.

The children's hospital first moved to the Falls



Six year old Leyton Anderson and his mum Samantha Herron join Health Minister Mike Nesbitt and Children's Hospital staff to mark the start of construction work on the new children's hospital.

Road building in 1932. The original building was altered and extended on several occasions in the intervening years, including an extension which was completed in 1998. The current hospital provides 113 beds and 3 theatres.

GBHP is the contractor appointed to deliver the new children's hospital.

Speaking as construction commenced, Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said:

"I am proud to join Children's Hospital staff to mark the start of works on our new world-class hospital. This is really welcome news for future healthcare provision for Northern Ireland and for the healthcare professionals, children and families that

will use the modern facility on completion. Today is a reason to celebrate and I am delighted to share the honour of cutting the first sod with Leyton because our key focus throughout the development of this project has been on delivering improved services and facilities for children and young people."

"Last week I visited Dublin's new children's hospital, which is finally close to completion, and saw first-hand the world-class facilities it will provide. I want children and families from across NI having access to equally world-class facilities. That is why this development starting today is so important."

Children's Hospital's Director Paula Cahalan said

"This is an exciting day for all of us in Children's Hospital and for families across Northern Ireland. We have really outgrown the facilities on the current site, so a new modern, technologically capable building will allow our dedicated teams to deliver excellent and innovative clinical care to future generations."

A representative from GBHP said:

"We are honoured to be delivering this joint milestone healthcare project for Northern Ireland.

The new hospital will be a critical facility for future generations and we look forward to collaboration with all stakeholders to bring the Children's Hospital project to life.

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11:15AM
£10 - £20 - £10
£10 - £20 - £10
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£10 - £20 - £10
£10 - £20 - £10
£10 - £20 - £10
TOTAL PAYOUT: **£850**
PICK YOUR SESSION!
£3650 TOTAL PRIZE MONEY

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TOTAL PAYOUT: **£850**

DAYTIME JACKPOT UP TO £5000
48NO'S OR LESS

MONDAY TO FRIDAY AFTERNOON BINGO

11:15AM
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TOTAL PAYOUT: **£850**

SATURDAY AFTERNOONS

100's & 1000's

TL 11:55AM	TZ 12NOON	1PM	2PM	2:45PM
FULL HOUSES	PG1 £100 PG2 £100 PG3 £100 PG4 £100	PG1 £100 PG2 £100 PG3 £100 PG4 £100	PG1 £100 PG2 £100 PG3 £100 PG4 £100	FULL HOUSES
ALL £70	PG5 £1000	PG5 £1000	PG5 £1000	ALL £70
+	£5 TO PLAY	£5 TO PLAY	£5 TO PLAY	+

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BIGGEST JACKPOT WON

£1000

£3.1 MILLION RURAL MICRO CAPITAL GRANT AWARDS

DAERA Minister Andrew Muir MLA has announced grants totalling £3.1million benefitting an estimated 150,000 rural dwellers under his Department's Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme (RMCGS).

Micro Capital grants of between £500 and £2,000 were available to rural voluntary and community organisations from the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) funded Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme for projects tackling issues of local poverty and/or social isolation or implementing energy efficiency measures/environmental improvements.

Minister Muir made the announcement at Auld Toon Ulster Scots Society in Kells where he handed over their grant-aid Letter of Offer for £1,992, for the purchase of a defibrillator and six folding tables for use in their hall.

Earlier in the day, the Minister had also handed over a grant-aid Letter of Offer of £692 to Millisle & District Community Association, for the purchase of a Sander and a Thicknesser/Planer for use at their Men's Shed.

Minister Muir said: "This grant aid will help address locally identified poverty or social isolation issues and is expected to benefit 150,000

rural dwellers. Small capital grants have a very positive impact on the voluntary and community sector.

"It is fitting, at a time when the sector played such a crucial role in supporting rural communities affected by Storm Éowyn, that the grant-aid provides support to sustain and, in many cases, increase the provision of services offered by rural voluntary and community organisations.

"I am also particularly pleased to note that upwards on 250 Letters of Offer provide support to implement positive sustainable environmental improvements."

Minister Muir continued: "I sincerely thank all the rural community-led organisations across Northern Ireland for their continued work in providing local services and building social cohesion in their areas."

The scheme is being delivered by Rural Support Networks on behalf of DAERA. Speaking at the event in Kells, Breige Conway manager of Northern Area Community



Pictured with Minister Muir are members of the Auld Toon Scots society in Kells along with Briège Conway manager of the Northern Area Community Network. Pictured left to right, William Thompson, Briège Conway, Mervyn McDonald, Minister Andrew Muir, Karl Barr, Karen Strain, and Andrew Barr.

Network (NACN) said: "The DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme continues to be a vital source of support for small voluntary and community organisation in rural areas. This funding enables them to invest in essential equipment, strengthening their ability to deliver crucial services and enhance the well-being of their local communities."

Commenting on the funding to Millisle & District Community Association, Nicholas McCrickard, manager of County Down Rural Community Network said: "Micro Grants have had a huge positive role to play in the lives of rural people all over the country. Men's Sheds such as this one in Millisle directly impact on positive mental and

physical health, keeping people active in loads of ways. We thank all the volunteers in Millisle who give their time selflessly so that others in the community can benefit from having local services and demand led activities provided close to their homes. We also thank DAERA for their ongoing commitment to rural communities."

Events to Mark 80th Anniversary of VE Day

Ards and North Down Borough Council has announced several commemorative events and activities to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

They will take place over 8-9 May, with beacon lightings in Bangor, Newtownards and Ballyhalbert coinciding with the national commemoration, together with the raising of unique VE Day 80 flags, and a performance by the Band of the Royal Irish outside Bangor Castle.

Thursday 8 May will mark 80 years since VE Day, the official end of the Second World War in Europe. Commemorations will begin when two unique VE Day 80 flags will be raised at 9am, with one outside Bangor Castle and the other at Conway Square, Newtownards.

In the evening, at approximately 9.30pm, beacons will be lit outside Bangor Castle, at Newtownards' Conway Square and at Ballyhalbert's Burr Point. Beacons symbolise the light and hope that emerged from the darkness of war. Commemorations will conclude on Friday 9 May when the Band of the Royal Irish will hold a VE Day 80 performance outside Bangor Castle.

The Council would like to encourage community



groups, voluntary groups and schools to get involved. A small grant scheme will operate with up to £1000 available for constituted community and voluntary groups. The scheme opens for applications on Monday 10 March and will close on Monday 24 March.

Non-constituted community and voluntary groups will be able to avail of celebration packs on a first come, first served basis, while North Down Museum will host several events including WWII themed Little Historians workshops (23-25 April), a VE Recollections Exhibition (6 May - 3 August), a VE Day talk (8 May), and a VE Day Living History Family Day with Valhalla Theatre Group (11 May).

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Alistair Cathcart, said:

"Millions of people lost their lives during the Second World War. It brought huge suffering to people across the world so it is important to commemorate this occasion. We must remember those that fought for our country and secured our freedom. They gave up so much for the benefit of society and we must thank everyone that played their part in bringing the war to an end. Without them, we may not be living in what is the largely peaceful and democratic society that we have today."

For more information, visit www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/veday80.

ECO VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATED AT LIVE HERE LOVE HERE AWARDS

Live Here Love Here, a people-powered campaign dedicated to improving the local environment and fostering civic pride, has revealed the winners of its 2025 Community Awards.

The event, held at Belfast City Hall recently and hosted by TV presenter Joe Mahon, brought together

over 150 guests - including DAERA Minister Andrew Muir, local leaders, environmental advocates and volunteers - to honour the outstanding contributions of voluntary community groups across Northern Ireland working to improve the environment and promote civic pride.

Sponsored by Power NI and supported by the Department of Agriculture,

Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), nine local councils, and the Housing Executive, the awards serve as a vital platform for recognising the power of collective action in tackling community environmental challenges such as dog fouling, littering, biodiversity loss, transformation of neglected spaces, and environmental education.

On the night, 12 awards

were presented to celebrate the achievements of local community groups, including the Regional Champions Awards, which honoured volunteers from Live Here Love Here's nine partner council areas. Donaghadee Community Development Association received Ards and North Down Borough Council's Regional Champions Award for their work

with 150 volunteers to enhance the town through environmental initiatives and advocacy for local improvements, including floral displays, a community orchard, and coastal conservation. Groomsport Village Association was also recognised in this category as runners-up for its efforts in maintaining the village's beauty through litter picks, "In Bloom" initiatives, and projects like a fairy garden that supports biodiversity while fostering community spirit.

The Lasting Contribution Award, supported by DAERA, was presented to Copeland Bird Observatory for their enduring commitment to environmental sustainability and community improvement spanning more than 6 decades. Since 1954, the observatory has been dedicated to bird conservation, research, and community

engagement, particularly on the Copeland Islands, making a lasting impact on local biodiversity. While, the Community Together Award, supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, was presented to Holywood Shared Town for their work supporting smaller groups and leading initiatives that build a cohesive and inclusive community, focusing on environmental improvements and social spaces for Holywood residents. Runner-up, Comber Regeneration Community Partnerships (CRCP), was also recognised for transforming the town with initiatives like creating a community garden and fostering pride and responsibility among residents.

For more information on the Live Here Love Here campaign and the Community Awards, visit livehereandlovehere.org.

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Queen's Hall hosts Tea Dance

More than 100 people attended a tea dance organised by Ards and North Down Borough Council that was held at Queen's Hall, Newtownards recently.



Attendees were treated to an afternoon of sequence and ballroom dancing while others simply enjoyed the atmosphere.

Several exhibitors were also in attendance including Ards and North Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership, DeafBlind

UK, and Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke who were able to provide some information on support services available to people, while Tesco donated items towards the event.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Alistair Cathcart, said:

“Participation in social activities, especially for older people, are essential to good health and mental wellbeing. The tea dance events are already well attended and cater for both regular and non-regular dancers. They give people who are not normal dancers the

opportunity to come along and learn dance sequences or just come along for a chat over a cup of tea or coffee and a sweet treat.”

For more information, including details about future tea dances, email agefriendly@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk.

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Community Advice

Ards and North Down

Community Advice Ards & North Down

Previously known as Citizen's Advice Ards & North Down

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NDAWA participates to 'Accelerate Action for Gender Equality' on International Women's Day.

North Down & Ards Women's Aid (NDAWA) supports women, children and young people who are affected by domestic and sexual abuse.

We are a passionate team and totally committed to making a positive difference to the lives of women, children, and young people in the North Down & Ards area. This year for International Women's Day (IWD) on Saturday 8th March, the theme was 'Accelerate Action for Gender Equality.'

CEO, Emalyn Turkington wants to thank her team for the amazing work they do every day and the action they take listening and advocating for the women, children and young people they work with. We are an all women organisation, and our strong ethos 'for women, with women, by women' is reflected daily in our roles. We exist to accelerate action, challenge attitudes, structures and systems which perpetuate domestic abuse. We seek through



our work to enable women, children, and young people to live free from violence and abuse. I could not do my role as CEO without the incredible Team, Board Members and Volunteers that I work with. The team at NDAWA inspire action through support, compassion, respect, providing a listening ear, showing empathy,

being non-judgemental, and empowering women, children, and young people to find their voice and reach their full potential - thank you!

NDAWA would also not be able to complete our work without the support of the partner agencies we work with and our local community. One of the biggest

ways to help NDAWA 'Accelerate Action for Gender Equality' is to Support the Supporters, thank you to all our supporters!

If you are affected by domestic and sexual abuse or want to find out more information about North Down & Ards Women's Aid, please contact the Bangor office on 028 9127 3196.

ROWAN TREE ART THERAPY

Talking about emotions isn't always easy—but what if you didn't have to use words at all?

At Rowan Tree Art Therapy, creativity becomes a powerful tool for healing. Whether you're navigating anxiety, stress, trauma, or simply seeking a new way to express yourself, art therapy offers an accessible path to emotional well-being. Unlike traditional talk therapy, it provides a non-verbal, creative outlet. Learn to process feelings, develop coping strategies, and gain new insights into your emotional well-being.

Get involved: This May, Rowan Tree Art Therapy is offering a six-week creative wellness workshop in Newtownards for adults looking to improve their mental health through artistic expression. Each session will explore a new theme, promoting self-exploration, emotional resilience, and personal growth

in a supportive, non-judgmental environment. Using a variety of art materials, participants will 'Recharge, Reflect, and Create' while discovering the therapeutic benefits—no artistic experience needed.

'Discovering me' is designed for children aged 10-16, including those who are neurodiverse.

Each session will encourage self-expression, confidence, and emotional resilience. This inclusive program provides a safe, supportive space where children can explore creativity, build social connections, and develop healthy coping tools. With numerous materials available, participants can experiment and find what works best for them, whether through colour, texture, or imaginative storytelling.



Spaces are limited, and early booking is recommended for a discounted rate. Register now through the website to secure a place!
Email: info@rowantreearttherapy.co.uk
Find us on Facebook & Instagram: @RowanTreeArtTherapy
Website: www.rowantreearttherapy.co.uk

Women's Aid
NORTH DOWN & ARDS
02891 273196

Working to end Domestic Abuse

North Down & Ards Women's Aid provides a wide range of free support services to women and their children affected by domestic and sexual abuse.

Our services include -

- Emergency refuge accommodation
- Floating support service for women in the community
- Children's services
- Group support programmes including
 - Journey to Freedom
- One Stop Shop - free multi-agency drop in service
- Court support

Our range of Children's Services include:

- Art Workshops
- Helping Hands
- Transformers
- Healthy Relationship Programme

We also provide awareness raising sessions and training to our local community, schools, businesses and agencies.

One Stop Shop 

A multi-agency drop-in service for women experiencing:

- Physical Abuse
- Financial Abuse
- Coercive control
- Sexual Abuse

The One Stop Shop provides FREE, immediate and confidential access to Women's Aid, legal support, benefits advice, housing support and safety advice.

10.00 am-12.00 noon
No appointment necessary
Crèche facilities are available
LOCATION: House Church, Crawfordsburn Road Newtownards, BT23 4EA

For any further information about the One Stop Shop or Women's Aid support services Contact us at 02891 273196

NEXT DATES:
Tuesday 25th March
Tuesday 8th April
Tuesday 13th May

Our sessions are held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month!

Housing Executive
 

CELEBRATING THE WOMEN AT HELENS BAY DENTAL ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Today, we proudly honour the incredible women who make up the heart and soul of our advanced dental clinic.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we pause to reflect on the exceptional contributions, expertise, and dedication of the 19 women who help shape the exceptional care we provide every day.

These women are more than just skilled professionals—they are leaders, educators, mentors, and trailblazers in the dental field. They inspire us with their tireless commitment to patient care, their passion for advancing dental practices, and their unwavering strength in overcoming challenges.

Whether they're performing delicate procedures, providing compassionate care, or managing the daily operations of our clinic, their presence elevates the standards of excellence we strive for.

Each one of these women brings something unique



to our team, from their diverse backgrounds and perspectives to their shared vision of creating a welcoming and inclusive space for both patients and colleagues alike. They remind us that healthcare is not only about expertise; it's about empathy, connection,

and a shared commitment to improving lives.

On this International Women's Day, we celebrate their achievements, their perseverance, and the positive impact they have on everyone who walks through our doors. To the 19 women at our clinic—thank

you for your passion, your professionalism, and your dedication. You are the backbone of our success, and we are so proud to work alongside you.

Here's to the incredible women who inspire us every day—not just today, but every day.

Ards International Guitar Festival 2025 Set to Strike a Chord!

The much-loved Ards International Guitar Festival will be rocking into Newtownards from 9 to 13 April!

This year's lineup promises a dynamic mix of guitar-inspired gigs, free fringe events, insightful conversations, and a stunning photography exhibition by the acclaimed Scarlet Page. Celebrating its 29th anniversary, the festival—organised by Ards and North Down Borough Council—continues to honour the world's most popular instrument, bringing together some of the finest guitarists from across the UK, Ireland and around the world.

With his music videos having Internet views exceeding 200 million and bookings in every corner of the globe, Luca Stricagnoli is considered to be one of the most unique guitarists in the world. Luca's creative style, which led him to reinvent guitar playing with innovations like the Reversed Triple Neck Guitar and the Reversed Slide Neck, vastly contributed to expanding the boundaries of modern acoustic guitar. Luca will be appearing at The Queen's Hall, Newtownards on Friday 11 April with support from John Tracey.

Renowned guitarist Gary Lucas, hailed by Rolling Stone as "one of the best and most original guitarists in America", is coming to Ards Arts Centre on Friday 11 April. Having collaborated with icons like Lou Reed, Captain Beefheart, and Jeff Buckley and known



The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Alistair Cathcart with musicians Gary Lutton and Amanda Agnew, pictured at the launch of Ards International Guitar Festival's 2025 programme.

for his genre-spanning performances on acoustic and electric guitar, Gary will be joined by Irish singer Ellen Lyons to collaborate on some of his best-known music, including Jeff Buckley songs and more.

Acclaimed rock photographer Scarlet Page will present her iconic exhibition, Resonators, at Ards Arts Centre from 20 March to 13 April. This compelling collection of portraits captures some of the world's most legendary guitarists, offering a rare glimpse into their artistry. Resonators represents the culmination of Scarlet's two-year global journey, first launched in 2015. This marks her first-ever exhibition in Northern Ireland, making it a must-see for music and photography enthusiasts

alike. Scarlet will also join Ralph McLean on Thursday 10 April for an intimate conversation exploring the stories behind her iconic images and her 30-year career photographing music legends.

With performances from Declan Zapala, Gary Lutton, Cormac Neeson, Megan O'Neill, Amanda Agnew, Craig Ogden and more, guitar fans are in for a treat with this year's impressive line-up.

Speaking about the festival, Councillor Alistair Cathcart, Mayor of Ards and North Down said: "The guitar has always been celebrated in Newtownards, and I am delighted to welcome the return of the Ards International Guitar Festival. This year's programme offers something truly special

for music lovers of all ages, and we're proud to host such a vibrant showcase of musical talent."

Ards Guitar Festival Director, Emily Crawford commented: "This year's Ards International Guitar Festival presents a truly eclectic and very special line-up, there really is something to appeal to every taste from classical and contemporary to traditional Irish, Blues, folk and rock. We are privileged to be joined by some real legends of the instrument for five days of guitar celebration, chats and music."

Ards International Guitar Festival runs from 9 - 13 April. For ticket details or to view the full programme, please visit the website www.ardsguitarfestival.co.uk

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JV Allister encourages us to tolerate mice in our gardens.

I don't know if I have any mice in my garden. I did spot one a couple of years back playing hide and seek with a rather stupid cat, but as they mostly feed at night and are fast-moving, they could be out there in a hedge or the compost area, perhaps eating the food I've scattered for blackbirds and robins.

Of course, I'm talking about the wood mouse, also sometimes called the field mouse, not the house mouse which, as its name suggests, mostly lives in buildings, not the great outdoors.

We have only the two mouse species in Ireland and, along with many other wild creatures they're in decline. It seems likely that house mice now struggle to find suitable accommodation because modern homes are like sealed boxes, and when found they can be subject to the array



of poisons available off the shelf in hardware stores.

Wood mice, mainly country dwellers, have similar problems because of more intensive agricultural practices, including hedge removal, plus the extensive use of what they call rodenticides. Although they might thrive in some woodland, they are increasingly scarce in more open farmland which is probably at least part of the reason

for the decline of kestrels, specialist rodent hunters.

So, as with many other wild refugees from farmland, wood mice are drawn to the relative safety of our gardens, particularly those with trees and decent-sized hedgerows, where they will find shelter and food, even if it's mainly for the birds.

They are opportunists, feeding on seeds, nuts, berries plus worms and insects, pretty much anything that's available. While their life span is short, they do breed prodigiously but are not a threat to our plants or gardens or carry diseases; they're just small creatures living precariously on the edge.

I've got a mix of mini habitats in my suburban garden, and hope I'm sharing it with these small mammals, but the neighbourhood cats are often on the prowl...

JVA

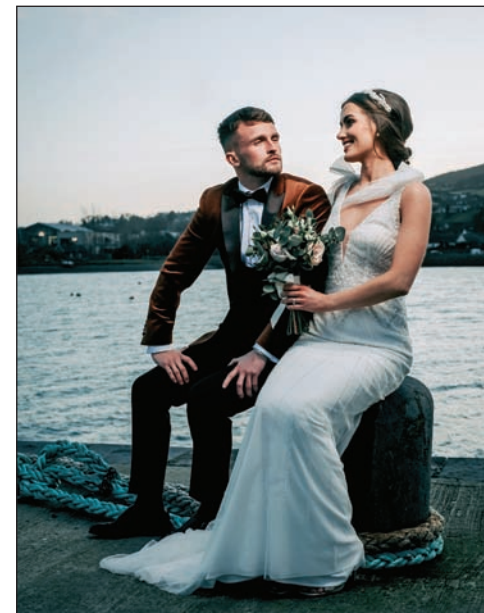
Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford Wins Best Winter Wedding Venue in Ireland

The Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford is proud to announce its recognition as Best Winter Wedding Venue in Ireland at the SaveMyDay.ie Irish Wedding Venue Awards 2025.

This prestigious accolade celebrates the hotel's dedication to creating unforgettable winter weddings in the picturesque setting of Carlingford.

Natalie Haake, Sales and Marketing Manager, expressed the team's excitement about the win: "The whole team is absolutely thrilled with this award. The summer months are always the first to book up, but there is something truly magical about winter weddings in Carlingford. That's why we are delighted to be recognised for this special time of year."

This achievement comes at a perfect time as the hotel has just launched its brand-new Winter Weddings by the Sea package, available on selected dates in 2025 and 2026. Designed to capture the charm of a cosy, romantic winter wedding, the package offers couples a stunning backdrop of Carlingford Lough, warm hospitality, and exquisite seasonal dining.



Carlingford is often described as a hidden gem, and its breathtaking winter scenery creates an enchanting atmosphere for wedding celebrations. The Four Seasons Hotel's continued commitment to excellence has now been recognised on a national stage,

solidifying its position as a top wedding destination in Ireland.

For more information on the Winter Weddings by the Sea package, contact us at:

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www.fourseasonshotelcarlingford.ie

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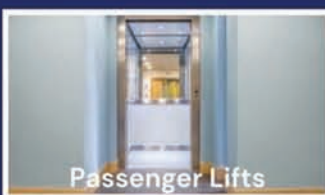
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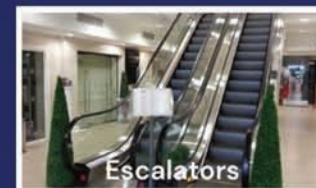
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Afternoon Tea at Margaret's Cottage – an extraordinary feast.

Guests who have enjoyed the delicious homemade treats at Margaret's Cottage in Ardglass have often said that their mouth-watering vintage afternoon teas compare very favourably to those laid on by the best hotels in the land.

However, what Ciara at Margaret's Cottage is most proud of, is offering your afternoon tea as a personalised, intimate experience that is just for you and yours.

All kinds of friends and family groups have joined together in Margaret's Cottage, over the years, for dainty hand-cut finger sandwiches and freshly prepared cakes, served with antique silver cutlery, fine bone china and, of course, starched Irish linen napkins.

At Margaret's Cottage, afternoon tea can be served every day of the week, with guests enjoying

the private upstairs drawing room for their own party of between two and ten guests. Everything is baked and freshly prepared for you and Ciara can cater for different diets, whether you are gluten-free, keto or dairy free

Booking is essential. You can call Ciara to book your afternoon tea in their elegant drawing room, discuss any dietary restrictions and confirm what time you would like to arrive. Most guests like to arrive between 2pm & 3.30pm.

Why not let Ciara know if you're having a special occasion and how she can make it



even more special for you.

Afternoon tea is currently £22 per person

At Margaret's Cottage, they believe you should still have your cake and eat it.

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Not just shopping, Glasgow is also famous for its fantastic nightlife, and great choice of restaurants

and bars. Glasgow is the perfect choice for your next city break away.

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The service is operated by HANNON Coach and leaves twice a day from Belfast, Grand Central Station (Stand 18) and drops visitors right in the heart of Glasgow's 'Style Mile'. The simple flat fare allows passengers to pick and mix dates and times of travel to suit and with no luggage charges it makes a perfect travel option for a shopping trip. There are also a



great range of hotels just minutes from Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station.

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

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

with no extra charge for luggage it is a massive help with keeping the cost of a break down."

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



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HERE COMES THE SUN

Why Planning Your Summer Holiday now could be a Game-Changer for your mental health!

The first daffodils are poking their heads through the soil, a gentle warmth is returning to the air, and a sense of possibility hangs in the breeze. It's early spring, and while summer might seem a distant dream, it's the perfect time to start planning your summer holiday. Why? Because the benefits, both for your mental well-being and your wallet are significant.

The Mental Boost: Anticipation and Control
Imagine this: the long winter months are behind you, and you have a sun-drenched getaway to look forward to. Just

the act of planning a holiday can provide a significant mental boost. Studies have shown that anticipation is a powerful emotion, and the excitement of envisioning your trip can increase happiness and reduce stress levels.

Having a holiday to look forward to can also provide a sense of control. In our busy lives, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by responsibilities. Planning a holiday allows you to take charge, make choices, and create something positive for yourself and your loved ones. It's a chance to escape



the daily grind and focus on relaxation and enjoyment.

Financial Advantages: Early Bird Gets the Best Deals

Beyond the mental benefits, planning your summer holiday

in early spring can also be a smart financial move.

Booking flights and accommodation in advance often means securing better deals. Airlines and hotels tend to offer lower prices for early

bookings, and you'll have a wider range of options to choose from.

Planning ahead also allows you to budget more effectively.

By spreading the cost of your holiday over several months, you

can avoid a large financial outlay all at once. This can make your holiday more affordable and reduce any post-trip financial stress.

Tips for Early Holiday Planning
• Set a budget:

Determine how much you can afford to spend on your holiday. This will help you narrow down your options and avoid overspending.

• Choose your destination: Consider your interests and preferences. Do you want a relaxing beach holiday, an adventurous hiking trip, or a cultural city break?

• Book early: As mentioned earlier, booking flights and accommodation in advance can save you money.

• Be flexible: If you're flexible with your travel dates, you may be able to find even better deals.

• Do your research: Read reviews and compare prices before

making any bookings.
• Get organized: Create a detailed itinerary and make sure you have all the necessary documents, such as passports and visas.

Planning your summer holiday in early spring is a win-win situation. You'll not only reap the mental benefits of anticipation and control, but you'll also have a better chance of securing great deals and sticking to your budget.

So, as the days get longer and the weather starts to warm up, take some time to dream about your perfect summer getaway.

Your mind and your wallet will thank you for it.

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Why invest in Agricultural Insurance?

Farming in the UK, while a cornerstone of the economy, is inherently risky, leading to a predictable pattern of insurance claims.

One of the most frequent categories involves property damage. Fire poses a constant threat,

particularly in storage areas for hay and straw, where spontaneous combustion is a real danger. Similarly,

electrical faults can ignite buildings and machinery. As with the recent storms unpredictable UK weather also contributes significantly, with storm and flood damage impacting buildings, fences, and crops. Flooding, in particular, can be devastating, leading to losses of livestock and stored goods. Furthermore, the isolation of many farms makes them vulnerable to theft and vandalism, with machinery, tools, and livestock frequently targeted.

Livestock-related claims are another major concern. Injuries and deaths of livestock due to accidents, disease, or attacks by other animals can

result in substantial financial losses. Straying livestock can also lead to accidents and subsequent liability claims. A very serious and growing problem is livestock worrying, where dogs attack and injure or kill farm animals, causing both financial and emotional distress to farmers.

Accidents involving machinery and vehicles are common. Farm machinery, while essential, is inherently dangerous, and accidents involving tractors and other equipment, such as rollovers and collisions, are frequent.

Road accidents involving farm vehicles also contribute to the claim statistics, often leading to significant

damage and liability issues.

Liability claims represent another significant category. Farmers can be held liable for injuries to members of the public on their land, particularly in areas with public access, such as footpaths. Employers' liability is also crucial, as farms employing workers are legally required to have insurance covering claims from employees injured during their work.

Finally, business interruption claims become necessary when events prevent the farm from operating as usual. This might include a large fire that destroys buildings and equipment, or a

widespread animal disease outbreak that forces the farm to cease operations. This type of claim is designed to cover lost income and ongoing costs during such disruptions.

For farmers, it is essential to have comprehensive insurance coverage that addresses these diverse risks. Regularly reviewing policies and ensuring they reflect current operations is vital. Equally important is the implementation of robust safety measures to minimize the likelihood of accidents and claims. By proactively managing these risks, farmers can better protect their livelihoods and ensure the sustainability of their businesses.

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On a recent Facebook review Happy Customer Ciara Donnelly said: "Recently bought a quad and the customer service was excellent, answered any questions I had regarding buying helmets and on delivery different sizes was brought down to try on. Would recommend JMK quads!"

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NORTHERN IRELAND COLOUR BELT OPEN ITF CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025 IS OPEN FOR ENTRY

Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland, would like to extend an invitation to all Taekwon-Do practitioners, clubs and organisations to participate in the 2025 Northern Ireland Colour Belt Open ITF Taekwon-Do Championships to be held in National Badminton Centre (Lisburn Racquets Club) on 27th April 2025

This competition is open to Active Tigers (Black Stripe) and Taekwon-Do Students Yellow Tag to Black Tag (Junior, Adult and Veteran). Applications are welcome from all individuals, clubs and organisations, regardless of affiliation to any

world body or style. The closing date for entry is 18th April 2024. To download the schedule and enter please follow this link to the official website: <https://www.kihapp.com/.../18277-northern-ireland-colour...> Taekwon-Do Ni is led by Mr



Maguire, Chief instructor for the area and President for Northern Ireland ITF. Last November, at the International Instructors Course, Leo was promoted to 7th Dan and newly awarded title of

master! For those interested in trying Taekwon-Do, classes are available in various locations. Enrollment can be booked through the UKTC NI website at www.taekwondo-ni.co.uk Any businesses that

may be interested in sponsoring events held in Northern Ireland, or local students attending events in other countries should contact Leo Maguire on 07891191494 or email taekwondoni@msn.com.

Fun places to visit this spring

County Down is a beautiful region in Northern Ireland that offers a wide range of activities for families.

From exploring historic castles to hiking in the Mourne Mountains, there is something for everyone to enjoy. Here are a few ideas for fun family activities to do in County Down:

Mourne Mountains: The Mourne Mountains are a stunning mountain range that offers a variety of hiking trails for all levels of experience. Families can enjoy a leisurely stroll along the lower slopes or challenge themselves with a more strenuous hike to the summit of Slieve Donard, the highest peak in Northern Ireland.

Castlewellan Forest Park: This beautiful park offers a variety of activities for families, including walking and cycling trails, a lake for boating, and a play park for children. The park also has a visitor centre where you can learn

about the local flora and fauna.

Tollymore Forest Park: Another great option for families is Tollymore Forest Park, which is known for its beautiful scenery and its role as a filming location for the popular TV series "Game of Thrones". The park offers a variety of walking trails, a river walk, and a picnic area.

Strangford Lough: This large sea lough is a great place for families to enjoy a variety of water activities, such as kayaking, canoeing, and paddle-boarding. Families can also take a boat tour of the lough to see the seals and other wildlife that live there.

Exploris Aquarium: This popular aquarium is home to a variety of marine life, including sharks, rays, and seals. Families can learn about the different species that



live in the Irish Sea and participate in interactive exhibits.

Down County Museum: This museum tells the story of County Down from prehistoric times to the present day. Families can learn about the history of the region and see artifacts from different periods.

Saint Patrick Centre: This centre tells the story of Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Families can learn about his life and his impact on Irish culture.

No matter what your family enjoys, you are sure to find plenty of fun activities to do in County Down. With its beautiful

scenery, rich history, and variety of attractions, County Down is the perfect place to create lasting memories with your loved ones.



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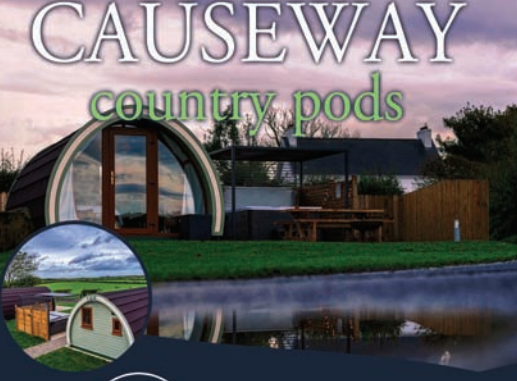


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TOBY TAKES THE REINS AT KEEWAY EQUESTRIAN

Keeway Equestrian has carved a niche within the equestrian world providing high-quality arena surfaces as well as innovative equine bedding and horse fencing solutions.

Following a long career in Civil Engineering and a lifetime in an Equestrian driven family Tim McKee took a leap of faith in the Equestrian world! Keeway Equestrian has provided all surfacing for Gransha Equestrian Centre since 2019 and Tim has also been developing knowledge and offering a range of products to fit the Irish Equestrian Market. Now under the new management of Tim's nephew Toby Fynn – the envelope continues to be pushed sourcing and offering innovative solutions for the equestrian!

Keeway Equestrian focuses entirely on the needs of horse and rider,

prioritising safety and performance. At the heart of their offerings are their specialised arena surfaces, designed to provide optimal footing for a variety of equestrian disciplines. Whether it's an indoor or outdoor arena, Keeway Equestrian offers arena fibres engineered to ensure consistent performance regardless of weather conditions, minimizing the risk of injury and maximizing horse comfort.

Beyond arena surfaces, Keeway Equestrian demonstrates a strong commitment to safety and sustainability. Their Equisafe fencing solutions provide secure and reliable

boundaries, while their Ecoflax bedding offers a sustainable and healthy environment for horses. This dedication to comprehensive equestrian solutions extends to other essential yard equipment, such as horse wash bays, demonstrating their understanding of the diverse needs of equestrian facilities. Keeway Equestrian works closely with a range of equestrian establishments across Ireland, including riding schools, livery yards, and stud farms. Their collaborative approach and dedication to providing top-tier products and services have solidified their

reputation as a trusted partner within the equestrian community.

Keeway Equestrian's product line reflects their commitment to quality and innovation. Their arena fibre solutions cater to the diverse needs of riders and horses, while their Ecoflax bedding provides a sustainable and comfortable alternative. Furthermore, their Equisafe fencing prioritises the safety of horses and riders alike. To explore their full range of products and services, you can visit their website, which offers detailed information and contact details.

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Aerial view of the Keeway Equestrian facility showing multiple arenas, a large indoor arena, and surrounding fields. Inset images show a rider on a horse in an outdoor arena and a close-up of a horse's head.

Saddle up for a visit to Holmestead Saddlery, Tyrella

Holmestead Saddlery at Tyrella near Downpatrick really is a hidden gem!



The latest Le Mieux collection at Holmestead

The largest equestrian store in Northern Ireland, is really worth a visit and is actually the nearest large store to Gransha Equestrian Centre!

We have Everything for the horse and rider, Holmestead is the main Ireland stockist for Le Mieux, Shire's, GPA, KEPP, Pikeur, Equaline and has a vast stock of new and used saddles, the largest selection of brands and with expert saddle fitters who can fit you and your horse in our arenas

or your yard. Our saddle fitters are regular visitors to Gransha!

Offering quality products at value for money prices and exceptional customer service is the key to Holmestead's popularity. Every guest is offered quality complimentary coffee and hot chocolate.

The team are all equestrians and qualified in hat, body protector and saddle fitting. On three large floors each better than the last Holmestead offers a unique shopping

experience you will absolutely love, at prices that will delight you!

We are delighted to have been the saddlery of choice for Adrienne and her family for 40 years and look forward to helping many more equestrians from Ards to enjoy the ultimate in equestrian shopping at Holmestead Saddlery. Did you know, we also have a superstore in Co. Kildare? For more information see www.holmesteadsaddlery.com or call us ph 02844851427.

GRANSHA EQUESTRIAN CENTRE: 40 YEARS OF RIDING EXCELLENCE!

Gransha Equestrian Centre, nestled in the picturesque countryside between Bangor, Newtownards, and Donaghadee, is celebrating a remarkable milestone: 40 years of providing top-tier equestrian experiences.

Over the decades, Gransha has become a cornerstone of the local riding community, fostering a love of horses and horsemanship in riders of all ages and abilities.

Established by Adrienne Stuart, Gransha Equestrian Centre has grown from its beginnings as a home yard into a thriving British Horse Society approved riding school and livery yard. Spanning approximately 42 acres of beautiful land, the centre offers extensive facilities. With 2 large indoor arenas, the Topspec all weather arena, suited to full size Dressage competitions which also links into the Derby all weather arena which includes banks, water obstacles and a drop down lane section. All the riding surfaces over the past 15 years have been developed and only ever used Keeway Standard Arena Fibre. Latest additions to facilities include an on-site Gallery café and investment in the livery facilities.

The centre provides:

- Riding Lessons: Catering to everyone from beginners to advanced riders.
- Livery Services: Providing excellent care for privately owned horses.
- Events and Competitions: Hosting

a variety of disciplines, including dressage, cross-country, showjumping, showing and working hunter.

• Training Clinics: Featuring specialist instructors to enhance rider skills at every level!

Gransha Equestrian Centre's commitment to excellence is evident in its well-maintained facilities and dedicated staff. The centre's diverse program ensures that there's something for everyone, whether you're a casual rider or a serious competitor. In recent times, Gransha Equestrian Centre has continued to be a very active centre, hosting events that bring the equestrian and wider community together and a full calendar of events is planned for this season!

Gransha Equestrian Centre owner is the dynamic Adrienne Stuart. An accomplished equestrian athlete in her own right Adrienne's talents and interests have been passed on to daughters Kirsty & Courtney who both compete at national and international level.

Adrienne's 50 years experience in the Showing and Working Hunter world together with her flair and experience in course design and building make her the



obvious person to help with young horses and any age of rider wishing to win rosettes or simply enjoy time spent on their horse in a non competitive fashion. Adrienne has designed & built working hunter courses for shows as prestigious as Balmoral and regularly provides opportunities for schooling and competition over her courses at Gransha Equestrian Centre to liveryes and visitors.

Adrienne is also passionate about supporting local community and charity interests. Last year Adrienne, together with agricultural show commentator Raymond Bready raised an amazing total of over £30,000 for Air Ambulance NI completing a skydive and organising events including the 'Pedal the peninsula cycle' the Gransha Equestrian Summer



Show, Donaghadee Beach Relay Race and charity raffles!

As Gransha Equestrian Centre marks its 40th anniversary, it looks forward to many more years of providing exceptional equestrian experiences. With its strong foundation and unwavering dedication

to the sport, Gransha is sure to remain a beloved destination for horse lovers for generations to come.

To find out more information, including lesson timetables, and upcoming events, please visit the Gransha Equestrian Centre website www.granshaequestrian.com



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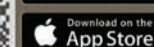
- SHOW JUMPING SERIES - MARCH 14TH & 21ST, APRIL 4TH & 11TH
- MARCH 28TH DRESSAGE EVENING COMPETITION
- MARCH 29TH BALMORAL IRISH DRAUGHT PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMANCE HORSE QUALIFIERS
- MARCH 30TH DERBY FOR JUNIORS AND SENIORS
- APRIL 5TH SHOW JUMPING | APRIL 14TH FUN DAY
- APRIL 19TH WORKING HUNTER HORSES AND PONIES
- AUGUST 2ND SUMMER SHOW AND FAYRE
- AUGUST 10TH 3 PHASE CHALLENGE FOR SENIORS AND JUNIORS
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When it comes to hands-on learning with activities that enable young people to think creatively and solve problems without compromising on endless fun, Northern Ireland is one of the best classrooms.

A recent poll of 5,000 families sees parents increasingly seek meaningful educational experiences for their children during holidays, short-trips and days out. Northern Ireland is bursting with giant experi-

ences to ignite the imagination of young minds in fun and entertaining ways.

Interested in history and the natural world? Try stargazing at OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory, or view an early edition of one of the world's greatest fantasy adventure books, Gulliver's Travel's at Armagh Robinson Library.

Experience the place where the Titanic was built and launched or step on-board a real-life warship

at HMS Caroline, while a myriad of museums and monuments tell the story of Northern Ireland's extraordinary history with a unique flair, entrancing visitors young and old.

Ahead of the half-term break, Discover Northern Ireland has put together top activity suggestions to inspire young minds with endless fun and some learning by stealth.

W5, Belfast
 • W5 is the ultimate family day out with eight exhibition zones and over 250 interactive exhibits covering everything from climate change and nature to optical illusions, built engineering, medical science and much more with limitless fun. From February 8-16 experience Multiverse Mayhem, a theatre show that features big bangs and crazy chemical concoctions, where you can meet the scientists who are travelling through the multiverse. They have landed at W5 and are here to see if the fundamental scientific theories in this world match those in other dimensions. With only 30 minutes before they are sucked back into the vortex, they must conduct as many out-of-this-world experiments as possible.

National Museums NI
 • National Museums NI looks after four distinct museums in Northern Ireland which serve as custodians to 1.4 million objects in collections spanning art, history and natural

sciences. Belfast's Ulster Museum is home to a range of multidisciplinary natural sciences, art and history collections while the Ulster Folk Museum at Cultra, in County Down, houses heritage buildings and objects allowing visitors to immerse themselves in a bygone way of life. Also at Cultra, The Ulster Transport Museum takes you on a journey with a comprehensive collection of vehicles from trams and railcars to an iconic DeLorean, the model made famous in the Back to the Future movies. In Omagh, County Tyrone, the Ulster American Folk Park tells the story of emigration to America over two centuries, with 30 buildings and exhibits for the kids to explore, and - you can even board a full-size emigrant ship. With 30 buildings and exhibits for you to explore - and loads for the kids to do - the Ulster American Folk Park is a unique experience.

Armagh Planetarium & Observatory, County Armagh

• There are a number of special astronomical events happening this year and Armagh Observatory and Planetarium (AOP) is 'The Place for Space'. Watch an amazing Full Dome Theatre show and explore the Universe. Touch Northern Ireland's largest meteorite, create your own solar system, or black hole, and visit the Astropark children's trail with augmented reality and sculptures. With daily shows



aimed at everyone from preschoolers to adults, there's always something out of this world going on at AOP.

Exploris Aquarium & Seal Sanctuary, Portaferry, County Down

• Enjoy a diver's view of marine life from around the world. An underwater glass tunnel lets you experience friendly sharks, a dwarf crocodile, a waddle of penguins at Northern Ireland's only aquarium and seal rehabilitation centre in Portaferry. The Tropical Ocean zone hosts over 100 species of colourful coral reefs. There is a soft play area, café and afterwards why not take the short car journey or ferry crossing over to Strangford and explore the National Trust's Castle Ward or Audley's Castle.

Marble Arch Caves, Enniskillen, County Fermanagh

• Unexplored until little over a century ago, the Marble Arch Caves feature stalactites, cavern-

ous passages, underground pools and streams which have been formed and reformed as the water slowly dissolved the limestone bedrock over countless millennia. First opened to the public 40 years ago, explore the extensive caves on foot, or by boat with one of the popular guided tours and you'll uncover a mind-boggling number of fascinating facts about geology, geography and archaeology in a cave system dating back over a million years.

Whitehead Railway Museum, Whitehead, County Antrim

• This fascinating five-gallery museum provides an exciting opportunity to rub shoulders with the giants of steam. You can step onto the footplate of a heritage steam engine and learn how it works, walk through several historic carriages and observe from a viewing gallery as restoration work takes place on locomotives

and coaches. The children's play area enables younger visitors to fire their imaginations by dressing up in Edwardian-style clothes. Keep an eye out on special events for a special ride in one of these fantastic steam engines.

Seamus Heaney HomePlace, Bellaghy, County Londonderry

• Treat the writers and poets in your life to a day they will never forget as they explore the Seamus Heaney HomePlace and discover how the Nobel Laureate's formative years served as a source of inspiration throughout his career. Found between Heaney's two childhood homes at Mossbawn and The Wood, let Heaney's distinctive voice guide you through the exhibitions and enjoy the atmospheric video projections and touchscreen displays that sit alongside precious items donated by the Heaney family that

transport you to important moments in his life.

Hill of the O'Neill & Ranfurly House, Dungannon, County Tyrone

• Explore a special place at the very heart of Ulster and home to one of our most important heritage sites. It was from this very hilltop that The O'Neill dynasty ruled for more than 300 years. On a clear day, enjoy breathtaking panoramic views from the glass observation tower on top of the hill. On your way back down, learn all about the Flight of the Earls and the Plantation of Ulster in the permanent multi-media exhibition at Ranfurly House. This Victorian listed building is also home to an array of art classes including crocheting, felt making and sewing.

To plan your next fun-filled learning experience in Northern Ireland, visit discovernorthernireland.com/familyfun

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It's all smiles on the Saintfield Road, Belfast with the arrival of Morrison Dental Clinic

It's all smiles on the Saintfield Road, Belfast with the arrival of Morrison Dental Clinic

Dr Morrison says: "You can really change someone's life through their smile. Seeing their reaction after showing them their finished result in the mirror is priceless. The change you see in a patient, giving them their smile and confidence, it is not just an aesthetic change but also gives a psychological change which is so rewarding!"

Morrison Dental Clinic is primarily a Denplan

practice. The practice ethos is that prevention is better than cure, and that seeing the hygienist every six months or more is the best starting point to maintain a healthy dentition for life. As a Denplan practice, the practice plan includes twice yearly check-ups and hygiene appointments, any x-rays required, and also gives discount off routine care, such as routine exams, cleaning, x-rays and oral hygiene instruction can help catch problems early and avoid the need for costly treatment later on.

Significant investment has already been made to ensure that the practice remains at the forefront of technology to improve

the patient experience. This includes an intra-oral scanner, which uses 3D photo imaging to scan the mouth, avoiding the need for taking moulds of your teeth. Treatment can then be planned digitally and with greater accuracy than ever, achieve perfectly fitting labwork such as crowns, veneers, bleaching trays etc. Another addition is a recently-installed CBCT scanner, used when there is a need for more information than what traditional 2D x-rays can offer, such as 3D visualisation of jaw bone for optimal planning for implant placement.

Dr Morrison is a member of the Irish Academy of Aesthetic Dentistry and the Association of Dental



Implantology, and is always reading articles and attending courses to stay up to date with the latest advancements!

He says: "I believe that we are at an exciting time

in dentistry, with more and more technological advances which can improve what is possible for our patients. I feel as a dentist in the modern age we must continually learn and improve our practices otherwise we will be left behind!"

The growing team (so far!) consists of five dentists, five nurses, dental hygienist Claire, receptionist Shauna, Yuko (Richard's wife) who does a lot of the work behind the scenes!

Morrison Dental Clinic is conveniently located at 95 Saintfield Road (not far from Forestside), and offers free parking available on site! For your appointment Tel: 028 9070 3215

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CANCER SCREENING CAMPAIGN BACKED BY ARDS BORN CHRISTINE LAMPARD

A MAJOR campaign which encourages people to consider taking part in life saving cancer screening in Northern Ireland has been launched by Cancer Research UK.

The campaign, which will feature on TV, radio, cinema and posters, focuses on Northern Ireland's three screening programmes for bowel, breast and cervical cancer.

It follows new data which show around four in 10 people were put off attending cervical screening because they were worried the test would be painful (39%), with more than a quarter (27%) put off breast screening for the same reason.*

Some people were also reluctant to attend because they were frightened about what the test might find, for both cervical (19%) and breast (18%) screenings.

However, reassuringly, most cancers diagnosed through Northern Ireland's three national screening programmes for bowel, cervical and breast cancer were found early when the disease is most treatable.**

Uptake of screening invitations is low in Northern Ireland. For example, only 58% of those eligible completed the bowel cancer screening test kit*** This is something Cancer Research UK hopes to change with this new

campaign.

The survey, which included around 1000 people in Northern Ireland, looked into the reasons why people weren't attending their screening appointments in Northern Ireland and was carried out ahead of the campaign launch.*

As well as the fear of pain or worry about what the test results might reveal, researchers found that one of the main reasons people avoided attending cervical or breast cancer screening was due to worry that the test would be carried out by a man (42% and 32%, respectively).

The main barriers to attending bowel cancer screening were being too frightened of what the test might find (13%), being unsure how to do it or worried they would do the test wrong (10%) or finding it too messy to complete (10%).

The new campaign uses a powerful TV advert that features the voice of Northern Ireland TV presenter Christine Lampard who grew up in Newtownards.

Christine Lampard said:

"Having supported close friends through cancer, I know how devastating a diagnosis can be. But screening can save lives by finding cancers at an early stage and even prevent some cancers from developing in the first place.

"I know people can feel nervous or even frightened about attending their appointment but it's so important because screening can help beat cancer. When you're invited, please don't ignore it."

People from Northern Ireland whose cancers were diagnosed via screening are at the heart of Cancer Research UK's new campaign.

Cancer screening is for people without symptoms. Each of the three programmes for bowel, cervical and breast screening use different tests, and have different eligibility criteria.

In Northern Ireland, people aged 60 to 74 who are registered with a GP receive a bowel screening kit every two years. The screening is offered by the Public Health Agency.



Women (including some transgender women), some transgender men and some non-binary people, are eligible for breast screening between the ages of 50 to 70. If you're registered as female with the GP, you'll be automatically sent an invitation every three years in the post every three years. If you aren't invited but think it might still be relevant for you, speak to your GP or Gender Identity Clinic. If you are over 70 you will not be automatically invited but can request screening.

Women, some transgender men and some non-binary people are eligible for cervical screening between the ages of 25-64. If you're registered as female with the GP, you'll be automatically sent an invitation every three years between the ages of 25 to 49 and every 5 years between the ages of 50 to 64. If you aren't invited but think it might still be relevant for you, speak to your GP or Gender Identity Clinic.

For more information visit: cruk.org/screeningNI

Agri Shows set for this year

2025 promises to be a year of celebration for Northern Ireland's agricultural sector. With a diverse range of shows and events taking place, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

So mark your calendars and get ready to experience the best of farming, food, and rural life in Northern Ireland! Whether you're a seasoned farmer, a foodie, or simply looking for a fun day out with the family, there's something for everyone. Here's a glimpse of what's in store:

Balmoral Show 2025: Kicking off the season in style is the Balmoral Show, Northern Ireland's largest agri-food event. Taking place from Wednesday 14th to Saturday 17th May at the Eikon Exhibition Centre in

Lisburn.

Ballymena Show: Held on Saturday 31st May, this show is known for its friendly atmosphere and strong focus on livestock competitions.

Ballymoney Show: Taking place on Friday 6th and Saturday 7th June.

Castlewellan Show: Castlewellan Show runs Saturday 19 July 2025, from 9am-6pm

Lurgan Show: Held on Saturday 7th June, this show is a great opportunity to sample local produce and learn about the region's rich

agricultural heritage.

Newry Show: Takes place on Saturday, June 28th.

Omagh Show: Tyrone Farming Society now look forward to the 183rd Annual Omagh Show which will take place on Friday 4 and Saturday 5 July 2025..

Saintfield Show: The Date for your diary this year is Saturday 21st June 2025. Saintfield Show is now in its 81st year and has a great history of showcasing all things agricultural to the local Co. Down community

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RUAS BANKING ON ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL BALMORAL SHOW

Ulster Bank announced as principal sponsor of 2025 Balmoral Show

Ulster Bank and the Royal Ulster Agriculture Society (RUAS) have kickstarted the countdown to the 156th Balmoral Show.

With four months to go until the 2025 event, representatives from both organisations met to announce some new attractions for this year's event and to confirm Ulster Bank will remain as principal sponsor of the show – marking a sixteen-year partnership between the two organisations.

Returning to Balmoral Park from 14-17 May, this year's Balmoral Show in partnership with Ulster Bank will once again feature a kids' farm, a mini-

Land Rover experience, the return of the Sustainability Village, along with the usual mix of machinery displays, food exhibitions and funfair attractions.

Some new livestock classes have been added to the 2025 programme including a Breeding Heifer class which will recognise excellence in the beef industry and additional qualifiers for the Performing Irish Draught, Connemara Ridden and Working Hunter horse classes, due to their growing popularity and high standard of competitors.

Show organisers are keen to consider the needs of all visitors this year and have introduced a designated

wellbeing area for those with additional need and enhanced the sensory space for younger showgoers.

Group Operations Director at the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, Rhonda Geary, said it is important to RUAS that everyone attending the 2025 Balmoral Show has an enjoyable experience.

"The Balmoral Show in partnership with Ulster Bank attracts over one hundred thousand visitors across the four days and as show organisers, it's our responsibility to ensure that everyone can access and enjoy the event. We have been working with our partners to introduce a new

children's sensory area and an enhanced wellbeing area for anyone wishing to find a quiet spot at the Show following a successful pilot in 2024.

"As an agricultural show, food and farming has always be the core of our activity, and this year will be no different. Thanks to the support from our principal partners at Ulster Bank, we have been able to add more exciting attractions to the programme and we are confident that this year's Show will be a fantastic showcase of agriculture in Northern Ireland.

Cormac McKervey, Senior Agriculture Manager,

Ulster Bank said he was looking forward to working with the RUAS once again to deliver this year's Balmoral Show.

"2025 marks the sixteenth year of Ulster Bank's title sponsorship of the Balmoral Show, and we are proud of the role we have played in the show's development.

"Ulster Bank's support for this sector extends well beyond the Balmoral Show and year-round, we support farming businesses and have a range of solutions available to meet their financial needs.

"Balmoral is always a great opportunity to meet with and learn from others across the supply chain and our teams of Relationship Managers will be on the ground throughout the show to engage with farmers about the future of farming and how we can better support the local industry here."

Early bird tickets for this year's event are already available to purchase online and the details of events will be available on the Balmoral Show website in the coming weeks.

For more information about how Ulster Bank can support your business needs, visit www.ulsterbank.co.uk/business

Communities Minister drives safety with £187,000 motorsports investment

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has announced funding of £187,000 to enable the motorsports sector to benefit from health and safety equipment.

Announcing the funding, Minister Lyons said: "Motorsports have always been part of Northern Ireland's world class sporting legacy, attracting riders and spectators from across the globe to events such as the North West 200 and other road racing circuits every year.

"This funding will go towards the purchase of safety bales which can be shared across the sector at road races and other events into the future, helping to make these races as safe as possible. The sector will also benefit from investment in other safety equipment, improving safety at race events and for those participating in track days."

Minister Lyons met with representatives from the governing bodies for motorsports in Northern Ireland to hear more about how the equipment will be used at events such as



motorbike road racing, car rallies, karting, hill climbs and at race tracks.

Minister Lyons highlighted the need to provide safer conditions for up and coming racers, saying: "We have some of the best motorsport talent in the world here in Northern Ireland and

local races and circuits are important to develop their careers. While the danger remains present, as it always will at high speeds, this funding, distributed through Sport NI, will boost rider and driver safety as well as the safety of teams, officials and visitors."



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Priority health outcomes announced for Live Better areas

The Department of Health has set out the three priority themes for the Live Better approach to tackle health inequalities.

Activities within the first two Live Better locations, which have been identified by local stakeholders, will deliver across themes of Starting Well, Living Well, and Ageing Well. They will also promote awareness of health inequalities issues through community health fairs, health checks and improving health literacy.

The initial Live Better locations are the Court District Electoral Area (DEA) in Belfast and The Moor DEA in Derry/Londonderry.

The three priority themes have been identified through engagement with local stakeholders to identify health issues in their neighbourhoods. They will involve:

- Starting Well: children's oral health (The Moor); childhood vaccinations (Court);
- Living Well: prediabetes, smoking cessation and cancer screening (The Moor); smoking in pregnancy (Court);
- Ageing Well: frailty and falls prevention (The Moor); connecting isolated older people with local support services (Court); and

In addition, health fairs and checks will be provided in both areas.

Health Minister Mike Nesbitt confirmed the agreed outcomes on a visit

to a health fair hosted by Shankill Shared Women's Centre in the Court area.

The event included information stalls, advice and support, alternative therapies and health checks.

Health Minister Mike Nesbitt said: "Health inequalities represent one of my key areas of focus and I am pleased to see its importance reflected in the Executive's Programme for Government.

"Live Better has been designed to bring targeted health support directly into communities by better aligning existing resources and HSC services and focusing on making them as accessible as possible and addressing local needs.

"I am delighted to be here today at the Shankill Shared Women's Centre to see how events like this can place healthcare into the heart of communities. I believe Live Better has the potential to make a real difference to people's lives and I would particularly encourage anyone who doesn't usually participate in health events to come and get involved in the activities that will be offered.

"I also extend my thanks to the local stakeholder groups, GPs and HSC Trusts who have been working closely with Public Health Agency (PHA) colleagues



Health Minister Mike Nesbitt is pictured with Betty Carlisle, CEO Shankill Women's Centre; and Stephen Wilson, Head of Strategic Engagement, Public Health Agency.

to identify the priority issues to be addressed in the Court and The Moor areas."

Some examples of programmes up and running or due to get underway include: a physio-lead intervention on safer mobility, including strength and balance exercises for older people with a text message service encouraging participants to be more active; a 12-week community-led pre-diabetes intervention programme; and a number of health check opportunities across the two demonstration areas.

Aidan Dawson, Chief Executive of the PHA, said: "The local community organisations and primary

care providers collaborating on Live Better are helping to deliver a community-centred approach to support people who are impacted most by health inequalities.

"The ongoing work by the PHA to help improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in communities has the potential to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes, which is complemented by the Live Better initiative.

"Over the coming weeks, I would encourage everyone to engage in Live Better activities in these areas to find out more about, and participate in, the project in their community."

NI Water volunteers help at Crosskennan Lane Animal Sanctuary

An enthusiastic team of NI Water volunteers recently helped at Crosskennan Lane Animal Sanctuary near Antrim.

The volunteers helped this fantastic local charity in a number of ways including painting new dog kennels, feeding and clearing out the animals and general farm tasks.

The volunteering day is part of NI Water's 'Cares Challenge' project which has been operating successfully for over ten years and is one of the largest corporate volunteering schemes in the province.

To date over 1,700 staff have volunteered in over 120 challenges, equating to more than 12,000 hours of volunteering to help support communities across Northern Ireland. In the latest project, volunteers from across the organisation made a valuable contribution to Crosskennan Lane Animal Sanctuary.

NI Water volunteer Debbie Mitchell commented: "It was a wonderful day, spending time helping out at the sanctuary and getting to know and work with other members of NIW.



It was a very therapeutic day and I would definitely visit again and highly recommend."

As part of the programme, activities are planned for various groups throughout Northern Ireland each year and are set up in partnership with Business in the Community's NI Cares Programme. The programme identifies organisations and charities within the local

community who need a helping hand with physical tasks such as gardening and painting.

Rose Kelly, Director of People and Learning, explained: "Our handy helpers have undertaken everything from gardening, painting and maintenance to environmental and fundraising days. It is often the extra support that these groups require to enhance their facilities,

improve the lives of their members and operate their centres successfully.

"Volunteering has also proved to be a key part of our health and wellbeing toolkit. Our teams gain so much from the experience, not only by helping the community, but also having the chance to spend time with colleagues from around the business that they might not otherwise have a chance to meet."



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Irish Football Association's (IFA) new five-year strategic plan for Women's and Girls' football

North Down DUP MLA Stephen Dunne has supported the launch of the Irish Football Association's (IFA) new five-year strategic plan for Women's and Girls' football in Northern Ireland as well as the launch of a joint UK bid to host the 2035 Women's World Cup. Mr Dunne commented:

'Women's and girls' football has grown substantially across Northern Ireland in recent years. The success of Northern Ireland's Senior Women at the 2022 European Championships demonstrates how far the women's game has come in such a short space of time. I welcome the launch of this strategic plan as an opportunity to reflect on the success to date, whilst also setting out clear actions to ensure this expansion continues.'

Having engaged with a number of local football clubs, I know that a lack of facilities and pitch provision is a real challenge to the continued growth of the women's game. Additionally, more opportunities are needed to provide promising

young players a clear pathway to the National Team and professional club football. We are fortunate to have so many positive role models in the local women's game, but it is important that the necessary infrastructure is in place to let players reach their full potential. I look forward to working alongside the IFA and all stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of this strategy. Together, we can elevate the game for everyone and inspire the next generation of female footballers in Northern Ireland. We have

The launch of this plan coincided with the announcement that the Football Associations of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales expressed their intention to submit a

joint UK bid to host the 2035 Women's World Cup. This would be an exciting opportunity to showcase Northern Irish football on the global stage, and I look forward to supporting the development of this bid where possible.'



Mr Dunne (second from left) with IFA officials at the launch of the new five-year strategic plan for Women's and Girls' football in Northern Ireland.

Half of people in NI are not confident in their smile, study finds

Brushing your teeth twice a day, cleaning them for at least two minutes, and visiting the dentist once a year are the staples of oral hygiene learned from an early age.

A new study from health and beauty tech retailer Currys, surveyed 2,000 people across the UK to explore the nation's oral hygiene habits, and results show that Brits still have a lot to learn. More than 6 in 10 Brits (63%) say that they brush their teeth for less than two minutes, and 16% of the nation says that they clean them only once a day. In addition to not following the basics, 40% of Brits say they struggle to get to a dentist when they need them.

The nation is losing their smile: is it bad hygiene or the fear of the dentist?

Oral health has been linked to self-esteem, and this is proven in several US studies, for both adults and children.

In the UK, data reveals that nearly 4 in 10 people (38%) are not confident about their smile, and a staggering 59% of them consider their teeth to be discoloured or yellow.

The data paints a similar picture in the Northern Ireland where nearly 6 in 10 (59%) people consider their teeth to be discoloured or yellow, with over a half (51%) not being confident in their smile.

The majority of people in the Northern Ireland (84%)—similar to the national average—clean their teeth twice a day. However,



14% still think that brushing only once a day is sufficient. More than a fifth (22%) of people in Northern Ireland don't follow the recommended two-minute minimum, brushing for one to two minutes. More alarmingly, nearly a third (30%) of Irish spend only 30 seconds to 1 minute brushing their teeth.

Not following basic oral hygiene practices or being unable to secure a dentist appointment can lead to serious health problems. For example, an untreated tooth infection can easily spread to surrounding tissue and other parts of the body, potentially resulting in hospitalisation in only the best-case scenario.

Fear of the dentist, also known as dental anxiety or

dentophobia, is one of the main barriers to securing a timely appointment. It is a common issue, with recent research confirming that 41% of Brits suffer from it. Another obstacle to good oral health, either on its own or combined with dental anxiety, is the difficulty in getting a dental appointment when needed, which was highlighted by nearly the same percentage of people in the UK (40%).

In Northern Ireland people also battle with fear of the dentist (43%) while a similar percentage (38%) highlight cost as the reason they are putting off a visit to the dentist.

Bad breath tops the list as the worst off-putting dental attribute

So, while bad oral hygiene

and struggling to get a dentist appointment can affect health and lead to poor self-esteem, it also carries some social consequences too.

Bad breath was flagged across the nation as one of the worst observable dental habits for a considerable number (73%) of people, followed by missing teeth (41%) and smoke on the breath (40%).

The Irish agree that the most off-putting dental attribute is bad breath, with missing teeth coming in second, and visible plaque emerging as the third most off-putting dental attribute in the region.

You can find more about the study here: <https://www.currys.co.uk/techtalk/kitchen-and-home/tooth-truths.html>

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The all-new, fully electric Volvo ES90

Some might say it is a saloon. Others will see a fastback, or even hints of an SUV.

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The ES90 combines the refined elegance of a saloon, the adaptability of a fastback, and the spacious interior and higher ground clearance associated with SUVs. It's a versatile car that does not compromise on comfort or space. A car that allows for bigger adventures and families, striking the perfect balance between your professional and private life, and allowing you to embrace the special moments in life.

The ES90 is designed to evolve over time and is powered by next-generation core computers that represent an eightfold improvement over the previous generation. It's the first Volvo car with 800V technology



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And naturally, it's designed with our pioneering safety tech at its core, in a package that is set to be another Scandinavian design classic from Volvo Cars.

With orderbooks open now in selected markets, the ES90 is the latest addition to our balanced product portfolio of premium Volvo cars. It is the sixth fully electric model in our line-up,

joining the EX90, EM90, EX40, EC40 and EX30 as we continue our journey towards full electrification.

"The Volvo ES90 combines our most advanced technologies with Scandinavian design and superior comfort, creating a true premium Volvo car designed to elevate your quality of life," says Jim Rowan, our CEO. "It joins the EX90 SUV as one of our flagship models and cements our position

as an industry leader in software-defined cars that harness the power of core computing."

The new Volvo ES90 is available for order now in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Other markets will be added later this year and into 2026.

DOUBLE SUCCESS FOR THE MG HS

The new MG HS SUV has achieved a double win at the 2025 What Car? Car of the Year Awards. The MG HS PHEV was judged 'Plug-in Hybrid of the Year' by the What Car? team whilst the petrol HS SE was crowned 'Best Family SUV for Value'.

Continuing MG's reputation for offering customers outstanding value in the SUV marketplace, the petrol HS SE 1.5T, recognised as the 'Best Family SUV for Value', is available from just £24,995.

David Allison, Head of Product and Planning at MG Motor UK, commented:

"The new MG HS models were designed to raise the bar even higher with more equipment and functionality, distinctive MG styling setting them apart from other SUVs, as well as a choice of advanced petrol or plug-in hybrid powertrains. Two awards from the What Car? experts are a great endorsement for our best-selling MG, and we're confident that this accolade will attract even more new customers to our brand, as well as impressing



existing owners looking for an upgrade.

The Plug-in Hybrid version offers a real alternative for families who love their SUVs but are put off by high running costs.

A range of 75 miles due to the high-capacity battery means most daily commutes can easily be covered by one charge, and for longer journeys, the added security of an

efficient petrol engine and large fuel tank makes it a compelling choice."

MG HS SUV models secured 30,207 sales in 2024 making this MG the 8th best-selling car in the UK. MG was also ranked 10th in terms of UK vehicle registrations, a first for the brand.

The new generation of the HS range offers customers the

best possible overall value in the SUV marketplace.

The petrol HS SE 1.5T is available from just £24,995 with the range-topping HS Trophy PHEV priced from £33,995. And, like all MGs, there is a generous 7-year/80,000-mile warranty supported by a 160 strong dealer network.

Successful initiative to reduce MOT waiting times extended

Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins has announced the extension of temporary exemption certificates (TECs) in 2025-26 to help manage MOT waiting times.

Minister Kimmins has extended the use of TECs for some five and seven year-old private cars for a further year. This will allow motorists with eligible cars to continue to drive them legally as long as they are roadworthy and are taxed and insured.

Former DfI Minister John O'Dowd approved the introduction of TECs for five and seven-year-old cars in April 2024 due to increased demands on vehicle testing and delays with the opening of Hydebank test centre.

The intervention has successfully reduced MOT waiting times from over 100 days at the end of May 2024 to around 30 days in early February 2025.

Vehicle licensing information shows that around 107,000 cars may be eligible for a TEC under the extension. The TECs will be automatically processed by



the DVA.

Minister Kimmins said: "TECs have helped to significantly reduce waiting times for MOTs. This extension will allow the DVA to continue to manage the increased demand for MOTs until new testing facilities at Hydebank and Mallusk are open for vehicle testing. These centres will provide the capacity to test more than 200,000 additional vehicles annually.

"Since the introduction of TECs, the DVA has continued to maximise its vehicle testing capacity at its existing 15 test centres through a variety of measures, including recruitment and overtime.

"From 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025, the DVA conducted 956,759 vehicle tests, compared with 942,789 for the same period in 2023-24. In 2024, there were only six days when

the DVA did not offer MOT appointments.

"TECs have helped improve service delivery while minimising any risk to road safety.

"As road users we all have a personal responsibility to behave in a way that keeps ourselves and others safe and, regardless of TECs, it remains our responsibility to ensure our cars are in a road-worthy condition by getting them serviced."

Toyota marked International Women's Day with Breaking Through short film

To celebrate International Women's Day 2025 (8 March), Toyota produced a new short film. *Breaking Through - A letter to my younger self*, featuring the Olympic medal-winning British diver and Toyota ambassador Andrea Spendolini-Sirieix.

Andrea Spendolini-Sirieix has enjoyed sporting success from a young age, from winning her first British Diving Championship at just 15-years-old, to medal success representing Great Britain at major international competitions, including a bronze at the Olympic Games Paris 2024.

In *Breaking Through*, she narrates a letter to her younger self, expressing her pride in her drive and determination and sharing personal stories and insights including her experiences with mental health, the importance of family support and her dedication to her sport.



She said: "Writing a letter to my younger self was an emotional and empowering experience. I wanted to remind my self — and young girls

everywhere — that perseverance and belief in yourself can lead to incredible achievements. I'm proud to share my story and hope it inspires

others to keep pushing forward."

Breaking Through is now available on Toyota's YouTube channel.

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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!

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THE ENDURING APPEAL OF ANTIQUE AND VINTAGE FURNITURE

In a world of mass-produced, disposable goods, antique and vintage furniture offer a refreshing alternative.

These pieces, with their rich history and unique character, bring a sense of warmth, authenticity, and sustainability to any home. But their appeal goes beyond mere aesthetics. Let's delve into the numerous benefits of incorporating these timeless treasures into your living space.

Unlike much of today's mass-produced furniture, antique and vintage pieces were often handcrafted with meticulous attention to detail. They were built to last, using high-quality materials and time-honoured techniques. This translates to exceptional durability and longevity, ensuring your investment will stand the test of time.

In a world where everyone seems to have the same furniture from big-box stores, antique and vintage pieces offer a chance to express your individuality. Each piece has its own story and history, making it a unique addition to your home. You're unlikely to find the exact same piece anywhere else, adding a touch of exclusivity to your décor.

Choosing antique and vintage furniture is a sustainable choice that benefits the environment. By repurposing existing pieces, you're reducing the demand for new production, which in turn conserves resources and reduces waste. It's a conscious way to



furnish your home while minimizing your environmental footprint.

Antique and vintage furniture encompasses a wide range of styles, from classic to mid-

century modern, ensuring there's something to suit every taste. These

pieces have a timeless quality that transcends fleeting trends, adding a touch of elegance

and sophistication to any space. They can be seamlessly integrated into various décor styles, from traditional to contemporary, creating a unique and eclectic look.

Antique and vintage furniture carries with it a sense of history and heritage.

Each piece has a story to tell, connecting you to the past and adding depth and character to your home. Owning a piece of history can be a truly enriching experience, sparking conversations and adding a unique dimension to your living space.

While not the primary reason to buy antique and vintage furniture, some pieces can appreciate in

value over time. As they become rarer and more sought-after, their value can increase, making them a potentially sound investment. However, it's essential to do your research and consult with experts before making any investment decisions.

Contrary to popular belief, antique and vintage furniture can be quite affordable, especially if you're willing to hunt for it. Flea markets, antique shops, and online marketplaces offer a treasure trove of unique finds at reasonable prices. With a little patience and perseverance, you can furnish your home with beautiful, high-quality pieces without breaking the bank.

Our guide to what can be planted in the garden in March

March is a month of transition in the UK garden. As the days lengthen and the soil begins to warm, it's time to shake off the winter chill and get your hands dirty.

Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, there's plenty to sow, plant, and nurture this March.

For vegetables, you can sow broad beans, carrots, parsnips, beetroot, spinach, summer cabbage, salad leaves, leeks, Swiss chard, kohlrabi, turnip, and summer cauliflower directly into the ground this month, weather permitting. If the weather is still unpredictable, you can get a head start by sowing tomatoes, peppers, chillies, aubergines, celery, and globe artichokes indoors. Onions, shallots, garlic sets, and Jerusalem artichoke tubers can be planted out in March.

Fruit-wise, March is the last chance to plant bare-root fruit trees like apples, pears, plums, and cherries. You can also plant potted soft fruit bushes such as currants, gooseberries, and raspberries. For a head start on your strawberry crop, plant cold-stored runners.

When it comes to flowers, sow hardy annuals like sweet peas, cornflowers, and poppies directly into the ground. Plant summer bulbs like gladioli, lilies, and crocosmia, and plant biennials like foxgloves, forget-me-nots, and wallflowers for blooms next year.

Other important gardening tasks include preparing



seedbeds by ensuring they are weed-free and raked to a fine tilth. Protect early outdoor sowings with cloches, mini-tunnels, or fleece. Continue to chit early and maincrop potatoes to encourage them to sprout before planting. Prune blueberries and carry out formative pruning of newly planted fruit trees. Mulch raspberries with homemade compost to suppress weeds and improve the soil. Feed apricots, currants, gooseberries, nectarines, peaches, and raspberries with compost. Start preparing runner bean supports and trenches.

Keep an eye out for trending plants like Helianthus 'Sunfinity 'Eternal Summer', a compact, multi-stemmed sunflower perfect for small gardens. Philadelphia Petite Perfume Pink, the world's pinkest

Philadelphus with vibrant pink blooms, is also one to watch. Osteospermum 'PopEyes' Series thrive in low light levels, while Buddleja Fanfare is a compact, double-flowering Buddleja that attracts pollinators. Hosta 'Sting' is slug-resistant and sun-tolerant with unusual foliage, and Miscanthus 'Lady In Red' is a striking new Miscanthus grass with red-tinged foliage. Acacia dealbata, a large evergreen

shrub with vibrant yellow blooms, will be popular, as will Helleborus orientalis 'Anemone Slaty Blue', a rare and unusual Hellebore with dark blooms. Magnolia 'Heaven Scent', a beautiful and fragrant Magnolia, and Clematis montana, a vigorous and colourful Clematis, round out the top ten.

Remember to be guided by the weather, as the weather in March can

be unpredictable, so be prepared to adjust your plans accordingly. Always check seed packets for specific sowing and planting instructions. Most

importantly, have fun, as gardening should be an enjoyable experience, so don't be afraid to experiment and try new things. Happy gardening!

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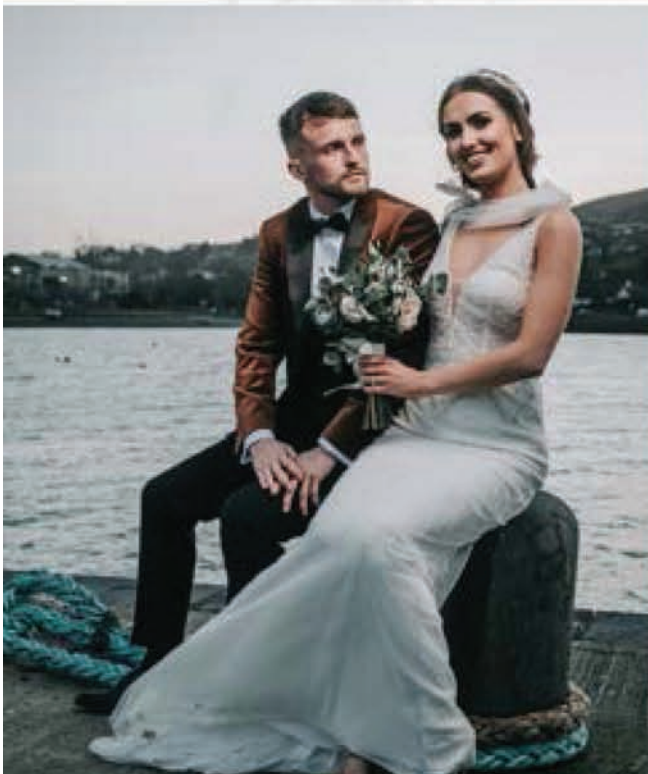
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