



THE ARDS ADVERTISER

Support Local

Reid Blinds

SPECIAL OFFER!

4 VERTICAL BLINDS FROM £125

Choose from Wooden, Venetian, Rollers, Louvre, Velux, Roman

SHOWROOM OPENING HOURS
Mon, Wed, Thurs & Fri 9am-5pm;
Tues 9am-3pm
Closed for lunch 1-1.30pm

Unit A8 Strangford Park, Ards Business Centre, Jubilee Road, Newtownards BT23 4YH

TEL: 02891 800505
www.reidblinds.com



Ards and North Down Mayor Councillor Gillian McCollum joined by L-R Sandra Henderson, Ruth-Anne Strotten, Louis Gilmore and Liz Elliot from the Ballywalter Community Action Group.

“IN BLOOM” FUNDING PROGRAMME

Ards and North Down Borough Council is pleased to announce that applications for this year’s “In Bloom” Funding Programme are now open.

The scheme supports community led horticultural projects across the Borough, with funding available for essential items such as plants, bulbs, compost, planters, and gardening tools.

The initiative aims to enhance local green spaces, promote sustainable gardening practices, and encourage community involvement.

Community groups

applying for support should demonstrate how their project meets the following criteria:

- Meet the core objectives of Ards and North Down in Bloom by focusing on the key criteria: Horticultural, Environment, and Community.
- Projects should help to instil local pride, create awareness of the environment and

biodiversity, encourages cross community participation and involvement for those of all ages and abilities.

- Provide a vision as to how the funding will enhance the particular areas and how this will be sustained in subsequent years.

- Evidence of approval from relevant landowner where works are to be carried out.

- Where appropriate insurance liability cover is in place, copy of certificate and schedule to be submitted.

- How the works are to be carried out, and by whom.
- Detailed breakdown of how funding will be utilised, and receipts submitted accordingly.

Continued on page 4

‘Mithing’ something?

Book a **free** dental implant consultation today – why wait?

Call us today
02891 853 304

helensbaydental.co.uk
1b Station Square, Helens Bay, BT19 1TN

WE BUY GOLD
BEST PRICES PAID
ID REQUIRED

Robinson Goldsmiths

**38A Prospect Road,
Bangor BT20 5DA**



ARDS BLOOD TESTING HUB SECURED

The South Eastern Trust’s Community Phlebotomy Hubs in Ards Hospital along with Downe Hospital and Lagan Valley Hospital provide a vital blood testing service in the heart of the community.

In 2025, the Team carried out an incredible 28,000 tests.

The Trust is delighted that this valuable and growing service is now fully funded by the Department of Health.

The hubs play a crucial role in providing blood tests in local hospitals, meaning patients do not have to travel to the Ulster Hospital.

When the service began prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Team initially helped approximately 400 patients per year. However, during 2024/25 alone, the service delivered an impressive 28,000 blood tests, clearly demonstrating how vital and well used the hubs are by both patients and clinicians.

On average, 2,000 patients go through the hubs each month.

Patients attend the Community Phlebotomy Hubs for blood tests ahead of planned procedures or treatment. This includes patients from the Diabetes Service, those undergoing cancer treatment, patients receiving biologic therapies and anyone preparing for surgery.

Pre-assessment Nurses, particularly when carrying out pre-assessments, can refer patients directly to the Community Phlebotomy Hubs to ensure all required blood work is completed in advance and patients are clinically cleared for their procedures or surgery.

Having blood results available ahead of appointment means clinical staff have the necessary information at hand, helping to avoid delays and improving overall care pathways.

Community Advice
Ards and North Down

Community Advice
Ards & North Down

Previously known as Citizen’s Advice Ards & North Down

FREE & CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE:
OVER 50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

WE SPECIALISE IN:

- Benefit Support: Specialist help with all benefit issues, including Universal Credit and PIP
- Social Security Appeals: if your benefit claim has been refused. Don’t face it alone—represented cases are significantly more likely to succeed.
- Employment Rights: Professional guidance on unfair dismissal, redundancies, contract disputes and employment tribunal attendance
- Debt - Specialist debt advisors to help you to sort out your debt issues. We are regulated by The Financial Conduct Authority—ensuring quality of advice.
- Housing: tenancy issues, social and private housing issues, affordability of rent/mortgages
- MacMillan Cancer Support Services—we have an office within The Macmillan Cancer centre at The Ulster Hospital, Dundonald

WHY CHOOSE US?

We are a local charity, not a government body. Our advice is free, independent, and confidential. With a team of over 45 specialists, we provide the expert advice and advocacy you need

CONTACT US TODAY

- Advice Line: 0300 123 9287 (Mon–Fri, 10 am – 4 pm).
- Email: advice@caand.co.uk

• Visit Us

(Drop-in each weekday 10 am – 15:30 pm):

- Newtownards: 30 Frances Street.
- Bangor: Hamilton Road Community Hub.
- Holywood: Sullivan Close (open only Mon and Wed).

See our website at www.caand.co.uk for the latest updates on outreach clinics in your area.





FOUR SEASONS HOTEL
CARLINGFORD
★★★★

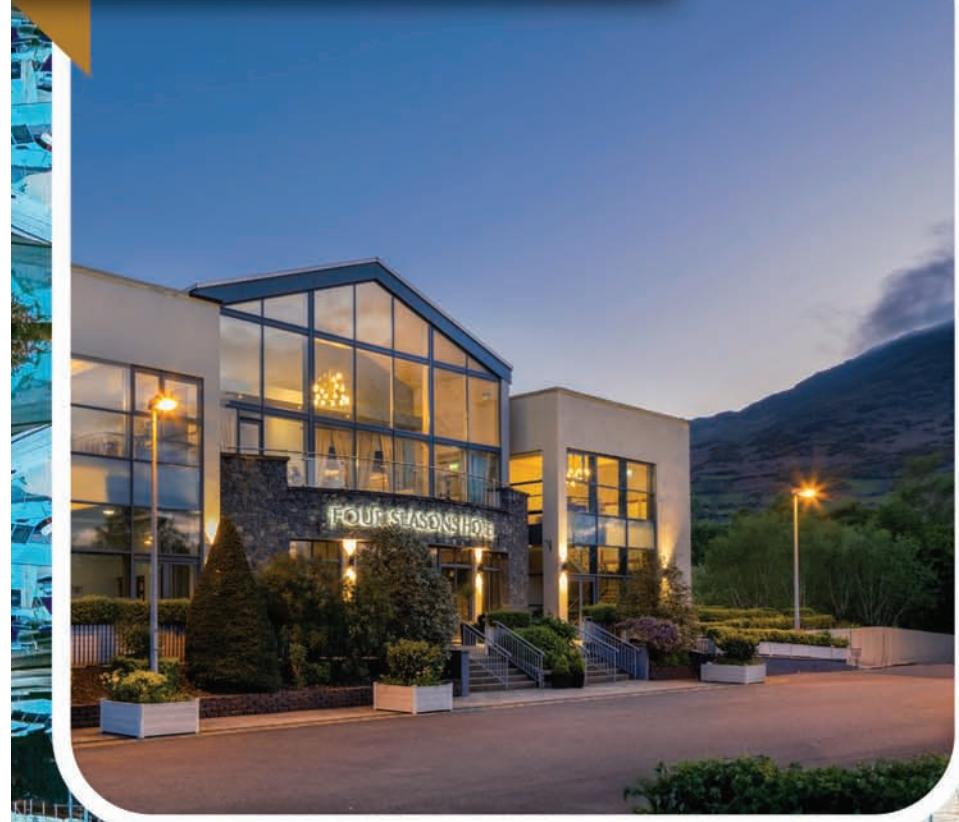
Spring into Summer



With a 1 Night Escape - Bed & Breakfast, 2 Course Evening Meal, a Complimentary Bottle of Wine & more...

From €225

per couple



info@fshc.ie | 4seasonshotelcarlingford.ie | +353 42 937 3530

Changing careers supported by Sports Turf Apprenticeship training

Sports Turf Apprenticeships at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) offer more than a qualification, they provide pathways into skilled, respected and progressive careers, all while earning as you learn.

This is demonstrated through the journey of Phillip Shields, a Level 3 Sports Turf Apprentice at CAFRE's Greenmount Campus and First Assistant Head Greenkeeper at Blackwood Golf Centre. By combining structured learning with day-to-day experience in a professional golf environment, Phillip has developed both the technical knowledge and leadership skills required to succeed in the sports turf industry.

Before entering greenkeeping, Phillip studied Law, achieving an LLB (Hons) and spending six years working in the legal industry. Redundancy during the Covid 19 pandemic became an unexpected turning point in his career. A temporary job at Holywood Golf Club, secured through a friend, introduced him to greenkeeping. This role quickly became far more than short term employment. During this period, Phillip built a solid foundation in turf maintenance, machinery operation, teamwork and health and safety.

CAFRE provided Phillip

with the opportunity to turn his passion into a profession. Studying Level 2 and now Level 3 Sports Turf Apprenticeship courses strengthened his skills through a deeper understanding of turf science, soils, drainage and plant health and course management principles.

Within just ten months at Blackwood Golf Centre, Phillip progressed into the role of First Assistant Head Greenkeeper. He supports the Head Greenkeeper with planning and organising daily operations, overseeing course presentation standards, and working closely with the team to deliver consistently high-quality playing surfaces.

Phillip's commitment and progress through CAFRE have been recognised across the industry. He was awarded BIGGA Greenkeeper of the Year 2024, and more recently was selected as the only greenkeeper from Northern Ireland to join the BIGGA Future Turf Managers Initiative to further his development.

CAFRE also encourages students to act as



Phillip Shields, CAFRE Level 3 Sports Turf Apprentice laying the groundwork for a successful career in Greenkeeping.

ambassadors for their professions. Phillip is passionate about promoting greenkeeping and educating the public through TikTok and Instagram (@thatturfman), where he shares behind the scenes and educational content highlighting the skill, planning and effort involved in maintaining high quality golf courses.

With ambitions to become a Head Greenkeeper, work at a venue hosting a major golf competition, and eventually mentor the next

generation of greenkeepers, Phillip's story highlights how CAFRE's Level 3 Sports Turf Apprenticeship training equips learners with the skills, confidence and industry connections to build a successful long-term career.

If you are interested in pursuing an Apprenticeship in Sports Turf, visit CAFRE on our Horticulture Open Day at Greenmount Campus on Wednesday 11 March. For more information and to book your place, please visit: www.cafre.ac.uk.



Own a self-financing home by the sea

Rental income 12 months of the Year
Earning you up to £1000 per week!

Head office 028 30821230

Cranfield Bay: 028 417 65242

Mourneview: 028 437 23327

Silvercove: 028 417 63136

Pebble Beach: 028 417 63136

Shanlieve: 028 417 64344

Cranfield House: 028 417 64344

Groomsport Bay: 028 9146 4323

200 New and Second-Hand Caravans for Sale
After Hours Mob 07860 617616

WWW.MILNEHOLIDAYPARKS.COM



Operating every day
in both directions
Book Online Now!

BELFAST GLASGOW EXPRESS

COACH & SAIL

£47

From Belfast Grand Central Station

Book your trip today!

www.hannoncoach.com

Tel: 028 9265 0700

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM

Belfast Stena Line
Terminal £45
Lisburn £48
Lurgan £49



certsure

Covering East Belfast, North Down, Ards & Ards Peninsula

CERTAINTY IN PROPERTY COMPLIANCE

Expert residential certification services for landlords, letting agents, and property developers.

Professional. Reliable. Fully accredited. CertSure Property services ensures your properties meet all legal safety and energy standards - with complete confidence.

- ✓ Energy Performance Certificates
- ✓ Electrical Inspection Reports
- ✓ Fire Alarm & Emergency Lighting
- ✓ Fire Extinguisher Servicing
- ✓ Cyclical Maintenance Surveys
- ✓ Landlord Inspections & Repair
- ✓ Legionella Risk Assessment
- ✓ Gas Safety Certificate
- ✓ Retrofit Consultation



WWW.CERTSUREPROPERTY.SERVICES
DANIEL@CERTSUREPROPERTY.SERVICES | TEL: 07738417976

NIFRS CELEBRATES NEWTOWNARDS WHOLETIME FIREFIGHTER GRADUATE

Recently 24 new Wholetime Firefighters officially graduated from Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) before taking up their roles in Fire Stations across the country.



GHD & CLOUD 9 REPAIRS
While you wait!
No need to book!

ALSO SMALL APPLIANCE REPAIR

For further details or enquiries:
Tel: 028 9048 1334
Unit 2, 57 Comber Road, Dundonald, BT16 2AA



The graduation ceremony was held at its Learning & Development College in Cookstown, where the Firefighter graduates spent the last 18 weeks completing an intensive training course, packed with realistic scenarios to prepare them to respond to real-life incidents while on duty.

Rhys Mercer, Wholetime Firefighter from Newtownards, was among the cohort who

graduated from NIFRS. During the ceremony, Firefighter Mercer was recognised for his exceptional performance in training by receiving the Top Trainee award with a Shield and the George Moore Trophy.

The Firefighters proudly demonstrated some of the specialist knowledge and range of practical skills they learned during their training to their family and friends as part of the special celebration. These included using breathing apparatus, tactical firefighting techniques, and responding to road traffic collisions and rescues.

As part of their rigorous training programme, they also learned how

to deliver essential fire prevention and community safety training to members of the public.

NIFRS Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, Aidan Jennings said:

"Today is an incredibly proud day for NIFRS as we welcome 24 new Wholetime Firefighters to our Service. Each of them has excelled throughout both our challenging recruitment process and the intense 18-week training programme that followed. These are not designed to be easy, so getting to this point is a fantastic achievement.

"Our expert trainers have played an instrumental role in preparing our trainee Firefighters over the last



Pictured is Wholetime Firefighter Rhys Mercer from Newtownards.

18 weeks. They have been superb teachers, exemplary role models and true ambassadors for NIFRS.

"This next generation of Firefighters have chosen this career path because they want to make a difference in our community. They want to work closely with others to make Northern Ireland a safer place to live."

NI Water Education Team Visits West Winds Primary School

NI Water's education team recently paid a visit to West Winds Primary School in Newtownards where the lessons of the day were on how to lag and tag your water pipes at home to protect them during freezing weather conditions, and also how to save water by using a waterbutt.

NI Water has produced a bright yellow tag

for customers to loop around their stop valves in their premises as part of its winter prep campaign. NI Water's education team have been visiting schools and providing tags to the children to bring home. The children were tasked with the important job of telling everyone at home where their stop valve is located and asking a grown up to put the tag on the valve so it will be easily identifiable in the event of a burst pipe.

NI Water also donated a waterbutt to West Winds Primary School for use in their garden.

Waterbutts are a great way of harvesting rainwater, which can then be used to water plants or wash windows.

NI Water education officer Anna Killen said

"It was a pleasure to meet the wonderful pupils at West Winds Primary School and to talk to them about how a stop valve is usually located under the kitchen sink and how they are used to shut off the flow of water in a pipe in an emergency. They've all been given their very own NI Water tag to take home for their families to use."

"It was also a pleasure to talk to the pupils



about the difference a waterbutt can make when trying to save water. We get plenty of rain in Northern Ireland but this rainwater has to be cleaned at our treatment works before it goes into the taps. Using a waterbutt to catch the rain is just one way we can all have play a part to ensure there's enough water for everyone now and in the future."

Continued from page 1

Ards and North Down Mayor Councillor Gillian McCollum said:

"The 'In Bloom' initiative reflects the very best of our community spirit here in Ards and North

Down. Every year, residents, volunteers, and local groups come together to make our city, towns, villages, and shared spaces more vibrant, more welcoming, and more environmentally sustainable. I am continually inspired

by the dedication of those who invest their time and passion into enhancing our Borough.

I would encourage community groups of all sizes to apply for this funding. Together, we can continue to nurture pride in our neighbourhoods and

create beautiful, biodiverse spaces for everyone to enjoy."

For more information and how to apply, please visit In Bloom Funding - Ards and North Down Borough Council <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/In-Bloom-Funding>

CAROLINE'S PILATES
FITNESS & AQUA PILATES
IN THE ABBEY

Mon 12.30pm, 6.30pm / Thurs 9.30am, 11am, and 6pm.
IN THE PARK Sat 9.30am
IN THE SEA Sat 11.15am

(Please contact me if coming to class for first time)
"I've been around professional sport for many years, but seldom have I come across a fitness programme that is as well presented as Caroline's."
-BOB ZELLER, Founder Belfast Giants

OPEN TO ALL | CALL FOR INFO
TEL. 07528445460

MOORE ROBOTIC MOWERS
Prices starting from £749
Bring this advert with you and get a further £15 discount off your purchase!

Contact Us - 028 9751 0804
MOORES ROBOTIC MOWERS
9 Drumalig Road, Boardmills, Lisburn BT27 6UD

Ear Wax Removal by Micro-Suction

Qualified hearing aid audiologist

Membership from just £21.45 per month*

Get Fit and Healthy with us at Comber

Membership includes: unlimited use of the gyms, FITT POD, classes and health suite at Comber.



JOIN HERE NOW

* Concession rate, adult, student and junior rates available. T&Cs apply.

Comber Leisure Centre

Castle Street, Comber BT23 4DY | 028 9187 4350
comberlc@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
leisureardsandnorthdown.com

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Ards and North Down Borough Council Becomes First Official Drop-Off Partner for The Hygiene Bank in Local Leisure Centres

Ards and North Down Borough Council is pleased to announce a new partnership with The Hygiene Bank – Ards and North Down Project, becoming the first local authority in Northern Ireland to host official donation drop-off points within Council-operated leisure facilities.

Collection boxes are now in place at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex, Comber Leisure Centre and Portaferry Sports Centre.

This initiative will support The Hygiene Bank's ongoing efforts to tackle hygiene poverty across Ards and North Down. The local project, run entirely by volunteers, has been serving the community for the past seven years, providing essential hygiene items to a wide network of community partners including foodbanks, community and church groups, schools, and other organisations supporting individuals and families facing hardship.

Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum, added,

"We are proud to support The Hygiene Bank and the vital work it carries out across our Borough. Hygiene poverty is an issue that affects many households quietly but profoundly. By providing drop-off points in our leisure centres, we hope to make it easier for residents to donate and to help ensure

that essential items reach those who need them most. This partnership reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting community wellbeing and ensuring that no one in Ards and North Down goes without the basics."

Jean McGrogan, The Hygiene Bank Ards and North Down Project said, "We, as volunteers with The Hygiene Bank, Ards and North Down Project, are very grateful to Ards

and North Down Borough Council for becoming the first Drop Off Points within the local Council Leisure Complexes.

Each donation means so much to families who need our help, and this partnership will greatly enhance our ability to support those experiencing hygiene poverty."

The Hygiene Bank collects essential everyday items commonly found in homes, such as shower gel, shampoo, soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes, toilet rolls, nappies and baby care essentials, household cleaning and laundry products.

Ards and North Down Borough Council encourages residents to donate what they can during their visit to one of the participating leisure centres.

For more information on The Hygiene Bank and how to get involved, please visit: www.thehygienebank.com.



Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum alongside (L-R), Councillor Rachel Ashe and Jean McGrogan, Hygiene Bank Ards and North Down Project.

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.

- 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

Women's Aid
NORTH DOWN & ARDS

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:

February
24th

March
10th & 24th

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

Housing Executive



Olympic Stairlifts
Making steps safer one stairlift at a time.

**Indoor and external,
straight and curved**

We supply, install, test and maintain Passenger Lifts, Access Lifts, Goods Lifts and Stairlifts along with escalators & Moving walkways. We have installed over 15,000 projects throughout the UK & Ireland over the last 40 years.



Head Office:
Olympic House, 2 Lissue Walk, Lisburn, BT28 2LU
Telephone: +44 (0)28 9262 2331
www.olympicstairlifts.co.uk



NENDRUM COLLEGE PUPILS SUPPORT CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Pupils from Comber's Nendrum College have taken part in a series of workshops designed to provide fun engaging techniques to support their emotional wellbeing in and out of the classroom, as part of Children's Mental Health Week.

The workshops were delivered through the Emotional Wellbeing Team in Schools (EWTS), a Regional programme led by Health and Social Care staff across all five Trust areas. Through interactive sessions and classroom-based discussions, pupils explored how to talk openly about their feelings and develop a stronger sense of belonging within their school community.

In today's social media driven world, it is increasingly important

that schools create supportive environments where pupils feel heard, seen and understood.

During the session at Nendrum College, Year Eight pupils took part in relaxed discussions, focussing on why a sense of belonging is so important for mental health, as well as how small acts of kindness towards one another can make such a difference.

Pupil, Sophie Rountree, shared how much she enjoyed the session. Sophie said, "I really liked it and

learning how important our mental health is. Coming from Primary Seven to Year Eight is fine, it is not scary and the teachers are so nice. I found the morning really good and really helpful."

Emotional Health and Wellbeing Practitioner Louise Begley has been delivering the programme across schools in the South Eastern Trust and Belfast Trust areas. "We have been delivering workshops and assembly's this week in Nendrum College as part of Children's Mental Health Week.

"It is really important, from Year Eight onwards, to build on the preventive education side of things

by helping children understand what mental health is, how they can look after their own emotional wellbeing and what support is available to them and how they can access it.

"Our service is based on the 'Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework' published in 2021, which highlighted some of the emotional difficulties some children can experience in Northern Ireland. It is important for our young people to be learning about their mental health and what they can do to support their wellbeing."



(L-R) Emotional Health and Wellbeing Practitioner Louise Begley, Year Eight Pupil Sophie Rountree, Nendrum College Teacher Mrs Williams and Emotional Health and Wellbeing Practitioner Gemma Vaughan

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS IN BUSINESS

Party Treasures

FANCY DRESS & ACCESSORIES

- Party Products • Helium Balloons
- Theme Parties • Hen Party Accessories
- For All Your Party Needs!

121 High Street, Bangor
028 9146 8597

Open: Mon - Sat
9.15am - 5.15pm

GILMORE FUNERAL DIRECTORS LTD

"Our family is here to look after your family when you need us most"

Proud WINNERS of Lifetime Service Award AND Independent Funeral Director of the Year at

For personal service from an INDEPENDENT family owned business call KEN GILMORE Dip.F.D. 028 9187 2949 Serving all areas 24 hours a day 365 days a year since 1987

GOLDEN CHARTER PRE PAID FUNERAL PLANS

Headstones erected, lettering added, stones cleaned

www.gilmore-funeraldirectors.co.uk | 1 Kilinchy Street Comber BT23 5AP

Gilmore Funeral Directors LTD is an appointed representative of Golden Charter Limited trading as Golden Charter Funeral Plans which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FRN:965279). Registered in England No. 02511598 Registered Office: One Fleet Place, London EC4M 7WS.

Kiln dried hardwood logs back in stock for winter. Our customers favourite quality Birch logs, low moisture content to satisfy your stove warranty, burns clean and bright, just the ticket to keep your home toasty warm

WoodStoc
keeping you warm this winter!

6 Bags equivalent to a barrow bag.
Delivery service available.
Normal Delivery charges apply.

2A Balloo Park, Balloo Industrial Estate, Bangor, BT19 7PP
T. 028 9147 7133
WWW.woodstoc.com

Portaferry hosted NI Science Festival Events

The wonders of science, technology, engineering, the arts and maths were recently explored at NI Science Festival with support from Tourism Northern Ireland.

The festival which took place from 11–22 February 2026, offered a vibrant programme of events at venues across Northern

Ireland, which included workshops, tours, talks and interactive activities for people of all ages.

In Portaferry - Portico Arts & Heritage Centre hosted 'Never Always Ever' and Strangford Lough Activity Centre hosted several events including Foraging Afloat, Paddle Back in Time and Paddle with a Purpose.

Throughout the Festival World-class scientists discussed cutting-edge research and what the future might hold, while there were also scientific debates, comedy, music and film screenings planned.

Highlights included a talk on examining

Ireland's historical and cultural relationship with superstition, 'Escape to the Chateau' star and sustainability advocate Dick Strawbridge in conversation and a talk by theoretical physicist Professor Jim Al-Khalili on how a century of quantum mechanics has shaped our world and the next frontiers of quantum science.

First launched in 2015, the NI Science Festival has developed into one of the biggest celebrations of science in the UK and Ireland, connecting leading scientists, thinkers and creators with audiences of all backgrounds.

It aims to inspire



(L-R) Sarah Jones, Director of the NI Science Festival, Siobhan McGuigan, Head of Events at Tourism NI and Cailin Lynn, NI Science Festival board member.

curiosity, spark conversations and showcase how science shapes the world, from the environment and health to creativity and innovation.

This marks the first

year that Tourism NI has supported the NI Science Festival through its International Tourism Events Fund. It supports events that attract significantly high levels of visitors to Northern Ireland, while also generating international media coverage, which helps to showcase the region as a must-see travel destination.

The NI Science Festival

is one of 14 events which secured funding through the fund. It is estimated that the NI Science Festival will attract around 50,000 visitors, with 10% coming from outside Northern Ireland.

Around 600 participants were expected to take part in the various events planned with 3,000 commercial bednights (hotel, B&B, guesthouse, self-catering) set to be booked.

Siobhan McGuigan, Head of Events at Tourism NI, said: "Tourism NI is delighted to support NI Science Festival.

"The festival boasts

a host of engaging events across the region with many taking place at innovative venues such as the Seamus Heaney Homeplace and at Armagh Planetarium, which will attract visitors of all ages, outside the peak season.

Sarah Jones, Director of the NI Science Festival, said: "We are grateful to Tourism NI for its support through the ITEF. This investment has enabled NI Science Festival to significantly increase our activity this year, delivering events right across Northern Ireland - from Rathlin and Portaferry to Enniskillen and beyond."

"The funding has allowed us to present an ambitious programme featuring world-leading science communicators, including Professor Alice Roberts and Professor Jim Al-Khalili, attracting new audiences from Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and overseas.

For further information, please visit nisciencefestival.com

RUBBER MATS

A range of Rubber Mats suitable for Play Areas, Grass Protection, Trailers, Vans, Garage Flooring, Stables, Kennels etc.

Contact Agri-Web Ltd
25 Enterprise Road, Bangor, BT19 7TA
Tel 028 9127 5913

6 Years ANNIVERSARY

GROWING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Silverwing MOBILE SPA

Silverwing Salon is MOBILE!

Bringing pampering right to your doorstep!
BOOK IN FOR A PAWSOME EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR PET!
Contact us on 028 9122 8172 kaitlyn@silverwingsalon.co.uk

GARDEN LEISURE NI

GREENHOUSE SALE
Save up to **30%**

02891 240140

VOICE OF HOPE CHOIR

The Wellness Recovery Network within the South Eastern Trust, is transforming the lives of people in recovery from mental health and addiction challenges through a range of creative and supportive programmes.

One such initiative, a singing for health group called 'Voice of Hope', has empowered many individuals to rebuild confidence, rediscover their voices and reconnect with others through the shared joy of music improving their overall mental health.

Among those whose lives have been positively transformed is 72-year-old piano teacher, Anuk Rooney from Bangor, who credits the group with supporting her recovery following a diagnosis of depression.

Anuk, who previously taught music in the United States before moving to Northern Ireland six years ago, explains how the group helped her reconnect with her passion after stepping away from music during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anuk said, "During COVID I became very depressed and had to step back from my much-loved work as a piano teacher. I found out about the Wellness Recovery Network support groups and went along to one. While I was there, I heard about the singing group in Ards and thought it would



The Voice of Hope singing group

be something I could try, even if it was just to listen to other people sing.

"Going along to the music group was so much fun. It was lovely to hear people sing and just as importantly, to have people to talk to. The group members have now become my friends."

Wellness Recovery Network Co-ordinator, Angela O'Hara highlighted the benefits of the group and its inclusive approach. Angela stated, "The Voice of Hope Group was formed in 2017 and is a singing for health group. You do not have

to be able to sing to join, you just need to enjoy music. Everyone is welcome to attend.

"The group is very uplifting and is ideal for anyone looking for routine, connection and confidence-building.

It runs every Monday afternoon in Action Mental Health in Jubilee Road, Newtownards.

Angela also explained that the group works in partnership with Right Key, an organisation specialising in supporting people in mental health and addiction recovery through music and singing for health. Angela added, "I have worked in the Trust

for 10 years and this is without doubt the best-attended group we have ever run. Each week, around 15 people return for another session.

"It is a real privilege to be part of this group. I love my job and getting to sing along with the group every Monday afternoon is a real joy. Singing is a hugely undervalued wellness tool and the benefits are incredible."

Anyone interested in attending the Voice of Hope singing group can self-refer by contacting wellnessrecoverynetwork@setrust.hscni.net or calling (07713) 088 676.

Sign up
to our
FREE
Digital
Magazine
Today!



Family
Focus



subscriptions@edamedia.co.uk



**ARDS
INTERNATIONAL
GUITAR FESTIVAL**
15~19 APRIL 2026

Tickets on sale now
ardsguitarfestival.co.uk  

 Ards and
North Down
Borough Council

Soft Play at Comber
It's all about the fun for little ones

For toddlers to 10 year olds.
Available for casual use throughout the week.
Great for Parties!

Scan this code for details



Comber Leisure Centre
Castle Street, Comber BT23 4DY | 028 9187 4350
comberlc@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk
leisureardsandnorthdown.com

 Ards and
North Down
Borough Council

North Down and Ards Women's Aid

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

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

A warm invitation is extended to come and listen to **GOSPEL MESSAGES** Applicable to everyday living IN Ballygown Village Hall MEETINGS EACH SUNDAY, 6-7PM FREE AND EVERYONE WELCOME! Tel: 07729 942414

A warm invitation is extended to come and listen to **GOSPEL MESSAGES** Applicable to everyday living IN Portavogie Community Centre EACH WEDNESDAY, 8-9PM FREE AND EVERYONE WELCOME! Tel: 07729 942414



working is vital in eliminating domestic abuse."

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

- Coercive Control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual abuse)
- Psychological and / or emotional abuse
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Financial or economic abuse
- Harassment and stalking
- Online or digital abuse.

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

7.3% increase from the year before. We had 68 women referred into our refuge, which was a 35.5% increase. Of this number, 91 women were from the rural area.

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

In contrast, the oystercatchers behaved much as they would along a rocky beach, hurrying from one prospective feeding spot to another, basically all over the place, but clearly intent on finding food in late winter when storms or

WADING FOR WORMS – THE OYSTERCATCHER

Peep peep peep peep peep peeppeep peeppeeppeep...



high tides might have restricted availability along the coast, a few miles away.

Oystercatchers are rather stocky waders, easily told apart from other wader kin such as turnstones and curlews by their larger size, striking black and white plumage, and that piercing piping call.

Around 60,000 oystercatchers spend the winter around the Irish coasts, the residents supplemented

by migrants from Iceland and Norway. While their numbers are in decline, they

edge. Despite their name, they seldom eat oysters, preferring cockles and mussels which they prise or break open using that massive, pointed beak, their diet supplemented by lugworms and other large invertebrates.

Winter is a great time to visit our coasts to see and hear the myriad waders and other water birds which find food and shelter here to sustain them until spring.

JVA

THE ARDS ADVERTISER

Support Local

Pick up your FREE copy at:

NEWTOWARDS
Scrab Service Station,
SPAR 181 Mill Street,
Newtownards
Top Spot
2 Frances Street,
Newtownards

COMBER
Livingstones Newsagents
5 Bridge Street,
Comber
Campbell Spar
2 Killinchy Road,
Comber

BALLYGOWAN & MONEYREAGH
Campbell Spar
2 Saintfield Road,
Ballygown
D Drury
1 Hillmount Drive,
Moneyreagh

BALLYHALBERT,
CLougHEY,
PORTAFERRY &
Spar Ballyhalbert
24-28 High Street,
Ballyhalbert
Watsons Centra
2 The Square, Cloughey
Portaferry Costcutters &
Post Office Portaferry
28 The Square

KILLINCHY & LISBANE
Bell's Killinchy
16 Comber Road,
Killinchy Spar
3 Comber Road, Killinchy
Lisbane Service Station
175 Killinchy Road, Comber,
Lisbane

Certsure Property Services: Your Partner in Property Compliance

In the fast-evolving landscape of the local property market, staying compliant with ever-changing safety regulations can be a daunting task for landlords and letting agents.

Certsure Property Services is a leading solution, providing a comprehensive "one-stop-shop" for property certification and safety requirements across the country.

A History of Reliability Certsure Property Services was founded with a clear mission: to simplify the complex world of property compliance. Recognizing that property owners often struggled to coordinate multiple contractors for different safety checks, the company established itself as a centralized hub for legal certifications. Over the years, they have built a

robust network of qualified engineers and accredited assessors, growing from a regional provider into a trusted nationwide partner known for professionalism and efficiency.

Comprehensive Service Offerings The company specializes in ensuring that residential and commercial properties meet all statutory requirements. Their core services include:

- Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR): Ensuring fixed electrical installations are safe and compliant with current standards.
- Gas Safety Certificates

(CP12): Mandatory annual inspections for gas appliances and flues.

- Energy Performance Certificates (EPC): Assessing energy efficiency to meet legal rental standards.

• Legionella risk assessment.

- Fire Safety & Alarms: Professional installation and maintenance of smoke, heat, and carbon monoxide detectors to protect inhabitants.

What Customers Say The company's dedication to customer service is reflected in their feedback. One satisfied landlord, Sarah M., recently shared:

"I've used Certsure for my entire portfolio. They handle the EICRs and Gas Safety checks seamlessly, and their booking system is incredibly efficient. It's a huge relief to know my properties are legal and my tenants are safe without having to chase multiple tradespeople."

By combining technical expertise with a customer-centric approach, Certsure Property Services continues to set the standard for property safety management in the UK. For more information, visit certsureproperty.com.

GRANSHA EQUESTRIAN CENTRE
RIDING LESSONS FOR ALL AGES AND STANDARDS
IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE BOOKING ON THE GRANSHA EQUESTRIAN APP, PLEASE PHONE OUR BOOKING LINE 02891422203 BETWEEN 9 & 5, MONDAY – FRIDAY
www.granshaequestriancentre.com
10A KERRS ROAD, BANGOR, BT19 7QD.
Enquiries to email – granshariding@yahoo.com



The Purple Paw Gala 2026
A night to transform lives, raising vital funds to support Assistance Dogs Northern Ireland.
Friday 6th March 2026 Culloden Estate & Spa
For tickets and information contact adni.org.uk #PurplePawGala #ADNI #LifeChangingDogs

MARCH MADNESS AT THE CAUSEWAY HOTEL

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

March Madness Midweek Special Rate: Overnight stay with breakfast for £100.00 per room!

Stay Longer, Save More Embrace the magic of March with our Winter Warmer deal. Book two nights and enjoy the third night free! Savour a delicious breakfast each morning and indulge in

dinner on your first two nights. With more time to explore the stunning coastline and iconic landmarks, there are endless reasons to stay longer.

Rest & Reflect March Weekend Getaway Escape to the coast with our exclusive weekend retreat. Enjoy a bottle of complimentary prosecco

waiting for you in your room and indulge in a late checkout (Friday-Sunday) for ultimate relaxation. Whether it's a romantic break or a solo recharge, we'll help you make your weekends truly memorable.

Family-Friendly March Break Escape to the coast with our exclusive weekend retreat. Enjoy a bottle of complimentary prosecco

Looking for a fun-filled family adventure? Kids

under 12 stay and eat free when sharing with adults. Enjoy a cozy night's stay with breakfast for just £180, or upgrade to dinner, bed, and breakfast for £200. Create cherished memories as you explore local attractions, perfect for family bonding this spring. Don't miss out on these fantastic offers this March.

Whether it's relaxation, adventure, or quality time with loved ones, The Causeway Hotel has something special for everyone. Book now and let your journey begin!

To book your stay, contact our friendly reception staff at 028 2073 1210 or email reception@thecausewayhotel.com

British pet parents struggling to cover cost of rising vet bills

One-in-three UK pet parents delay or skip vet treatment because of high costs

Majority of dog and cat owners support an end to postcode pricing at vets

Jollyes, the UK's leading value pet retailer, offers major savings on core vet services such as vaccinations and microchipping, making high quality pet care available to all

As the UK's leading value pet retailer Jollyes Pets, today released new research that laid bare the concern felt by pet parents about the cost of rising vet services. In a survey conducted last week by OnePoll[2] on behalf of Jollyes Pets, almost one-in-three (30 per cent) pet parents said they'd delayed or skipped treatment for their pet because of rising vet prices.

That's why prices at Jollyes' vet clinics are at the same low prices nationwide, with none of the local price variations that other big vet groups apply.

A two-course vaccination for a new puppy or kitten is just £55.00 at any Jollyes vet clinic and a booster vaccination for either a dog or cat, is a flat £35.00.

Chipping a dog or cat at is £20.00 at Jollyes Pets and a combined first vaccination course and microchip is £68.00.

Jollyes Pets chief executive officer-designate Adam Dury said:

"It's clear pet parents across the UK are really struggling to fund vet bills that have exploded over the past five years.

"While our vet clinics offer simple services such as vaccines and microchipping, those services cover nine in ten visits to a vet – with significant savings.

"As our survey shows, customers want prices transparency and lower



prices with the same price from one end of the country to the other.

"That's why we're focused on opening more stores to provide communities access to lower vet clinic prices for the services they need."

The vet market is dominated by six large veterinary groups[3], that control 60 per cent of the market and Jollyes Pets offers a low-cost, high-quality alternative for services such as vaccinations and microchipping that's the price leader, over 40 per cent better value.

In the next two months, regulation[4] is expected that will improve price transparency in the £6.3bn sector that, according to the Office for National

Statistics has seen cost of taking pets to the vet rise by almost 50 per cent[5] since 2020.

Across its 73 vet clinics nationwide[6], Jollyes now offers over 20,000 hours of appointment time with Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) vets – an increase of 9.3 per cent on the previous year and has over 100 trained colleagues (SQP) licensed to offer advice on over-the-counter medicines.

Bookings can also now be made online with fully trained Royal Veterinary College-accredited vets who work with long-term sector experts from Evile & Jones.

Over the past three years Jollyes has almost doubled the number of stores across the UK, becoming a clear

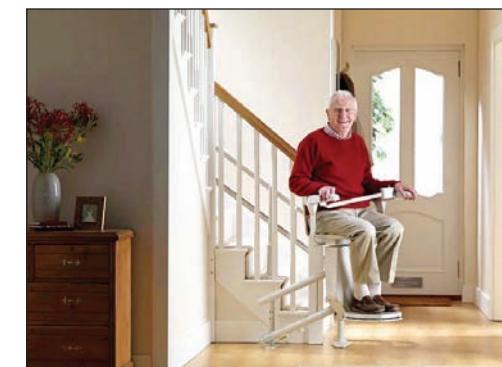
challenger brand in the UK pet retail market.

Earlier this month Jollyes released strong trading results[7] that demonstrated how significant rises in food and vet bills over the year were impacting household budgets.

In late 2025 the RSPCA reported pet abandonment and neglect cases were at a five-year high because of these economic concerns[8].

Olympic Lifts; making steps safer one stairlift at a time.

Olympic Lifts is your trusted partner for a wide range of accessibility products.



access to lower gardens, garages, or cellars.

• Straight stairlifts: Reliable and space-saving options for straightforward staircases.

Beyond Stairlifts, Olympic Lifts also supplies, installs, tests, and maintains Passenger Lifts, Access Lifts, Goods Lifts, escalators, and Moving walkways. We are proud to have completed almost 20,000 projects over the past four decades. Recently, we launched our new machine room traction drive access passenger lift (the Eclipse), a versatile Hybrid Lift suitable for both domestic and commercial

properties, offering numerous sizes and finish options.

Our commitment to continuous development, investment, and product advancement ensures that Olympic Lifts offers the most up-to-date, highest quality products and services. This dedication translates to an improved purchasing experience, enhanced efficiencies, and cost savings for our valued customers.

For more information on our range of Stairlifts and other lifting solutions, please contact us at 02892 622331 or visit our website at www.olympiclifts.co.uk.

What's on at La Mon?

THE RAT PACK 28 FEB	MOTHER'S DAY AFTERNOON TEA 14 MAR	MOTHER'S DAY CARVERY 15 MAR	MOTOWN SENSATIONS 27 MAR
EASTER SUNDAY CARVERY 5 APR	GARTH BROOKS TRIBUTE 11 APR	ABBA SENSATIONS 24 APR	PRINCESS ACADEMY 13 JUN
 Visit lamon.co.uk for more information.			
			

MARCH MADNESS SALE

Escape to the stunning Causeway Coast with exclusive March offers



Explore the iconic Giant's Causeway with free entrance to the Giant's Causeway Visitor Experience with each stay

Stay longer, save more

Relax in our charming rooms with complimentary Prosecco, late check out & coastal views

Kids Stay & Eat Free

+44(0) 28 2073 1210



Ards International Guitar Festival Strikes a Chord for Its 30th Anniversary

The much loved Ards International Guitar Festival will return to Newtownards from 15 - 19 April, celebrating an incredible 30 years of world class performances, inspiring collaborations and unforgettable guitar driven moments.

Organised by Ards and North Down Borough Council, the 2026 programme brings together exceptional players from across the UK, Ireland and beyond, honouring the versatility and global influence of the guitar in all its forms.

This milestone year opens with French virtuoso Pierre Bensusan, who appears as part of his 50th Anniversary World Tour. Known worldwide as "Mister DADGAD", Bensusan brings his unmistakable voice and musical depth to the Queen's Hall, where he will also be joined by George and Aaron Lowden for an on stage conversation exploring the origins of his longstanding relationship with the Lowden guitar brand. A previous recipient of the festival's Lifetime

Achievement Award and winner of numerous international accolades, Bensusan's performance promises a spellbinding beginning to the anniversary celebrations.

Audiences can also look forward to a powerful tribute to the late John Martyn, delivered by Belfast's own Ken Haddock and his full band. Haddock - a revered songwriter, guitarist and vocalist - will delve into Martyn's remarkable catalogue, from timeless favourites such as May You Never and Solid Air to some of the artist's more experimental and rarely performed works. With top flight musicians including Colm McClean on guitars and John McCullough on keyboards, this special show brings together artistry, memory and a deep love of

Martyn's musical legacy. Also appearing at this year's festival is the extraordinary Martin Taylor, returning with his brand new solo show Standards. Described by Jeff Beck as 'the best guitarist in the world' and hailed by Pat Metheny as 'one of the most awesome solo guitar players in history,' the multi award winning fingerstyle virtuoso brings an evening dedicated to the golden age of jazz. Another previous recipient of the festival's Lifetime Achievement Award, Taylor's performance promises breathtaking musicianship, warm storytelling and an intimate journey through the timeless classics that shaped his remarkable six decade career. Supported by Andrew Toman, this will be a standout night for jazz lovers and newcomers alike.

Closing the festival at the Queen's Hall in electrifying style, Ricky Warwick & The Fighting Hearts bring a raw, heartfelt and hard hitting rock performance back to Warwick's hometown. Best known for his work with The Almighty, Black Star Riders and Thin Lizzy, Warwick remains one of British rock's most enduring voices. Fresh from the success of his critically acclaimed 2025 album Blood Ties, he returns to Newtownards with a full band line up and a set that

blends grit, melody and deeply personal storytelling. "It's always extra special for me to play my hometown," he said. "I'm delighted to bring The Fighting Hearts to the 30th anniversary festival."

Fans can also look forward to performances by Andy McKee, David Browne Murray, Matthew McAllister with the Classical Guitar Society of Northern Ireland, The Frank Carbery Blues Band, a series of Free Fringe Events and so much more!

The Luthier's Tale, a special exhibition at Ards Arts Centre will explore the artistry of guitar building, honouring the makers of Lowden and Avalon through a behind-the-scenes look at their craft. Created to mark 30 years of the Ards International Guitar Festival, recognising Newtownards guitar-making heritage.

Speaking about this year's milestone programme, the



Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Gillian McCollum said: "I am thrilled to welcome Ards International Guitar Festival back to the Borough. The guitar has always held a special place in Newtownards' cultural life, and it is wonderful to see the festival celebrate its 30th Anniversary."

Festival Director Emily Crawford added: "We are absolutely delighted to be celebrating such a special anniversary this year. The 2026 line up offers an eclectic mix of styles - from classical to folk, blues, contemporary and rock-reflecting the remarkable range of the instrument and its players with some special nods to the history and legacy of the past 30 years."

The Ards International Guitar Festival runs from 15-19 April. Tickets and full programme details are available at www.ardsguitarfestival.co.uk.

STRUMMING FOR SUCCESS

Picking up a guitar is far more than a quest for rock stardom; it is a profound investment in your cognitive health.



When you learn to navigate the fretboard, you are essentially putting your brain through a high-intensity workout. This process fosters neuroplasticity by forcing the mind to multitask—simultaneously reading notation, maintaining rhythm, and coordinating complex finger movements. These mental gymnastics sharpen your focus and have been shown to improve long-term memory, effectively rewiring your brain to process information more efficiently.

Beyond the mental perks, the guitar serves

as a powerful tool for emotional regulation. Engaging with the instrument allows players to enter a "flow state," a form of active meditation where the stressors of daily life fade into the background. The tactile sensation of the strings and the resonance of the wood provide a physical outlet for expression that can significantly lower cortisol levels. Whether you are strumming a gentle folk tune or shredding a cathartic solo, the act of creation acts as a reset button for the soul.

Finally, the guitar offers physical and

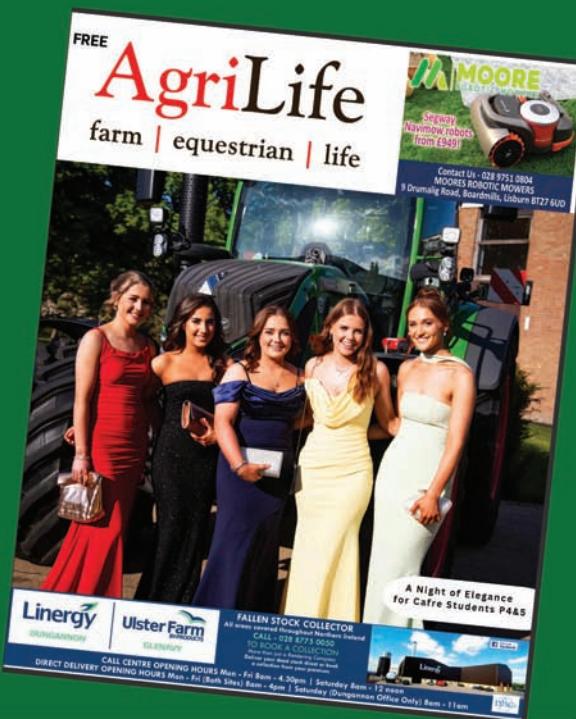
social rewards that last a lifetime. Developing the fine motor skills required for intricate chord shapes builds incredible hand-eye coordination and finger dexterity. This newfound skill often translates into a surge of self-confidence that spills over into social settings. As a universal language, music creates instant bridges, whether you are jamming with a local band or simply sharing a song with friends. Even a few minutes of daily practice transforms the guitar from a piece of wood into a lifelong companion for growth and connection.

Pre-Paid Funeral Plans Available

MARK PATTON
FUNERAL SERVICES
24 HOUR PERSONAL SERVICE

Victoria Square, Ballygowan
Tel: 028 9752 8333 - 028 9751 1212

Sign up to our
FREE
Digital Magazine
Today!



AgriLife
farm | equestrian | life



subscriptions@edamedia.co.uk

Ards and North Down Job Fair

Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex, Newtownards
Thursday 19 March 2026, 11.00am - 2.00pm

Find job opportunities and improve your employment prospects with practical advice and support

BSL and ISL interpreters
11.00am - 12.30pm
Benefit customers may get help with travel costs to the event



For more information: jobapplyni.com
or email: dfcemployerservices@communities-ni.gov.uk

Ards and
North Down
Borough Council

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN
Labour Market Partnership
Working Together



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk



Intergenerational ballet classes
for children and adults.

The first signs of spring

Winter doesn't exit with a grand flourish; it retreats with a slow, muddy exhale.

In the countryside, spring isn't a single date on a calendar but a series of subtle "handshakes" between the earth and the sun. If you're tired of the grey-scale landscape, it's time to stop looking for big changes and start noticing the small, quiet rebellions against the frost.

The first move belongs to the snowdrops. These are the undisputed MVPs of the season, equipped with a natural "antifreeze" that lets them punch through frozen soil without shattering. They are soon joined by the "green mist"—that strange, ethereal aura that settles over the treeline. It isn't an optical illusion; it's the result of sap rising and millions of tiny buds swelling simultaneously, changing the horizon's color before a single leaf has even unfurled.

Look toward the

hedgerows and you'll see hazel catkins, often called "lamb's tails," dancing in the wind. These long, yellow-green tassels are designed to flick pollen into the breeze before the summer foliage grows thick enough to block its path. On the ground, the yellow stars of Celandines begin to pepper the ditches. These are the countryside's sun-seekers, opening wide during bright spells and clamping shut the moment a cloud dares to pass over.

The silence of winter breaks first in the canopy. The "Dawn Chorus" returns, led by the Great Tit's rhythmic, two-note "teacher-teacher" call. You'll notice a new, frantic energy as rooks squabble over nesting rights in the treetops and blackbirds dart through the undergrowth with beaks

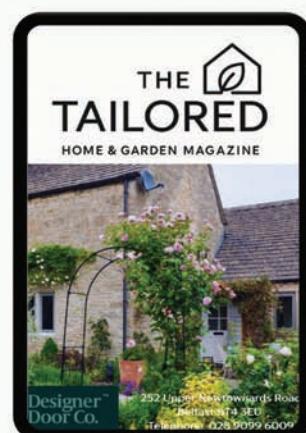
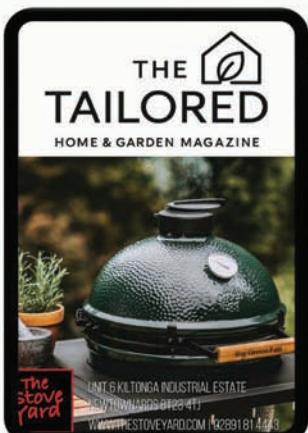


full of dried grass. Even the water stirs; clumps of frogspawn—clear jelly with obsidian centers—appear in the shallows of ponds, signaling that the underwater world has officially woken up.

Finally, there is the scent. As the soil warms and dries, it releases a distinct, earthy perfume known as petrichor.

It's a primitive aroma that signals the ground is ready to support life again. Combined with the sight of "wobbly" newborn lambs in the fields, these signs confirm that the cycle has turned. Spring is here—you just have to look down at the ditches and up at the buds to see it.

THE
TAILORED
HOME & GARDEN MAGAZINE



- HOME INTERIORS
- RENOVATIONS
- LIFESTYLE

Subscribe
for FREE

email: subscriptions@edamedia.co.uk

Tuesdays : St John's Malone
Wednesday : Holywood Old School
Thursday : St John's Malone
Friday : Holywood Old School
Saturday : Carnmoney Presbyterian.
Laura Walker BA Hons. ARAD. Life Member of the RAD
Contact Laura on 07368275235
email : laurawalkerballet@hotmail.com

[f Laura Walker Ballet School](#)



Bangor Bingo – A New Chapter Begins

After more than two decades at the heart of the local community, the much-loved Oasis Bingo has officially rebranded as Bangor Bingo.



While the name has changed, the spirit remains the same—great value, friendly faces, and a welcoming night out—now enhanced with a modern bingo experience designed for today's players.

The venue has been refreshed with stylish décor, upgraded technology, and a warm, comfortable atmosphere blending traditional bingo fun with a contemporary feel. Players can enjoy both fully electronic and classic paper bingo, offering something for every generation, including those discovering bingo for the first time.

New members receive £50 free to use on bingo, gaming machines, or both. Regular visitors benefit from a strong loyalty programme,

featuring loyalty credit, and-night accumulators, multi-visit discounts, upgrade offers, £10 for introducing a new member, free tea and coffee, and a machine rewards system that gives something back as you play.

Bangor Bingo proudly pays all prize money in-house and runs day-

and-night accumulators, and-night accumulators, commonly £10,000 and £5,000 each week, delivering real excitement every session.

With bingo available from as little as £10, the focus remains on value, sociability, and a genuinely welcoming atmosphere.

Launch Night takes place Friday 27th February from 6:00pm, featuring a free gift, free bingo book, £6,500 in-house prize money, and special giveaways.

Find Bangor Bingo beside the cinema in Bangor, and follow the venue on Facebook for regular competitions and free bingo opportunities.

**LEO MAGUIRE
TAE-KWON DO SCHOOLS**
(3 Years - Adults)



LITTLE TIGER CUBS

Learn Through Play Programme (For 3-5 Year Old's)
Introduce Basic Martial Arts Skills through a mixture of Games,
Fitness Drills and Tae-kwon Do Training.

ACTIVE TIGERS

(For 5-8 Year Old's) Allowing Children to Develop
Tae-kwon Do Skills at a More Relaxed Pace.

TAE-KWON DO

(For 9 Year Old's to Adult) It's Safe, Practical and Fun. Improve Self-Confidence.

BELGIUM FLANDERS FIELDS!

6 GOLDS - 8 SILVERS - 7 BRONZE
800 COMPETITORS - 14 COUNTRIES - 60 TEAMS
CAME 6TH OUT OF 60 TEAMS



www.taekwondo-ni.co.uk
Contact: Leo Maguire (N.I. National Coach)
T: 07891 191494

HANNON Coach & Sail is perfect for a city break in Glasgow this New Year!

Direct Belfast – Glasgow Express now departing from the new Belfast Grand Central Station.

An award-winning service offering hassle-free travel, HANNON Coach & Sail is ideal for a New Year city break in Glasgow and the perfect antidote to flying and airport stress! Already hugely popular with those in the know, the Belfast – Glasgow Express Coach Service is rated 5-Star on TripAdvisor.

A shopper's paradise, Glasgow is recognised as having the best retail therapy in the UK outside of London. Consistently voted 'top of the shops', the city is Scotland's premier shopping destination.

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.

With a simple flat fare of £47 which includes the cost of



the ferry and your bag, the Belfast – Glasgow Express offers a really attractive, convenient and low-cost alternative to flying.

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 Christmas shopping. There are also a great range of hotels just minutes from 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," said Mr Hannon.

The service can be booked online at www.hannoncoach.com up to 1 hour before departure or by phone using the very friendly telephone booking service.

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

1 Regent Street
NEWTOWNARDS, BT23 4AB
028 9181 3144

8-10 Main Street
BALLYMONEY, BT53 6AL
028 2766 3265

CORDNERS
WWW.CORDNERS.CO.UK

NEW SPRING SUMMER ARRIVALS

CLAIM £5 OFF WITH THIS VOUCHER
Present at check-out to Redeem

Golden Sands
BENONE

Golden Sands offers a luxury experience. 4 star holiday park by the sea, located in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Holiday Homes
Touring Caravans
Camping

EASTER SALE ON STATIC CARAVANS!

If you would like any further information or to make a booking
Tel: 028 777 50324 Fax: 028 777 50405 Email: info@goldensandsbenone.com
26 Benone Avenue, Limavady, Co. Londonderry, BT49 0LQ.

www.goldensandsbenone.com

News from the The Chip Stop and The Phat Fryer

Since opening its doors in Autumn 2025, The Phat Fryer has quickly become a staple of the Bangor food scene.

But while the name might be new to the Gransha Road, the expertise behind the counter certainly isn't.

As the sister business to the legendary The Chip Stop—which has been open on the Belfast Road for nine successful years—The Phat Fryer carries a serious pedigree for frying.

At both businesses the focus remains on the holy trinity of a great chippy: perfectly

battered cod, generous portions, and freshly cut chips.

The Phat Fryer Goes Digital

In a move that's making life a whole lot easier for the hungry masses, The Phat Fryer has officially launched its brand-new app!

Android Users: You are officially in the "VIP Lane." The app is live on the Google Play Store right now. Fewer clicks, faster orders, and more grub heading your

way.

iOS Crew: Don't panic! Apple is reportedly "a bit busy" (their words, probably), but (at time of print) the app is approved and just waiting in the queue. You'll be live very soon—stay tuned!

Delivery Has Landed (And it's a Bargain!)

If you don't feel like leaving the sofa, The Phat Fryer has you covered. Delivery has officially launched, running Tuesday

through Saturday from 5:00 PM.

To celebrate the launch, they are offering a massive deal: Delivery for only 99p! Whether you're ordering via the new Android app or through their website, you can now get those freshly cut chips delivered straight to your door without breaking the bank.

visit www.thephatfryer.co.uk to place your order.

Tourism NI launches accommodation certification campaign

Tourism Northern Ireland is urging accommodation providers planning to rent out their properties for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann this summer to get certified.

Belfast will host Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, the world's largest annual festival of Irish music, song, dance and competitions, between August 2 and 9, 2026.

Around 700,000 visitors are expected to attend the event, which will include a fringe programme in regional areas.

In preparation, Tourism NI has launched a new accommodation certification campaign to ensure providers are ready for the event.

It is a legal requirement that all visitor accommodation in Northern Ireland is certified by

Tourism NI, even if they are let on an ad-hoc basis.

Such legislation ensures that all providers comply with relevant regulations, operate on a level playing field, maintain quality standards, and instil consumer confidence in our tourism offerings.

More importantly, operating without certification could result in legal action against the operator and reputational damage to the wider industry.

The certification process includes a physical inspection of the property and its facilities by a member of the Tourism NI

team. Proprietors can also receive operational and marketing advice during the certification process.

The new industry-wide campaign, which is being supported by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS), emphasises the importance of legal operation and the simplicity of the certification process.

The campaign is being launched just weeks before Tourism NI hosts a Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann accommodation information webinar on February 18.

This session will offer accommodation providers planning to promote properties during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann practical information and highlight the importance of responsible and fair pricing, which will help ensure the event remains accessible for visitors, delivers lasting economic benefits for accommodation providers, and preserves the inclusive spirit that defines the event.

Further details about the webinar and how to register is available at Getting Fleadh Ready: Lunch and Learn Webinar A Guide for Accommodation Providers

Aine Kearney, Director of Events at Tourism NI, said: "The process of applying for certification is very simple and can be completed online. Once certified, we will conduct one statutory inspection of the property over a four-year period.

"Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is sure to draw performers and visitors from around the world who will be in need of accommodation across the region. We want to ensure they receive the best experience possible.

"Therefore, it is really important that anyone providing visitor accommodation is certified in good time ahead of the event in August. We don't want anyone looking to offer visitor accommodation to miss out by not being certified."

Peter Cassidy, Station Commander with the NIFRS, said: "We're proud to partner with Tourism NI to highlight the importance of fire safety in tourist accommodations ahead of this summer's Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

"Before renting out your property as a holiday let, ensure it meets the required fire safety standards by conducting a fire risk assessment, confirming the appropriate smoke alarms are installed and working, and providing clear escape instructions for occupants in case of fire.

"Together, we can help make this a safe and memorable summer, for all the right reasons."

Further information about certification is available from Tourism NI by emailing qa@tourismni.com or by calling 028 90 441545.

WHAT WE CAN PROVIDE

- Accommodation for up to 140 people
- Catered or self-catering
- Wide range of indoor and outdoor activities for all abilities

Find out more:

www.ganaway.co.uk

028 9186 1297

info@ganaway.co.uk



Strangford Moorings

- Aids to Navigation
- Vessel Charter
- Family run business for over 30 years
- Owner operator therefore competitive prices
- Proven track record on Marine Renewable projects
- Road Transportable Multicats, Catamarans & Ribs



www.strangfordmoorings.co.uk

matt@strangfordmoorings.co.uk

07815875995 02897541880

THE CHIP STOP

OPEN 7 DAYS PER WEEK

12PM – 9PM

DELIVERY SERVICE

CALL NOW 07895 207 472

VISIT: THECHIPSTOPBANGOR.COM

- LUNCHTIME SPECIALS
- GLUTEN FREE OPTIONS

BP GARAGE, BELFAST ROAD, BANGOR



THE PHAT

FRYER

WHERE FLAVOUR MEETS PASSION

OPEN TUESDAY - SATURDAY 12-8PM

DELIVERY SERVICE 5-8PM

LUNCHTIME SPECIALS | COLLECTIONS | WALK-INS

UNIT 2 GRANSHA ROAD, BANGOR

CALL NOW TO PLACE YOUR ORDER

07510 990959

WWW.THEPHATFRYER.CO.UK

Causeway Speciality Market Celebrates 20 Years

April 2026 will see one of Coleraine's best-loved attractions reach a major milestone.

The Council-run Causeway Speciality Market will celebrate its 20th anniversary on Saturday 11th April 2026.

Council's Town and Village Management team, who proudly run the market, invites everyone to join them for a very special outdoor celebration - recognising two decades of talented makers, local produce, artisan craft, creativity and of course community.

Located in the heart of Coleraine, the Causeway Speciality Market has become one of the largest regular outdoor artisan markets in Northern Ireland over the last two decades and during this time has supported many local startups to develop and grow their businesses.

To mark this significant anniversary, Council is planning a year-long programme of celebratory activity, running from April 2026 right through to

March 2027. Watch out for a showcase of market favourites reflecting on the early days of the market while also sharing 20 years of memories.

The free anniversary celebration event, on Saturday 11th April 2026 will feature live entertainment, family activities, and promises to be a fun-filled day for all that reflects the market's unique appeal.

Follow Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's social media pages for updates:

Facebook
Instagram

For more information about CSM and what it offers traders and shoppers alike visit Causeway Speciality Market | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council



Clogher Valley Agricultural Show
Wednesday 29th July 2026

at Knockmany Road Augher
Everyone is Welcome!

All enquiries to Mrs Ruth Montgomery Secretary
www.cloghervalleyshow.com

Tel: 028 8554 8883

W: www.cloghervalleyshow.com
E: cloghershow27@hotmail.com



CAUSEWAY Speciality MARKET Coleraine

Causeway Speciality Market is a bustling food and craft market held in Coleraine town centre twice a month from 9am - 4pm.

Upcoming dates;

Saturday 14 March
Saturday 11 April
Saturday 25 April

Market on Saturday 11 April will feature live entertainment, family activities, and promises to be a fun-filled day for all that reflects the market's unique appeal as it celebrates 20 years.

causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/csm

5 STAR CARE AT HELENS BAY DENTAL

Helens Bay Dental Practice frequently emerges in patient narratives as a place that genuinely transforms confidence and well-being.

Reviewers often speak of life-changing outcomes — from implants that restore chewing function to cosmetic treatments that revive self-esteem

- One patient shared how broken front teeth were fixed with "three implants to carry five front teeth," enabling them to eat comfortably and smile radiantly. The whole process was praised as "very efficient, pain free" with "a new lease of life"

- Another described overcoming discoloration, unevenness, and gaps through whitening, implants, and fillings—a journey so successful they "no longer ashamed to let people see" their smile

- Cosmetic cases also thrive, such as Invisalign or Six Month Smile users who highlight how previously camera-shy individuals now feel able

to flash genuine grins: "now I have straight teeth and I couldn't be happier"

Across 269 Google reviews, the practice consistently earns five-star praise for its clean, welcoming environment and gentle, professional staff. Recent reviews underscore that the team—especially the hygienists—deliver dependable, reassuring care: "Staff are very pleasant ... I felt at ease," and "Seamless as always"

In essence, a visit to Helens Bay Dental not only addresses practical dental needs but often leads to profound personal transformation—granting renewed comfort, confidence and a smile patients are proud to share.

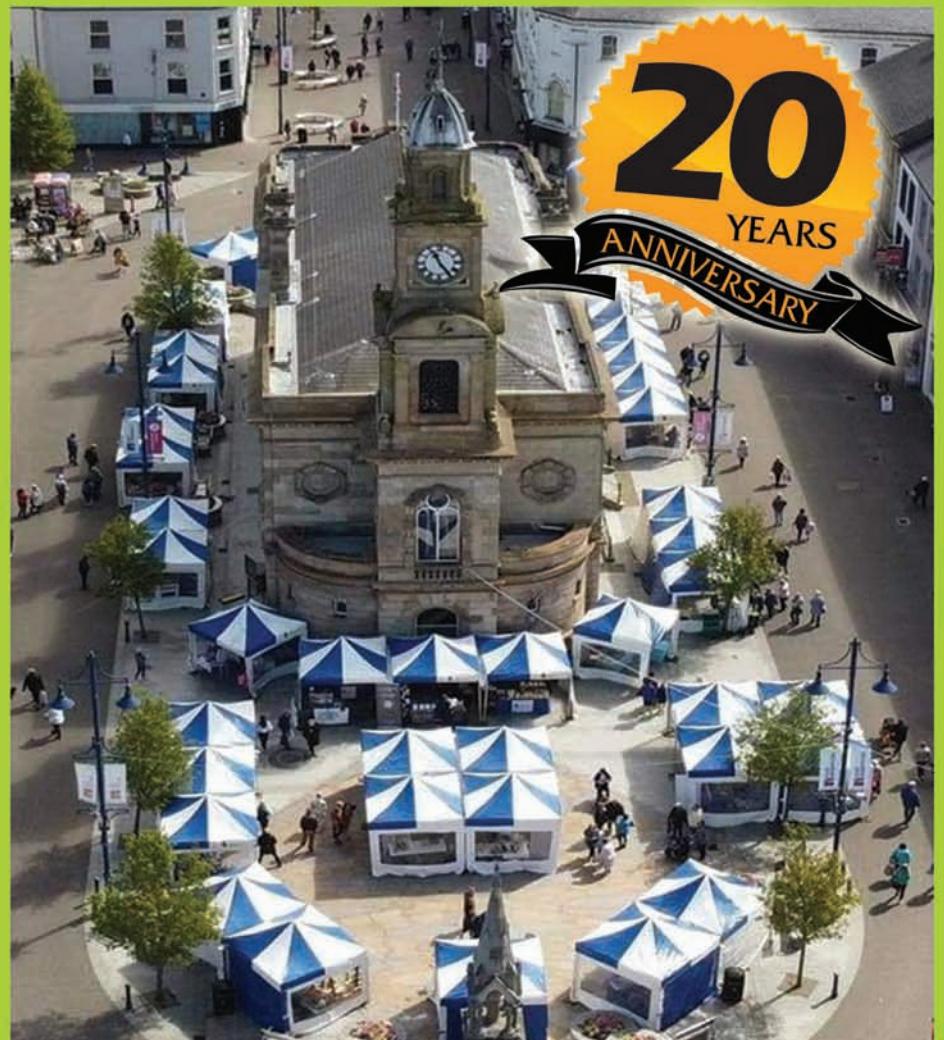
Call to arrange a Complimentary visit with one of the Treatment coordinators



to find out how you can improve your Dental health and upgrade your smile

02891 853304 ask for Victoria the New Patient

Coordinator
Email info@helensbaydental.co.uk
Find [helensbaydental](https://www.helensbaydental.co.uk) on Facebook and Instagram



Spring Adventures: Family Events in Ards & North Down (March–May 2026)

As the days stretch out and the first snowdrops begin to peek through in Nugent's Wood, the local area comes alive with a packed calendar of family-friendly activities.

From the shores of Strangford Lough to the bustling streets of Bangor and Holywood, here is your ultimate guide to what's on for families this spring.

March: Culture, Craic, and Coastal Walks

- Young Aspects Festival (Feb 27 – March 1): Wrap up the tail end of this youth literature festival in Bangor. Expect cozy bedtime stories, bookbinding workshops, and character creation sessions perfect for budding authors and artists.

- St. Patrick's Weekend (March 14–17): * Newtownards & Bangor: Catch "Cap on the Wall" for a night of Irish dancing and music featuring All-Ireland champions and Riverdance stars.

- Trad Trails: Follow the music through local venues as the borough celebrates Ireland's patron saint with pop-up performances and family fun days.

- Arts Night at the Museum (Friday, March 20): Visit the North Down Museum in Bangor for a special late-night opening filled with interactive art and history.

- Spring Solstice with NI Opera (March 20): A unique musical experience to welcome the new season, often held in atmospheric



Young Aspects is always a highlight of the Spring events calendar for families

local heritage sites. April: Easter Egg-stravaganzas

- National Trust Easter Trails (March 28 – April 7):
- Mount Stewart: The world-class gardens host a nature-inspired Easter trail. Kids can earn a chocolate treat (with vegan options available) while exploring the whimsical topiary and lake walks.

- Castle Ward: Head further down the coast for a "long-eared" adventure in the sprawling 18th-century estate.

- Ark Open Farm Easter Extravaganza (Two Weeks in April): Always a hit with toddlers and primary schoolers, the farm features a Dino Egg Trail, the chance to meet the Easter Bunny, and—the highlight

of spring—bottle-feeding newborn lambs.

- Ards International Guitar Festival (April 15–19): For families with older children or music lovers, this festival brings world-class talent to Newtownards for workshops and concerts.

- Pet Nose Day at Mount Stewart (April 25): A quirky day out where your four-legged family members are the guests of honor.

- May: Maypoles and Maritime Magic

- Holywood Merry May Day (Monday, May 4): This is one of Ireland's oldest traditions. The town center is pedestrianized for a day:

- Maypole Dancing: Watch local schoolchildren perform traditional routines around the UK's only town-

centre maypole.

- Fancy Dress & Street Theatre: Don't miss the crowning of the May Queen and the "Bonnie Baby" competition.

- Donaghadee Moat & Camera Obscura: Reopening in May for the summer season, the Moat offers incredible views across the Irish Sea—a great spot for a family picnic.

- Coastal Adventure at Pickie Funpark: While open year-round, May is the perfect time to hop on the iconic Pickie Swans or try the splash pad on a sunny afternoon in Bangor.

- Exploris Aquarium: Located in Portaferry, spring is a great time to visit the seal sanctuary to see the pups before they are released back into the wild.

New digital course to help pupils stay safe online

Education Minister Paul Givan has today officially launched a new online Digital Proficiency Course aimed at educating pupils and wider school communities on keeping safe online.

Provided through the Safer Schools NI platform, the Digital Proficiency Course has been designed to provide the practical tools and knowledge to empower children and young people to stay safe online.

The course has been made freely available to all education settings, pupils and parents across Northern Ireland.

Colin Stitt, Head of Safer Schools, INEQE Safeguarding Group said: "Decades ago, 'Cycling Proficiency' taught us to navigate the physical world safely; today, that 'road'

has become digital. The Digital Proficiency Course is an age-appropriate, episodic video-based programme based on the five 'Five Cs' of online risk - Content, Contact, Conduct, Commerce, and Cyber Security. This certified course is free to access for parents, carers, pupils and school staff on the Safer Schools NI web and mobile app. The digital 'road' may have changed, but our collective commitment to safeguarding our children should always remain paramount. I urge all

schools and families to use these resources to educate, empower and protect our children and young people in the digital world."

The Course was launched during a visit to Braniel Primary School, one of the 400 schools already pre-registered to take part in the initiative, which will go live on Safer Internet Day, marked on 10 February 2026.

To register your school or learn more about the Digital Proficiency Course, visit: <https://saferschoolsnri.co.uk/digitalproficiency/>

CWA claire whyte architect

Design to Inspire

RIBA Chartered Architect

Creating individual spaces for every scale or budget

Claire Whyte, 12 Mount Alexander, Comber, BT23 5QL

www.clairewhytearchitect.com and on facebook

Email: claire@clairewhytearchitect.com

T: 02891071300 M: 07595422433

[Find us on Facebook](#)

The **Blind** **Spot**

Verticals start from 3 windows for £99

Local Gold Partner and Retailer for the social media trending Blind Screen

Terms & Conditions Apply

CURTAIN RAILS AND MADE TO MEASURE CURTAINS



- Roller Blinds
- Wooden Venetians
- Fauxwood Venetians
- Aluminium Venetians
- Perfect Fit
- Roof Roller Blinds
- Santa Fe Shutters
- Z Lite / Day & Night Blinds
- Roman Blinds
- Motorised Rollers & Venetians
- Blinds Screen / Flyscreen



FREE
MEASURING
AND FITTING

0% APR* finance available

*Subject to status. Terms and conditions apply.

[Learn more](#)

Provided by

deal4finance

duolagi

Interest free credit available for approved customers. Terms and conditions apply. Please call for details.

LANDLORD AND NEW BUILD DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE | SUGGESTED RETAILER FOR SANTA FE SHUTTERS
COMPETITIVE QUOTES ACROSS ALL OUR RANGE - CALL US TODAY ON 028 9059 5255

Unit 4 East Belfast Enterprise Park. Tel 028 9059 5255 | Email: theblindspot@mail.com

www.theblindspotbelfast.co.uk

ROUND UP OF EVENTING IRELAND NORTHERN REGION FIXTURES FOR 2026

The 2026 equestrian calendar is off to a flying start for Eventing Ireland (EI), with the Northern Region leading the charge through its popular winter series and a robust schedule of upcoming national fixtures.



**SEAVIEW
CARAVAN SALES**

**HOLIDAY PARK,
CARAVAN SALES,
MAIN WILLERBY
HOLIDAY HOME
DEALERS**

1 DONAGHADEE ROAD, MILLISLE,
TEL: 028 9186 1248



THE WILLERBY BUXTON

**WELCOME TO NORTHERN IRELAND'S
NUMBER 1 DRONE PILOT
TRAINING PROVIDER**

**DRONE PILOT
TRAINING ACADEMY**

QUOTE THE ARDS ADVERTISER FOR
10% OFF BEGINNER TRAINING

A2 COFC & GVC

BRING YOUR OWN DRONE TO DRONE PILOT
TRAINING ACADEMY AND WE WILL TEACH
YOU HOW TO FLY IT!

Available for Beginners Drone Pilot Training
and Demos.
Terms & Conditions apply.



3ic

f x in

Contact Robert Dobbin on
07565 481 897
www.dronepilotdeploy.com

DE JA VU  **FREE
Consultation!**

BRIDAL PACKAGES HAIR EXTENSIONS BRIDAL PACKAGES

**Award
winning
salon!**

We also offer colour
correction, upstyles restyles
and wedding packages!

Tel: 028 9182 6888
44 Francis Street, Newtownards

Before 
After 

Led by regional chair Georgia Stubington, the Northern Region

remains a powerhouse of the sport, blending grassroots development with high-level competition.

The year began at The Meadows Equestrian Centre (MEC) in Lurgan with the Baileys Horse Feeds Flexi-Eventing Series.

Running every Saturday from January 10th through February 21st, 2026, the series serves as the ultimate "springboard" for the main season.

This format allows riders to choose individual phases

(Dressage, Show Jumping, or Cross-Country) to school their horses. The 2026 league has been bolstered by a £1,000 prize fund from Baileys Horse Feeds, with points awarded for both performance and consistency.

Following the conclusion of the Flexi-Eventing league in February, the Northern Region transitions to its affiliated "One Day Event" (ODE) calendar. While dates are subject to final confirmation

by Eventing Ireland, the 2026 schedule is expected to follow the traditional northern circuit:

The Expected Spring / Summer Calendar of events kicks off with the The traditional "season opener" on the sandy dunes of Tyrella, Co. Down (March-April). In May the action traditionally moves to Maddybenny on the North Coast, known for its testing cross-country course. The NI Spring Festival Final (April 25-26) and major summer

ODEs will be hosted by Castle Irvine, Necarne. In August Loughanmore and Finvoy host high quality fixtures.

While the Northern Region keeps local riders busy, 2026 also features two major "Home Internationals" and championship events that Northern members frequently target:

FEI World Eventing Championships U25 (Millstreet): Takes place July 22-26, 2026, this inaugural event at the Green Glens Arena will bring global talent to Irish shores.

EI National Championships: Traditionally held in early September, the 2026 venue is anticipated to be announced shortly, with Killossery Lodge or Lisgarvan House being top contenders for this rotating fixture.

IPC Eventing Championships: Scheduled for August 21-24, 2026, at Tattersalls, this remains the pinnacle for young Northern Region riders coming through the Pony Club ranks.

Thompson Leisure: Driving Ireland's Motorhome Lifestyle Forward

Thompson Leisure has firmly established itself as Ireland's largest and most trusted motorhome and campervan dealer, setting the benchmark for quality, choice, and customer care.



MOTORHOME AND CAMPERVAN RENTAL

CONTACT US TODAY
028 9269 3999 (OPT 2)

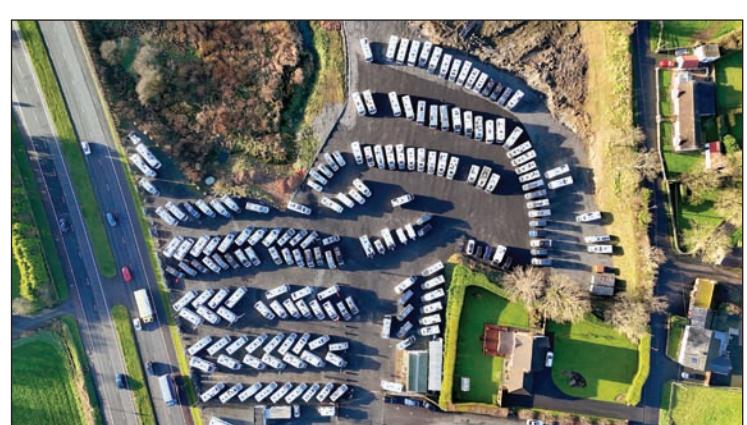
RENT@THOMPSONLEISURE.COM

BOOK NOW



For decades, the company has been at the heart of Ireland's growing touring and staycation culture, offering customers not just vehicles, but complete freedom to explore the open road.

With an extensive range of new and used motorhomes and campervans from leading European brands, Thompson Leisure caters to every type of traveller, from first-time adventurers to seasoned touring enthusiasts. Backed by knowledgeable staff and a reputation built on reliability, customers



can buy with confidence, knowing expert advice is always close at hand.

Thompson Leisure has a very successful rental

department called TLL Rent. TLL Rent allows customers to experience the motorhome lifestyle without commitment,

making it ideal for holidays, festivals, or trial runs before purchase. Fully equipped and meticulously maintained, the rental fleet reflects the same high standards found across the business.

Beyond sales and rentals, Thompson Leisure offers comprehensive aftersales support. Its state-of-the-art workshop provides full habitation checks, mechanical servicing, repairs, and upgrades, ensuring motorhomes and campervans remain safe, comfortable, and road-ready year-round. The company also offers secure outside storage, giving owners peace of mind when their vehicle is not in use.

From purchase to aftercare, Thompson Leisure continues to lead the way, supporting Ireland's motorhome community every mile of the journey.

**HOME
START**

**Ards, Comber and
Peninsula Area**

**Local Scheme Supporting
Families for just under 30 years**

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

FOR FAMILY SUPPORT, DRIVING,
CHARITY SHOPS & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE.

ON-GOING RECRUITMENT FOR VOLUNTEER PREPARATION TEL: 028 427 88369

Our volunteers offer informal, friendly and confidential support to families going through a difficult time.

LOOKING FOR A BARGAIN? Call Down to our Children's Charity Shop at:

2 Ann Street, Newtownards Open Usual Hours

OR OUR GENERAL CHARITY SHOP AT: 52 Castle Street, Comber

Open Mon-Sat 10am -1.30/2pm Usual Hours

Home-Start Ards, Comber and Peninsula Area Registered as a company limited by guarantee in N. Ireland No. NI055744
Registered with the Charity Commission for N.Ireland NIC 105855, funders include SureStart Ards, Cathedral Grant,

Ards Comber & Peninsula Area Charity Shop Funding, Halifax Foundation, Awards For All (Lottery),

John Moore Foundation N.I. & County Down Rural Community Network, LFT Foundation Trust.

Volunteers are welcome from all sections of the community.

Anne Thomas

B.Ed., B.A.(Hons), T.E.S.O.L.,
NVQ 3 & NVQ 4 (Careers Advice & Guidance)



- Secondary Tuition in English Language, English Literature and Sociology
- Primary Tuition in all subjects.
- AQE Tuition • Fully qualified Careers Adviser
- Qualified TESOL Teacher.
- Mobile: 075 1100 9697
- Email: athomasenator@gmail.com

PERSONAL TUTOR & CAREERS ADVISER

I can help prepare your P6 child for SEAG (Schools Entrance Assessment Group) entrance test being adopted by 60 Grammar Schools across Northern Ireland!

'Field to Fork' programme

Mash Direct, the award-winning Northern Ireland food producer, has partnered with the Learning and Engagement team from W5, Northern Ireland's award winning science and discovery centre, to launch the 'Field to Fork' education programme, an interactive initiative helping children understand where their food comes from and the role of sustainable farming.

The pilot scheme has now officially launched and is already being delivered in local classrooms, with visits completed at Comber, Kilcooley and Carrowdore Primary Schools. Pupils have been taking part in hands-on activities that bring the journey of food from field to plate to life, exploring growing conditions, soil health, climate and environmental impact while making clear links between science and the food they eat every day.

Delivered by W5's expert Learning and Engagement team and sponsored by Mash Direct, the free programme engages pupils from ten local primary schools, particularly in areas of higher social

deprivation. The sessions are curriculum-linked, hands-on, and designed to spark curiosity and highlight the journey from farm to plate.

The pilot includes practical activities such as:

- Growing vegetables from seed and observing how soil and climate affect growth
- Cooking and tasting traditional potato bread
- Exploring balanced nutrition with the Eatwell Plate
- Investigating food miles and sustainable farming practices

- Creating video stories to share learnings

Research underscores the importance of initiatives like this. According to the British Nutrition Foundation



(BNF), nearly one in five primary-school children believe fish fingers come from chicken, and close to a third think cheese comes from plants - highlighting a widespread lack of understanding of food

origins. Meanwhile, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) reports that after using its "Food - a fact of life" resources, 85% of pupils were more informed about where food comes from.

As a pilot scheme, this initiative is sowing the seeds for a broader educational rollout, one that could transform how young people understand food, health and sustainability from the field all the way to their fork.

Countryside Services Limited awarded training and facilitation contract

Countryside Services Limited has been appointed to deliver key knowledge transfer elements of the Farming for Sustainability Scheme.

Countryside Services will support the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), delivering face to face training and themed peer to peer group facilitation to farm businesses across Northern Ireland.

"The appointment of Countryside Services will help ensure farmers have timely, practical and accessible training that supports productivity, environmental outcomes and resilience across the sector," commented Albert Johnston, Head of Knowledge Advisory Service, CAFRE.

The first training to be delivered by Countryside Services will be associated with the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme. It is now necessary to complete this training to receive future Farm Sustainability Payments. If



you have still to complete the training, you can do so through online training at: www.cafre.ac.uk. If you would prefer to complete the training in person, new dates and venues across the province and booking information can be found at: www.cafre.ac.uk/snhs-training and at: www.countrysideservices.com.

"We're delighted to partner with CAFRE in

delivering high quality training and facilitated peer learning to support farm businesses increase both efficiency and care for our environment," remarked Dr Andrew Kerr, Countryside Services Limited.

If you would like further information on relating to the Sustainable Agriculture Programme, please visit the Business Support area of: www.cafre.ac.uk.



Smart Space

Container Specialists

- STORAGE
- SALES
- CONVERSIONS



Contact Us 028 91 629462

www.smartspaceeni.co.uk info@smartspaceeni.co.uk



ACTION CANCER'S MOTHER'S DAY WALK IS A REAL FAMILY AFFAIR

'Walk with her, walk to remember her'

Action Cancer's much-loved Mother's Day 5K Walk returns to the beautiful surrounds of Lurgan Park on Saturday 14 March 2026.

The event welcomes anyone wishing to come together with family and friends ahead of Mothering Sunday, offering a chance to spend time in a peaceful, reflective setting, walking with loved ones or in memory of those who are no longer here.

This 5K walk, supported by local company Country Kitchen, is organised by the Action Cancer Lurgan Fundraising Group. All money raised will support Action Cancer which includes the continued delivery of its therapeutic and support services currently available in Lurgan and the surrounding area.

Early Bird registration is now open at £10 per adult (general registration is £15), with children under 16 free. Once registered, walkers will receive an information pack, sponsor

form and fundraising materials. Participants are encouraged, where possible, to raise £120 in sponsorship, which will cover the cost of a breast screening for a local woman.

Action Cancer delivers life saving prevention, detection, and therapeutic services that are unique within Northern Ireland and free to those who need them most.

Action Cancer's comprehensive range of cancer detection, prevention and support services, cost £4 million annually to deliver. Every year Action Cancer, through the support of public donations, helps to save and support 15,000 people face-to-face across Northern Ireland through the delivery of its services.

Its unique breast screening service is offered to women aged 40-49 and over 70, those outside the NHS screening programme.

The charity also provides counselling and complementary therapies

for anyone living with cancer or supporting a loved one, available to adults and children from the age of five.

Action Cancer's offering also includes; acupuncture, scar therapy, yoga, one-to-one and group life coaching, and educational events. Its Health Promotion programme delivers practical guidance on reducing cancer risk through lifestyle choices, alongside M.O.T. health checks as well as running nutrition and exercise programmes for people affected by cancer. Action Cancer also offers a skin cancer detection service.

Services are delivered at Action Cancer House in Belfast, selected regional venues including Mount Zion House in Lurgan, and onboard the Action Cancer Big Bus, (supported by SuperValu and Centra).

Anyone affected by cancer who wishes to book an appointment can do so at www.actioncancer.org or by calling 028 9080 3344.

EVENT DETAILS



(L-R) Mark Irwin-Watson (Action Cancer), Eleanor Hamilton, (Lurgan Action Cancer Group Founder) and Judith Colhoun (Action Cancer).

Action Cancer's Mother's Day Walk, Saturday 14 March 2026
Lurgan Park, Windsor Avenue

On-the-day registration: 11am
Walk begins: 12noon

Minister announces over £2million to cut energy bills for low income homes

More than 1,000 additional low income households will benefit from warmer, more energy efficient homes thanks to a new £2.17million investment announced today by Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald.

The funding boost for the NI Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP), delivered by the Energy Saving Trust on behalf of the Utility Regulator, will support insulation and other energy saving measures, and is directed to low income households.

This new allocation brings the Department for the Economy's total investment in domestic energy efficiency measures to over £5million in the last three years.

Speaking in Coleraine, Minister Archibald said: "This funding will enable more than 1,000 low income households to install practical measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation. These improvements will help reduce energy bills, improve comfort and warmth, and lower carbon emissions.

"Over 1,600 homes have already benefited from £3.5million of additional support provided by my Department in the past two years. I am committed to ensuring that no one is left behind as we transition to a greener, more sustainable economy."

The Minister said the investment will also provide a welcome boost to local



Pictured with Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald in the Coleraine home of Sammy Aiken, who has benefitted from the scheme are (L-R) Peter Russell, Executive Director, Utility Regulator, homeowner, Sammy Aiken, and Dawn Weir, NI Programme Manager, Energy Saving Trust.

businesses delivering energy efficiency services.

Sammy Aiken, a homeowner from Coleraine and a beneficiary of the scheme explained: "Thanks to the scheme, I was able to have roof insulation installed without paying the £1,500 upfront cost. Our home feels warmer and more comfortable, and our energy bills have gone down - it's made a big impact for us."

"We are proud to continue administering NISEP in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust, to ensure energy efficiency support is provided to those who most need it."

Further information on NISEP, eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/programme/nisep

ing carbon emissions. An average of more than 3,500 households have benefited from NISEP funding annually in recent years.

"Since 2010 NISEP has invested £108million, which will achieve a benefit of £845million for both business and domestic customers in reduced bills.

"We are proud to continue administering NISEP in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust, to ensure energy efficiency support is provided to those who most need it."

Further information on NISEP, eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/programme/nisep

Lucy's Locks
HAIR SALON

Wash & Blow Dry
Tints
Balayage
Highlights
Gents styling

07707 108 491
For an appointment
lucyslocks_
Lucy's Locks

73 Magherahamlet Rd, Spa, BT24 8PZ

WoodStoc

Outside made better.

Woostoc is the ideal place for anyone interested in making the most of their outdoor space.

Absolutely stunning new range of greenhouses available through Woodstoc in Bangor.

Juliana Danish greenhouses have been developed and improved over the last 60 years to give us our premier quality greenhouse offer. Boasting a 12 year warranty we can be assured that the quality is up to scratch. Introductory offer open to the April 30th 2026.

Up to 25% OFF Greenhouses

See website for prices www.woodstoc.com
Tel: 02891477133 | E: info@woodstoc.com
22 Balloo Park, Bangor, BT19 7PP

MINISTER MUIR CELEBRATES £7.91 MILLION INVESTMENT IN RURAL AREAS

DAERA Minister Andrew Muir has welcomed the award of £7.91million in grants to over 2,350 rural community organisations and businesses over the past year.

Offer for funding of £1.74million have been issued to voluntary and community organisations throughout Northern Ireland from the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme.

"The Scheme is a key initiative delivered through my Department's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework. It supports rural community-led, voluntary organisations in identifying and implementing projects that address locally identified poverty, isolation, loneliness and health and wellbeing issues."

"I was delighted to hear how Moneylane

Rural Community organisation have availed of the Department's Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme over many years to enhance their facilities for the local rural community. I express my sincere gratitude to the committee and to all voluntary and community organisations across Northern Ireland for their ongoing work in maintaining and developing a wide range of opportunities and facilities for people in local rural communities."

Minister Muir also visited BWE Equestrian Ltd, a rural micro-business in Ballyward,

He added: "It's been great to meet the staff of BWE



Minister Andrew Muir pictured with Newry Mourne and Down Council Chair Cllr Philip Campbell, Shane O'Reilly, Manager of Ballyward Equestrian Estate and Ceto a six-year-old mare bred at Ballyward.

Equestrian Limited, a first-time applicant to the Scheme, and

to hear how the sustainability and grant will help increase their potential for growth. This is

exactly the type of support the scheme aims to deliver across Northern Ireland."

The Minister concluded: "Both the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme and the Rural

Business Development Grant Scheme are important contributors to my commitment to build strong, sustainable and diverse rural communities where people want to live, work and invest."

Food and Drink Academy opens for applications

Northern Ireland's food and drink industry is opening doors to fresh talent in September 2026.

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), in partnership with the Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association (NIFDA), is proud to announce the application period for the Food and Drink Academy is now open.

With training delivery at Loughry Campus, Cookstown in conjunction with Northern Ireland food businesses, the Academy could be a gateway to an exciting career in a thriving sector.

The Food and Drink Academy is a unique 'study first' apprenticeship programme designed for school leavers who want to combine university-level study with real-world food and drink industry experience. Students will spend their first year on campus at Loughry enjoying student life while building a strong academic foundation. They then progress into three years of blended study and work, gaining hands-on training with some of Northern Ireland's leading food and drink companies. On completion of the programme, successful participants graduate with a BSc (Hons) Degree in Food and Drink Manufacture, validated by Ulster University.

One of the key attractions of the course is that students earn while they learn.



please visit: www.cafre.ac.uk/student-courses/food-and-drink-academy

SILVERBIRCH CONTRACTS

- Arenas
- Fencing
- Digger and Groundworks site clearance.

Call Simon on 07926244710

LURGYBRACK OPEN FARM
Cullion Road, Lurgybrack, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
Tel: (0)03 5374 912 2683 - Mob: 086 8212012

2026 OPENING DATES
Saturday 28th March through to Sunday 12th April

During May we will Open weekends only (closed Mon-Friday)

Check online for our Summer hours or make an online booking at Lurgybrackopenfarm.town.ie

SEE YOU THERE!

Spice Cottages

Four stunning self catering family cottages situated in the Dungannon / Moy countryside, Co. Tyrone.

Each cottage is crafted from beautifully restored 150 year old stone buildings.

142 Moy Road, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone BT71 7DX

Tel: 028 8778 9798
Email: info@spicecottages.com
www.spicecottages.com

SCAN HERE TO FIND OUT MORE

DRIVERS PLAGUED BY CRUMBLING ROADS

Northern Ireland's most pothole-ridden areas have been revealed, with the latest data showing that the region's broken roads continue to pose a danger to motorists.

Potholes are a persistent source of frustration for drivers, leading to costly repair bills for thousands of motorists in Northern Ireland every year. They are also a major safety concern, increasing the risk of serious accidents and injuries on our roads.

With the arrival of National Pothole Day (January 15), the car insurance experts at CompareNI.com have sifted through the latest government data to identify the worst-hit areas in 2025 and find out which local councils made the most progress in carrying out repairs.

While there was a slight drop in the number of potholes reported over the last 12 months – down 3% from the previous calendar year – they continue to present a significant challenge for NI motorists, accounting for 80% of all road claims received by Stormont last year.*

The statistics show that of the 127,109 surface defects recorded on NI roads in 2025, a staggering 77% (97,897) were related to potholes.**

Although around two thirds (67%) of all reported potholes were fixed last year, the repair rate varied wildly between council areas – with Fermanagh and Omagh tackling 87% of defects compared to 44%



in Belfast.

Overall, Belfast emerged as the area with the highest number of reported potholes, with 16,856 in 2025 – a significant rise of 38% from the previous year.

Newry, Mourne and Down was the next hardest hit area at 15,249, followed by Mid Ulster, which recorded 12,683 potholes.

While four of the 11 local council areas saw an increase in potholes year-on-year, the majority experienced a decrease. Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon enjoyed the biggest year-on-year drop of 35%, while Lisburn and Castlereagh recorded the fewest potholes overall.

While potholes can sometimes be an unavoidable part of driving, there are some preventative measures drivers can take to

help reduce the risk of damage, such as regularly maintaining tyre pressure, being wary of puddles and checking navigation apps for problem areas.

To report potholes, drivers can contact the Department for Infrastructure – they can also seek compensation for damage to help with repair costs. However, they will need proof the damage came from a pothole, so it is important to take photographs and measurements to use as evidence in the claim.

CompareNI.com gives drivers the tools to shop around and find savings on car insurance, as well as niche items such as van and taxi insurance.

Lester Breadon GARDEN MACHINERY SALES - SERVICE - REPAIRS
COLLECTION & DELIVERY SERVICE AVAILABLE
Est. for over 20 years.

Keen Rates - Free Estimates
028 9188 2356
078213 77585



TOYE VEHICLE REPAIRS
UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT Owner Garry McClurg
Reliable Garage Services
Looking for an experienced mechanic to get your vehicle back on road?
Toye Vehicle Repairs is here to help.
We provide all kinds of vehicle repair and restoration services at competitive prices.

Call us on 0289 754 1261
Email us on info@toyevr.com
64 Comber Road, BT23 6PD



**PART WORN TYRES, CARRYDUFF
NEED-A-TYRE?**
We supply tyres for any car, any van, any make, any model.

Call: 07707 560688

EXCELLENT OFFERS ON TYRES - NEW TYRES ALSO AVAILABLE

PLUS we guarantee not to be beaten on price!

Tullyard Business Park, Drumbu,
66 Tullyard Road, Drumbu,

ALLOY WHEEL REPAIR CENTRE
Alloy Wheel Professionals
IRELAND'S LONGEST ESTABLISHED WHEEL REPAIR BUSINESS
PROPRIETOR D. TOLAND

Lissie Industrial Estate, Moira Road, Lisburn, BT28 2RE
Tel: 02892 621 681 Mob: (0)79 0281 8873
info@alloywheelslisburn.com

Jamisons
INDEPENDENT LAND ROVER VEHICLE SPECIALIST
Sales | Parts
238 Castlecat Road, Dervock,
Ballymoney, BT53 8BP
Tel: 028 2074 2888
www.jamisonsgarage.co.uk



GOLF GTI EDITION 50

Exclusive anniversary model offers outstanding driving dynamics and numerous design highlights

In 2026, the Golf GTI2 will celebrate its 50th anniversary, and the brand is marking this special event with this outstanding special model. With an output of 239 kW (325 PS), the Golf GTI EDITION 50 is going down in history as the most powerful production Golf GTI to date.

The Golf GTI is one of the most successful compact sports cars in the world. More than 2.5 million units have been produced worldwide to date.

Volkswagen is equipping the special model with a 2.0-litre turbocharged engine – a modification of the drive unit from the Golf GTI Clubsport4 with 221 kW (300 PS). Thanks to internal engine measures, the Volkswagen engine team have succeeded in increasing the output of the Golf GTI EDITION 50 to 239 kW (325 PS) – compared with the classic Golf GTI2 in the basic configuration with 195 kW (265 PS), this is an additional 44 kW (60 PS). The maximum torque of the EDITION 50 has been increased to 420 Nm. In comparison, the Golf GTI Clubsport has a maximum



torque of 400 Nm, while the Golf GTI produces 370 Nm.

The chassis of the Golf GTI EDITION 50 has been further refined and adapted to the higher power. A MacPherson front axle and a four-link rear axle form the basic layout. Overall, the anniversary model is 15 mm lower than the basic configuration.

The Golf GTI EDITION 50 boasts numerous highlights inside and out.

Combined with the red seat belts, the sporty seats with check pattern, a line in Racing Green and synthetic velour elements create a high-quality ambience with a motorsport touch.

The newly designed multifunction leather sports steering wheel features trim with the GTI 50 logo. Together with the integrated shift paddles for the seven-speed DSG, it offers a real motorsport feeling.

The seats and steering wheel are thus the interfaces to the exceptional chassis and engine of the Golf GTI EDITION 50.

On the exterior, the GTI 50 logo is placed on the roof spoiler and the insides of the exterior mirrors.

Combined with the red seat belts, the sporty seats with check pattern, a line in Racing Green and synthetic velour elements create a high-quality ambience with a motorsport touch.

the exhaust system. A striking side stripe on the side members with a colour gradient from black to Tornado red additionally underlines the sporty character of the vehicle.

Five exterior colours are planned for the Golf GTI Edition 50: in addition to the characteristic Pure white, these are Moonstone grey, Grenadilla black metallic and – exclusively for the anniversary model – Dark Moss green metallic and Tornado red. Tornado red is the colour that has been synonymous with high-performance Volkswagen vehicles over the decades since 1986.

The Kia K4 Has Landed: Modern Driving Starts Here

The all-new Kia K4 has officially arrived in the UK, marking an exciting addition to Kia's lineup.

Combining bold design, advanced technology, everyday practicality, and the latest in safety innovations, the K4 is built for modern drivers seeking style, comfort, and confidence on every journey.

Perfect for commuting, heading out on a family trip, or enjoying the open road, the K4 makes driving smarter and more enjoyable. From the first glance, the Kia K4 impresses with a sleek, sculpted hatchback profile, and commanding road presence. It straddles the line between the C and D-segment,

offering the stance of a larger estate car with the agility of a compact.

Signature touches include the Star Map Lighting inspired by the EV9, a floating roofline, hidden rear door handles, and the exclusive Sparkling Yellow paint. The K4's sporty GT-Line adds sportier touches with gloss black mirror caps, side sills, wheel arch mouldings, paddle shifters, and 17 or 18-inch allow wheels.

Inside, the cabin blends premium surfaces, ambient lighting, and a driver-focused layout, while the three-spoke GT-

Line steering wheel adds a performance-inspired edge.

The Kia K4 offers a spacious, practical interior that's more than just stylish. Rear passengers enjoy class-leading legroom and headroom, while up to 438-litres of boot space ensures plenty of storage for shopping or luggage. The K4 extends versatility further, offering additional cargo space for families and adventurers alike.

Underneath its bold design, the K4 delivers a smooth, confident driving experience. Drivers can choose from efficient petrol

options or mild-hybrid powertrains that balance performance with economy. For those looking at the sportier end of the line-up, the Kia K4 GT-Line adds an extra dose of excitement, pairing responsive handling with dynamic styling cues.

Whichever version you choose, the K4 delivers refined comfort on longer journeys and composed

Safety is always at the forefront of Kia's design philosophy, and the K4 is no exception. A full suite of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) include Rear Parking Sensors, Lane Keep Assist, and Forward Collision-Avoidance Assist. Higher specs come equipped with more advanced systems such as Blind-Spot View Monitor, Highway Driving Assist 2.0, and Blind-Spot Collision-Avoidance Assist.

Every journey is backed by Kia's commitment to protecting drivers and passengers.

TOP FIVE TRACTORS

The UK tractor market in 2026 is defined by a shift toward "smart power"—machines that don't just offer raw horsepower, but also the intelligence to use it efficiently.

For British farmers facing rising input costs and tighter environmental regulations, the latest crop of tractors focuses on three pillars: fuel economy, operator retention through comfort, and high-speed road-to-field versatility.

Here is a look at the top five tractor launches in the UK this year and how they translate into tangible benefits for the farm.

Fendt 800 Vario Gen5: The Precision Specialist

The 800 Vario has long been a staple on UK arable farms, and the fifth generation brings "big tractor" technologies down into the mid-to-high horsepower bracket, ranging from 260 to 343 hp. The standout benefit here is the new CORE80 engine, which utilizes the Fendt iD low-speed concept. This allows the tractor to reach its top road speed of 60 km/h at just 1,450 rpm, significantly cutting fuel consumption during

transport. Furthermore, the introduction of the single-stage Vari-ODrive drivetrain eliminates the need for manual range switching between field and road. By automatically managing torque distribution to the axle with the most grip, it ensures permanent four-wheel drive and maximum traction without operator intervention. To round out the package, Fendt has boosted nighttime productivity with an optional lighting package delivering up to 114,700 lumens, which is essential for hitting tight harvest windows in the unpredictable British weather.

New Holland T7 XD: The Heavy-Duty Hybrid

The T7 XD (Extra Duty) marks New Holland's push into a higher power category, offering up to 435 hp in a frame that remains narrow enough for the UK's smaller road networks and traditional gate widths. This machine is built for uptime;



it features a massive 680-litre fuel tank and a 750-hour service interval. For a large-scale arable farmer, this means fewer interruptions during critical windows and lower long-term maintenance costs.

Despite its high power output, the T7 XD remains surprisingly agile thanks to its structural sump design, which allows for a tighter turning circle than many other tractors in the 350+ hp segment. The comfort level has also been a major focus, with the Horizon™ cab featuring advanced suspension to reduce the physical toll on the driver. This is a critical benefit for farms looking to retain skilled operators who expect a high-quality working environment during 12-hour shifts.

Massey Ferguson 5S Dyna-VT: The Livestock Evolution

While many launches focus on high horsepower, the MF 5S update is a

game-changer for the UK's livestock and dairy sectors. For the first time, this famous "steep-nose" tractor is available with a Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT). This allows for infinitely variable speeds from 0 to 40 km/h, which is a massive benefit for the slow, precise movements required when stacking bales or navigating a busy silage clamp. The 5S remains the market leader for loader

work because its signature sloped bonnet provides the best forward visibility in the industry. Combined with the fuel-saving Dyna-VT transmission—which allows the tractor to reach road speeds at just 1,550 rpm—it offers a low cost of ownership that is hard to beat. It is a machine that feels just as comfortable feeding cattle in a tight barn as it does hauling a trailer down a B-road.

Choosing a Slurry Tanker for your Farm

Choosing a slurry tanker is one of the most significant investments you'll make for your farm, and it's a decision that balances raw power with environmental finesse.

While it's tempting to simply go for the largest capacity your budget allows, the process requires a deep look at your existing fleet, your soil types, and the tightening net of environmental regulations. It is less about buying a tank and more about buying a nutrient management system that won't ruin your land in the process.

The first and most critical factor is the relationship between your tractor's horsepower and the tanker's capacity. It's easy to look at a 3,000-gallon tank and think your mid-sized tractor can pull it, but "pulling" is only half the battle. You have to consider the weight of the slurry itself—which is denser than water—and the ability of your tractor to safely stop that mass on a slick incline. A good rule of thumb is to allow for 20 to 25 horsepower for every 1,000 liters of capacity. If you skimp on this ratio, you aren't just slowing down your work cycle; you're putting unnecessary strain on your transmission and compromising your safety on the road.

When it comes to the

internal mechanics, you'll likely choose between a vacuum system and a positive displacement pump. Vacuum tankers are the industry's bread and butter because they are simple, relatively inexpensive, and easy to maintain. However, they can struggle with very thick slurry or long suction lifts. If you are a high-volume contractor or dealing with heavy fibre content, a centrifugal or positive displacement pump might be worth the extra cost. These systems provide more consistent pressure, which is essential if you plan on running wide distribution booms, though they do require a more watchful eye on maintenance to prevent stones from damaging the internals.

Soil health is the often-overlooked victim of poor tanker choice. Large tanks carry immense weight, and if that weight is concentrated on thin tires, you are essentially turning your high-value sward into concrete. Investing in large-diameter flotation tires is the best way to spread that footprint and minimize compaction. Furthermore, if you are looking at tandem or triple-axle models,

the machine. Slurry is incredibly corrosive, and a painted tank will often show its age through rust within just a few seasons. Hot-dip galvanization is the gold standard here, providing a protective zinc coating that shields the steel inside and out. Pay close attention to the

thickness of the steel—usually between 6mm and 8mm—and ensure the tanker is "future-proofed" with the necessary brackets and hydraulic plumbing to support low-emission spreading equipment down the line, even if you don't purchase the boom immediately.



Martin's Garage
Bailieboro Ltd.

50
YEARS
EST. 1968

S/H Tractors ex stock.

- 2022 MF 7715 4wd
- 2022 MF 6S.155 4wd c/w Loader
- 2021 MF 8S.265 4wd F/L
- 2021 MF 7715 4wd c/w Loader
- 2021 MF 5S.125 4wd c/w Loader
- 2020 MF 7720 4wd c/w F/L & PTO
- 2020 MF 7715 4wd c/w loader
- 2020 MF 6715 4wd c/w Loader
- 2019 MF 7720 4wd c/w F/L & PTO
- 2019 MF 7718 4wd c/w F/L
- 2019 MF 7716 4wd c/w F/L
- 2019 MF 6713 4wd c/w Loader
- 2019 MF 5712 4wd c/w Loader
- 2019 MF 5711M 4wd Loader ready
- 2018 MF 7718 4wd F/L PTO & Loader
- 2018 MF 7715 4wd
- 2017 MF 7726 4wd F/L & PTO
- 2017 MF 7720 4wd F/L & PTO
- 2017 MF 5712 4wd
- 2016 MF 5612 4wd c/w Loader
- 2016 MF 5610 4wd c/w Loader
- 2015 MF 5608 4wd
- 2013 MF 7618 4wd
- 2009 Valtra A92 4wd c/w Loader
- 2004 Landini Legend 140 4wd
- 1999 Newholland 8560 4wd

Martins Garage | Tel: (00353) 4296 65147
Cavan Road, Galbolie, Bailieborough
Cavan, A82 X3D7

Jonny Mcilwaine
Agricultural Sales & Service

Tractor Repair Specialist
- Diagnostics - Servicing
- Repairs

Tel: 077 5650 9156

77 Mountview Road, Ballynahinch

Find us on 



YOUR FARM INSURANCE PROFESSIONALS...

The agricultural sector has a range of specialised insurance needs.

With over 50 years of experience providing farmers across Northern Ireland with tractor and farm insurance, Brady Insurance can make sure you have the perfect policies.

You can choose from a range of combined farm insurance policies that will protect your property, your vehicles and your employees.

Visit one of our branches in Enniskillen, Pomeroy, Fintona or Castlederg to arrange a quote.



COMPREHENSIVE COVER

 bradyinsurance.co.uk

VEHICLE, CAR AND 4X4 INSURANCE

Most farms rely on a combination of heavy machinery and vehicles.

Brady Insurance can provide you with affordable, reliable insurance for any vehicle on your farm.

We've got policies that cover 4x4s, combine harvesters, cars or any other vehicle.

SAVE YOURSELF TIME, MONEY AND BOTHER

Are you looking for affordable farm or tractor insurance?

Brady Insurance is a third generation family company with over 50 years experience in the Northern Ireland insurance industry.

We will compare all current farm insurance policies on the market to find the best fit for your needs and your budget.

Call us now on:

028 8775 8323 Pomeroy

028 8167 0031 Castlederg

028 8246 4006 Fintona

028 6632 4371 Enniskillen



**FREE ESTIMATES
ON ALL QUOTES**
Tel: 07720 312 990

- Roofs repaired & replaced
- All leadwork undertaken
- Flat roofing repaired & replaced
- Chimneys re-pointed & replaced
- New gutters & fascia boards • Dry Verge Systems
- Vent Roof tiles Supplied & fitted • Houses re-pointed
- All work undertaken • All work guaranteed

**RUDDELL
METALS LTD**
CASH PAID FOR SCRAP
Excellent prices paid!
Collection and disposal of scrap
Steel fabrication
North Road Industrial Park, Newtownards
Tel: 028 9181 0245
Mob: 07714 396 849
www.ruddellmetals.co.uk

Washing Machine Repairs

Also: • Cookers • Tumble Dryers • Dishwashers
No Call Out Charge
We Sell All New & Re-conditioned Appliances

Find us on

Call 07784 844 744

S&R TILING
Porcelain, Ceramic & Natural Stone All Catered For
FOR FREE ESTIMATES CONTACT STEPHEN ON: T. 028 4277 2111 M. 07840 657014

VERTICAL BLINDS
New Vertical Blinds 3 from £99
Venetians Cleaned - 6 for £49 • Blinds over 8ft count as 2
Re-cord & Repair Service Available
NELSON BLINDS
Tel: 07917 435548
Email: nelsonblinds@gmail.com

Celebrating over 35 Years in Business
MC Upholstery
(formerly Kingway Upholstery)
DOMESTIC SERVICES:
Recover Cloth Suites, All Repairs
COMMERCIAL SERVICES:
Recover - Bar Seating, Office Chairs
FREE QUOTATION
T: 028 9030 1899 M: 07786 062989
230A Kingsway, Dunmurry, BT17 9AE

OVENEZE
OVEN CLEANING SPECIALISTS
WE CLEAN OVENS, AGAS, GRILLS, HOBS, EXTRACTORS, MICROWAVES & BBQS
• Removes stubborn burnt on grease & carbon
• No fumes, no mess & minimum disruption
• Low odour, biodegradeable products
• Bulb & filter paper replacement service
• Landlords & letting agents welcome
Why not call us today and get a free quote over the phone. No hidden costs, our price depends on the size of the oven, not how dirty it is.
Tel. 07780 986777

HOME IMPROVEMENTS & MAINTENANCE
Doors, Floors, Skirting, Decking, Fencing, Kitchens, Painting, Flatpack Assembly etc.
25 Years Experience FREE ESTIMATES
Call James: 07826 926408

NIFRS REVEALS HIGHEST HOUSE FIRE FATALITIES IN 2025

2025 was the highest year of house fire fatalities in a quarter of a century with 16 losses of life.

The statistics from Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) reveal that half of the incidents were smoking material related with electrical causes contributing to 4 fatalities. A third of the incidents did not have working smoke alarms.

It is known that 75% of the fatalities were people who lived alone,

and over 65% of those were also in NIFRS People at Risk group.

NIFRS is urging the public to start the year by taking extra care at home with their safety habits. Most fires are preventable and having working smoke alarms and changing behaviours that create risk can save your life.

NIFRS Assistant Chief

Fire & Rescue Officer Marcus Wright said:

"Our thoughts and sympathies are with the families and loved ones of those who have died in 2025 in house fires. This is the highest number of fatalities since 1999 and is a key priority and concern for us.

The fires show how quickly everyday situations can turn into life-changing emergencies leading to devastating impacts for our community.

"We are pleading with the public to make home fire safety a priority to prevent further loss of life or serious injury.

"Smoking materials has been the leading

cause of fatal house fires, accounting for a staggering 43% of such deaths over the past 10 years. We

strongly advise for you to smoke outdoors at your property and to extinguish cigarettes before placing them in a suitable container, such as a metal bin.

"A majority of the fatal fires started in a bedroom followed by living room and kitchen.

Therefore, we ask that you check your smoke alarms are fitted, tested regularly, and replace batteries when needed.

Please also consider installing smoke alarms in the rooms you use the most.

We would also advise heat detectors in your

kitchen and utility.

"As we continue to be in the high-risk time of year for house fire, we are asking you to take time to

reach out to vulnerable family members, neighbours and friends who may need support to stay safe from fire, especially those who live alone. If you have any concerns about this person, you

can also complete our online Home Fire Safety Check with them, or request an in-person visit.

"We are also calling on our partner agencies to make use of our referral system for Home Fire Safety Check on 028 9266 4221.

You are the 'eyes and ears' in our community to helping us keep those most at risk safe from fire.

"We are currently considering what more can be done, over and above what is currently being done, to help keep those most at risk safe from fire, as we continue to educate our community and deliver engagement activities."

If you fit NIFRS Person at Risk criteria, have no access to the internet or unable to complete the online self-assessment, please

contact NIFRS by phone to receive a free in person Home Fire Safety Check on 028 9266 4221.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY AND BEYOND SINCE 1979
GaryDavidson
Bloomfield Blinds
SPECIALISTS IN CLEANING VENETIAN BLINDS
PHONE FOR QUOTATION • Venetian • Vertical Blinds • Curtain Rails • Roller Blinds
• Supplied, Fitted & Repaired
COMPETITIVE RATES
Contact Gary 07884 090505 Email: gary.davidson02@virginmedia.com

P TULLY CONTRACTS
BUILDING & ROOFING SPECIALISTS
- Extensions - Houses Repointed - Chimneys Renewed * Insurance Work Undertaken
- Sun Rooms - Roofs Re-slated - Lead Work * All Work Guaranteed
- Loft Conversions - Roofs Repaired - New Guttering & Fascia * Free Estimates
- Garages - Flat Roofs - Vent Roof Tiles 25 Years' Experience
Mob: 078 6035 6648

MULLVIEW GARDEN & HOME MAINTENANCE
• GARDEN MAINTENANCE/GARDEN DESIGN: • QUALIFIED GARDENER
• PRUNING & PLANTING • HEDGWORK, HEDGE REMOVAL,
GRASS CUTTING, SEEDING • FENCING, DECKING, SHED BUILDING
& FLOWER BEDS
• PAVING, GRAVEL, BARK & PONDS Home improvements:
FREE NO OBLIGATION QUOTATION Power Hosing
(SPECIAL RATE FOR PENSIONERS) Painting inside & out
TEL: 028 9186 2161 Joinery
MOB: 079 0591 6164 Kitchen fitting
Upcycling of old tired furniture

McCracken
CONTRACTS & Landscape Specialists
SPECIALIZING IN:
• Brick Paving • Tarmac Sealing • Patios • Concreting
• Site Clearance • Complete Garden Refurbishments
SEALING OF TARMAC & BRICK DRIVEWAYS
FULLY INSURED - ALL WORK GUARANTEED FREE ESTIMATES
NO DISTANCE TOO FAR
T: 028 9181 6141 | M: 07771 803 961

GS PROPERTY SERVICES
Fencing | Decking
Bespoke Sheds & Log Cabins
Patios | Brick Paving | Concrete Work
Digger & Groundwork
Digger Driver Hire
T: 028 4275 7011 | M: 07967 664 369
Facebook - GsPropertyServices

ARDS LANDSCAPES
M: 07746 228 760
. Paving in Brick or Flags
. Fencing, Walls and Steps
. Low Maintenance Gardening
Visit Facebook or website ardslandscapes.com

D&M
DECORATORS
• All Interior & Exterior Painting and Decorating
• Private & Commercial • Wallpaper Hanging
Tel: 0751 4147 019

mobile services
POWER WASHING
Driveways - Patios - Decking - Walls etc
Block Paving Re-Sanding & Sealing Service
Using the latest High Powered LOW MESS
Flat Surface Cleaners
DOMESTIC & COMMERCIAL
FULLY INSURED call Colin on
m 07790 864682
www.mobilepowerwashing.co.uk

M.D. SHEDS
124 Derryboye Road, Crossgar
Garden Sheds, Workshops, Dog Kennels, Dog Runs & More.
Example: 8x6 Garden Shed Delivered & Erected From £770
07763158129
www.md-sheds.co.uk

FAY PLUMBING & HEATING
Tel: 07712 173 734
Fayplumbing.enquiries@gmail.com
• Oil to Gas Conversion • Boiler Changes
• Power Flushing
• System Upgrades
• Bathrooms
• Landlord Certificates
• Leak Repairs
• Emergency Call Out

BM GARDEN & TREE SERVICES
FULLY INSURED | FREE ESTIMATES
25 YEARS' EXPERIENCE - COVERING BT24 & BT30
GRASS SEED SOWING & TURF LAYING
LOGS FOR SALE
TREE FELLING/PRUNING THINNING OUT OF WOODLAND
SPECIALISTS IN CONIFER MAINTENANCE:
SMALL DIGGER WORK: MAINTENANCE: PATIOS:
GARDEN LEVELLING: FENCING: HEDGES
ALL WASTE MATERIAL TAKEN AWAY
Tel: 028 9754 3059
Mob: 0781 0271073

DARYL BROWN
PLASTERING
PROFESSIONAL PLASTERING SERVICES
078 60 64 24 20
DARYLBROWNPLASTERING

PHIL LANGFORD
HANDYMAN
No job too small
QUALITY WORKMANSHIP
AT A REASONABLE PRICE
Telephone: 07874 355 055

William McIlwraith Ltd
Building & Joinery Contractor
Over 30 years experience
EXTENSIONS, RENOVATIONS
GENERAL BUILDING & JOINERY WORK
Tel: 028 9754 2756
Mob: 078 0326 5543

BRIAN EVANS
ALL PLUMBING & CENTRAL HEATING
INSTALLATIONS • REPLACEMENTS • REPAIRS
Phoenix Natural Gas
• Oil Fired Heating & Servicing
• Oil Tank Replacement
• Free Competitive Estimates
3 Year Guarantee - Fully Insured
Cleanly & Efficiently Installed by Tradesmen
T: 028 9181 0640 | M: 078 9641 1510
www.evansplumbers.co.uk
50 Gregstown Park, Newtownards, BT23 8GW

CECIL SMYTH LTD Est. 1961
BUILDING CONTRACTORS
Cecil Smyth Ltd
Est. 1961
NEED AN EXTENSION?
PROPERTY MAINTENANCE?
or BUILDING PROJECT?
Contact John on
078 0241 4484
cecilsmythltd@hotmail.com
FREE QUOTE!

MARCH INTO ACTION WITH TASK LIST FOR HOME & GARDEN

March is the bridge between winter's chill and spring's chaos.

It's the time to realize your lawn isn't dead—just sleeping—and that your windows are coated in three months of "winter mood." This month is all about laying the groundwork so you aren't overwhelmed when the heat finally hits.

In the garden, your first task is the "great reveal." Clear away sodden leaves and debris, but stay mindful of hibernating pollinators if the temperature is still dipping. This is the prime window for pruning roses and late-flowering shrubs to encourage vigorous new growth. Cutting back now ensures the plant's energy goes into fresh stems rather than maintaining old wood.

Enriching the soil with compost or well-rotted manure now will pay dividends later. If you have a sunny windowsill, it is officially "go-time" for starting tomatoes, peppers, and sweet peas. These early starts give you a



significant head start before the outside soil is fully workable.

Inside the home, use the seasonal shift as a trigger for safety maintenance. Test your smoke alarms and swap out those dusty HVAC filters that have been struggling through the winter. It's also the perfect

time to deep-clean your kitchen appliances; running a descaler through your dishwasher now prevents grime from settling in during the busier months ahead.

Finally, take a look at your home's exterior. Winter storms likely left your gutters full of stray

grit and leaves, which can lead to damp issues during April showers. A quick visual check of the roof for slipped tiles or nesting birds can save you a fortune in repairs later. A little momentum in March ensures you can actually enjoy the sun when it finally decides to stay.

Warm Healthy Homes Strategy launched

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons recently set out a long-term, cross-government approach to tackling fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.

Speaking after visiting a home in Hopewell Crescent, Belfast to launch 'Warm Healthy Homes: A Northern Ireland Fuel Poverty Strategy 2026-2036', Minister Lyons said: "I am pleased to launch the Warm Healthy Homes strategy, a new approach that has secured Executive backing and which will help lift families out of fuel poverty."

"This is a comprehensive 10-year strategy to ensure that cold, damp homes become a thing of the past. Fuel poverty affects nearly one in four households, and its consequences are linked to poor health and financial stress, particularly for the

less well off. This strategy sets out a clear pathway to change that."

The Minister continued: "Together with the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Housing Supply Strategy, the Warm Healthy Homes Strategy will tackle the root causes of fuel poverty and provide meaningful measures and actions which will make a real difference to people across Northern Ireland."

"As part of the strategy, I will introduce a new Warm Healthy Homes Fund next year, for which I intend to allocate £150million to deliver of energy efficiency investment in its first five

years. This fund will transform low-income households, modernising energy inefficient homes. Through this fund, along with energy wellbeing advice from trusted partners in the community, I want to ensure those worst affected have the information and means to upgrade their homes for the better. I also want to improve housing standards and my Department has already begun consulting on a revised Decent Homes Standard for social housing."

Householder Trevor Rainey, who had a Low Carbon retrofit upgrade fitted to his home by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

last summer, said: "Since the work was done my bills are a lot lower, the house is warmer and the hot water is great in the mornings. I'd recommend it to anyone."

The full Warm Healthy Homes: A Northern Ireland Fuel Poverty Strategy 2026-2036 document is available at: www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/warm-healthy-homes-2026-2036-new-fuel-poverty-strategy-northern-ireland

The Minister has made a written ministerial statement to the Assembly: www.communities-ni.gov.uk/news/announcement-publication-warm-healthy-homes-strategy

EST 1978 - CELEBRATING 40 YEARS IN BUSINESS

A&C MORROW CHIMNEY SWEEPS

Cleanest Sweep in Town

- All types of Chimney Swept
- Cowls, Bird Guards
- Gutters Cleaned & Repaired
- Chimney Reaming and De-Scaling
- Fireback Replacement & Installation

Mob: 07 785 500 064 | Tel: 028 90 648 946

E: acmsweeps@gmail.com
W: www.acmsweeps.com

SHOT BLASTING SERVICES LTD

Specialists In Blasting & Powder Coating



- GRIT BLASTING - METAL SPRAYING - PROTECTIVE COATING - SMALL METAL REPAIRS - COLLECTION & DELIVERY SERVICES

Gates, Railings, Antiques & Garden Furniture

Call 078 4006 6272 or 078 5654 8771
www.shotblastingservicesnl.com

Need a skip?

www.ballooskiphire.com

BALLOO SKIP HIRE

T: 02891 898365

E: ballooskiphire@mail.com

GREEN DAY TREE & GARDEN SERVICES

- TREE SERVICES • HEDGE CUTTING • CONIFER REDUCTION
- FENCING • POWER-WASHING
- DIGGER WORK • GROUND CLEARANCE

10% DISCOUNT FOR OVER 60'S

CONTACT GLENN ON 079 0752 7903
www.greendaygardenservices.co.uk

BANGOR FENCE COMPANY

- BOARDED & PANEL FENCING
- FENCE REPAIRS
- GATES
- FENCES SUPPLIED & FITTED

10% DISCOUNT for Over 60's

CALL GLENN ON 07907 527 903

BATESY

FAST AND RELIABLE SKIP HIRE
WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Telephone: 028 90 111 111
Email: info@acebates.com
1 Dunrue Pass Belfast BT3 9BS

02890 111 111

WE WILL BEAT ANY LEGITIMATE PRICE!

Cold snaps causing burst pipes – check your property urges NI Water

Since the beginning of January, a series of cold snaps have led to a considerable rise in burst pipes across the NI Water network and on private property.

While the NI Water teams are out finding and repairing bursts on the network, the public can help by checking for leaks on their property.

If you spot a leak on your property, turn off the water supply using your stop valve (usually under the kitchen sink) to minimise any damage. If you spot a leak or burst pipe on the public system - such as on streets, pavements, or public spaces - please report it to us.

Paul Bryce, Head of Water at NI Water, said: "NI Water is asking the public to be proactive; if you discover a leak, repair it if it's on your property or report it to NI Water if it's on the public network. We are also asking farmers, caravan owners and landlords to inspect empty buildings, drinking troughs, sheds, yards, taps, and outhouses - any location with water supplies.

Keep an eye on your water meter, as this can indicate a burst; quick repairs can help prevent unnecessarily high water bills."

How to Report a Leak or Burst Pipe:

If you spot a burst pipe or leak on the road or street, please report it to NI Water straight away. Reporting is quick and easy:

- Fill in the online form at www.niwater.com/report-a-leak-or-burst-pipe
- Contact Leakline on 0800 0282011 (free, open 24/7)

- Use NI Water's webchat service or reach out via NI Water's social media channels

What to Do If You Have a Leak or Burst Pipe:

- Turn off your stop valve (usually under the kitchen sink, turn clockwise).
- Use towels or thick cloths to block escaping water.
- Turn on all taps to lower water pressure and reduce flooding; make sure to turn them off once the problem is fixed.

- Contact a plumber - find an accredited professional by searching your postcode at www.watersafe.org.uk.
- Notify your insurance company to check for protection against water damage.

With further cold snaps possible throughout the winter months, NI Water is also urging the public to protect their outdoor taps from freezing and



costly damage caused by leaks and bursts by fitting a free insulated tap cover, available at www.getwaterfit.co.uk while stocks last.

DC Joinery
All types of joinery work

- Doors
- Floors
- Decking
- Stairs
- Kitchen/Bathroom units
- Garden fencing
- Radiator covers

Find us on [facebook](http://facebook.com/dcjoinery)

Tel: 077 0332 0111

S SOLUTIONS
FOR SYSTEMS

Commercial/Residential
Fire alarms, CCTV & security alarms!

028 90 995191
info@solutionsforsystems.com
www.solutionsforsystems.com

Unit 25, Innotec Drive, Balloo Road, Bangor. BT9 7PD

R Tully Plumbing & Heating

Tel: 07711 644351

OIL TO GAS CONVERSIONS
GENERAL PLUMBING WORK
BATHROOM REFURBISHMENTS
CENTRAL HEATING INSTALLATION
UNDERFLOOR HEATING
EXPERIENCED AND QUALIFIED

Free Initial Estimates on Request

BLAKELY

TARMAC CONTRACTORS DRIVEWAY SPECIALISTS

- BITMAC • ASPHALT • SMA • SEALING • PAVING

NOW TAKING CREDIT & DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS

028 9186 1736 078 3629 0234

brian@blakelycontracts.co.uk www.blakelycontractsni.co.uk

Tree Cutting Services

Rust Busters
Specialists in Rust Removal & Powder Coating

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS



GATES - RAILINGS - GARDEN FURNITURE
ALLOYS - RADIATORS - MOTORCYCLE FRAMES

Unit 22, 149 Glen Road, Comber, County Down. BT23 5QU

Telephone: 028 9044 8033
www.rustbustersni.co.uk

**For A Free Quotation Call:
07712 085390**

Bangor 8 BINGO



Sign Up

LAUNCH NIGHT

FRIDAY 27TH FEBRUARY

£6,500



NEW MEMBERS
GET
£50
FREE

On Sign-Up

CHECK OUT OUR SOCIALS FOR DAILY OFFERS



Tel: 028 9185 7000

1A Valentine Rd, Bangor BT20 4JH

www.bangorbingo.co.uk