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Issue 230 - BT22 • BT23

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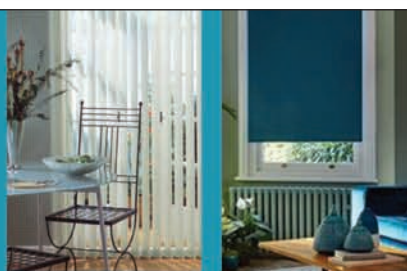
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The refurbished play park at Islandview in Greyabbey was officially launched, by school pupils and the Mayor.

New Considerate Parking Campaign

A new Considerate Parking Campaign has been launched to highlight how small parking decisions can significantly affect others' daily lives.

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

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

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

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

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

to highlight and address issues affecting older people and those with disabilities.

The campaign includes a short video featuring lived experiences from members of the Disability Forum and Over 50s Council and a range of visual materials for social media and print, highlighting real-life scenarios showing the everyday impact of inconsiderate parking.

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

For more information about the Considerate Parking Campaign, visit <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/considerate-parking>

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CHILDREN HELP SHAPE NEW £170,000 PLAY PARKS

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

The first of the new facilities was unveiled at Northfield, Donaghadee, with pupils from Donaghadee Primary School joining representatives and project partners to celebrate the opening. A second refurbished

play park at Islandview in Greyabbey was officially launched, with the Mayor in attendance.

Both play areas received investments of £170,000, transforming facilities that were due for refurbishment and

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

A key feature of both projects was the involvement of local schoolchildren throughout the design process. Engagement sessions were held

with pupils, giving them the opportunity to view proposed designs, learn about different types of play equipment, ask questions and vote on their preferred options.

Continued on page 4

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COMBER MUM CLAIRE LED RACE FOR LIFE

INSPIRATIONAL Claire Haire who was diagnosed with breast cancer just weeks after her 40th birthday was chosen to launch Race for Life in Northern Ireland.

The mum-of-two, was guest of honour at Cancer Research UK's Race for Life Belfast recently sounding the starter horn to send 1,570 participants on the 3k and 5k courses at Stormont. More than £145,000 was raised, vital funds which will enable scientists to find new ways to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer- to bring about a world where everybody lives longer, better lives free from the fear of cancer. Over the last 50 years, the charity's work has helped double breast cancer survival in the UK.

Every year, around 10,700 people are diagnosed with cancer in Northern Ireland.* Claire, who has a faulty gene** putting her at higher risk of some cancers, knows exactly how vital it is raise funds for life-saving research. She cheered on a team of 26 family, friends and neighbours who live near her home in Comber, County Down and took part in Race for Life in her honour.

Claire said: "I come from an amazing family of strong women who have walked this path with breast cancer before and I felt incredibly proud to stand on the start line to launch Race for Life.

It was confirmed on September 4 2025 that Claire had breast cancer. She was the fourth person on her mum's side of the family to be diagnosed. Just three years earlier, Claire had supported her mum, Denise Dutton through the disease. Claire's gran and her aunt had also been treated for breast cancer. Waiting for the results of more scans to check the cancer had not spread was challenging.

On November 3 last year at Ulster Hospital in Belfast, Claire had mastectomy and reconstruction surgeries. It was challenging getting through Christmas, knowing that on December 31, she faced the first of six chemotherapy sessions. Claire had her final chemotherapy session in mid-April ahead of 15 sessions of radiotherapy.

Claire was part of a team who raised more than £1,220 for Cancer Research UK. They joined crowds which included participants in fancy dress and members of the Rock Choir entertained Race for Life participants as they followed the route through the picturesque park land at Stormont.

Cancer Research



UK's Race for Life is an inspiring series of 3k, 5k, 10k, Pretty Muddy and Pretty Muddy Kids events which raise millions of pounds every year to help beat cancer by funding life-saving research. The events are non competitive, so participants can walk, jog or run or get muddy at their own pace.

Since it began in 1994, more than 10 million people have taken part in Race for Life, contributing millions of pounds towards life-saving research.

Cancer Research UK funded scientists led the development of the Human Papillomavirus Virus vaccine, which is expected to prevent almost 90 per cent of cervical cancers in the UK. The charity were a key player in the development of radiotherapy which now benefits millions of cancer patients worldwide.

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NEW LOCAL ACTION GROUPS LAUNCHED TO DRIVE POSITIVE CHANGE



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

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

The Local Action Groups will focus on strengthening

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

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

"I am delighted to launch the new Local Action Groups, which will bring together key stakeholders from across our communities to identify issues, collaborate on solutions and promote positive change.

This is a model built on partnership, local insight and shared commitment, and that is exactly what makes it so valuable. By working together, we can ensure every one of our towns and city continues to thrive and realise its full potential."

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

The initiative is supported by the Department for Communities and Department of



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

Infrastructure, which work in partnership with councils to deliver regeneration and placemaking outcomes.

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

Chair of the Ards and North Down Business

Forum, Frank Shivers said, "The Local Action Groups provide an important platform for the business community to work in partnership with Council and other stakeholders. By bringing our collective insight and experience to the table, we can help shape practical solutions that

support vibrant town centres and sustainable economic growth across the Borough."

The launch also recognised the success of existing initiatives supporting local business and high streets, including grant schemes such as Glow Up, Empty to Energised and Freshen Up, which

are helping to enhance the vibrancy of city and town centres.

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

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SMALL GRANTS RETURN FOR LOCAL PROJECTS

Environmental charity, Live Here Love Here, has announced the return of its Small Grants scheme for 2026, following another successful year in Ards and North Down where 10 local projects were awarded a total of £17,437 in funding.

Live Here Love Here Small Grants supports projects that increase civic pride, enhance green spaces, revitalise underused areas, improve community health and wellbeing, and boost local biodiversity. Grants ranging from £500 to £3,000 are available for successful applicants, with applications now open until 30 June 2026. The initiative is delivered in partnership with

ten local councils, including Ards and North Down Borough Council, and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Projects funded last year in Ards and North Down included initiatives by Holywood Shared Town, Bowtown Community Development Group, South Eastern Regional College, and Portaferry in Bloom.

The Small Grants continue

to deliver significant impact across Northern Ireland, supporting community-led environmental improvements, boosting local wellbeing and helping communities take pride in where they live. Live Here Love Here is also currently hosting Connecting Communities events across Northern Ireland, offering opportunities for local groups and volunteers to learn more about the Small

Grants Scheme and how to apply.

The Small Grants Scheme offers awards of between £500 and £3,000 for eligible groups, including community and volunteer organisations, schools, youth groups, sports clubs, churches and not-for-profit organisations.

For more information on Small Grants or how to apply, visit livehere-lovehere-community.org/smallgrants.

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Continued from page 1

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

Following completion of the works, pupils were invited back to the finished play parks to see how their

ideas had been brought to life and to enjoy a morning of play on the new equipment.

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

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

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Creative Peninsula 2026 – A Celebration of Artists and Makers

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

This established festival highlights the strength and diversity of the local creative sector, offering visitors the chance to engage directly with artists and their work.

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

Seacourt Print Workshop, Bangor, will host Imogen Donegan as its resident artist for 2026/27 through the inaugural Artist in the Community Residency, supported by Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. As part of Creative Peninsula, Seacourt are holding an Open Studio Week (10–15 August), where visitors can meet Imogen and take part in a series of free activities including printmaking, storytelling sessions and a sketchbook workshop.

To celebrate the arrival of the All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil, Ards Arts Centre



The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Craig Blaney with artist Lisa Ballard at the launch of Creative Peninsula 2026

will host a special Musical Instruments Meet the Maker event showcasing beautifully hand-crafted musical instruments by three acclaimed local makers – William Smyth Harps, Boardman Violins and Avalon Guitars. Taking place on Wednesday 5 August from 7pm to 9pm, this informal evening offers audiences a unique opportunity to hear directly from the makers about their craft, see how their instruments are created and played, and engage in conversation with the artisans behind the work.

Highlights also include the popular Twilight Market and Arts Night in Conway Square,

Newtownards on Friday 7 August, featuring live music from the Rare Aul Stuff and Jordan Lively, craft stalls and local food and drink, and a free Heritage Craft Afternoon at North Down Museum on Sunday 2 August, showcasing traditional skills such as knitting, natural dyeing and woodwork.

The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Craig Blaney said: "Creative Peninsula is a highlight of our Arts calendar and an important celebration of the talent within our Borough. I encourage residents and visitors alike to explore the programme, visit local

studios and support our creative community."

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

The full Creative Peninsula will go live and tickets to bookable workshops and events will go on sale on: Thursday 25 June at 12noon.

For more information, visit: creativepeninsula.andculture.org.uk

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

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

Over the next two years, the programme will establish a learning network linking community gardens, allotments and sheds across the Borough. It will support the creation of new growing spaces, offer hands on workshops in food growing, biodiversity

and practical skills, and provide opportunities for cross border learning and cultural exchange. The initiative will also contribute directly to the Council's Let's Grow Together Strategy, which highlights the importance of accessible growing spaces and the role they play in community wellbeing, environmental awareness and local resilience.

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

"This programme as an important investment in people and place.

It emphasises its potential to strengthen relationships, build confidence and create shared spaces that everyone can enjoy."

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



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

journey.

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

This project is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed

by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

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Success at Annual Beach, Marina and Seaside Awards Celebrated

North Down Alliance MLA Andrew Muir has congratulated Ards & North Down Borough Council for the recognition of its marina and seaside locations at the annual Live Here Love Here Awards.

Bangor Marina was awarded the internationally recognised Blue Flag, whilst Groomsport, Millisle, Ballywalter and Cloughie were recognised for their well-managed coastlines with Seaside Awards.

All of the locations retained their awards from last year and these were presented to Ards & North Mayor Gillian McCollum.

Attending the Live Here Love Here Awards, Andrew Muir MLA expressed

his pride in the local success.

"I am over the moon that Bangor Marina has again been awarded the prestigious Blue Flag, international recognition for its management and high standards. I'm also delighted to see so many sites on the peninsula's coastline retain their Seaside Awards. This success is a testament to the hard work of Council staff, volunteers and operators, who go above and beyond to maintain our beautiful

golden coast."

Speaking in his role as Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Andrew Muir also informed the public of his upcoming review of Northern Ireland's Bathing Waters.

"I intend to launch a public consultation on the Bathing Waters Policy Review soon which will focus on key policy areas including the length of the bathing season, a potential risk-based monitoring approach,



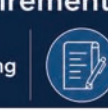
(L-R) Eric Randall, CEO of Live Here Love Here; Sinead Murray, Local Environmental Quality Manager at Live Here Love Here; Ards & North Down Mayor Gillian McCollum; and John Thompson, Trustee of Live Here Love Here.



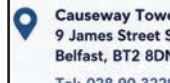
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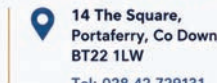
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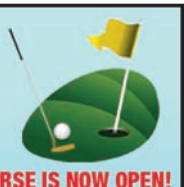
the criteria for identifying bathing waters, the use of candidate sites and the de-identification of sites. I encourage everyone with an interest to engage fully with this consultation to help shape."

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Students Celebrate at FE Sector Awards Ceremony

The achievements of students and staff from South Eastern Regional College (SERC) were celebrated at an event in Cookstown recently, hosted to highlight success across the further education sector in Northern Ireland.

The ceremony saw top students in every level, from foundation learning to higher education, awarded trophies. In addition, presentations were made to staff who had made significant contributions to college life over many years. Stephen McGreevy, SERC Lead Business Skills Manager, and SERC Newtownards Campus caretaker, Colin Martin, were recognised for exceptional service to further education, going above and beyond to support colleagues and students.

Tommy Martin, SERC Principal and Chief Executive, said:

"Stephen has made an exceptional contribution to Further Education over many years, supporting generations of learners and helping to shape the success of SERC and the wider sector. Colin has been a notable force for good among staff and students with his professional and supportive approach to his work. This recognition reflects the dedication of SERC staff, as well as the lasting impact they have on



Chair of SERC governing body, John Nugent (left) presents an Excellence Award for entry-level study to Antonio Billo, a Skills for Life and Work student at SERC Newtownards Campus.

students, colleagues and their communities.

"I am equally proud of our student award winners, whose achievements highlight the incredible talent, determination and ambition that exists across our college. From apprentices and higher-level apprentices achieving success on regional, national and international stages, to students excelling in higher education and lifelong learning, they demonstrate the transformative opportunities Further

Education provides. Their success is an inspiration to current and future learners, and a testament to the strength of our college community."

The student award winners from SERC included:

- Excellence Award for Entry Level Study: Gabriel Carlin and Antonio Billo (both SERC Newtownards Campus) Skills for Life and Work.

- Excellence in Advanced Learning: Holt Dixon (SERC Bangor Campus) L3 National

Extended Diploma in Animal Management.

- Excellence in the Higher Level Apprenticeship Programme: Grace Dugan (SERC Bangor Campus) HLA Culinary Arts – employed by Culloden Estate and Spa.

- Excellence in Higher Education: Daniel Harrison and Shannon Gregson, (Both SERC Bangor Campus) BSc in Business Management (validated by Liverpool John Moores University).

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Kindergarten Kids Childcare Celebrates Top 20 Award and 5th Birthday

A popular local day nursery is celebrating double success this year after being named among the Top 20 Day Nurseries in the country for another year running.

Kindergarten Kids Childcare has once again received the prestigious Daynurseries.co.uk Top 20 Day Nursery award, which recognises excellence in early years care. The timing of the award could not be better, as the nursery is also marking its fifth Birthday at its location on the Portaferry Road just beside Londonderry Park.

Since opening its doors five years ago, Kindergarten Kids Childcare has become

a trusted part of the local community, supporting hundreds of families through their children's vital early years. The nursery provides a warm, nurturing environment where little ones can learn, play and develop with confidence – from those first wobbly steps and new friendships to endless giggles and exciting "Milestone" moments. The nursery also organises lots of family inclusive events during the year such as our halloween party

and family Christmas event where the whole family can come to nursery and even meet Santa in his grotto and make magical festive family memories.

The team is particularly grateful to parents and carers for their continued support and feedback. They are proud to hold a perfect 10/10 score from nearly 100 parent reviews, reflecting the high standard of care and the strong relationships built with families over the past five years.

In addition to the award success, the nursery has just launched a fully revamped website [WWW.KINDERGARTENKIDS CHILD CARE.COM](http://WWW.KINDERGARTENKIDSCHILD CARE.COM)

The new site features lots of fresh photos and videos showcasing the bright playrooms and the children (their little VIPs) happily enjoying daily activities. It also provides parents with important practical information, including daily routines, up-to-date menus, and a comprehensive FAQ

section that answers the most common questions asked during showrounds.

Kindergarten kids looks forward to many more years of supporting local families and delivering outstanding early years care in the heart of the community.

Places in our baby room can fill up nearly 6 months in advance so we advise parents to contact us as early as possible.

We occasionally have immediate spaces across our



different rooms so if you are needing childcare quickly give us a call and we can let you know what we have available.

Parents interested in finding out more can easily get in touch in several ways. They can fill out the contact form on the new website, email

the team at info@kindergartenkidschildcare.com, call on 028 9182 0737, or message via WhatsApp 07840965056.

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Glasgow is a vibrant, stylish city with something for everyone. From world-class culture and nightlife to outstanding restaurants and bars, it’s a destination that never disappoints. Shoppers are particularly well catered for—Glasgow is widely recognised as the UK’s top shopping destination outside London, with its famous ‘Style Mile’ offering unbeatable retail therapy.

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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.

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MASTER THE SUN THIS SUMMER

Staying safe in the sun is essential for protecting your skin from painful burns and premature ageing. The easiest way to defend yourself is by applying a broad-spectrum sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays.

You should also seek shade during the hottest parts of the day when the solar radiation peaks. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses adds an extra layer of vital physical defense. Understanding Sun Protection Factor numbers is the key to choosing the right level of skin defense. The number tells you how much longer your skin can resist burning compared to using no protection at all. If your unprotected skin usually begins to redden after ten minutes then an factor fifteen lotion theoretically grants one hundred and fifty minutes. However real-world conditions like sweating and swimming mean you must reapply the cream every two hours regardless of the number. For reliable safety in the UK climate you should always opt for an factor thirty or higher. Apply the cream generously to all exposed skin about twenty minutes before you step outdoors so it can bond properly. Taking these simple precautions ensures you can enjoy the beautiful summer weather without risking your long-term health.

Milne adds two more sites to Holiday Park Portfolio

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

This significant further development solidifies Milne Holiday Parks' position as the leading provider of high-quality holiday destinations along the stunning Northern Irish coastline. Milne Holiday Parks now boasts a collection of seven beach-front parks, offering an enviable selection of locations for those dreaming of owning a home by the Sea. The addition of Groomsport Bay complements their existing parks: Cranfield Bay, Mourneview, Silvercove, Pebble Beach, Cranfield House and Shanlieve All 12x month holiday parks. Each of these parks offers unique characteristics and access to the beautiful beaches and landscapes that Northern Ireland is renowned for. The appeal of owning a holiday home at a Milne Holiday Park is further enhanced by the attractive financial options available. Prospective owners can step into their dream with deposits starting from as little as 10%. Flexible finance options are available at low rates, making holiday home ownership more accessible than ever. This allows families and individuals to invest in a lifestyle of relaxation and coastal enjoyment without undue financial strain. Currently, Milne Holiday Parks offers an impressive selection of over 200 new and pre-owned holiday homes for sale. This extensive range ensures that there is something to suit various tastes and budgets. Adding to the appeal, Milne Holiday Parks is currently offering free site fees for 2025 & 2026 on new purchases, representing a significant £6000 saving for new owners. This limited-time offer presents a compelling reason to explore the opportunities available at their six beach-front locations. Owners at Milne Holiday Parks can enjoy their holiday homes ALL Year Round, allowing for extended breaks and the flexibility to visit whenever they desire. This extended season maximizes the value of ownership and allows for enjoyment across different seasons, from summer beach days to cosy autumn retreats and refreshing spring escapes with the added bonus of being able to rent out their holiday homes with great returns. For those interested in learning more about owning a holiday home at any of the Milne Holiday Parks, including the new Groomsport Bay, further information can be found on their website: www.milneholidayparks.com. Additionally, individuals can text "HOLIDAY HOME" to 07860 617 616 to request a call-back and speak directly with a representative who can provide personalised assistance and details on available properties and financing options.



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MORE THAN A STING IN THE TALE: THE POWER OF NETTLES

Most of us love native wildflowers, which feed butterflies and bees. But some of the plants of most importance are the ones we don't like, often regarded as terrible weeds which need to be removed asap. Ragwort? Thistles? And nettles.

They all are of vital importance to nature, but nettles are one of the best.

Yes, they sting, don't smell nice and tend to

spread, but they also support over 40 different kinds of insects, which use the nettle sting as a shield, protecting them from

grazing animals, and in turn are food for ladybirds and many other creatures. But it's the nettle role as a host for egg-laying insects which is particularly important, vital for some moths, plus butterflies such as the Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma. And all this insect life, including caterpillars and other larvae, can attract amphibians and hedgehogs, as well as foraging birds.

So why don't we cherish nettles? Because they sting or don't have colourful flowers? Because they're common and associated with unkempt places? In fact, if you want to garden for wildlife, a patch of nettles in a sunny spot will deliver for so many insects and the natural food cycle.

And don't forget about their medicinal and food properties for us. They are a good source of calcium, magnesium and



iron as well as other trace elements and vitamins (nettle soup anyone?) and were a highly valued, nutrient-dense survival food back in prehistoric times. Indeed, traces of nettles have been found during digs of ancient settlements, suggesting that

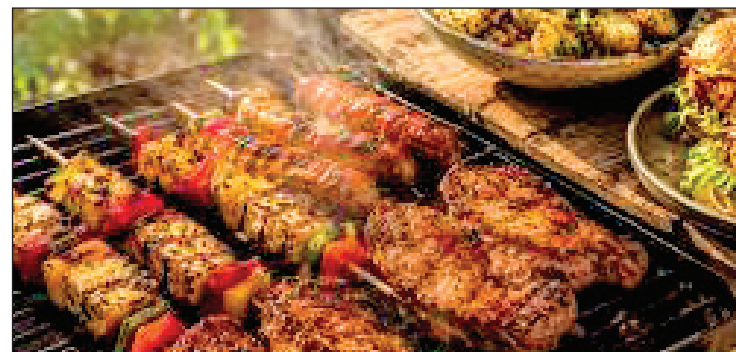
where there were people there were nettles and vice versa.

Sometimes maligned 'weeds' need to be rediscovered and valued for what they contribute to the natural world, which of course is our world.

JVA

A Summer of Celebration at Bell's Centra

Bell's Centra in Killinchy is proudly celebrating a major milestone of ten years in business. Located conveniently at 16 Comber Road, Killinchy this local independent hub provides everything you need every single day!



The store features fresh chilled meat and veg packed with high quality fresh options perfect for summer barbecues. Your BBQ can also be fuelled in-store or why not pick up a disposable one? Customers can quickly stock up on premium meats and outdoor entertaining essentials to make the most of the warmer weather.

The handy forecourt also allows local drivers to fuel up easily before heading out on long summer road trips.

There's even a brand new car-wash on-site and don't forget your tyre pressure and oil and water checks! Don't forget the ices and car snacks for your journey!

As the summer months transition into autumn, the convenient store helps families prepare for the busy back to school routine. Parents can find essential stationery supplies alongside nutritious snacks and refreshing drinks to fill up school lunchboxes.

Beyond seasonal needs, Bell's Centra offers essential daily conveniences like a hot food deli and a free ATM. Visitors can enjoy delicious cold deli options, hot drinks or browse the well-stocked off-licence section. The friendly location also includes a pay point facility for handling important everyday tasks. To keep up to date with their latest special offers, community members can check their Facebook page.

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Summer Fun Awaits at The Crew House

Parents can now access the highly anticipated summer Holiday Club plans from The Crew House, formerly known as The Lookout.

The popular childcare provider has officially rebranded to reflect its vibrant wrap-around care service for children aged 4 to 12.

The club has scheduled an action-packed summer schedule designed to create lasting memories. Families can expect a diverse programme that balances outdoor adventures and exciting trips with creative activities. Children will also enjoy plenty of fun games throughout the holidays.

The club operates every day from 08:00 until 18:00 to give parents maximum flexibility. The pricing is all-inclusive with absolutely no hidden extra fees for any trips or daily activities because all costs are included.

Financial support options are available to qualifying families to ensure affordable activities for all. Childcare Vouchers and Tax-Free Childcare payments are acceptable. Eligible families can also benefit from a specific NICSS discount.

Unlike many other childcare options booking is fully flexible offering the option to book only those days that you'd like your child to attend. Book your slots online. Registration and bookings are managed via the dedicated platform at thecrewhouse.magicbooking.co.uk. The club is located at 2 Union Street in Donaghadee. Parents can also reach the team directly by calling 07846 363633 or via email at crewhousekids@gmail.com.





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SUMMER ALLERGY SURVIVAL

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

The absolute worst pollen producers during June and July are perennial grasses, which dominate our rural pastures, road verges, and lawns. Highly allergenic species like ryegrass, Timothy grass, and cocksfoot release billions of microscopic grains that easily become airborne in the breeze. While spring tree pollen has mostly subsided, summer also sees a massive surge from weeds like nettles and dock leaves. These plants thrive in our damp maritime climate, creating a double threat when combined with the peak grass season.

Beating the mid-summer

pollen surge requires a proactive strategy focused on reducing your daily exposure.

You should try to stay indoors during the early morning and late evening because pollen counts naturally peak during these times.

When you must venture outside, wearing wraparound sunglasses helps create a physical barrier that keeps floating allergens out of your eyes. Smearing a small amount of petroleum jelly just inside your nostrils can also trap pollen before you breathe it in.

Your home should be a safe haven from seasonal



allergens, so keep windows firmly closed during high-count days. After spending time outdoors, change your clothes immediately and wash your hair to remove trapped particles before getting into bed. If you have a lawn, delegate the

mowing to someone else or keep it tightly clipped to prevent the grass from flowering. Finally, tracking daily forecasts from the Met Office allows you to plan your outdoor adventures when the atmospheric risk is lowest.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In July and August new students joining will receive £10 Discount on First Years Membership and £10 Discount on Suit price.



There are classes for LITTLE TIGER CUBS (3 to 5 Years), ACTIVE TIGERS TAEKWON-DO (5 to 9 Years), TAEKWON-DO (Kids, Teenagers & Adults)

To view the full LIST OF CLASSES and to book your FREE TRIAL LESSON at your local club please visit,

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FARMING AND FUN AT THE FOREST PARK

The countdown in on for the highly anticipated Castlewellan Agricultural Show 2026. The vibrant event will return to the stunning surroundings of Castlewellan Forest Park on Saturday 18th July.

This massive celebration of farming and country life spans across fifty acres of beautiful parkland. Gates open from 9am until 5pm for a spectacular summer showcase. Organisers expect to welcome up to twenty thousand visitors to enjoy the lively countryside atmosphere.

Agriculture remains at the very heart of the day. The competitive arenas will host a variety of livestock classes with thousands of fine animals being judged. Visitors can view premium beef and dairy cattle alongside sheep, horses, ponies, pigs and poultry. Exciting national championships and qualifiers are also scheduled.

Beyond the livestock rings, entertainment options



are incredibly diverse. Families can enjoy thrilling showjumping events, competitive dog agility trials and a fun family pet show. Children will love the designated play areas, face painting and energetic bouncy castles.

Foodies are well catered for in the bustling food village. This popular area proudly promotes the finest local producers with everything from gourmet meats to sweet treats. Nearby, a vibrant craft marquee and an array of

trade stands will showcase unique local wares. The dedicated show committee is eager to welcome visitors from towns and cities alike. They want to profile everything the countryside has to offer.

What you need to know about Castlewellan show!

When is the next show? Saturday 18th July 2026

What time does the Castlewellan Show open? The show opens to the public at 9:00am, with competitions and activities running throughout the day. We recommend arriving early to make the most of everything on offer.

Is there parking available at the event? Yes — on-site parking is available within Castlewellan Forest Park. Stewards will direct you on arrival. Accessible parking spaces are also provided for visitors with mobility needs.

How much is parking? Parking is FREE within Castlewellan Forest Park on Show Day

Are there children's activities at the show? Absolutely! From our funfair with bouncy castle, inflatable slide, bumping cars, inflatable maze, bungee trampoline, games trailer and face painting. We have

interactive displays to animal encounters. There is plenty to keep younger visitors entertained.

Do I need to buy my tickets in advance? You can still purchase your tickets on the gate on show day. Tickets bought in advance online are 20% cheaper. We recommend advance purchase for speed on entry on show day

Can I bring my dog to the show? Dogs are welcome, but must be kept on a lead at all times. Please clean up after your pet and be mindful around livestock and busy areas.

What are the Opening Hours? Castlewellan Agricultural Show: 9am to 5pm.

Who runs Castlewellan Show? The show is run by an organising committee and team of volunteers.



How much are the tickets? Tickets can be purchased online at a discounted rate. Start your day without a hitch by ensuring you have your entry tickets ready before you arrive to speed up the admission process. Please note, we cannot accept screenshots. Entry fee can also be paid at the gate on show day. At gate: Adult: £15.00 online £12.00 At gate: Age 13-16 £5.00 online £4.00 Children under 12 are free of charge. For more info see castlewellanshow.com

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Jump into summer with the National Trust's Summer of Play supported by Pokémon

This summer, the National Trust's much-loved Summer of Play returns, inviting families to enjoy outdoor adventures across Northern Ireland - with all new experiences supported by Pokémon.

Taking place in some of the National Trust's most inspiring locations, from nature reserves alive with bug hunting and wild exploring, shady woodlands made for den building and imaginative play, to wide open lawns perfect for team games, races and a kickabout, Summer of Play is designed to help families connect with nature and the outdoors through shared experiences.

Rowallane Garden and Mount Stewart will host Pokémon activities, where families can tackle challenges and trails inspired by their favourite Pokémon and collect stickers at each visit, while Pokémon GO fans will enjoy new National Trust Pokéstops and Gyms, plus exclusive gameplay experiences.

Here's just a small selection of the events on offer this summer:

At Rowallane Garden in County Down from 13

June, get active outdoors on our Pokémon Trading Card Game Mega Evolution Trail. Team up as a family to search the gardens for each Mega Evolution Pokémon, discover their powers, and complete your own challenges. Trail sheets will be available to collect on the day. Normal admission also applies (free for National Trust members).

From 11 July to 31 August at Rowallane Garden, families can enjoy a colourful Summer of Play across the garden, from active games in the Pleasure Ground to creative crafts in the Stableyard and hands-on building with natural materials throughout the wider garden. At the bandstand, performance play brings opportunities for storytelling, puppetry and dance.

At Mount Mount Stewart from 11 July to 6 September, Summer of Play means you



can share the magic of Pokémon as a family! Ready to unleash your energy? On top of an already jam-packed Summer of Play, discover our all-new Pokémon zone. Get stuck into the Pokémon trading, take part in mega games, flex your skills and collect stickers! Don't forget your imagination! Trail sheets will be available to collect on the day.

Castle Ward will

host a vibrant summer programme from 11 July to 24 August 2026, inviting families to explore imaginative play zones across its grounds. Activities include tractor races and hobby horse fun in the Farmyard Zone, as well as climbing and balance challenges in the Adventure Play area. The Courtyard offers traditional games, creative building, performance

opportunities, and a calming book nook for quiet moments. On the front lawn, visitors can enjoy classic summer games like badminton and egg-and-spoon races. Overall, the experience blends adventure, creativity and relaxation in a scenic historic setting.

To find your nearest Summer of Play experience visit: nationaltrust.org.uk/summer-of-play

DONKEYS WILL DELIGHT AT CASTLEWELLAN SHOW 2026

The historic Castlewellan Agricultural Show returns on Saturday 18th July 2026 within the beautiful grounds of Castlewellan Forest Park.

The highly anticipated donkey classes will take centre stage in Ring 13. Judging begins at 10am under the expert guidance of Liz Langford. This popular section is proudly sponsored by Green Energy Wind from Castlewellan. It offers a brilliant platform for local and national exhibitors to showcase their best animals.

Exhibitors can enter an impressive variety of competitive categories throughout the day. In hand classes will test conformation and turnout across multiple age groups. The line-up features dedicated slots for

stallions four years and over alongside separate classes for geldings and mares. Young stock aged between one and three years old will also have their moment in front of the judge. The pet and aged donkey category evaluates suitability as a family companion. Conformation is ignored here to focus entirely on temperament and character.

Skill and grooming remain highly valued at this northern agricultural event. The best conditioned and turned out class judges presentation rather than physical conformation. Young

handlers under sixteen years old will compete to demonstrate their handling abilities and ring craft. Furthermore a riding class introduces a dynamic element requiring suitable tack and strict rider weight limits.

Local breeders living within a twenty five mile radius can compete for the best local donkey title.

The action continues after lunch with thrilling driving classes scheduled from 2pm. Spectators can enjoy traditional long reining and exercise categories. The private driving and trade classes



will display elegant vehicles and historical agricultural styles. Competitors will aim for top prizes and the prestigious Coco Perpetual Memorial Trophy. This event acts

as an official qualifier for the upcoming Donkey Breed Society Championship Show. It ensures premium livestock competition and an unforgettable summer day out.



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QUEEN CAMILLA VISITS NORTH DOWN & ARDS WOMEN'S AID

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

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

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

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



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

for those impacted by domestic abuse.

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

Her Majesty was given a

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

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

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

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

Summer of Fleadhs in Area

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is encouraging residents and visitors to experience a vibrant summer of traditional Irish music, culture and community spirit as three major Fleadhs take place across the district in the coming months.

The Council has provided funding support towards the events as part of its ongoing commitment to cultural development, tourism growth and supporting local communities.

The summer programme begins with the Armagh County Fleadh in Crossmaglen from 25-31 May, marking a particularly significant occasion as the Fleadh returns to the town for the first time in more than 50 years.

The event is expected to bring a major celebration of music, dancing, singing and Irish culture to the heart of South Armagh, with a packed programme of competitions, sessions, concerts and community events planned throughout the week.

The celebrations continue with the Fleadh Cheoil na Dúin (Down Fleadh) in Downpatrick from 15-21 June, offering another opportunity to showcase the district's

rich musical traditions in the historic home of St Patrick. Musicians, performers and visitors from across the island are expected to gather in the town for a week-long programme celebrating traditional Irish arts and culture.

The Ulster Fleadh takes place in Warrenpoint from 19-26 July, bringing one of the province's largest traditional music festivals to the scenic coastal town. Last year's event attracted around 30,000 visitors, with organisers hoping to grow this year's visitor numbers to 40,000.

With its vibrant hospitality sector, waterfront setting and strong musical tradition, Warrenpoint is expected to provide a fitting backdrop for what promises to be a major regional cultural celebration.

The programme of summer events will create a vibrant atmosphere across towns and villages

throughout the district, attracting competitors, performers and visitors from across Ireland and beyond, with the increased footfall providing a significant boost for local businesses, hospitality providers and the wider tourism sector, while also highlighting Newry, Mourne and Down as a welcoming and culturally vibrant destination.

This summer's programme also comes as excitement continues to build ahead of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast, one of the largest celebrations of Irish music and culture in the world.

Hosting of the All-Ireland Fleadh on the island's eastern corridor presents a major opportunity for Newry, Mourne and Down to welcome domestic and international visitors exploring the wider region during their stay.

Ideally located between Belfast and Dublin, the district offers excellent accessibility through direct rail services on the Belfast-Dublin line, extensive bus connections and strong road links, making it an attractive base for visitors attending Fleadh events across the region.

Visitors staying in Newry, Mourne and Down can enjoy a wide range of accommodation options including hotels, guesthouses, self-catering properties and coastal retreats, experiencing the renowned Mourne Gullion Strangford offering outdoor adventures, food experiences and a packed calendar of festivals and events throughout the summer season.

For further information visit <https://www.visitmournegullionstrangford.com/whats-on/summer-trad-and-fleadh-in-mourne-gullion-strangford>

Local Inclusive Beach Celebrates Fifth Year of Accessibility and Inclusion

Ards and North Down Borough Council is delighted to celebrate the official launch of the fifth year of the Groomsport Inclusive Beach, in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation.

As the only facility of its kind in the Borough, the Inclusive Beach continues to provide a welcoming and accessible environment where individuals of all ages and abilities can enjoy the coastline. The initiative offers a free beach equipment loan scheme alongside a programme of inclusive activities, helping to remove barriers and ensure that everyone can experience the benefits of the outdoors.

The programme is delivered in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation, an organisation committed to creating opportunities for people of all abilities to participate in activities, build friendships, and explore the world in an inclusive and supportive environment.

The 2026 season is now open and will run until Sunday 29 August, with the scheme open to the public every Saturday and Sunday

from 11.30am to 4.30pm. A range of engaging activities will take place throughout the summer, including beach fun days and community events.

The launch event featured a variety of activities, including an African Drum Circle, and welcomed attendees from local organisations, schools and the wider community.

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

"It is an absolute

pleasure to celebrate the launch of the fifth year of Groomsport Inclusive Beach. This fantastic initiative reflects our shared ambition to create a Borough where everyone feels welcome, included and able to take part.

Thanks to the dedication of the Mae Murray Foundation and our Council teams, this beach offers far more than access – it provides confidence, independence and the opportunity for families

to enjoy special moments together.

We are proud to support a project that not only enhances accessibility but also strengthens community wellbeing and showcases our Borough as a leader in inclusion and innovation."

Kyleigh Lough, CEO of the Mae Murray Foundation, also attended the event and spoke about the importance of continuing to expand inclusive opportunities

across Northern Ireland's coastline.

Groomsport Inclusive Beach continues to set a benchmark for accessible tourism and community wellbeing, ensuring that more people can enjoy the natural beauty of the Borough in a safe, supportive and inclusive way.

For more information and to book, please visit - Mae Murray Foundation | Inclusive Beach Access for Everyone



The Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Craig Blaney, alongside L-R Kyleigh Lough, CEO - Mae Murray Foundation and Pauline Hunter-Graham, Community Development Officer - Mae Murray Foundation.

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Host a Breast Friends BBQ this summer and save lives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"This year, we want to go even bigger. With bouncy castles and BBQs

at the ready, we've set ourselves a fundraising target of £2,000 through a day filled with music, laughter and community spirit.

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

Barbecue enthusiast Romilly Moore from Newtownabbey

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

everyone who signs up to receive a Breast Friends BBQ fundraising pack.

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

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

"That experience encouraged me to attend Action Cancer's breast screening programme for women in their 40s.



Following my first screening at the age of 45, I left feeling reassured and empowered, knowing everything was as it should be.

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

"Early detection saves lives, and that's why I'm proud to support Action Cancer's Breast Friends BBQ campaign and

encourage other women to make their breast health a priority."

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

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

Stay safe this summer: essential tips from NIFRS

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

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

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

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

"Whether you're having a barbecue at home or at a designated picnic area, ensure it's set up well away from flammable

materials. Remember to never leave it unattended and ensure it's fully extinguished after use, especially disposable barbecues.

"Fires in our countryside do happen and can almost always be prevented. Dry conditions can allow fire to spread quickly putting lives, wildlife and property at risk. You should avoid lighting open fires and only barbecue in designated areas. Always dispose of cigarettes properly and never throw them on the ground or out of car windows."

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

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

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

Delamont Caravan Site open for Summer Season

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is pleased to announce the reopening of the Delamont caravan site, welcoming visitors to enjoy stays at one of the district's most scenic outdoor destinations throughout the summer season.

The site will operate daily through to September and bookings can now be made online at visitmournegullionstrangford.com/DelamontCaravanPark.

Located beside the stunning Delamont Country Park on the shores of Strangford Lough, the caravan site provides a peaceful rural setting with serviced hard-standing pitches and easy access to the park's extensive facilities and attractions.

Set within more than 200 acres of parkland, Delamont Country Park offers spectacular views across Strangford Lough to the Mourne Mountains and is a popular destination for walking, family days out and outdoor recreation.

Visitors can enjoy woodland and shoreline walks, picnic and barbecue areas, a children's adventure playground, miniature railway, coffee kiosk and the iconic Strangford Stone.

The caravan site is ideally located just one mile from the historic town of Killyleagh, renowned for its picturesque setting, local hospitality and the historic Castle, while also being within easy reach of Downpatrick and wider attractions across the Mourne Gullion Strangford destination.



Delamont caravan park outside Killyleagh which is to reopen for the summer.

Visitors staying at the Delamont caravan site this summer will also have the opportunity to enjoy a packed programme of events taking place across the district, including the popular Downpatrick Racecourse meetings, Fleadh Cheoil an Dúin in Downpatrick and the Skiffie Fest in Delamont Country Park, alongside a range of family activities, festivals and outdoor experiences throughout the season.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Glyn Hanna said, "Delamont caravan site is a fantastic addition to our tourism and visitor offering and we are delighted to welcome guests back for the 2026 season."

"Its unique location beside Strangford Lough and within Delamont Country Park provides visitors with the opportunity to relax, explore the outdoors and experience all that the Mourne Gullion

Strangford destination has to offer.

"With a fantastic range of events taking place across the district this summer, Delamont caravan site provides the perfect base for visitors to stay longer, explore more and enjoy the area's unique mix of outdoor adventure, heritage, culture and hospitality."

For further information and bookings visit visitmournegullionstrangford.com.

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COASTAL CULTURE AND FAMILY FUN

The sun is shining across Ards and North Down this summer. A spectacular line-up of events awaits residents and visitors during July and August 2026.

According to the official Ards and North Down Borough Council website, the entire region will burst into life with vibrant community activities. Families can enjoy the action-packed “Summer of Play” initiative organised directly by the council. Free pop-up play events will take place at popular spots including Londonderry Park and Holywood Sea Park. Details on the council platform show these sessions run throughout July and August. Children can also experience nature adventures during the “Wild Days Out” programme at Kiltonga Nature Reserve. Music lovers can

check the Open House Festival web updates for excellent entertainment. Organisers are hosting weekly “Picnic in the Park” concerts at the Ward Park Bandstand. These free Sunday events feature talented musicians like the Queen Magic Experience and the Lee Hedley Blues Band. It is the perfect way to enjoy a relaxed summer afternoon with friends. Culture enthusiasts should look at the official Visit Ards and North Down tourism website for local listings. The celebrated Creative Peninsula festival returns for the entire month of August. This initiative showcases incredible local artists through open



studios, exhibitions and live craft demonstrations. Conway Square will also host a vibrant twilight market featuring creative talent. History buffs can explore the Donaghadee Summer Festival listings online. Tourism diaries highlight unique

events celebrating local maritime heritage alongside family fun. Visitors can explore the historic Cockle Row Cottages in Groomsport too. The council website confirms free weekend entertainment will run there during both months.

Air Ambulance NI gets its first-owned helicopter

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

Representing a major milestone in Air Ambulance NI’s journey since its inception back in 2017, the new aircraft has been procured through Sloane Helicopters and manufactured by Leonardo Helicopters, and it’s scheduled to become Air Ambulance NI’s primary helicopter from later summer 2026. Following years of financial planning and supporters’ generosity, including contributions from Gifts in Wills, the new aircraft is currently in the final stages of testing and medical fit-out. The new aircraft, which will carry the registration G-HMNI, is due to take flight as the Air Ambulance NI’s primary helicopter by late Summer 2026. For nearly nine years, Air Ambulance Northern Ireland, working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, has been a vital lifeline for communities,

responding to over 5,500 emergency call-outs and saving countless lives. On average, the service responds to 60 calls per month. Since its establishment, Air Ambulance NI has operated two leased aircraft – a primary and a backup. With this new investment, the main helicopter, G HEMZ, will move into a backup role, and the current reserve aircraft, G RSCU, will be stood down from service. Today, Air Ambulance NI is also launching its new fundraising appeal, Lift Off Together, giving the public the opportunity to have their name, or that of someone special, featured on the underside of the new aircraft for a donation of £200. With limited space available, this is a rare chance to be part of the charity’s next chapter and help Air Ambulance NI’s new aircraft to ‘lift off together’.

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

journey of Air Ambulance NI’s new helicopter as it prepares to take flight this summer across all Air Ambulance NI social media channels.

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COULD YOU COOK THE WORLD'S BEST ULSTER FRY? JENNY BRISTOW JOINS SEARCH FOR 2026 CHAMPION

Entries are now open for the Fourth Ulster Fry World Championships, sponsored by Lakeland Dairies and organised by Donaghadee Community Development Association.

The popular competition will take place on Saturday 15 August 2026 at Donaghadee Community Centre and organisers are calling on chefs, cafés, restaurants, hotels and B&Bs from across the nine counties of Ulster to put their breakfast credentials to the test.

This year's championship will once again feature celebrity chef and broadcaster Jenny Bristow on the judging panel as finalists compete live from 12 noon to 2pm for the prestigious title of Ulster Fry World Champion.

Competitors will be challenged to create the perfect traditional Ulster Fry using just five classic ingredients – sausage, bacon, egg, soda bread and potato bread. Entries will be judged on taste, presentation and the quality of local produce used.

Now in its fourth year, the championship has

become a highlight of Donaghadee's summer events programme, attracting competitors and visitors from across the province while celebrating one of Ulster's most iconic dishes.

A spokesperson for Donaghadee Community Development Association said:

"We know there are outstanding Ulster Frys being served every day throughout Ulster and we're keen to discover the very best. This is a fantastic opportunity for local hospitality businesses to showcase their skills, gain valuable publicity and compete for a unique title. We would encourage anyone who believes they serve a championship-worthy fry to enter."

Following the competition, visitors can enjoy an afternoon of live cookery demonstrations from 2pm to 4pm, when Jenny Bristow will prepare a range of delicious dishes



and share practical cooking tips using quality local ingredients.

The event is free for spectators and forms part of Donaghadee's wider summer festival celebrations.

Last year's winners reported increased publicity, customer interest and a significant boost in team morale following their success in the competition.

Businesses interested

in entering the Fourth Ulster Fry World Championships can request an entry form by emailing info@visitdonaghadee.com.

Event Details:
• Fourth Ulster Fry World Championships
• Sponsored by Lakeland Dairies
• Organised by Donaghadee Community Development Association

Association
• Saturday 15 August 2026
• Donaghadee Community Centre
• Competition: 12 noon – 2pm
• Jenny Bristow Cookery Demonstrations: 2pm – 4pm
• Free Admission
For further information: info@visitdonaghadee.com

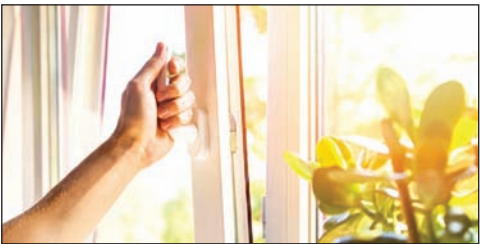
KEEPING YOUR COOL

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

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

One of the most effective ways to lower indoor temperatures is to stop the sun before it ever touches the glass. Traditional awnings and external shutters are making a significant comeback in contemporary design because they address the root of the problem. While interior blinds provide privacy they often allow solar heat to pass through the window and become trapped behind the fabric. By installing external louvres or deep eaves we can block the harshest rays during the peak of the day and ensure that the interior remains naturally shaded. This approach prioritises the "envelope" of the home and transforms the facade into a functional layer of climate control.

Nature offers its own ingenious cooling system through the process of transpiration. Incorporating an "indoor jungle" is more than just a decorative trend; it is a way to actively humidify and cool the air within a room. Large-leafed plant



varieties such as Peace Lilies and Rubber Trees act as natural evaporative coolers. They release moisture into the atmosphere and helping to break up stagnant heat. When strategically placed near windows or in breezy corridors these plants create a microclimate that feels significantly fresher and more revitalising than a sterile air-conditioned environment.

The tactile experience of a home changes dramatically with the seasons and the swap from winter wools to summer linens is essential for thermal comfort. Heavy velvets and synthetic blends should be packed away in favour of breathable natural fibres like hemp and cotton. These materials allow for far better airflow and do not trap body heat against furniture or bedding. Even the visual palette plays a role as lighter colours reflect light rather than absorbing it. By stripping back the layers

and opting for a minimalist approach to textiles we create a sense of visual "cool" that translates into physical comfort.

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



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GUIDE TO PREVENTING AND CURING TRAVEL SICKNESS

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

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

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

Why Do We Get Travel Sickness?

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

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

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

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

How to Avoid Travel Sickness (Prevention)

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

1. Choose Your Seat Wisely

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

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



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

• On a Boat: Request a cabin in the middle of the ship, close to the waterline. This is the ship’s natural pivot point and experiences the least rocking.

• On a Plane: Secure a

seat over the front edge of the wing, which is the most stable zone during turbulence.

• On a Train: Always sit facing forward—never backward.

2. Fixate on the Horizon

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

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

3. Manage Your Diet Before Departure

What you put in your stomach matters. Avoid heavy, greasy, spicy,

or highly acidic foods for a few hours before you travel. At the same time, do not travel on an empty stomach; a light, bland snack like crackers or toast can help stabilize stomach acids.

How to Cure Travel Sickness (Quick Relief) If you are already in

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

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

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

2. Stabilize your head: Within 1 minute.

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

3. Apply acupressure: Within 2 minutes.

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

minutes, or use elastic acupressure wristbands.

4. Deploy ginger or peppermint: Within 5 minutes.

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

The Medicinal Toolkit

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

A Note on Drowsiness:

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

The Great Summer Holiday Escape

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

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

Long-journey preparation should always begin well before the suitcases are packed, focusing on elements most vulnerable to seasonal heat. High temperatures dramatically accelerate tyre degradation and exacerbate existing structural weaknesses, making a rigorous pressure and tread depth check mandatory for safety. Under the bonnet, engine coolant levels must be topped up to prevent the engine from overheating while idling in seasonal gridlock, and windscreen wash should be filled to clear the heavy coating of dust and insects that intensifies dangerous

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

For those expanding their holiday by towing a caravan or a tent trailer, preparation demands an entirely different layer of mechanical awareness. Towing alters a vehicle’s handling characteristics completely, meaning drivers must strictly verify their car’s maximum towing capacity and legal weight limits before departure. When packing the trailer, heavy items must be positioned low down and directly over the axle to establish a stable centre of gravity and mitigate “snaking”—the dangerous side-to-side swaying triggered by crosswinds or passing heavy goods vehicles. Furthermore, extension towing mirrors are a strict legal requirement to

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

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

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

Volkswagen’s Electric Hero Finally Grows Up

When Volkswagen launched the original ID.3, it carried the immense weight of being hailed as the electric successor to the legendary Golf.

While it sold well, early adopters fiercely criticized its cheap cabin plastics and a frustratingly glitchy, button-free infotainment system. Volkswagen has clearly taken that feedback to heart. The heavily reworked model arrives with an entirely fresh ethos and a new name: the Volkswagen ID.3 Neo.

On the outside, the ID.3 Neo sheds its slightly awkward, futuristic appearance in favour of a cleaner, more traditional aesthetic. VW has removed the black plastic contrast panels from the bonnet, painting the entire body in a single, cohesive colour. Combined with

a continuous front LED light bar, the Neo looks lower, wider, and far more premium. It feels less like a radical electric science experiment and more like a high-quality, modern Volkswagen hatchback.

Step inside, and it is instantly clear where the bulk of the development budget was spent. The hard, scratchy dashboard plastics that plagued the original model have been replaced by dense, soft-touch materials with elegant stitching. More importantly, common-sense ergonomics have returned to the cockpit. The frustrating, touch-sensitive haptic pads on the steering wheel

are gone, replaced by proper, tactile physical buttons. A dedicated row of physical switches now controls the climate settings directly below a crisp, upgraded 12.9-inch central touchscreen running vastly faster, bug-free software.

Under the skin, the ID.3 Neo uses an updated iteration of VW’s rear-wheel-drive platform, offered in three battery sizes. The entry-level variant utilizes a 50 kWh pack, while a mid-range 58 kWh option balances weight and cost. The flagship Style trim features a massive 79 kWh battery that pushes driving range to an impressive 391 miles.

On the road, the rear-wheel-drive setup ensures balanced handling and a tight turning circle, making it incredibly agile in town while maintaining a composed motorway ride.

The Volkswagen ID.3 Neo is the car the original should have been from day one. By admitting its past interface and material flaws, Volkswagen has delivered a highly refined, practical family hatchback. With a much-improved real-world range and a cabin that prioritizes usability over pure minimalism, the Neo stands out as a genuinely compelling, user-friendly choice for the modern driver.

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GET A FAN-TASTIC NIGHTS SLEEP

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

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

When you hire a local electrician, their primary task is ensuring structural stability. Because standard plastic ceiling boxes cannot handle the continuous vibration and weight of a 5kg to 15kg motorized fan, the electrician will first check your ceiling joists. If a joist isn't perfectly aligned with your desired location, they will need to install a timber support block or an adjustable metal brace, usually by gaining access from the loft or room above. Once the ceiling is reinforced, they will safely isolate the power circuit, fully assemble the fan unit, and mount the motor housing.

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

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

If the electrician is simply swapping out an existing, centred light fitting where the joists are already strong enough, the job is straightforward. This typically takes one to two hours and will cost between £50 and £150 in labour. However, if the electrician needs to head into the loft to install timber reinforcements, or if you want complex new wiring chased down the walls for separate light and speed switches, the labour can quickly rise to between £120 and £350+.

Remember that these estimates cover professional labour and basic electrical materials only; you will need to purchase the ceiling fan fixture separately, which generally ranges from £60 for entry-level models to over £250 for stylish options with integrated smart remotes. To get the most accurate quote from a local trader, always confirm whether they have clear access to the space directly above your bedroom ceiling, as restricted access can add time and plasterboard repair costs to the final bill.



Creating a Resort-Style Patio

You don't need a boarding pass to escape the daily grind. With the right design choices, you can easily transform an ordinary backyard patio into a high-end, resort-style sanctuary.

The secret lies in treating your outdoor area with the same editorial care as your living room, focusing on three foundational elements: weather-resistant sectionals, outdoor rugs, and strategic lighting.

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

Next, define your "outdoor room" with a premium outdoor rug. A large, flat-weave polypropylene rug acts as a visual anchor, instantly warming up cold concrete or stone pavers.

Opt for a subtle geometric pattern or a sandy neutral tone to mimic a high-end cabana vibe underfoot.

Finally, layering your lighting is what takes the patio from day to night. Avoid harsh overhead floods. Instead, string warm LED Edison bulbs overhead for a festive, stary-night ambience. Complement them with battery-operated, weather-proof floor lanterns tucked into corners, and solar-powered uplighting hidden in nearby planters.

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





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THE HIDDEN DANGER IN YOUR GARDEN THIS SUMMER

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

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

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

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

backflow.

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

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

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

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

Top tips for safe water use this summer:

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

it in a cool, dry place when not in use

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

• Fit a trigger nozzle so it isn't accidentally left running unattended

• Fit a double-check valve to the tap and replace it every 10 years

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

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

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

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

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



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

WaterSafe-registered plumber to check it for you."

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

CREATE A WATER FEATURE IN A SMALL GARDEN

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

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

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

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

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



pond (often called a "patio pond") using an old stone trough, a ceramic pot, or half a wooden wine barrel.

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

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

a spot that gets reliable, direct sunlight.

- Sun and Shade: Place your water feature where

it receives partial shade. Too much direct sunlight accelerates algae growth—which turns the water green—

while too much deep shade will cause fallen leaves to rot and foul the water.

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

edges.

Adding water to a small garden doesn't require a massive budget or a major construction project. By choosing a style that complements your layout and keeping up with basic maintenance—like topping up the water during hot spells—you can easily bring the soothing, therapeutic benefits of water to your outdoor doorstep.

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