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Stronger Together was delivered in partnership with Ballymacash Sports Academy and Canal Boxing Academy.

## GOOD RELATIONS SPORTS & WELLNESS WORKSHOPS UNITE YOUNG WOMEN

A two-night pilot initiative called Stronger Together, designed to bring young women and girls aged 12 and over from diverse backgrounds into a shared space through sport, wellness, and meaningful experience took place recently.

The programme was supported by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Good Relations Programme.

Delivered in partnership with Ballymacash Sports Academy and Canal Boxing Club, the programme reflected the Council's

ongoing commitment to fostering good relations across the community. Both partner organisations are deeply rooted in their local communities making their collaboration a powerful symbol of unity and shared purpose.

Stronger Together, which took place recently, uses physical activity and values-based workshops to encourage cross-community connection, build confidence, and support mental wellbeing. Participants took part

in a range of interactive activities designed to spark conversation, reflection and understanding—promoting respect and inclusivity in a fun, safe environment.

**Continued on  
page 4**

## Summer has been a blast with Sports Camps

Local children have been making the most of the school holidays with weeks of fun and excitement at the annual 'Summer in the City' programme delivered by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

The action-packed summer schemes have taken place at venues including Lagan Valley LeisurePlex, Dundonald International Ice Bowl, Lough Moss Leisure Centre and Glenmore Activity Centre.

Children have enjoyed a wide range of activities and sports tailored to different age groups. Many schemes also include two exciting off-site trips each week, offering great value for money and even more fun for children.

Sports courses are also delivered across the council area, giving young people the chance to try a new sport.

Visiting some of the summer schemes and sports camps, Councillor Tim Mitchell, Chair of the Communities and Wellbeing Committee, said, "We understand how important it is to keep children active for their health and wellbeing. Our schemes and sports camps not only encourage physical fitness, but also help young people form new friendships, build confidence and develop valuable social skills."

For full details on the remaining Sports Camps and to enrol online, please visit [www.theleisureplex.com/summer](http://www.theleisureplex.com/summer)

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# David Honeyford MLA visits wellness business

**David Honeyford, Economy spokesperson and Alliance MLA has praised the impact of tailored business support after visiting Natural Salt Therapy, a local wellness business whose growth was boosted by Northern Ireland's enterprise support service, Go Succeed.**

During the visit, Mr Honeyford met with founder Sylvia Darragh and toured the business's state-of-the-art premises, learning more about how salt therapy is used as a natural, drug-free way to ease respiratory and skin conditions.

Speaking about the visit, Mr Honeyford, said:

“Natural Salt Therapy is a fantastic example of a purpose-driven business making a real difference in people’s lives. It’s inspiring to see an entrepreneur like Sylvia use her personal experience to launch a business rooted in wellbeing and innovation

"Initiatives like Go Succeed are essential in helping businesses like this build resilience, reach new customers and grow sustainably - and it's clear the support has made a real difference here in rural Lisburn."

Natural Salt Therapy provides tailored halotherapy sessions to adults and children with respiratory issues such as asthma, sinusitis, bronchitis, and skin conditions like eczema.

Through the Go Succeed programme, the



David Honeyford, Economy spokesperson and Alliance MLA has praised the impact of tailored business support after visiting Natural Salt Therapy, a local wellness business whose growth was boosted by Northern Ireland's enterprise support service, Go Succeed. He is pictured at the business with founder Sylvia Darraagh

business received one-to-one support and guidance to help strengthen the foundations of the business and expand its reach in Northern Ireland.

Reflecting on her experience with Go Succeed, Sylvia Darragh said:

"I'm so passionate about helping people through natural therapies, and Go Succeed has given me the tools and

confidence to grow this business.

"From developing my business plan to improving my marketing approach, the support has been so practical - and I'm excited about what's ahead."

Go Succeed is delivered through Northern Ireland's 11 local councils and offers a wide range of fully funded support including mentoring, masterclasses, business

planning advice, peer networks and access to grant funding.

Go Succeed is funded by a £9.2 million investment from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and will run until March 2026. In its first year, the programme supported almost 27,500 individuals and businesses and delivered over £2 million in grant funding.



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# YOUNG HEROS PROGRAMME TAKES TO THE ICE

Energy levels soared as over forty young people slid into action for an energy packed ice hockey camp at Dundonald International Ice Bowl.

The camp is part of the highly successful HEROS cross-community programme that uses ice hockey to inspire and motivate participants.

Now in its 17th year, the programme brings together young people from Lisburn, Belfast, Holywood, Swords & Finglas in Dublin. During the week, the group received international coaching from Canadian hockey players then had the opportunity to test their skills in a big game on the final evening.

The HEROS programme was developed by the youth partners; Crosscare, Army Welfare Services, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, along with the international partners H.E.R.O.S Canada.

This highly successful model was first established in Canada and has helped develop life skills and empower over 17,000 young people since it started in 2000. This success has been mirrored in Northern Ireland



through the HEROS programme.

Dropping the puck at the final game, Councillor Alan Givan, Vice Chairman of the Communities and Wellbeing Committee said, "This is the 17th year, council has welcomed the HEROS programme to Dundonald International Ice Bowl. The initiative continues to be a tremendous success and is met with such enthusiasm and commitment from everyone involved.

It was fantastic to see so many young people taking part in the big game tonight to showcase their new skills in front of family and friends. Many of the participants have only started skating for the first time while others are returning to the programme in a leadership capacity.

"Sport plays an important role in bringing young people together to take part in positive activity which promotes a culture of teamwork and

understanding for one another. I would like to thank the organisers and Canadian HEROS volunteers for delivering such an innovative programme which will hopefully have a major impact on the lives of participants as they apply their new skills and experiences off the ice."

On behalf of the youth partners, Natalie Trainor added, "The programme works towards giving young people a unique opportunity to learn and develop

life skills in ice hockey while developing aspirations for themselves and building relationships between young people from different backgrounds.

"The programme has been running for 17 years and we are delighted to celebrate the talent, friendships and skills being developed as a result of the programme. We hope that every young person gains from the experience and takes away positive messages from this unique project."

## Continued from page 1

Speaking at the event, Councillor Alan Givan, Vice Chair of Communities and Wellbeing at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, said: "Programmes like Stronger Together show the positive change that can happen when

communities come together through shared experiences. By giving young women the tools to connect, communicate and grow in confidence, we will build a stronger, more inclusive future for Lisburn & Castlereagh."

Stronger Together is supported by the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Good Relations Programme, which works year-round



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to promote mutual respect, understanding and community cohesion across the region.

The initiative also aligns with the Northern Ireland Executive Office's END Violence Against Women

and Girls strategy, launched in 2024. It addresses various forms of gender-based violence, abuse, and harm disproportionately experienced by women and girls—issues rooted in gender inequality.

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# First sod at Moira Park and Ride rail facility

Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins has officially cut the first sod at the site of an enhanced Moira Park and Ride rail facility.



The expanded facility will have capacity for 489 free car parking spaces. Minister Kimmins said she was committed to progressing park and ride facilities in a bid to boost greener more sustainable travel.

Welcoming the start of work she said: “I am committed to enhancing public transport and encouraging more people to use public transport. “The Moira Park and Ride rail facility is a key infrastructure project that will

provide secure parking so more people can experience the convenience of rail travel, ensuring better connectivity. “Cleaner, greener, sustainable transport is key to protecting our environment and fighting the climate

crisis. “Park and Rides, such as the one at Moira, will give more citizens the chance to use the public transport network as an alternative to commuting, helping to drive down congestion and emissions.”

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# ENTREPRENEURS CALLED TO WRITE THEMSELVES INTO NORTHERN IRELAND'S BUSINESS SUCCESS STORY

Entrepreneurs from across the Lisburn and Castlereagh area are being invited to write the next chapter of their business story, as Go Succeed's Ultimate Pitch, which is returning for a second year.

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The local Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council local heat will take place on Wednesday 22nd October with entrants making the 'ultimate pitch' to an esteemed panel of expert judges.

Launched at the literary home of one of Ireland's most celebrated storytellers, Seamus Heaney Go Succeed's: The Ultimate Pitch is providing entrepreneurs with the opportunity to win up to £6,000 in investment for their business idea.

Started in 2024 by the government-backed enterprise support service, this competition is open to individuals, businesses, and social enterprises of all shapes and sizes and in every sector.

The regional final of heat winners from all 11 councils will take place on Wednesday 19th November

at a special event in Seamus Heaney Home Place in Bellaghy and will be celebrated as part of Global Entrepreneurship Week 2025.

Last year's Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's winner was Emma Stephenson of M-Power. Emma secured a spot in the final after pitching their idea for an App to help identify and manage symptoms associated with menopause to a panel of judges from across the local business and civic community.

Emma also won the overall Rising Star award for the most inspiring 16- to 25-year-old entrepreneur at the Northern Ireland wide final.

In addition to an overall winner who will receive the Go Succeed Ultimate Pitch Award, individual prizes will include the Go Succeed Impact Award for the best social enterprise, the Go Succeed Inclusive Entrepreneurship Award, and the Go Succeed Rising Star Award for the most inspiring 16-25-year-old entrepreneur.



Meanwhile, members of the public will have the opportunity to vote for their favourite finalist to win the People's Choice Award.

Entrants have until 18th August to apply to the competition, with local heats being held within council areas throughout the autumn. Applicants will also have the opportunity to

attend masterclasses on how to make the ultimate pitch ahead of their regional heats.

Go Succeed ([www.go-succeed.com](http://www.go-succeed.com)) is funded by the UK Government and delivered by Northern Ireland's 11 councils. The service supports entrepreneurs, new starts and existing businesses with easy-to-access advice

and support – including mentoring, masterclasses, peer networks, access to grant funding and business planning – at every stage of their growth journey.

To find out more about Go Succeed: The Ultimate Pitch, view the full terms and conditions, and apply, visit: [www.go-succeed.com/TheUltimatePitch](http://www.go-succeed.com/TheUltimatePitch).

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## Park Life Programme Earns Superfan!

Ivy from Moira has become something of a Park Life VIP! For the past two years, Ivy and her family have been travelling across Lisburn & Castlereagh to enjoy every event the Park Life Programme has to offer — and she hasn't missed a single one!

Park Life is the council's flagship summer programme of events that take place in Wallace Park, Moat Park, Moira Demesne, Castle Gardens, and Lough Moss in Carryduff.

Free to attend, the programme is bursting with exciting children's activities from roaring fun at



Jurassic Adventures to Messy Bug Ball, to the enchanting world of Heroes and Princess Days and creative Plant and Play sessions.

Superfan Ivy loves it all, but her top picks include the Play Days filled with hula hoops, parachute games, and face painting, she chooses a new design every time!

One of her favourite memories is the Wallace Park Play Day, complete with the Play Bus and outdoor games galore!

But it's not just about the activities, Ivy loved

meeting Spiderman this year. He had everyone, even her parents, joining in the fun!

And speaking of parents... Ivy's mum and dad are just as hooked. They never miss a chance for a selfie with Princess Tiana or Batman.

Thanks to Park Life, Ivy says her summer has been unforgettable and we couldn't agree more.

Find your next event and join the fun by visiting Park Life 2025 <https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/park-life>

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# Mayor's Cup 2025 organised by Lisburn Castlereagh junior league

The Mayor's Cup 2025 has been hailed a resounding success as young people from across the country came together for a weekend of football, community spirit and charitable giving.

Held across three venues, Lagan Valley LeisurePlex and Stanley Park on Saturday 2nd, and at Ballymacash Sports Academy on Sunday 3rd August, the tournament saw U11 and U12 teams complete while raising vital funds for the Mayor's chosen charity, Action Cancer.

The event was led by Alderman Amanda Grehan, Mayor of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, whose passion for community inspired the creation of the tournament during her year in office.

Mayor Amanda said, "I'm incredibly proud of how our communities came together to make the first Mayor's Cup such a vibrant celebration. Sport has the power to bring people closer, and this weekend proved just that. Thank you to every team, volunteer, supporter, and partner especially Choice Housing and Action Cancer – for making it such a success."

More than just a football tournament, the event featured family-friendly activities, charity



engagement, and a strong focus on inclusion and wellbeing. Action Cancer was present to raise awareness of its life saving services across Northern Ireland.

Lucy McCusker, Senior Fundraising Manager, Action Cancer, said, "We were honoured the Mayor's chosen charity. The funds raised will support our free breast screenings, health checks and counselling. Huge

thanks to everyone who contributed."

Choice Housing, as principal sponsor, played a key role in supporting the event.

Cyril Moorehead, Good Relations Officer, added: "We're proud to support events like the Mayor's Cup that build stronger, healthier communities. It was a brilliant example of civic leadership in action.

The weekend concluded with a thrilling final

match at Ballymacash Sports Academy, trophy presentations by the Mayor, and well-earned celebrations by the winning teams.

WINNERS 2015'S Mayors Cup – Glendowan Trophy Winners - Crewe United  
WINNERS 2014'S Winners Cup – Bangor YM Trophy Winners – Crusaders



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# LORD OF THE FLIES

JV Allister asks if the common horse fly is predator or hero?

It's a hot day in late summer some years ago. You're cutting your lawn, or if you're a farmer you're saving late hay or harvesting barley, flies whizzing around your head, attracted to your sweat, and then it strikes, and you yelp. Cleg attack!

It's likely that clegs as they're known in

Scotland and Ulster are in decline, along with other insects through loss of habitat and the impact of intensive farming, but common horse flies as they're properly named, and flies in general, have been around for millions of years, an integral part of our connected environment.

We take flies for granted and sometimes want to kill them if they annoy us, but they're important to our eco system, for instance having emerged as pollinators of plants even before bees evolved.

And they're important to natural recycling. You see, we didn't invent recycling as we know it over the past few decades, nature has been doing it for eons. Many flies are attracted to decaying matter, animal or vegetable, feeding and laying the eggs that produce larvae. Without flies, fungi and other organisms that recycle and convert dead and decaying matter, we'd have serious threats to our health and



wellbeing. Incidentally, there are approximately 150,000 fly species globally, from fruit flies to mosquitoes and bluebottles, so they're not just prolific and necessary to our

nature systems, but successful, otherwise they wouldn't be around in such numbers.

But back to clegs aka common horse flies, which are less interested in decaying matter than...blood! While they mostly feed on nectar and plant juices in damp grassy areas, the females need blood to produce eggs, and so prey on cattle, and horses of course, and sometimes humans. That annoying bite on your bare wrist, ankle or neck will be painful, but because of the decline in our insect population it will be increasingly rare.

JVA

## Crowds flock to Royal Hillsborough for the final farmers market of the summer season

It was no surprise to see Royal Hillsborough come alive on the last Saturday of May, June and July with the return of the Royal Hillsborough Farmers Market summer series.

Hosted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council the market consistently drew crowds of 5,500 to the village.

Reflecting on the continued success of the Royal Hillsborough Farmers Markets, Councillor Claire Kemp, Chair of LCCC Regeneration and Growth Committee commented: "Each year, Royal Hillsborough Farmers Market goes from strength to strength. We're thrilled by the growing interest from local food producers, artisan makers and creators from our area and beyond, who are keen to be involved. As ever, the market was a welcoming event with something for everyone, from gourmet treats and creative crafts for children to live music and much more. After such a successful summer series of markets we are already looking forward to the Royal Hillsborough Christmas Market."

Visitors enjoyed a feast of flavours throughout the day from artisan producers including Krumb Bakery,



Tori's Coffee Cakes and Bakes, The Pie Shop and Moon Gelato. 'Farm to fork' produce from The Curious Farmer and The Curly Pigs is always popular alongside seasonal produce from Cherryvalley Farm and Tullyveery Market Garden. Street food and specialty coffee vendors such as The Flavoursmyth, The Crepe Makers and Loki's Coffee provided marketgoers the opportunity to choose something to eat and enjoy it in the

unique surroundings of Hillsborough Fort.

Beyond the delicious food and drink, the market also showcased a strong selection of local art and craft vendors. Highlights included Lisburn-based Amber Jordan Design, known for her elegant homewares and illustrative artwork. Also trading along The Dark Walk were Thomas Powell Pottery, Wildaboutsoaps, Susanna Banks Art and Seaside Books – adding even more variety and charm to the day's offerings.

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## Discover 'Mourne Living' at House of Vic-Ryn, Lisburn

We're delighted to announce the opening of Mourne Living, our brand-new furniture store at the House of Vic-Ryn, Lisburn, on Friday 29th August at 9:30am.

We're delighted to announce the opening of Mourne Living, our brand-new furniture store at the House of Vic-Ryn, Lisburn, on Friday 29th August at 9:30am.

Mourne Living has been created with one simple aim: to bring stylish, high-quality furniture to local

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welcome our first customers through the doors. Our friendly team will be on hand to offer advice, inspiration, and guidance to help you find the perfect pieces for your home.

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To book, call us on 028 2073 1210 or visit our website at [www.thecausewayhotel.com](http://www.thecausewayhotel.com). Let the coast call you back this winter.

## New sponsor for Lisburn Rovers FC & Naomi Orr School of Dance

Int Lisburn based takeaway ordering App ‘We Eat Local’ Puts Community First with New Sponsorships - Lisburn Rovers FC & Naomi Orr School of Dance Backed by Local Business.

We Eat Local is an app developed by local man John Brennan which allows customers to order from their favourite takeaways on their own phones. Commission is just a fraction of that charged by other similar apps and uniquely a share of the profits go back into the local community.

We Eat Local is proud to announce two new local sponsorships – one with Lisburn Rovers Seniors Football Club and the other with the Naomi Orr School of Dance, who recently brought home a world championship title to Northern Ireland.

The homegrown business, which offers a cheaper and faster alternative to the likes of Just Eat, says these partnerships are a natural part of what they stand for.

“We’re a local company built for local people. That doesn’t just mean helping you get a cheaper takeaway – it means giving back to the community that supports us,” said John Brennan, founder of We Eat Local.

As part of their commitment to community support, We

Eat Local now proudly features as main sponsor on Lisburn Rovers’ new away kit, and was a key sponsor in helping Naomi Orr’s dancers compete at the Global Dance Open World Finals, where the team took home a host of medals including gold.

“What Naomi and her dancers have achieved on the global stage is nothing short of incredible – and seeing Lisburn Rovers push forward with local pride, matches our energy perfectly,” John added.

Since launching, We Eat Local has focused on cutting out high

delivery fees, speeding up payouts for takeaways, and offering real local support instead of off-shore call centres. The app continues to grow, supporting independent food spots across Lisburn and beyond.

“Every order placed through We Eat Local helps keep money in the community. That’s what we’re about – backing our own.”

For more information, visit:

- [WeEatLocal.co.uk](http://WeEatLocal.co.uk)
- Download We Eat Local on iOS & Android: [we-eat.local.co.uk/App](http://we-eat.local.co.uk/App)

## For the good of my health and fashion!

Meet Deirdre, a member of Christine Young’s Thursday morning group at Elim Church. Deirdre joined Slimming World in January 2012.

She reached her chosen target weight in September of that year with a 3st 10lbs weightloss. Deirdre was recently crowned as the groups ‘Diamond member for 2025’, she remains at her target weight some 13 years on.

Deirdre says “I joined to lose weight not only to improve my health but to be able to wear fashionable clothes and feel good in them. Slimming World has changed the way I think about food.

I have formed healthy habits that I can stick to without deprivation. I still enjoy all my favourite foods but now cooked without the oils, butters and fats. I still enjoy eating



out with friends and family. I go to group every week which definitely helps me maintain my weight.

The members and Christine are very supportive. I love to encourage any new members in group. Everyone is capable of getting the life they want.

The biggest change for me is being able to say NO! A word I found so hard to say for many years. I follow the Slimming Worlds Body Magic plan by enjoying daily walks.

It helps to keep me fit and healthy.



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For more information or to book a consultation, call 07932 139 245 or visit [www.sharonclare-hypnotherapy.com](http://www.sharonclare-hypnotherapy.com)



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# Are you claiming financial support towards childcare for school aged children?

Working parents can get help with wraparound childcare costs for older children.

## Employers For Childcare

Many working parents find it challenging to manage and afford childcare for children who are at school. Organising the morning drop-off and the afternoon pick-ups, and the childcare required to allow parents to be in work on time in the mornings and also be able to work into the late afternoon. This is often referred to as 'wraparound' childcare as it wraps around the school day.

In addition, there is the added complication of childcare that is required

when schools are closed, whether for the weeks of school holidays or for those one-off days of closure that happen during each term, as well as perhaps having other younger or older children requiring a different form of childcare.

Find out what financial support is available

Many parents don't realise that there is help available with the cost of registered childcare for older children. This can include some wraparound childcare such as breakfast or after school



clubs, as well as registered childminders and day nurseries. Parents may be paying a number of different providers to meet their childcare requirements and may be able to get financial support through Universal Credit, Childcare Vouchers or Tax-Free Childcare plus the Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme to help meet their bills. Eligible parents can claim support through any of these schemes for children under the age of 12, however for older children below the age of 16 only Universal Credit and Childcare Vouchers offer support, unless the child is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

Finding suitable childcare

The Family Support NI website [www.familysupportni.gov.uk](http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk) is a useful resource

for families looking for registered childcare and includes a search function for all registered childcare providers across Northern Ireland. This includes some breakfast and after-school clubs and also information on day nurseries and childminders who offer transport to and from school. It's worth speaking to your local primary school to see what childcare it may offer and whether it accepts Tax-Free Childcare, the NI Childcare Subsidy Scheme or Childcare Vouchers as forms of payment.

Further information

To find out more about what financial support you are entitled to towards childcare, contact Employers For Childcare's Family Benefits Advice Service on 028 9267 8200 or email [hello@employersforchildcare.org](mailto:hello@employersforchildcare.org).

# Specsavers Lisburn encourages parents to prioritise children's eye health before they return to school

SPECSAVERS Lisburn is reminding parents to put their child's eye test at the top of their back-to-school checklist.

With 80% of learning done through sight in a child's early years, undiagnosed vision problems can often lead to difficulties in reading, writing, and in some cases behaviour. A simple, quick, and free NHS-funded eye test at Specsavers can help identify and address any issues before the school year begins.

Leanne Lindsay, Store Director at Specsavers Lisburn, says: "Good eyesight is vital for a child's learning, confidence and development, yet many children don't know they could be having issues with their vision.

"We believe getting your child an eye test at the start of the school year is vital, and it is timely to remind parents and guardians that children up to 16 years old can avail of a NHS funded eye test and a second pair of glasses from just £10\* at Specsavers

"Back to school is a busy time for every



family but making sure your child's vision is in top shape can make a huge difference, and is the perfect opportunity for parents to get their regular sight tests done too. Our goal as a locally owned and run business is to help every family in the local area see clearly and comfortably, especially children as they return to school."

The local team at Specsavers Lisburn is passionate about the eye health of children and recently sponsored the Lisburn Youth 2015 Football Team, providing them with branded boot bags and water bottles ahead of their trip. A player from the team who required sports goggles was also sponsored by the store.

Children visiting Specsavers for an eye test can also now enjoy a fully interactive experience, thanks to new sticker books which take them through the entire process, from arrival to getting their frames fitted.

Appointments can be booked online at [specsavers.co.uk/stores/Lisburn](http://specsavers.co.uk/stores/Lisburn) or by calling the store on 028 9262 7290.

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# Howdens Lisburn: Participate in “Trade Fest” and win this Autumn!

Located at Unit 2, Riverside Commercial Centre, Young Street, Lisburn (BT27 5EA), Howdens Lisburn is a key depot for trade professionals and homeowners in the area.

With an “excellent” reputation for expert design and customer service, the depot is known for its friendly and knowledgeable team. They offer a free home survey and design service, helping to plan and customise kitchens to suit any room size, shape, and budget.

Howdens is a leading manufacturer and supplier of kitchens and joinery products, and the Lisburn depot provides a wide range of options, including various kitchen styles, built-in appliances, work surfaces, flooring, and doors. The company prides itself on

high-quality products, with kitchen cabinets manufactured in the UK from sustainable materials and carrying a 25-year guarantee.

“Trade Fest” Comes to Lisburn

This Autumn The Howdens Lisburn depot is running A “Trade Fest” event, a special celebration for their trade customers. The event, which runs from October 5th to November 1st, was designed to thank trade professionals and provide them with an opportunity to win prizes and freebies.

A central feature of the

“Trade Fest” was a “spin the wheel” game, with prizes from partners like Greggs and DeWalt. The event also offered attendees the chance to win prizes, including a £200 holiday voucher, and other special discounts.

“Trade Fest” is a unique event that adds an element of fun and celebration. It provides a chance for customers to engage with the Howdens team, win rewards, and see the range of products on offer.

For more information, you can contact the Lisburn depot directly at 02892 444910 or visit the Howdens website

# MULROY WOODS HOTEL: YOUR PERFECT WEDDING VENUE IN DONEGAL

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

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

Exclusively Yours

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

Customizable All-Inclusive Packages

Mulroy Woods Hotel offers flexible all-inclusive wedding packages that can be customized to suit your specific needs and preferences. Whether you’re dreaming of a small, intimate ceremony or a grand celebration, the

hotel can accommodate your vision. From the menu to the décor, every detail can be personalized to create a truly memorable event.

Catering for All

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

Civil Ceremonies

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

Looking for a Break?



In addition to being a popular wedding venue, Mulroy Woods Hotel also offers a relaxing and enjoyable getaway. Enjoy a mid-week 2 night break for two people sharing (B&B), complete with a delicious meal on the

evening of your choice, for just €318.00 in total. This package is available from September to December, excluding all bank holidays.

Mulroy Woods Hotel is the perfect choice for couples seeking a

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

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AUTUMN PACKAGES

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# PLANNING YOUR PERFECT AUTUMN GETAWAY

As the vibrant greens of summer begin to mellow into a kaleidoscope of fiery reds, rustic oranges, and golden yellows, Northern Ireland transforms into an enchanting autumn wonderland.

With crisp air, fewer crowds, and a magical quality to the light, it's an ideal time to explore its dramatic coastlines, ancient landscapes, and charming cities. If you're dreaming of a cozy and captivating escape, here's how to plan your perfect autumn getaway in Northern Ireland.



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with colour, offering incredible photographic opportunities.

- **Fewer Crowds:** Popular attractions, while still accessible, are generally less busy than in the peak summer months, allowing for a more relaxed experience.
- **Cozy Vibes:** Think roaring fires in traditional pubs, hearty local food, and a sense of warmth and welcome that perfectly complements the cooler weather.
- **Harvest Festivals & Events:** Many towns and villages host harvest festivals, food events, and cultural gatherings throughout the autumn, offering a taste of local life.

Northern Ireland might be compact, but it's packed with diverse regions, each offering unique autumn experience.

The Causeway Coast

& Glens: This iconic stretch of coastline is spectacular at any time of year, but autumn adds an extra layer of drama.

- **Giant's Causeway:** Witness the hexagonal basalt columns against a backdrop of autumnal hues and crashing waves.
- **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge:** The walk to the bridge offers stunning coastal views, made even more vibrant by the changing leaves.
- **Dark Hedges:** Famous from Game of Thrones, these intertwined beech trees are particularly atmospheric in autumn, especially with morning mist or a golden sunset.
- **Glenariff Forest Park:** Known as the "Queen of the Glens," its waterfalls and walking trails are magnificent amidst the autumnal colours.

The Mourne Mountains: For hikers

and nature lovers, the Mourne are a must-visit.

- **Walking Trails:** Explore the numerous trails, from gentle rambles to challenging ascents, all offering panoramic views of the golden landscape and coastline.
- **Tollymore Forest Park:** A truly magical spot with ancient trees, follies, and the Shimna River, all bathed in autumn's glow.
- **Fermanagh Lakelands:** Discover a serene landscape of shimmering loughs and ancient islands.
- **Lough Erne:** Take a boat trip to explore monastic sites like Devenish Island, surrounded by the peaceful autumn scenery.
- **Marble Arch Caves:** Global Geopark: While underground, the surrounding landscape



of Cuilcagh Mountain is stunning for autumnal walks.

- **Belfast & Derry/Londonderry:** These vibrant cities offer a blend of history, culture, and excellent food.
- **Belfast Botanic Gardens:** A peaceful oasis showcasing beautiful autumnal displays.
- **Ulster Folk &**

Transport Museum: Experience traditional rural life and see how autumn harvests were celebrated in days gone by.

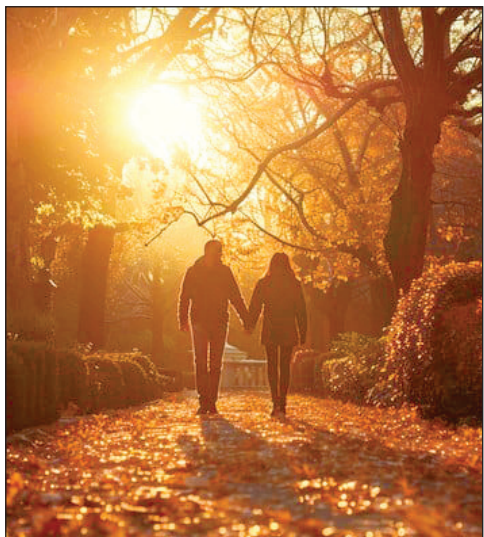
- **Derry/Londonderry City Walls:** Walk the historic walls and admire the city and surrounding Foyle Valley bathed in autumn light.
- **Autumn in Northern**

Ireland is a truly magical experience. With careful planning, you can immerse yourself in its stunning natural beauty, rich history, and warm hospitality, creating memories that will last long after the golden leaves have fallen. So pack your bags, embrace the crisp air, and prepare to be enchanted!

## Embrace the Autumn Splendour: Tips for Your Next Walk

Autumn is arguably one of the most beautiful seasons for outdoor exploration. Here are some tips to make your autumn walks even more enjoyable:

1. **Time it Right:** The peak of autumn colour varies each year and by region, but generally, late September to mid-November offers the best chances in many temperate climates.
2. **Seek Out Deciduous Woodlands:** While urban parks can offer glimpses of colour, dedicated woodlands and forests will provide the most immersive and spectacular autumnal experience. Look for areas with a variety of tree species for a diverse palette.
3. **Go on a Sunny Day (with a bit of chill):** Bright sunshine will make the colours pop and truly glow. The best days for viewing often follow crisp, cool nights (which help promote anthocyanin production).
4. **Look for Water Features:** Lakes, rivers, and ponds create stunning reflections of the colourful foliage, doubling the beauty.
5. **Dress in Layers:** Autumn weather can be unpredictable. Layers will allow you to adjust to changing temperatures throughout your walk. Don't forget waterproofs in case of an unexpected shower.
6. **Wear Sturdy, Comfortable Footwear:** Trails can be wet, muddy, or covered in fallen leaves, which can be slippery. Good walking shoes or boots are essential.
7. **Bring a Camera:** You'll want to capture the breathtaking beauty. Experiment with different angles and lighting to get the best shots.



8. **Pack a Flask and Snacks:** A warm drink (tea, coffee, or hot chocolate) and some autumnal treats (like apples or flapjacks) can enhance your walk, especially on a cooler day.

9. **Engage Your Senses:** Beyond the visual feast, autumn offers a symphony of other sensations. Listen to the satisfying crunch of leaves underfoot, breathe in the earthy scent of damp soil and decaying leaves, and feel the crisp air on

10. **Leave No Trace:** Remember to stick to marked paths, take only photographs, and leave the natural environment as you found it for others to enjoy. So, as the days shorten and the air grows crisp, pull on your walking boots and head outdoors. The fleeting, vibrant beauty of autumn's foliage is a spectacle not to be missed, a true celebration of nature's artistry before winter's slumber.



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# A GUIDE TO SEASONAL AUTUMN PRODUCE

As the vibrant greens of summer fade to earthy tones, a new palette of produce takes centre stage.

Autumn brings a bounty of hearty, nutritious, and delicious fruits and vegetables that are perfect for warming meals and cozy gatherings. Eating seasonally is not only great for flavour, but it can also be more sustainable and economical.

**Fruits of the Season**  
Autumn's fruits are perfect for baking, snacking, and making warming desserts.

**Apples:** A true autumn staple. With hundreds of varieties, there's an apple for every purpose, from crisp eating apples like

Gala and Honeycrisp to firm baking apples such as Granny Smith and Braeburn. How to use them: Beyond the classic apple pie, use them in salads, make homemade applesauce, or roast them with cinnamon and a drizzle of maple syrup for a simple dessert.

**Pears:** Pears come into their own in the fall. Varieties like Conference and Comice are sweet and juicy when ripe. How to use them: Pears are fantastic poached in red wine or spices, baked into tarts, or sliced into a cheese board for a sophisticated starter.

**Plums:** Late-season plums are rich in flavor. How to use them: They are excellent for making jam, compotes, or simply roasting with pork or chicken for a sweet and savory dish.

**Vegetables to Enjoy**  
The vegetables of autumn are robust and versatile, forming the foundation of many comforting dishes.

**Squash and Pumpkins:** From butternut to acorn and delicate courgettes, squash is the star of autumn. How to use them: Roast cubes of butternut squash with herbs, make a creamy pumpkin soup, or stuff



a whole acorn squash with a savory filling of rice and vegetables. Don't forget to toast the seeds for a crunchy

snack!  
**Root Vegetables:** Carrots, parsnips, and potatoes are at their peak. How to use them:

Roasting these together brings out their natural sweetness. They are also essential for hearty stews, chunky soups,

and mashed dishes.

**Cabbage and Brussels Sprouts:** These cruciferous vegetables thrive in cooler weather. How to use them: Sautéed Brussels sprouts with bacon and chestnuts are a classic side dish. Shredded cabbage can be used in slaws or braised with apples for a tangy accompaniment.

**Mushrooms:** Foraged or store-bought, mushrooms like shiitake, cremini, and oyster mushrooms are in abundance. How to use them: Sauté them with garlic and herbs, add them to risottos, or use them as a hearty

base for a mushroom gravy.

**Herbs and Nuts**  
Autumn also brings fresh, aromatic herbs and a bounty of nuts.

**Herbs:** Rosemary, sage, and thyme are perfect for flavouring roasted meats and vegetables. Their earthy notes complement the season's produce beautifully.

**Nuts:** Walnuts and chestnuts are harvested in the fall. How to use them: Walnuts are great in salads, baking, or as a snack. Roasted chestnuts are a classic autumn treat, either on their own or used in stuffings and purees.

## HANNON Coach & Sail is perfect for a city break in Glasgow!

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

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

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

Not just shopping, Glasgow is also famous for its fantastic nightlife, and great choice of restaurants and bars. Glasgow is the perfect choice for your next city break away.

With a simple flat fare of £47 which includes the cost of the ferry and your bag, the Belfast – Glasgow Express offers a really attractive, convenient and



low-cost alternative to flying.

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

option for a shopping trip. There are also a great range of hotels just minutes from Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station.

Company director Aodh Hannon says people seem to really love the convenience of the service as we take you right into the heart of the city centre. "People love the fact that it's so hassle-free compared to flying, no airport transfers and

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

The service can be booked online at [www.hannoncoach.com](http://www.hannoncoach.com) up to 1 hour before departure or by phone using the very friendly telephone booking service.

Call 028 9265 0700 (Mon – Fri) or visit [www.hannoncoach.com](http://www.hannoncoach.com)

## The Fiery Transformation: Why Autumn Leaves change colour

As summer's verdant embrace loosens its grip, a spectacular transformation sweeps across our landscapes.

The lush greens of trees give way to a breathtaking palette of fiery reds, brilliant oranges, sunny yellows, and deep purples. This annual display, a hallmark of autumn, isn't just a pretty show; it's a fascinating natural process driven by biochemistry and the changing seasons.

**The Science Behind the Spectacle:**

The primary player in the green of summer leaves is chlorophyll, the pigment essential for photosynthesis. Throughout the warmer months, trees are busily converting sunlight into energy, and chlorophyll efficiently absorbs light in the red and blue spectrums, reflecting green, which is what we see.

However, as days shorten and temperatures drop in autumn, trees begin to prepare for winter dormancy. This preparation involves a gradual shutdown of photosynthesis. With less sunlight and colder conditions, the production of chlorophyll slows down and eventually stops.

The existing chlorophyll then starts to break down, revealing other pigments that have been present in the leaves all along, but were previously masked by the dominant green.

These "hidden" pigments are:

- **Carotenoids:** These are responsible for the vibrant yellows and oranges. Carotenoids are present in leaves year-round but become visible once the chlorophyll degrades. They are also found in carrots, corn, and bananas.

- **Anthocyanins:** These pigments produce the striking reds, purples, and even some deep blues. Unlike carotenoids, anthocyanins are not present in the leaves throughout the summer.

They are actively produced in the autumn, particularly when there are warm, sunny days followed by cool, crisp nights (but not freezing). Sugars trapped in the leaves by cool temperatures and bright sunlight contribute to their formation. The specific hue



of red or purple can depend on the acidity of the leaf's sap.

The combination and concentration of these pigments, along with environmental factors, determine the precise colour we see. Some trees, like maples and oaks, are renowned for their spectacular reds and oranges due to their ability to produce abundant anthocyanins. Others, like birches and aspens, typically showcase brilliant yellows from their carotenoids.

A Last Hurrah Before

Winter:

The shedding of leaves in autumn is a vital survival mechanism for deciduous trees. By dropping their leaves, trees reduce water loss during the colder, drier winter months when water can be scarce or frozen. It also helps them shed accumulated waste products. The stunning display of colour is a beautiful, albeit temporary, farewell to the growing season, preparing the tree for a period of rest before the cycle begins anew in spring.

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# EMBRACING OUTDOOR WORKOUTS IN COOLER WEATHER

As the days get shorter and the air turns crisp, it's easy to retreat indoors and let your fitness routine hibernate for the winter.

But autumn is a fantastic season for outdoor exercise. The cooler temperatures can make high-intensity workouts more comfortable, and the beautiful scenery—think vibrant changing leaves and golden sunlight—provides a refreshing backdrop that can boost your mood and motivation.

The Benefits of Exercising Outdoors in Autumn

Working out in the autumn air offers unique advantages. The cooler climate helps your body regulate its temperature more efficiently, which can improve endurance and prevent overheating during intense sessions. A brisk autumn walk or run can feel invigorating, and the natural light exposure

can help combat seasonal mood changes. The changing landscape also provides a visual feast that makes your workout feel less like a chore and more like an enjoyable experience.

Tips for Staying Safe and Comfortable

To make the most of your outdoor autumn workouts, a little preparation goes a long way.

- Dress in Layers: This is the golden rule of cold-weather exercise. Start with a moisture-wicking base layer to draw sweat away from your skin, a middle layer for insulation (like a fleece or wool), and a wind-resistant or waterproof outer layer. As you warm up, you can shed layers.
- Protect Your Extremities: Your hands, feet, and

ears are most susceptible to the cold. Wear gloves or mittens, thermal socks, and a hat or ear warmers.

- Stay Hydrated: Just because it's cooler doesn't mean you don't need to drink water. You can still become dehydrated, so carry a water bottle with you.
- Choose the Right Footwear: As the ground may be wet or covered in leaves, opt for shoes with good traction. If you're running, consider trail shoes for better grip.
- Mind the Daylight: With earlier sunsets, it's crucial to be visible. Wear bright or reflective clothing, and consider a headlamp if you'll be out around dusk or dawn.

Inspiring Autumn Workout Ideas



Don't be limited to your usual routine. Autumn is the perfect time to try something new.

- Trail Running or Hiking: Take to local trails and immerse yourself in the changing colours. The varied terrain will challenge different muscle groups and keep things interesting.
- Outdoor Yoga: Find a secluded spot in a park and practice your yoga flow surrounded by nature. The serene environment can enhance your sense of calm.
- Raking Leaves (A Fun Challenge): Turn a chore into a workout! Raking leaves is great for your core, arms, and shoulders. For an extra cardio boost, jump into the piles you create with your family or friends.
- Bodyweight Circuits:

Use a park bench for incline push-ups or step-ups, a tree for support during lunges, or find an open field for sprints. The world is your gym!

By embracing the beauty and challenges of the season, you can make autumn a time of fitness growth and renewed appreciation for the great outdoors.



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## Lisburn to Host Prestigious ITF Taekwon-Do Championships

Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland is gearing up to host the highly anticipated 2025 ITF Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland Championship, an invitation-only event set to showcase some of the world's finest martial arts talent.



the rich culture and history of Northern Ireland.

The championship schedule for Sunday, September 21st, will run from 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM, with categories structured as follows:

- All Junior Belts (Under 18 Years of age): Green Belt, Blue Belt, Red Belt, and Black Belt (6th Kup to 3rd Dan).
- All Adults (18-34 Years): Green Belt, Blue Belt, Red Belt, and Black Belt (6th Kup to 6th Dan).

For those interested in exploring Taekwon-Do in Northern Ireland, a full list of classes across the region can be found by visiting [www.taekwondo-ni.co.uk](http://www.taekwondo-ni.co.uk).

The championship will take place on Sunday, September 21st, at the National Badminton Centre in Lisburn. Grandmasters, Masters, Instructors, Coaches, Competitors, and Spectators are all cordially invited to participate in what promises to be a historic display of Taekwon-Do skills. The event is open to a wide range of participants, including Juniors (6-17 years), Adults (18-34 years), and Veterans (35 years & above). All competitors must hold a rank from Green Belt (6th Kup) to Black Belt (6th Degree).

Organizers are strongly

urging prospective competitors to register early to secure their spot, as the championship is expected to be well-attended.

Master Leo Maguire, President of Taekwon-Do Northern Ireland, expressed his delight in welcoming participants: "We look forward to welcoming you all to enjoy a one-day display of Taekwon-Do skills from some of the very best ITF Taekwon-Do athletes in the World."

The National Badminton Centre, located conveniently close to Belfast and Lisburn, offers participants the opportunity to experience

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# AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2025 FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

As summer transitions into autumn, County Down, Northern Ireland, bursts with vibrant events and festivals throughout August and September 2025.

August: A Month of Music, Arts, and Outdoor Adventures

Donaghadee Summer Festival (Ongoing until September 21st, Donaghadee): This bumper summer festival continues into August with a mix of beloved returning events and new additions across various locations in and around Donaghadee.

Sir Samuel Kelly Project (Ongoing until September 30th, Donaghadee): Visit the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat at Marina Carpark and explore an exhibition detailing its fascinating story.

Dragonfly Festival (Ongoing until September 21st, WWT Castle Espie Wetland Centre, Comber): Make special family memories at WWT's first-ever Dragonfly Festival, offering a chance to connect with nature.

Discover Groomsport - Walking Tours (Ongoing until September 13th, Groomsport): Join local ambassadors for free walking tours, delving into the amazing history of Groomsport village.

Inspiration and Transformation Exhibition (Until August 31st, North Down Museum, Bangor): Explore an exciting new exhibition showcasing the works of County Down artists, celebrating the region's long history of artistic expression.

Summer Camps and Outdoor Adventures: Throughout August, several multi-activity summer schemes are available, such as the Strangford Lough Activity Centre Summer Scheme (until August 21st, Killinchy) and Kids Summer Adventure Camp (various dates, Rostrevor). For animal lovers, Cranfield Alpacas in Kilkeel offers various alpaca adventure and field walk experiences, while the Slievenaman Goat Trail and Petting Farm in Newcastle provides a unique countryside adventure with breathtaking Mourne Mountain views.

Summer of Play at Castle Ward (Until August 31st, Downpatrick): Experience a summer of medieval adventure with thrilling challenges, interactive quests, and fantasy fun at Castle Ward.

September: Culinary Delights and Autumnal Entertainment

As the leaves begin to turn, September in County Down brings a focus on food and a continuation of cultural events.

Eats and Beats Festival (September 6th-7th, Newcastle): This highly anticipated festival returns to Newcastle, offering a vibrant celebration of food and music. With two live music stages showcasing local and international talent, and an array of locally sourced produce, artisanal delights, and live cookery demonstrations, it's a feast for the senses. Entry is free, with select ticketed events for cookery demonstrations and VIP experiences.

Newcastle Restaurant Week (September 1st-7th, Newcastle): Leading up to and coinciding with Eats and Beats, Newcastle Restaurant Week provides an opportunity to sample special dishes made with local seafood, farm-fresh vegetables, and homemade desserts at participating eateries.

Other notable events in September include:

LUX Beginners Jewellery Making Workshop (Various dates in September, Holywood): Unleash your creativity and learn the art of jewellery making in a fun and relaxing workshop setting.

Paddy Raff - Here's One for Ya! (September 13th, Down Arts Centre, Downpatrick): Catch Northern Irish comedian Paddy Raff on his successful tour, promising more comedy songs and hilarious tales.

Grant Thornton Race Evening (September 5th, Down Royal Racecourse, Lisburn): Enjoy a thrilling day out at the races with family and friends.

Comic Con Northern Ireland (September 6th-7th, Eikon Exhibition Centre, Lisburn): A fantastic event for families and fans of pop culture, with a wide range of activities and attractions.

Garden Workshops (Ongoing until September 14th, Hillsborough Castle & Gardens, Royal Hillsborough): Join expert gardeners for hands-on workshops in the idyllic setting of Hillsborough Castle's gardens.

Scarva Band Concerts (Ongoing until September 28th, Scarva Bandstand): Enjoy free outdoor band concerts every Sunday afternoon.

Forest-bathing (September 28th, Killeavy Castle Estate): Deepen your connection with nature through a calming and restorative forest-bathing experience.

Downpatrick Racecourse Fixtures (September 19th, Downpatrick): Another opportunity to enjoy the excitement of live horse racing, followed by live music.

County Down in August and September 2025 promises an abundance of experiences, from captivating cultural festivals to outdoor adventures and culinary delights. Be sure to check individual event listings for specific times, ticketing information, and any updates. Plan your visit to this beautiful part of Northern Ireland and immerse yourself in its vibrant autumnal offerings!



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## Clear Vision at Apex elite NI

What began as a modest family business focused on quality blinds has grown into a standout name in the industry.

Formerly Apex Blinds, the company has evolved through a recent rebrand and merger with elite Blinds—now proudly operating as Apex elite NI. The new name reflects their journey from reliable to exceptional.

But this transformation goes far beyond branding.

What Do They Offer?

Forget the basics—Apex elite NI crafts a wide selection of custom window and outdoor coverings right at their local facilities, using only top-tier UK-sourced materials.

From sleek Roller Blinds to cutting-edge Motorised Blinds that sync with your smartphone or remote, they put you in complete control of your space's light and privacy.

Their expertise also extends to shutters, offering both timeless styles and fully automated options that blend function with design.

And when it comes to outdoor spaces? Apex Elite NI is Northern Ireland's exclusive supplier of Markilux Awnings. These premium awnings go beyond ordinary—they're stylish, sturdy, and ideal for creating your own outdoor retreat.

From humble beginnings to a one-stop destination for blinds, shutters, and awnings, Apex Elite NI continues to prove that quality and innovation make all the difference.

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# Translink and The NOW Group announce new 3 year partnership

Supporting people with invisible disabilities including new job academy

Translink has announced a new strategic partnership with The NOW Group, reflecting the public transport operator's ongoing Equality, Diversity & Inclusion commitment.

The new 3 year programme builds on a successful longstanding relationship between both organisations which originated in 2013 with the promotion of the JAM (Just A Minute) Card\* in a drive to make services inclusive for all.

For over a decade the partnership has evolved with Translink & The NOW Group working closely together to increase JAM Card sign-ups and there are currently over 190,000 users.

This new partnership aims to raise further awareness about the JAM Card and encourage more people with invisible disabilities to use public transport. It will include JAM Card training certification for Translink employees and development of a new job academy.

The academy will incorporate Translink work placements specifically designed to help participants develop skills and experience to support them when securing employment in the future.

Jacqui Kennedy, Chief People & Corporate Services Officer, Translink, said:

"We're committed to ensuring our services and facilities are accessible to



everyone and this enhanced partnership with The NOW Group reflects our strong customer focus and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

"Over the years, The JAM Card has been an essential tool for so many of our passengers, helping them enjoy greater independence and keeping people better connected. We look forward to continuing our journey with The NOW Group & building on the partnership by encouraging more people to use the JAM Card when using public transport.

"By providing colleagues with bespoke training, we are equipping our staff with the skills to recognise and address communication barriers, ensuring a more inclusive and welcoming ex-

perience for customers. We are also looking forward to creating valuable workplace placement opportunities for NOW Group participants."

Maeve Monaghan, CEO of NOW Group, adds:

"We've built such a strong relationship with Translink over the years, and they've been instrumental in helping the JAM Card initiative grow. It's been incredible to see the difference being a JAM Card friendly business makes, giving customers who need a little more time or understanding the confidence to travel with ease and dignity.

"Now, as we look to the future with plans for a Job Academy, we're excited to open up meaningful employment opportunities within Translink for NOW

Group participants. Inclusive transport and inclusive workplaces really do change lives, and we're so proud to embark on this strategic partnership as we work together to make journeys and futures even more welcoming for everyone."

Louise McBride, a JAM Card user and frequent traveller on Translink services, said:

"The JAM Card takes the stress out of travelling. I don't have to explain myself or feel rushed because the staff already understand. It's such a relief and makes using the bus or train so much easier."

To learn more about the JAM Card, or to find out how to become a JAM Card Friendly Business, please visit: [www.jamcard.org](http://www.jamcard.org).

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# ‘What is Care?’ photography award

A powerful photograph taken by Terri Johnston, a medically retired HR professional from County Antrim, has been shortlisted in a UK-wide competition by leading home care provider Caremark, as part of its ‘What is Care?’ photography competition.

Launched to mark 20 years of Caremark championing home care in communities, the competition asked the public to capture what care means to them in everyday life, from small gestures to big moments. Out of hundreds of entries, one finalist was chosen from each of the UK’s 12 regions, following a rigorous judging process carried out by Caremark’s head office.

Terri is representing Northern Ireland with a photograph that was taken in 2005, capturing her Granny, Jean McCreight (who has now sadly passed), with Terri’s eldest daughter, Jenna.

The image is now part of a nationwide public vote on social media to determine the overall winner of the competition. The photographer of the winning entry will receive a £1,000 luxury getaway.

Terri talks about the photo and what it means to her:

“This photo represents so much; it represents the legacy of my granny. She cared for others her entire life and so many people will remember her kindness. I try to bring that into everything I do. She’s been my inspiration through

tough times, including my own health issues – her strength has given me strength.

“The moment captured is when we knew we were soon going to lose her. Granny was very ill at this point. It means the world to have this image of her full of joy, looking down at Jenna. I love her arms wrapped around Jenna — as if she’s passing on her care, telling us, “Don’t worry, I’ll still be here” . . . she’s wrapped around her like a shield to protect her in the future.

“Jenna felt so comfortable and happy here, she loved being in Granny’s arms. Conceived through a third round of IVF, she was so precious to us all — and this picture shows that devoted bond. It’s hard to put into words, but this photo does it. It represents care in its truest form.

“My second daughter Zara was born six weeks early — we think [she arrived early] just so she could meet Granny. Granny sadly passed away two weeks later, but Zara got to lie beside her, and that gives me comfort.”

“Finding out I was a finalist means so much, especially as it’s this



picture. It feels as if she’s still here with her arms around us. If I won, I’d love to take my girls – Jenna and Zara, who is now graduating – away somewhere in North Antrim where my Granny came from. It would be just lovely to spend a nice, long week away snuggled up together in a nice Airbnb and spend some time together.”

Voting is open to the public via Caremark’s Facebook page and will close at 9am on 29th September 2025. The entry with the highest number of public votes will be announced as the winner shortly after voting closes.

For more information about the competition and to view the finalists’ photographs, visit: [www.caremark.co.uk/whatiscare](http://www.caremark.co.uk/whatiscare)

# COMMUNITIES MINISTER ANNOUNCES £3.3M FOR HOUSING RIGHTS

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has recently announced a three-year £3.3 million funding package for Housing Rights.

Minister Lyons made the announcement during a visit to Housing Rights in East Belfast to meet the Board and staff and hear first-hand how the charity helps households deal with housing and homelessness problems.

During the visit, Minister Lyons praised the work of those combating homelessness.

The Minister said: “I have made it clear that addressing homelessness and increasing the supply of housing are amongst my top priorities. This three-year funding package will support the delivery of valuable services, helping those who need it most. I welcome the opportunity to hear more about the work of Housing Rights and how their guidance, advice and support has helped people right across Northern Ireland.

“I also recognise the valuable training on housing issues Housing Rights provides for the wider advice sector; it is vitally important that people in crisis have access to accurate advice



and timely support. The collaborative work of Housing Rights and the organisations and individuals working with homeless people is critical if we are to prevent the risk of homelessness and continue to support people who need help in our society.”

Kate McCauley, Housing Rights CEO, welcomed the Minister’s support and said:

“Housing Rights’ vision to ensure everyone has a home is strengthened with support from a range of funders and partners across government and civil society. Despite our collective efforts, too many people still wait too long for a home to meet their family’s needs. Our work to deliver independent, quality, specialist housing advice across Northern Ireland has therefore never been

more needed.

We are delighted to host the Minister’s visit to our offices to mark a further three years of support for our services from his Department.”

Housing Rights has a dedicated service telephone number on 028 9024 5640 for Housing Rights Advice. Information can also be found at [www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice](http://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice).

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# Effortlessly electric: the all-new Nissan LEAF is the EV for everyone

Nissan Motor Co, Ltd. Recently launched the all-new LEAF. The third-generation electric vehicle (EV) benefits from over 15 years of real-world insights gained through global sales of nearly 700,000 units.

Beyond appealing to EV intenders, the all-new LEAF provides a compelling alternative for internal combustion engine (ICE) buyers with its substantially increased maximum range, enhanced charging speed and a technology suite that makes daily driving easier and enriches owners lifestyles.

The all-new LEAF is targeted to arrive at retailers across the United States from autumn, with other regions to follow.

The all-new LEAF embodies Nissan's Timeless Japanese Futurism design with a distinctive Japanese aesthetic conveyed in a simple yet powerfully modern way.

A fastback-like silhouette and features such as flush front door handles, aerotuned wheels and a flat underbody combine to ensure the all-new LEAF not only looks bold and sleek, but also offers a 0.26 drag coefficient for U.S. and Japan models, and an even more impressive 0.25 for European variants.2

The interior is spacious with an almost entirely flat floor courtesy of Nissan's CMF-EV platform and the wide horizontal instrument panel appears to be floating.

A Nissan-first Dimming Panoramic Roof featuring heat shielding with embedded Polymer Dispersed Liquid Crystal (PDLC) technology allows owners to enjoy natural light



and year-round comfort at the touch of a button.

The all-new LEAF delivers a responsive, ultra-smooth drive. The all-new, 3-in-1 EV powertrain with an integrated motor, inverter and reducer is 10% smaller than its predecessor and features Nissan's unique motor control, which enhances refinement.

The new motor, paired with a new, high-rigidity motor-mount bracket, supports a 75-percent reduction in motor vibration compared to the outgoing model.

For select regions, newly available Intelligent Distance Control Assist helps intuitively maintain a set distance from the vehicle in front

while driving in city traffic and also optimizes regenerative braking.

The all-new LEAF is available with two liquid-cooled lithium-ion battery options, both of which offer thermal conditioning functionality.

Select models are powered by batteries with 52 kWh of usable capacity, supporting an output of 130 kW and 345 Nm of torque. Larger 75 kWh batteries are also available, providing 160 kW and 355 Nm of torque.

An enhanced thermal recovery and management system harvests heat created by the onboard charger (OBC) to warm up the battery, increasing its regeneration potential in

cold weather.

Additionally, on applicable grades a new intelligent navigation-linked thermal conditioning function optimizes battery cooling based on the selected drive route.

When connected to a fast charger, owners can replenish 10-80% of their charge in as little as 35 minutes.

The all-new, third generation Nissan LEAF will be assembled at the Tochigi Plant in Japan, as well as at Nissan's state-of-the-art production facility in Sunderland, northeast England.

Further details including pricing will be provided closer to the start of sales in each respective market.

# KIA EV3 NAMED AUTOTRADER'S CAR OF THE YEAR FOR 2025

The Kia EV3 has collected two major award wins at the Autotrader Drivers' Choice Awards 2025: 'Best Mainstream Electric Car' and overall 'Car of the Year'.

The awards, formerly known as the Autotrader New Car Awards, feature 25 categories. Finalists and overall winners are determined by the real-world opinions of more than 225,000 UK car owners, who completed an online survey sharing exactly what they think of their car. Every vehicle is rated across 16 different criteria, from reliability and performance to appearance and running costs. Owners were also asked about their overall satisfaction with their car and how likely they would be to recommend it to others.

The EV3 impressed UK customers for offering great value and a complete, refined package, with owners naming the model both the EV that represents the best of the best in terms of 'mainstream' vehicles, and the best car overall of 2025. The Kia EV3 is priced from £33,005 and offers up to 375 miles on a single charge\* on the WLTP 'combined'



cycle, a range of three competitively equipped trim levels, and space for five occupants.

Erin Baker, Autotrader's Editorial Director, said: "It may be Kia's most affordable current EV on sale, but the EV3 still manages to pack a premium punch. It scored top marks for the quality of its features which, combined with eye-catching looks and a great driving experience, has made the EV3 a massive hit with its owners. One told us: 'This was my

first ever electric car, and it really stood out among all the other EVs, particularly within my price bracket. It's quirky, futuristic, packed full of brilliant features, and it's really easy to drive. Plus, I can get the whole family in it with room to spare. We absolutely love it.' Congratulations Kia on a very well-deserved win."

Kia is no stranger to success at the Autotrader Drivers' Choice Awards. Last year, the Kia EV6 was

named 'Best Car for Families' and 'Best Car for Dog Owners', whilst in 2023 the Soul EV collected 'Best Value Electric Car', and EV6 was named 'New Car of the Year'.

The EV3 is soon to be joined by the EV4 and EV5. Both models will embark on a nationwide tour of 'Kia Electric Experience' events across the Kia UK dealer network, starting 8 July, and showcasing the latest of Kia's electric offerings to customers.

# Essential Car Maintenance for Autumn

As the vibrant greens of summer give way to the golden hues of autumn, the change in seasons brings with it unique challenges for your vehicle.

Cooler temperatures, increased rainfall, and falling leaves can all impact your car's performance and safety. Taking a proactive approach to car maintenance now can save you headaches and costly repairs down the line. Here's a rundown of essential checks to ensure your car is autumn-ready.

Check Your Tyres: Grip and Pressure Are Key

Your tyres are your car's only point of contact with the road, and their condition is paramount for autumn driving.

- Tread Depth: Aim for at least 3mm of tread depth for optimal grip in wet conditions. If your tyres are nearing the legal limit (typically 1.6mm in the UK), consider replacing them before the wet weather sets in.

- Tyre Pressure: As temperatures drop, so does tyre pressure. Check your tyre pressures regularly (at least once a month) when the tyres are cold, and inflate them to the manufacturer's recommended levels. Correct pressure improves handling, fuel efficiency, and tyre longevity.

- Punctures and Sidewall Damage: Inspect your tyres for any bulges, cracks, or embedded objects that could lead to a sudden deflation.

Inspect Your Wipers and Washer Fluid: Clear Vision is Non-Negotiable

Autumn often brings more rain and even early morning mist.

- Wiper Blades: Worn or cracked wiper blades won't clear your windshield effectively, leading to reduced visibility. Replace

them if they leave streaks or chatter across the glass.

- Washer Fluid: Top up your washer fluid reservoir with a good quality screen wash that includes an antifreeze agent. This prevents the fluid from freezing in colder temperatures and helps to clear grime and salt from the road.

Test Your Lights: Be Seen and See Clearly

Daylight hours shorten significantly in autumn, making properly functioning lights crucial.

- All Lights: Check all exterior lights – headlights (high and low beam), tail lights, brake lights, indicators, and fog lights – to ensure they are working correctly. Replace any blown bulbs promptly.

- Headlight Clarity: Over

time, headlight lenses can become cloudy. Consider a headlight restoration kit if yours are looking dull, as this can significantly improve light output.

Examine Your Brakes: Stopping Power Matters

Wet and leafy roads can significantly increase stopping distances.

Brake Pads and Discs: Listen for any squealing or grinding noises when you brake, and pay attention to any changes in pedal feel (e.g., spongy or vibrating). If you have any concerns, have your brakes inspected by a qualified mechanic. They will check the thickness of your brake pads and the condition of your discs.

Check Your Battery: Don't Get Caught Out by the Cold

Cold weather puts extra strain on your car's battery.

- Battery Age: If your battery is over three years old, it's worth having it tested.

- Terminals: Look for any signs of corrosion on the battery terminals, and ensure they are clean and securely fastened.

Top Up Your Coolant/Antifreeze: Protect Against Freezing

Your coolant system not only keeps your engine from overheating but also prevents the water in the system from freezing in cold temperatures.

- Level and Strength: Check your coolant reservoir and ensure the level is between the min and max marks. If you're unsure about the strength of your antifreeze, a mechanic can test it for you.

Clear Out Debris: Protect



Against Clogs and Corrosion

Falling leaves and other organic matter can accumulate in various parts of your car.

- Wiper Scuttle/Drain Channels: Clear leaves from the area around your windscreen wipers and the drain channels beneath your bonnet. Blockages here can

lead to water ingress into the cabin or affect electrical components.

- Radiator Grille: Remove any leaves or debris from your car's front grille, as these can restrict airflow to the radiator and lead to overheating.

By taking the time to perform these essential

autumn maintenance checks, you'll not only enhance your driving safety but also extend the life of your vehicle, ensuring a smoother and more reliable journey through the changing season. If in doubt about any of these checks, consult a professional mechanic.

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# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR OUTSIDE DRAIN IS BLOCKED

If your outside drain is blocked, we'll take you through your options on how to clear it yourself, including tools and expert techniques.

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You're here because you've probably noticed a stench, damage to electrical fittings, or there's a lot of water sitting on the ground outside your home.

The following are often causes of a blocked drain. Leaves (covering the grid or inside the drain); Food waste, fat or oil from the kitchen sink; Soil or sand due to a collapsed drain;

Objects lodged in the pipes; Tree root damage or Toilet roll build-up.

Before deciding what to do - whether to repair yourself or hire a professional - you'll need to assess the damage. Take a look at the drain and see what you're dealing with. It might be that the blockage is caused by leaf litter on the grid, in which case you can

just clear it by hand. In most blocked drain cases though, you'll need to lift the cover and take a look inside.

To lift a cover you might need a screwdriver or a piece of rope. Once you have access to the pipe below, you're looking to see if the blockage is visible or out of sight, this will give you an idea of the work and tools needed to clear it.

If, after assessing the cause of the blockage, you're confident that you can clear it yourself, then you can source the tools needed for the job. Different clogs require different solutions to clear them. If the blockage isn't too serious - using a solution is an obvious first step. If that doesn't work you'll need: Rubber gloves with long sleeves; Goggles and a face mask; Drain rods; Bucket and bin bags and a Pressure hose.

Armed with the tools and equipment above, including the all-important safety gear, you can take action yourself if your outside drain keeps blocking.

Bear in mind that clearing an outside drain without the help of a professional is only possible if it's not too clogged or too complex a



job.

Remove any blockages - This is all about doing the obvious and simple stuff first, as that might be all it takes to clear a blocked drain outside your house.

Put on your long-sleeve gloves, goggles and face mask, remove any debris you can easily reach, such as leaves, soap scum or food waste, and place it in your bucket or bin bag.

Clear the blockage with your rods - If clearing the drain by hand doesn't work, then it's time for the rods.

Start with one and carefully insert down the drain and into the pipe below. If you feel resistance, twist the rod into the

blockage with sufficient pressure until you break through. Can't feel it? Connect more rods until you find the blockage.

Clean up the debris - You don't want to do all that dirty work only to have to do it all over again in a few days, so clear up any material you removed and use the opportunity to clear away anything nearby that might cause another blockage. Again, pop it in your bucket or bin bag.

It's important to take care when using rods or any kind of invasive equipment down your outside drain and pipes, as any damage caused could result in a hefty repair bill and a lot of upheaval to access the area.

To avoid this, or if your drain won't unblock, it's always advisable to call in a professional to take care of the job and it might not cost as much as you think.

On average you'll pay £60 for a call out, with drain rodding costing £80, jetting £175 and a drain CCTV survey for really difficult jobs costing on average £250. They will have the equipment, know-how and insurance to unblock your outside drain efficiently and safely. Plus, you don't get dirty!

For more information see <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/expert-advice/outside-drain-blocked-problem-solve/>

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# How to find a good tradesperson!

**The majority of tradespeople are hard-working, reliable and will do a good job, but we've all heard of the cowboy horror stories.**

Let's help you to avoid the bad eggs with this guide that looks at how to find a good tradesperson in your area.

Request quotes from at least 3 tradespeople

With all home improvement projects, we always recommend obtaining at least three quotes from different tradespeople in your area. You'll want to shop around to make sure you're paying a fair price for the work.

Make sure they have the relevant qualifications

To get the best results, it's important to hire tradespeople who are dedicated to their trade. Look for a tradesperson with relevant qualifications and accreditations, and check if they're part of national trade schemes.

Choose tradespeople with local experience

Hiring a tradesperson with a lot of local experience can be really valuable. They'll have a working knowledge of local planning permission, have access to a local network of suppliers and labour, and will be close at hand should you need them during the course of your project.

Ask for customer references (and contact them)

We do this to make sure a tradesperson's reviews on our website are real, but there's certainly no harm in you following up on customer references.

When you've found a tradesperson (or tradespeople) you think could be right for the job, ask them to provide you with references from



previous customers about the quality of the tradesperson's work, what it was like to work with them, and would they hire them again.

Ask these 10 questions...

Before you hire a tradesperson, it's a good idea to meet with them in person to discuss the work you need them to do. That way, you can find out more about their experience and approach to their trade.

If you want to know how to find a tradesperson you can trust, ask potential candidates these questions:

1. How long have you been working in the business?

2. What qualifications and/or accreditations do you have?

3. Have you done many projects like this before?

4. Can you show me examples of previous projects that you've worked on?

5. Do you have appropriate insurance,

and can you provide valid certificates?

6. Could you provide me with references from previous customers for me to contact?

7. Do you offer a customer satisfaction guarantee?

8. How long will it take you to complete the work? And when can you start?

9. How much will it cost, and what are the payment terms?

10. What steps do you take to keep your work on schedule and within budget?

The average cost of a tradesperson will depend on the trade, the nature of the work, and where they are located

(labour costs in London tend to be higher than in the North).

To help you plan a budget, here are some average rates you can expect to pay:

- Plumber costs – £40 - £60 Per hour or around £350 per day

- Carpenter prices– £30 - £45 per hour

- Builder rates – £50 per hour or £400 per day

- Electrician rates – £50 per hour or £400 per day

- Painter and decorator prices– £250-£400 per day

For more info see <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/hiring-guides/find-good-tradesperson/>

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## Autumn Tasks in the Home

**Autumn cleaning is about creating a cosy, functional, and organised space for the winter months. Focus on tasks that ready your home for the cold.**

### • Windows and Doors:

Inspect every window and exterior door in your home for signs of drafts or gaps. A simple way to do this is by running your hand along the frame to feel for cold air or holding a lit candle near the edges to see if the flame flickers. If you notice leaks, apply fresh weather stripping, install a draft excluder, or use caulk to seal gaps. This not only prevents heat from escaping but also keeps cold air out, improving comfort and reducing your heating bills. Before winter sets in, give your windows a thorough clean inside and out—clear glass lets in more natural light during short winter days, which can brighten your home and help slightly with warmth.

### • Heating System:

Before temperatures drop, arrange for a professional to service your furnace, boiler, or heat pump. A routine inspection ensures your heating system runs efficiently, reducing the risk of breakdowns during the coldest months. Replace or clean furnace filters to maintain good airflow and air quality. If you have radiators, bleed them by opening the valve slightly until water starts to appear—this removes trapped air, allowing them to heat evenly. For programmable thermostats, check the settings so your heating



schedule matches your winter lifestyle.

### • Fireplace and Chimney:

For wood-burning fireplaces, have the chimney swept by a certified professional to remove soot and creosote, which can cause dangerous chimney fires. This is also a good time to check for any cracks or damage in the chimney structure. Stockpile dry, seasoned firewood in a covered location, or, if you have a gas or electric fireplace, test it to ensure it's working properly before the first cold snap.

### • Gutters and Downspouts:

Clear leaves, twigs, and debris from your gutters and downspouts before heavy autumn rains arrive. Blocked gutters can cause water to overflow, potentially damaging

your roof, walls, and foundation. Check that downspouts direct water at least three feet away from your home's base to prevent pooling and erosion. Installing gutter guards can help reduce future cleaning needs.

### • Outdoor Furniture and Garden:

Give your outdoor furniture a good clean to remove dirt, mold, or pollen buildup, then cover it with weather-resistant covers to

protect it through the winter. Store cushions and fabrics indoors to prevent dampness and mildew. Mow your lawn one last time before growth stops, trim back perennials, and plant spring bulbs like tulips and daffodils before the ground freezes. Drain garden hoses completely, coil them, and store them away. Shut off and drain any outdoor taps to avoid frozen pipes, which can cause costly bursts.

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