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A major cross-border initiative supported by PEACEPLUS and led by Outscape called 'Walking for All' will deliver short, regular walks in local community spaces.

## WALKING FOR ALL INSPIRES HEALTH, INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY

A brand new 'Walking for All' programme, a major cross-border initiative supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), and led by Outscape will aim to engage over 14,000 people across rural areas in Northern Ireland and the border counties to engage in accessible, led walking activities.

Designed to improve health and well-being in rural communities by making walking more accessible, enjoyable, and social for everyone to explore and participate in, Walking for All, will deliver short, regular walks in local community spaces. The programme is open to adults, regardless of age, background, or ability. By fostering a focus on connection, inclusion, and well-being, Walking for All will seek to build sustainable, healthy communities and address issues such as social isolation, wellbeing and inactivity.

**Continued on page 4**

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## £200,000 investment for repairs to historic churches

Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has announced £200,000 in funding towards the long term sustainability of Northern Ireland's historic church buildings.

The funding will be administered by the National Churches Trust (NCT) to help address a range of urgent structural and fabric repairs at four church buildings.

The churches that will receive support are: Mount Merrion Parish Church (CoL), Belfast; Bloomfield Presbyterian Church, Belfast; Whiteabbey Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey; and Seymour Street Methodist Church, Lisburn.

communities they serve. "These grants will fund essential works to safeguard four historic buildings, helping to keep these churches open, safe and welcoming. Each project reflects the dedication of local congregations and volunteers who work tirelessly to care for these important spaces."

Claire Walker, Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust, said: "We are deeply grateful to the Department and Minister not only for this funding, but for their continued partnership and support over the past eight years, which has made a real and lasting difference to places of worship and the

Further information on these grant schemes and on other sources of heritage funding is available at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/historic-environment/historic-environment-funding-grants>

Further information on the National Churches Trust's work in Northern Ireland including events and advice on maintenance is available at <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/get-support-northern-ireland>.

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# LOCAL HERO THOMAS DOHERTY HONOURED WITH FREEDOM OF THE CITY

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council recently bestowed the 'Freedom of the City' on Mr Thomas Doherty in a tradition that dates back to the thirteenth century. This is the highest civic honour that can be awarded by a council.

Born in Belfast in January 1927, Mr Doherty, known affectionately as 'Tommy', is now aged 99 and is one of the oldest veterans in Lisburn and Castlereagh. He is being recognised for a lifetime of service – from his contribution to the armed forces in the 1940's, to his continued dedication to his community and charitable causes.

Tommy grew up in East Belfast as the seventh of ten children, and experienced first-hand the impact of the Belfast Blitz when his family home was damaged. He was inspired by a strong sense of duty and with three brothers serving in the armed forces, joined the Royal Air Force where he served as a driver in the mechanical transport section. His role saw him stationed in Northern Ireland, England and overseas in Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia, transporting aircrew, equipment and vital supplies. He rose to the rank of corporal during his service.

Following his time in the RAF, Tommy returned home, settling in Castlereagh with his

beloved wife, Edna, to whom he was married for nearly 80 years until her passing in 2025. Together they raised three children and built a life rooted in family and community.

In later years, Tommy became a well-known figure in The Temple area near Lisburn, where he led the 'Temple in Bloom' initiative, helping to bring colour and vibrancy to the local area.

Tommy has also shown remarkable commitment to charitable work, raising significant funds for local charities.

He has long supported veteran organisations such as the Royal British Legion and continues to attend civic events, including Remembrance Sunday.

Speaking in advance of the formal ceremony, Mayor of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Alderman Amanda Grehan, said:

"It is a true privilege to honour Mr Thomas Doherty with the Freedom of the City. Tommy's life is one of extraordinary service, resilience and generosity. From his contribution during wartime, to his



unwavering support for veterans and his continued dedication to his local community, he represents the very best of Lisburn and Castlereagh.

"Even at 99 years of age, Tommy continues to inspire us all with his kindness and commitment to helping others. His fundraising efforts and his active role in community life are a testament to his character. We are incredibly proud to recognise his achievements with this most prestigious honour.

"I hope Tommy, along

with his family and friends, enjoys this very special and well-deserved day."

Speaking ahead of receiving the Freedom of the City, Mr Doherty said: "I am truly honoured and very humbled to receive the Freedom of the City of Lisburn and Castlereagh. I never expected anything like this, and I am very grateful to the council for this recognition.

"I have always tried to do my bit, whether through my time in the RAF, supporting local charities or being involved in the community.

Lisburn and Castlereagh has been my home for many years, and it means a great deal to be recognised in this way.

"I would like to thank my family, friends and everyone who has supported me over the years. This is a very proud moment for me and my family."

The Freedom of the City ceremony took place at Lagan Valley Island, celebrating the remarkable life and contribution of one of the area's most respected residents.

# YOUNG VOLUNTEERS BRING CONNECTION AND CARE TO PATIENTS

What began as a few spare hours has grown into a deeply rewarding experience for 18-year-old Katie Mulholland and 17-year-old Harry Johnston, whose time as Befriender and Activity Volunteers has brought meaningful connections to patients at Lisburn's Thompson House Hospital.

Since joining the South Eastern Trust in January, the pair have become valued team members in the hospital, which provides Regional post-acute assessment and rehabilitation for adults living with an Acquired Brain Injury or Complex Neuro Disability.

A pupil at Friends' School, Katie explained, "I am hoping to go on to university to study Medicine and by volunteering, I am getting a feel for what it would be like in a medical setting. I feel that volunteering is a way of giving back to the community."

Katie shared how rewarding it is to spend time with the patients at Thompson House. "You really get a sense that the Service Users are benefiting from the time you spend with them. The time you give, the patient is getting something out of it."

Currently studying for her A' Levels, Katie added how she hopes to continue with her volunteer role once her studies are complete. "I would definitely encourage anyone who is interested to get involved as a Volunteer. It is so rewarding to see how patients benefit and you



feel that you are making an impact."

Harry, who volunteers twice a week, also highlighted how much he values the experience, "I come to Thompson House every Tuesday and Wednesday. I chat with patients, play games with them and sometimes walk around the grounds.

"I find it very rewarding and I really enjoy the days I am on the wards. I have always been interested in working in a hospital environment and volunteering has given me the chance to see what that is like."

Thompson House Hospital's, Interim Manager, Victoria Quinn praised the contribution of both the young Volunteers, "We

are absolutely delighted to continue building our Volunteer Team and in particular to welcome such young Volunteers. It is wonderful to see Katie and Harry bringing such enthusiasm and kindness to our patients.

"I know that Katie and Harry get a lot out of coming to Thompson House and the flipside of that is our patients look forward to their visits.

"It is lovely to see the young people make that connection with patients as it really helps with their rehabilitation as well."

If you are interested in finding out more about volunteering please contact:

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# COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS CELEBRATED!

The Community Training Celebration Event brought together individuals from community and voluntary groups across the council area who have completed a wide range of training programmes delivered by Community Services over the past year.

Over 20 training courses have been delivered since September 2025, equipping local volunteers with the knowledge and skills needed to strengthen their groups and support their communities.

These have ranged from safeguarding and first aid to governance, Makaton and food hygiene.

Chair of LCCC's Communities & Wellbeing Committee, Councillor Tim Mitchell, paid tribute to those in attendance: "This evening is about recognising the incredible contribution volunteers make every day.

By taking part in training, you are not only developing your own skills, but strengthening the organisations and communities you serve. Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council is proud to support you on that journey."

The event also highlighted the council's ongoing commitment to building strong, resilient communities through its Community Training



Programme, with a new training calendar launching for April to June 2026.

Community groups and volunteers are encouraged

to get involved and take advantage of the wide range of free training opportunities available.

For more information

on upcoming training, visit <https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/w/community-group-training>



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# LYONS HERALDS HISTORIC DAY FOR DEAF COMMUNITY

Championing the rights of Deaf people is a privilege, Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has said, as he marked the passing of Northern Ireland's first Sign Language Bill.

Minister Lyons said: "Today I join with the Deaf and deafblind signing community in celebrating the passing of sign language rights into law.

"For all of us, this is a day that truly merits being described as historic. It has been a privilege for me to lead on this ground-breaking work for the Executive, working in lock-step with the community.

"Across generations, Deaf people have built rich linguistic, cultural and social communities through sign language.

"Yet that history has too often been marked by exclusion. Legal

recognition of sign languages has lagged far behind lived reality.

"This new law sends a clear signal that Deaf people and sign language users are valued members of our society. It reflects modern understandings of equality and human rights, and it aligns Northern Ireland with international good practice."

The landmark Bill formally recognises the use and importance of British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) and strengthens support for Deaf people across Northern Ireland.

It places new duties on listed public bodies and Executive departments to promote and facilitate the use of BSL and ISL, improve accessibility to their information and services, and support greater inclusion of Deaf sign language users in daily life.

Rebecca Mansell, Chief Executive Officer at the British Deaf Association, said: "The passage of the Sign Language Bill is a powerful recognition of our languages, our culture and our community.

"The hard work starts here. That means ensuring early access to sign language for Deaf babies, children and their families; expanding the availability of public information in sign language; and empowering Deaf signers to play a stronger, more visible role in shaping the decisions that affect our lives and our future."

Action Deaf Youth Services Director Julie Graham said: "We are very pleased that the

much-awaited and long-fought-for Sign Language Bill has today passed into law.

"This new law recognises, nurtures and enables our Deaf children and young people and their families to live fulfilling and inclusive lives – in their language – in Northern Ireland and will have a considerable impact on the quality of the children's lives."

George Crockford, Chief Executive of the National Deaf Children's Society, said: "This is a historic milestone for the Deaf community of Northern Ireland. We're very optimistic that this Bill will hugely improve access to sign language for many more families. We're also confident that public bodies will get behind their duty to promote sign language too, so we can create a much more inclusive and accessible society for all."

Natalia Buchanan from Craigavon, mother of Deaf son Alexander,



Communities Minister Gordon Lyons is pictured at Parliament Buildings with members of the Deaf sector after the passing of the Sign Language Bill.

12, said: "Today is a great day. Access to sign language in Northern Ireland has been too difficult for too long. Many Deaf children never get the chance to learn sign language, because classes simply don't exist in their area

or are too expensive. I really hope this Bill will help families across Northern Ireland access the support they need much more quickly and easily."

Natalia's son, Alexander said: "BSL is part of who I am, so

this Bill gives me real hope. I hope it leads to a future where we don't have to fight for access, where more people can communicate with us, and where sign language is available for all."

The Bill will now proceed to Royal

Assent, followed by implementation, with work continuing on Statutory Guidance, engagement with the Deaf community, and arrangements to support public bodies in meeting their new responsibilities.

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**Continued from page 1**

The programme is being delivered by Outscape in partnership with 15 partner organisations across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, including 8 local authorities, the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust and 6 Local Sports Partnerships. Sport Ireland, Mountaineering Ireland (Get Ireland Walking), and the

Public Health Agency are associate partners. Locally this project is being led by Carla Adams a newly appointed Walking for All Officer for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council who will support the development of these walking groups across the council area, working closely with local communities.

Sixteen dedicated Walking for All Officers have already been recruited and will lead

the programme as well as train Walk Leaders, supporting the creation of nearly 600 walking groups and engaging thousands in regular, social walks over the next three years.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister Andrew Muir MLA said: "I'm delighted that my Department, working in partnership with DRCDG and SEUPB, is providing funding under the PEACEPLUS programme to the Walking for All (WFA) project. WFA is not just about walking - it is about inspiring people to come together through shared, volunteer led experiences, strengthening bonds within our rural communities while enjoying the beauty of our countryside at its very best.

This project will create a lasting legacy of healthier, happier and more connected

rural communities, demonstrating the remarkable impact of community-led initiatives to inspire long-term positive change and helping rural areas to thrive as places where people can live, work and prosper."

Walking for All is a key priority for both governments across the island, supporting public health, community wellbeing, and preventative action. Research shows that structured walking is one of the most cost-effective and inclusive ways to increase physical activity, improve mental wellbeing, reduce social isolation, and deepen people's connection with nature, whilst strengthening community participation and cross-sector collaboration.

Visit [www.walkingforall.com](http://www.walkingforall.com) for more information on becoming a Walk Leader or to find local walks.

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# Free training programme for community groups

**Lisburn Castlereagh Launched a new community training calendar offering a range of free workshops and accredited courses for local community and voluntary groups!**

The programme will run to June 2026 to help local organisations strengthen their skills, build confidence and continue delivering valuable activities and services within their communities.

The training calendar includes a diverse range of sessions covering topics like:

- Emergency First Aid (adult and paediatric)
- Makaton Level 1 Training
- Food Hygiene & Safety Level 2

Committee Training: Roles and Responsibilities

Councillor Tim Mitchell, Chair of the Communities and Wellbeing Committee, said:

“Our community groups play a vital role in making Lisburn & Castlereagh a vibrant, connected, and supportive place to live. The launch



of this new training calendar demonstrates the Council’s ongoing commitment to strengthening and empowering local organisations, ensuring they have the skills and resources needed to continue delivering high quality activities and services for residents across the area.

“We are pleased to offer this comprehensive programme of free support, designed to be both relevant and accessible. I encourage anyone interested to register early to secure their place. All sessions are provided at no cost and are open to members of community and voluntary groups.”

All sessions are open to members of community and voluntary groups operating within the Lisburn and Castlereagh area.

For more information on the training calendar or to book a place email [community.services@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk](mailto:community.services@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk), or call 028 9244 7713.

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# SERC CHEF STUDENTS SERVE UP TASTY WAYS TO CUT FOOD WASTE

LCCC Waste Education and Environmental Health Officers joined forces with Level 3 Student Chefs from South Eastern Regional College (SERC) to produce a new booklet to help residents reduce food waste at home.

The booklet combines practical advice and a selection of tasty, budget-friendly recipes that show how to make the most of leftovers and everyday store-cupboard ingredients. It also promotes energy-saving cooking methods and explains how to make cost-effective choices in the kitchen. Alongside the recipes, there are useful tips on storing and cooking food safely.

LCCC's Chair of Environmental Services, Alderman Owen Gawith, met with the students to officially launch the booklet. He praised their efforts saying: "I was really impressed by the way the students have shown

that small changes in our kitchens can have a big impact in reducing food waste.

"Their creativity shows that cooking sustainably can be simple, tasty and affordable. If every household followed just a few of the tips in this booklet, we would see less food wasted and more money in people's pockets."

The students embraced this project wholeheartedly, their work showed creativity and reflected the practical importance of reducing food waste. The project was showcased at the SERC Project-Based Learning Expo in the Sustainability and Environmental Impact category. After impressing

judges at the Lisburn heat, the team went on to achieve second place in the final.

SERC Lecturer, Ian Thompson, added: "Sustainability is embedded in the course, so researching, testing recipes and coming up with new ideas for breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert, complemented the students studies."

A limited number of booklets will be available at the Sustainability Village in Wallace Park during the Mayor's Family Fun Day on Saturday 9th May.

Community groups can also receive copies of the booklets by taking part in the Waste Education Team's informative "Tackling Food



Waste and Saving Money" talk. To learn more about our

free talks and workshops, email waste.education@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk

## Career changers find their path through horticulture at CAFRE

At the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), students from all backgrounds discover that their passion for plants, landscapes, and working with nature can grow into fulfilling and sustainable careers in horticulture.

Changing direction in life is never easy, but returning to education can be incredibly empowering. The experiences of horticulture student Mary Anne Farenden, from Crumlin, shows how determination, support, and a passion for Horticulture can open the

door to new futures.

Mary Anne Farenden: Designing a life through horticulture

Mary Anne originally trained in architecture at Queen's University Belfast but quickly realised that a traditional office environment didn't suit

her. Further study and job roles helped her explore other possibilities, but none of them aligned with her personal passions and the space for the creativity she valued.

A move into the hospitality sector gave her more freedom and allowed

her to develop a small art and signage business, but she still felt "a nagging feeling that I could be doing something even more authentic to myself. I knew I had skills I could reappropriate, passions I could incorporate."

Seeing an advertisement

for CAFRE's part time horticulture degree changed everything. "It drew me in instantly," she recalls. Although she worried about her lack of professional plant-related experience, she applied and was thrilled to be accepted.

"I absolutely loved it," recalling her time at CAFRE. Her classmates and lecturers formed a supportive community, and she found herself surrounded by students of all ages and professional backgrounds. Her studies also opened unexpected opportunities: competing in and winning Super Garden 2021, leading to designing at Bord Bia Bloom 2022, and working on BBC's B&B by the Sea.

These achievements helped her confidently establish Mary Anne Designs, where she now works as a full-time garden designer. "I would not be where I am today without the guidance, support and encouragement I received while at CAFRE," she says.

Her belief in lifelong learning and personal investment is strong. "If you have the passion for something, invest in yourself to really give it a go. You won't know until you try, and if you never try, you'll never know.

For anyone considering a new direction, their message is united and encouraging: with passion, persistence, and the right environment, a fresh start in horticulture is absolutely possible.

If you're ready for a change in your career, why not consider studying horticulture at CAFRE? We have courses from Level 2 to Honours Degree with both full time and part time routes available. Our staff are ready to support you build a career focused around your passion. To explore our course, please visit: www.cafre.ac.uk



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# New funding available for local community safety projects

Lisburn & Castlereagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) is pleased to announce the launch of a Project Support Programme, which is open to all constituted community groups, Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and Community Police Liaison Committees operating within the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

The PCSP supports community projects addressing anti-social behaviour, crime, domestic abuse, confidence in policing, fear of crime, road safety, burglaries, business and retail crime. Grants from £500 to £5000 will be awarded to successful groups for projects that continue up to 26th February 2027.

Announcing the Project Support Programme, Lisburn & Castlereagh PCSP Chair, Councillor Alan Martin said, "I would encourage all relevant groups to make an application to access this funding which is being made available to address policing and community safety issues across the council area.

"The Partnership wishes to reach out to all communities to make their communities safer and to improve confidence in policing, however it is particularly keen to receive applications



from groups who have traditionally not engaged in this area of work."

Application forms and guidance notes are available online at <https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/community/policing-and-community-safety-partnership> or by request from Lisburn & Castlereagh PCSP Officers, by emailing: [pcsp@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk](mailto:pcsp@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk)

lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk Please note that completed applications will not be accepted by email. Projects must be within the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

Completed applications must be returned either online at <https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/community/policing-and-community-safety-partnership> or

in a sealed envelope, marked 'Policing and Community Safety Partnership - Project Support Programme Application 2026/27' and addressed to: 'The PCSP Manager, Lisburn & Castlereagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership, Civic Headquarters, Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn, BT27 4RL' to arrive no later than 1.00pm on Friday 29th May 2026.

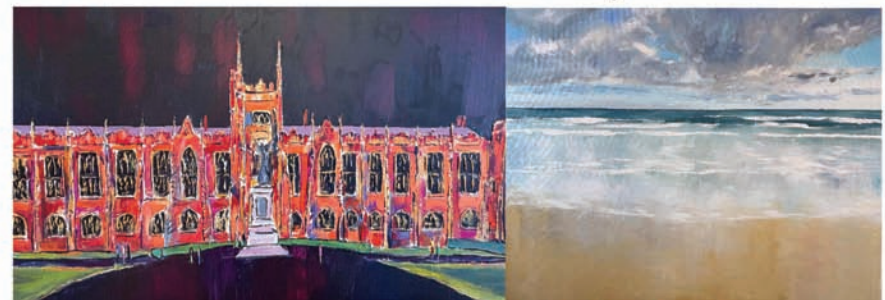


## MAJOR EXHIBITION & SALE OF IRISH ART WORKS BY ADRIAN MARGEY



### TITANIC HOTEL BELFAST

FRI 5<sup>th</sup> JUNE: 6 – 9pm | SAT 6<sup>th</sup> JUNE: 11am – 9pm  
SUN 7<sup>th</sup> JUNE: 11am – 6pm



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Adrian McColgan Pottery Studio

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# Unlock the Secrets to a Pain-Free Back – Starting Today!

**Back pain. It's something too many of us have come to accept as a "normal" part of life. Whether it's that nagging ache in the morning or the sharp twinge that makes everyday tasks harder, it can feel like there's no escape. But what if there was a way to change all that?**

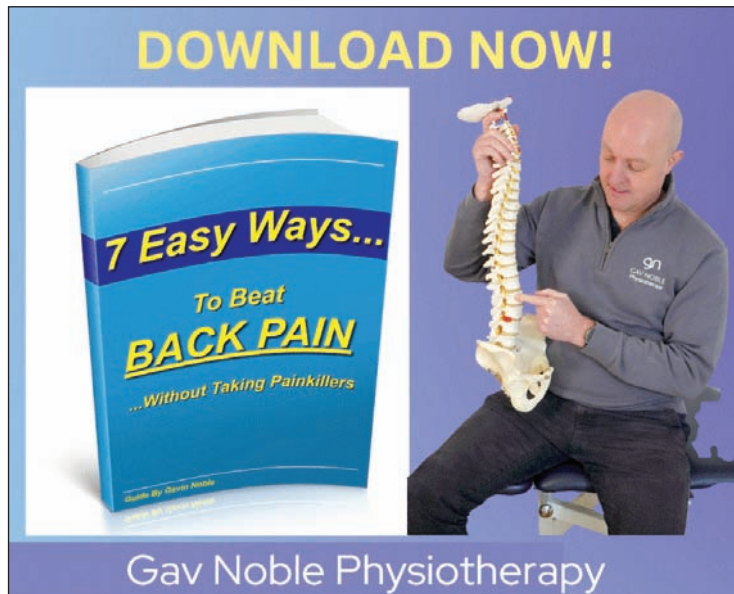
I'm Gavin Noble, a physiotherapist who's spent years helping people regain their strength, flexibility, and confidence. And I'm here to tell you that you don't have to live with back pain. Not anymore.

That's why I created '7 Easy Ways... To Beat BACK PAIN... Without Taking Painkillers'

This guide is designed especially for people who want to stay active, independent, and enjoy life without being held back by pain. Inside, you'll find:

- Quick and easy stretches you can do at home.
- Posture tips to protect your back all day long.
- The secret to avoiding common back pain triggers.

These aren't complicated routines or fleeting fixes. They're proven methods I've used with countless clients—people just like you—to help them feel stronger, move more freely, and get back to doing the



things they love.

Whether you're an avid gardener, an office worker, or just someone who wants to keep up with the grandkids, this eBook is your starting point.

So, why wait? Take the first step to a pain-free back right now.

• Download your FREE copy here: [www.gavnoble.com/back-pain](http://www.gavnoble.com/back-pain), or call today on 02892666959.

And if you're looking for even more tips and exercises, check out my YouTube channel, 'The 10X Physio Channel,' where I share expert advice

to help you stay active and pain-free.

It's time to take control of your back health. Don't let pain hold you back from living your best life—start your journey to a stronger, healthier, happier you today.

Gavin Noble  
Gav Noble Physiotherapy

# REVEALED: EASIEST PLACE TO PASS DRIVING TEST IN NORTHERN IRELAND

**New research has revealed stark regional differences in driving test pass rates across Northern Ireland, showing which areas learners are finding it more difficult to obtain their licence.**

The latest figures show some locations are significantly outperforming others, with pass rates varying by more than 20% between some test centres.

It comes as Northern Ireland prepares to become the first UK region to adopt graduated driver licensing, in a move to help reduce the number of young people killed or seriously injured on our roads.\*

The system, set to come into force from 1st October 2026, will be the biggest overhaul to driving laws here in 70 years, introducing new rules including a six-month wait for learner drivers before taking their practical test. Learners will also have to complete a 14-module training programme, which needs to be signed off by an approved instructor.

Once they pass, new drivers will face an extended 'R' plate period from 12 months to 24 months, as well as restrictions on nighttime driving and passenger numbers.

With these changes on the horizon, there could be a spike in demand for driving tests in the coming months, as learners seek to attain their licence before the new



laws come into effect.

In light of the upcoming revamp, the car insurance experts at CompareNI.com have crunched the numbers to rank which Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) test centres motorists are most likely to pass at.

Craigavon had the highest pass rate for private cars out of all 15 test centres in the region in 2025, coming in at 65.4 per cent. This was followed closely by Downpatrick (64.7%) and Enniskillen (64.5%).

At the other end of the scale, busier urban areas show markedly lower success rates, with

fewer than half of candidates passing.

Belfast recorded an average pass rate of just 47.2%, with Lisburn coming in at 47.4%. The lowest pass rate was at Hydebank, where just 45% of candidates were successful.

Overall, 56,898 learners took their driving test in 2025, but fewer than 30,104 (52.9%) passed. Failing a driving test can have a significant financial knock-on effect for learners, particularly young drivers or those on a tighter budget.

There is no discount for resitting the test, meaning

candidates must pay the full fee – ranging from £65-£95 – each time they take the test,\*\* while also covering the cost of additional lessons and car hire. This means failing a test could see some learners face hundreds of pounds in extra costs.

This financial strain is compounded by the long delays that learners may face when trying to book test slots – with wait times as long as 10 weeks in some areas,\*\*\* meaning they will likely need to take extra lessons to stay test-ready.

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# Local Cancer Charity Welcomes Historic Smokefree Generation Law

Action on Smoking and Health NI (ASH NI) and Cancer Focus Northern Ireland welcome the Introduction of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

The introduction of the Tobacco and Vapes law marks a major step forward in protecting public health and creating a smoke free generation.

Each year, around 2,200 people in Northern Ireland die from smoking related causes, the equivalent of six lives lost every day. Smoking also places a significant burden on health services, with approximately 34,900 hospital admissions annually and costs estimated at up to £450 million when wider economic impacts are included.

The new legislation introduces a phased approach to ending tobacco use by making it illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009. This creates a smoke free generation while not affecting those who can already legally purchase tobacco.

The new law also includes strong measures to address youth vaping, including restrictions on advertising, bans on sales to under 18s, and tighter regulation of products and marketing.

Naomi Thompson Health Improvement Manager with Cancer Focus NI stated:

“Smoking continues to have a devastating



impact on lives, families, and communities across Northern Ireland. Losing six people every day to a preventable cause underlines the urgency for action.

“Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer and many other diseases. This legislation is a landmark moment.

The creation of a smoke free generation is a bold and necessary step that will protect future generations from the harms of tobacco.

“It is also vital that we address the growing concern around the youth use of nicotine containing

products. These new measures will help ensure that children are not targeted or drawn into nicotine addiction.

“However, legislation alone is not enough. In NI there needs to be a coordinated approach to tobacco and nicotine product use - with focussed prevention programmes, investment in stop smoking services, widespread campaigns, funded enforcement; especially targeting communities and groups where smoking rates remain highest.

“This is a once in a generation opportunity to

reduce harm, tackle health inequalities, and move closer to a tobacco free society.”

While the new law represents significant progress, challenges remain. Thousands of people will continue to use tobacco products. Smoking rates are highest in the most deprived communities, where people are four times more likely to smoke than those in the least deprived areas, reinforcing the urgent need to address health inequalities.

With sustained commitment and investment, a Smokefree NI by 2035 is within reach.

# Robin Swann MP visits new HANNON Steel premises at former RAF Nutts Corner site

Robin Swann MP recently visited the new HANNON Steel premises at Nutts Corner, meeting the team and viewing the company’s purpose-built facility as the business begins a phased move into the site.

The visit provided an opportunity to see first-hand the HANNON Group’s investment in the HANNON Steel facility, part of the wider redevelopment of the former RAF base at Nutts Corner.

The new premises have been developed to better serve customers, with increased stockholding capacity, improved processing areas and enhanced walk-in facilities. This allows HANNON Steel to hold a broader range of materials on site while improving operational efficiency and supporting continued growth.

HANNON Steel supplies mild steel products to customers across Northern Ireland, including engineering firms, fabricators, farms, construction contractors and manufacturing businesses. A key part of the service is its daily delivery operation, using its own fleet to deliver directly to



Pictured L-R: Jonathan Whyte, General Manager, HANNON Steel; Adrian Hannon, Managing Director, HANNON Steel; Robin Swann MP, Member of Parliament for South Antrim; Aodh Hannon, CEO & Founder, HANNON Group; Chris Whyte, HANNON Steel.

customer premises.

Adrian Hannon, Managing Director of HANNON Steel, said:

“Our customers depend on being able to access the steel they need quickly for their projects and day-to-day operations. Increasing our stockholding capacity and

improving how we process and dispatch orders allows us to continue building on the service we already provide.”

The development also forms part of the HANNON Group’s longer-term plans for the site, including a £22 million pharmaceutical

logistics and warehousing facility for HANNON PharmaLink.

Robin Swann MP welcomed the investment, highlighting its importance for the local economy and the confidence it demonstrates in the South Antrim area.

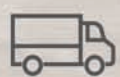
## HANNON STEEL

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# REAL LIVING WAGE



**JOIN THE CAMPAIGN!**



[join.unison.org.uk](http://join.unison.org.uk)



# Real Living Wage campaign

**UNISON's Real Living Wage campaign in Northern Ireland** is challenging low pay and improving living standards for workers across public services and the independent sector. Built on a clear principle—that every worker should earn enough to cover the real cost of essentials such as food, housing, heating and transport—the campaign promotes the Real Living Wage, currently £13.45 per hour, which is independently calculated to reflect actual living costs rather than government minimums that often leave workers in “in-work poverty.”

This issue is especially urgent in Health and Social Care, where many committed staff continue to endure chronic low pay. UNISON works directly with employers to support accreditation as Real Living Wage employers, ensuring fair and decent pay for all workers, including those in the independent care sector. The union also campaigns for fair pay structures within the NHS, protecting Agenda for Change staff on Band 3 and above from pay compression. UNISON emphasises that the Real Living Wage delivers benefits beyond individual workers. Fair pay strengthens wellbeing, morale and job satisfaction, helping employers retain skilled staff and reducing turnover in vital services. A fairly rewarded workforce is more stable, more motivated and better equipped to deliver high-quality care and service provision.

UNISON's Real Living Wage campaign is rooted in dignity, fairness and financial security for those who deliver essential public services.

By championing real pay for real living across Northern Ireland, UNISON remains committed to building a more equal and sustainable society—one where workers are paid not just to survive, but to live.

**Gillian Foley, UNISON Branch Secretary & Trade Union Chair**

## Why UNISON's Campaign for Low-Band NHS Pay Matters More Than Ever

**In the current financial climate, the efforts of UNISON representatives, to secure better pay for low-band NHS staff are not only justified, they are essential.**

Low-band staff, such as healthcare assistants, domestic staff and support staff, are the backbone of the NHS. Yet they are so often the most financially vulnerable. Delivering more for less. Working in one of the most demanding and essential services.

For many staff, including myself, this is about more than just a wage. It's about whether we can afford to properly support and provide for our families. This impacts on home life, when left worrying if the weekly food shop will stretch far enough. Whether the heating can stay on a bit longer during colder months. Whether there is anything left over after bills are paid. For us members with children, it can mean difficult choices. The nature of NHS work itself is often exhausting. These are long shifts, full of emotional and physical demands that cannot simply be turned off when the shift ends. Many go home already drained, only to face financial stress on top of that.

This is why UNISON's efforts matter so much. They're not just arguing for a pay rise—they're standing up for a basic level of dignity. A Living Wage means being able to live without constant financial anxiety. UNISON's campaign is a reminder that behind every NHS role is a person, and behind that person is a family trying to get by.

Admin Member

I work full-time on minimum wage, yet every month feels like a struggle to get by. The cost of living keeps rising—rent, food, transport, and energy bills all take bigger pieces of my pay, while my wages barely change. There's little left after covering the basics, and saving money feels almost impossible.

It's exhausting not just physically, but mentally. There's constant pressure to make ends meet, to budget every penny, and to worry about unexpected expenses that could throw everything off. Simple things—like taking a day off, going out with friends, or planning for the future—feel out of reach.

Working hard used to mean building a stable life, but now it often feels like working to make ends meet. Many of us are doing everything we're supposed to—working long hours, showing up every day—and still can't afford a decent standard of living. It's frustrating and disheartening to feel overlooked and undervalued.

Living on minimum wage in these times isn't just about tight finances—it's about the stress, the uncertainty, and the feeling that no matter how hard you work, it's never quite enough.

Support Services Member



**PUT NHS PAY RIGHT**

**It's time to kick poverty pay out of the NHS.**



# MARGEY EXHIBITION & SALE AT TITANIC HOTEL BELFAST

Artist Adrian Margey will be returning to Titanic Hotel Belfast with his latest exhibition and sale of work from Friday 5th to Sunday 7th June.

Margey shot to notoriety as a result of his bold and colourful contemporary depictions of Irish landscapes and landmarks, and is now also receiving widespread praise for his more subtle, impressionistic pieces that embrace a naturalistic palette. Visitors can expect an eclectic exhibition filled with vibrant landscapes, dramatic cityscapes, and dreamy beach scenes. From large-scale canvases to smaller works, collectors and art lovers will enjoy depictions of Belfast City, Donegal, the North Coast, the Glens of Antrim and the Mourne, alongside traditional Irish musicians and dancers.

Margey's evolving style combines expressive brushwork with a keen sense of atmosphere, capturing both the energy and tranquillity of his subjects. Whether through bold colour or softer tonal shifts, his work reflects a deep connection to place, light, and the changing moods of the Irish landscape. The light-filled setting of Drawing Office One at the Titanic Hotel will provide a spectacular backdrop for this impressive new body of work. With original pieces and limited edition prints on show, there will be artwork to suit a range of budgets. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. Opening



times are as follows: Friday 5th June, 6pm-9pm; Saturday 6th June, 11am-9pm; and Sunday 7th June, 11am-6pm. For

more information, telephone Margey's Portrush studio on 07841593762 or visit [www.adrianmargey.com](http://www.adrianmargey.com).

# Oticon Zeal™ the world's most discreet, complete hearing aid now available at Lisburn Hearing Centre

Colin l'Anson has been serving customers from the Lisburn area, Belfast and beyond for 3 years and Lisburn Hearing Centre has helped hundreds of people hear better with wax removal and new hearing aids.

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# Take the wheel and get inspired at Adrian Mc Colgan Pottery Studio

If you're looking to swap screen time for something a bit more... tactile, the Adrian McColgan Pottery Studio has the perfect antidote.

This summer, the studio is throwing open its doors for the Paint Me Glaze Me scheme—a vibrant, hands-on experience designed to turn "I'm bored" into "Look what I made!"

Whether you're a seasoned pro or someone who hasn't touched clay since primary school, the scheme is built for pure, unadulterated fun. You pick a piece, grab a brush, and let your imagination take the wheel. From toddlers with a penchant for finger painting to adults looking for a therapeutic afternoon, the studio is an all-ages zone. There's something uniquely satisfying about creating a physical object you can actually use. Plus, it's one of the few activities where getting a little messy

is actually encouraged.

While the Paint Me Glaze Me scheme offers fantastic flexibility for those spontaneous creative urges, the studio is also amping up its educational game.

If you or your kids want to dive deeper into the craft—think wheel-throwing, hand-building, and professional techniques—Adrian McColgan is hosting a dedicated series of Summer Classes. These sessions provide a more structured way to master the kiln and the wheel under expert guidance.

Ready to get your hands dirty? You don't need to be a "natural artist" to enjoy the studio; you just need to show up.

Location: Adrian McColgan Pottery Studio



Hours: Mon-Fri, 10 AM - 4 PM

Full Class Schedule: [www.adrianmccolganpotterystudio.com](http://www.adrianmccolganpotterystudio.com)

This summer, don't just buy something off a shelf—make something that tells a story. We'll see you at the studio!

## Old Friends Day Care, providing a caring solution for those living with Dementia

On September 17th last year, Wendy Minnis and her husband, Derek, officially opened the doors of Old Friends Day Care, marking the beginning of a vital new resource for the Lisburn area.

After two decades in the care sector—including ten years as a Registered Adult Nurse at Lagan Valley Hospital and a further decade managing care homes—Wendy recognized a recurring struggle among local families.

Wendy said: "I have seen how families wanted to keep their loved ones at home, but there weren't the facilities or services available for daytime care. That's when I decided I wanted to open the Day Centre. Some say it is a life line, it gives family members peace of mind when they can be assured that their loved one is being cared for in such a caring environment."

She witnessed many families who desperately wanted to keep their loved ones at home but were forced toward residential care because the necessary support services simply didn't exist. Together with

Derek, who serves as the Responsible Individual for the centre, Wendy launched Old Friends to bridge this gap, combining her clinical expertise with a shared commitment to high-standard, compliant care.

The centre prioritizes an intimate, "home from home" atmosphere, intentionally limiting capacity to 20 guests to maintain a personalized touch. Wendy, who is currently working toward becoming a Dementia Ambassador, emphasizes that specialist care is about more than just safety; it is about understanding how dementia affects each individual differently. By getting to know guests on a one-to-one basis, the team enables them to rediscover old passions while encouraging new ones in an environment that feels like a warm, welcoming house rather than a clinical facility. A typical day at the centre



is defined by companionship and activity. Guests are welcomed with morning tea and toast, followed by chair exercises and creative crafts. After a home-cooked lunch, the afternoon might include gardening, singing, or a local walk. This structured yet flexible routine provides a vital lifeline for primary caregivers, offering them peace of mind and much-needed

respite. Looking ahead, Wendy and Derek aim for Old Friends to be a cornerstone of the community, offering door-to-door transport and hosting dementia information evenings to support the wider public as they move through their first year of operation. Old Friends Day Care Centre is open Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.

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**Open Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm**

**Tel: 028 9252 8963 - [info@oldfriendsdaycare.com](mailto:info@oldfriendsdaycare.com)**

# Summer Escapes, Good Times & Great Memories This May & June!

As the days grow longer and summer begins to bloom across Donegal, there's no better time to enjoy a well-deserved break.

A change of pace, delicious food, lively entertainment, and the fresh Atlantic air can do wonders for the soul — and there's no better place to experience it all than the welcoming Station House Hotel in the heart of Letterkenny.

With the Over 50s Golden Years Offer, guests can enjoy outstanding value, warm hospitality, and a relaxing getaway, making May and June the perfect time to discover everything Donegal has to offer.

Discover Donegal This Early Summer

Built on the site of the original Old Station House, the hotel blends historic charm with modern comfort. Since opening in 2006, it has become one of Letterkenny's best-loved hotels, offering 81 spacious bedrooms, the popular Depot Bar & Restaurant, and modern conference and

banqueting facilities.

A proud recipient of TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice and Certificate of Excellence for 14 consecutive years, the Station House Hotel is renowned for delivering memorable guest experiences. With consistently high ratings on Google and TripAdvisor, guests can book with confidence knowing a warm welcome awaits.

Step outside and you are in the very centre of Letterkenny's vibrant atmosphere. From shopping and night life, everything is within easy reach. Enjoy a performance at An Grianán Theatre, catch the latest release at Century Cinema, or simply soak up the buzz of the town.

Explore Donegal's Natural Beauty

May and June are ideal for exploring the spectacular

scenery that makes Donegal famous. Use the Station House Hotel as your base to discover the beauty of Glenveagh National Park, the breathtaking Slieve League Cliffs, and Donegal's stunning Blue Flag beaches and more!

Whether you're planning scenic drives, coastal walks, golf outings, or simply time to relax and recharge, Donegal has something for everyone.

Comfort And Choice The hotel offers a range of spacious room types to suit every stay, including Executive, Double, Twin, Triple, Family, Interconnecting, and Accessible rooms all designed with comfort in mind and featuring 43-inch plasma screens with Chromecast.

Dine Like A Local

Home to the ever-popular and newly refurbished Depot Bar

& Restaurant, guests can enjoy a warm and friendly dining experience with a menu full of tempting favourites. Loved by both locals and visitors alike, it is the perfect place to relax and unwind after a day exploring Donegal.

Golden Years Offer - Great Value

Make the most of your early summer escape with the hotel's exclusive Golden Years Offer. Enjoy excellent value with no prepayment required! Simply book now, secure your preferred dates, and pay on arrival.

This May and June, treat yourself to a relaxing getaway in Donegal and enjoy the warmth, comfort, and hospitality that make the Station House Hotel one of Letterkenny's favourite destinations.

A warm welcome awaits.

# Discover Glasgow the Easy Way with HANNON Coach & Sail

Planning a city break in Glasgow? Skip the airport queues and travel stress and choose the Belfast-Glasgow Express with HANNON Coach & Sail—a comfortable, hassle-free way to reach the heart of Scotland's largest city.

Now departing from the new Belfast Grand Central Station, this award-winning service offers a smooth coach-and-ferry journey straight into Glasgow city centre, making it the perfect alternative to flying. Already a firm favourite with seasoned travellers, the Belfast-Glasgow Express is proudly rated 5-Star on TripAdvisor.

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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fare of just £49, including ferry travel and luggage, the Belfast-Glasgow Express delivers outstanding value. With no hidden costs and flexible travel options, passengers can pick and mix dates and times to suit their plans—making it ideal for a spontaneous spring getaway or a longer city break.

The service operates

twice daily from Belfast Grand Central Station (Stand 18) and drops passengers at Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station, close to the Style Mile and a wide range of excellent city-centre hotels.

Company Director Aodh Hannon says the service's popularity comes down to convenience and simplicity.

"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."

Bookings can be made online at [www.hannoncoach.com](http://www.hannoncoach.com), or by phone through HANNON's friendly booking team on 028 9265 0700 (Monday-Friday).



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## Parents' top online searches about their children revealed

96% of parents in Northern Ireland say they turn to the internet to decode how their child sees the world, with the most obscure and quirky searches revealed.

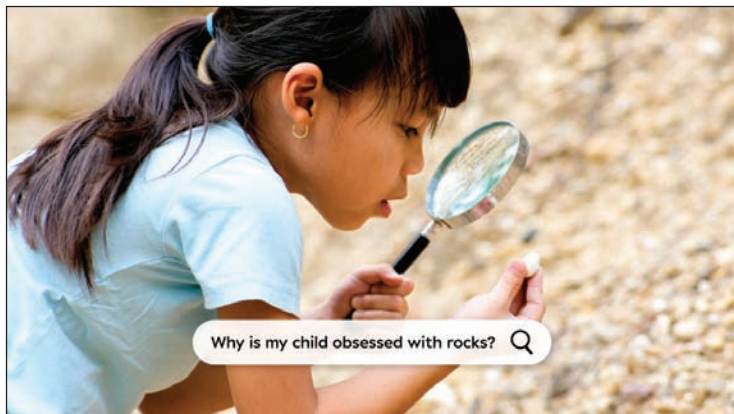
These queries include 'why do kids say 6 7?', 'why do kids eat sponges?', 'why do kids like sitting in a box?' and 'do kids naturally hate vegetables?'.

A massive 96% of parents struggle to understand their child's weird and wonderful world, according to the research. However, the eye care experts at Specsavers, who commissioned the study, warn that a crucial topic is being missed - with no parents in Northern Ireland (0%) seeking advice on their child's vision.

When it comes to their child's physical health, 33% have searched for answers online, with most common themes including sleep problems or tiredness (75%), mental wellbeing or emotional health (63%), high temperatures (50%), or developmental milestones (50%). Yet 0% have sought advice about ways to improve kids' eyesight.

Of those who haven't, many say it's because they didn't spot vision problems in their child (28%) or believe their child is too young for it to be a concern (12%). Paula Cunningham, ophthalmic director from Specsavers Connswater, highlights that children often don't report vision issues because they assume what they see is normal - and regular eye tests are recommended from the age of three.

Child psychologist, Dr Elizabeth Kilbey, adds: "It's not surprising parents are turning to search engines to help navigate the many questions that come with raising children - from



behaviour and development to the often weird and wonderful things kids say or do. "Children are curious and imaginative, and this plays a vital role in how they learn, explore and build confidence. Because so much of that discovery is visual, clear vision is crucial to their development. In all areas of life, and the classroom especially, clear vision is fundamental. Being able to see and focus underpins learning; when vision is affected, it can influence a child's attention, engagement and behaviour. That's why parents should prioritise eye health as an important part of their child's overall wellbeing."

The survey uncovers what parents in Northern Ireland search for most, with 38% saying they search about their child's habits or routines, while a similar amount (33%) question whether certain behaviours of their child are common. Interestingly, more than half of parents (58%) admit their online searches regularly start with

"Is it normal for my child to...".

When it comes to their child's eye health, 16% of parents are not aware of any common eyesight issues which can affect children, such as short-sightedness or lazy eyes (amblyopia). Worryingly, 12% of those polled, have never taken their child for an eye test, while 20% haven't done so within the last two years. The main reason for this was simply because their child hasn't complained about their vision (12%), with 12% also saying they would make an appointment if there appeared to be an issue.

Paula Cunningham, ophthalmic director from Specsavers Connswater, says "This research proves how easy it is to overlook a child's eye health unless obvious symptoms appear. But that's why being proactive is so important. Regular eye tests can identify issues early - often before a child realises anything is wrong. What many parents may

not realise is that many sight conditions, such as myopia in kids, can be managed or corrected if they're detected before the age of eight, while vision is still developing."

The research aims to encourage parents to prioritise their children's eye health and reveals how children's sight problems are going unnoticed. In fact, around 1 in 5 children under 10 experience sight conditions according to the Royal College of Ophthalmologists\* - which is up to 1.6 million children in the UK\*\*.

Book your child's NHS-funded eye test at Specsavers.co.uk for children under 16.

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## Navigating the Pollen Peak

May marks a cruel irony: just as the weather turns perfect, the air becomes a biological minefield.

For those of us with seasonal allergies, the transition from May through July isn't just about picnics and sunshine; it's a high-stakes game of respiratory chess.

The Seasonal Triple Threat

The "pollen calendar" shifts rapidly during these months, offering little reprieve:

May: Tree pollen (like oak and birch) often lingers, while grass pollen begins its aggressive ascent.

June: This is the "peak."

Grass pollen is at its most potent, typically causing the most widespread misery of the year.

July: As grasses finally begin to subside, weed pollen (such as mugwort and early ragweed) takes the baton.

More Than Just a Sneeze

The perils go beyond simple sniffles. The real danger lies in the "pollen fog"—the cognitive fatigue and "brain fog" that make a standard workday feel like wading through syrup. In 2026, shifting climate patterns

have led to even longer, more intense flowering seasons, turning "hay fever" into a marathon rather than a sprint.

To survive the season, treat your local pollen count like the stock market. Keep windows shut during high-wind mornings, shower after being outdoors, and remember: that beautiful, blooming meadow is technically picking a fight with your immune system. Stay vigilant, stay antihistaminated, and may the breeze be ever in your favour.



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## 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-leaved 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.

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.

Every parent knows the struggle of finding a birthday party idea that is actually “cool.” Game Locker takes the stress out of planning by providing an environment that is every child’s dream. Forget the standard soft-play areas; Game Locker offers high-spec PC setups, state-of-the-art VR (Virtual Reality), and professional-grade racing

## WHY GAME LOCKER IS NORTHERN IRELAND’S ULTIMATE EVENT DESTINATION

**Game Locker isn’t just a gaming centre; it’s a high-tech arena designed to “Unlock the Player Inside.”**

Located on Carrowreagh Road, this gaming hub is redefining what it means to have a night out, offering an immersive experience that caters to everyone from seven-year-old upwards birthday stars to corporate teams looking for their next big win.

Game Locker offers high-spec PC setups, state-of-the-art VR (Virtual Reality), and professional-grade racing

simulators that make you feel like you’re actually on the track.

**Birthday Parties & Playdates:** There is nothing quite like the atmosphere of a group of friends competing in a custom tournament. It’s social, it’s safe, and most importantly, it’s incredibly fun.

Gaming isn’t just for the kids. In fact, some of the most intense competitions at Game Locker happen among the adults. If you’re tired of the same old pub crawls or awkward ice-breakers, Game Locker provides a high-octane alternative.

**Stags, Hens, and Weddings:** Want to see who the fastest driver

in the wedding party really is? The racing sims are a massive hit for stag and hen groups, offering a competitive edge to the festivities. It’s a fantastic way to kick off a celebration or even a unique addition to a wedding weekend to keep guests entertained between events.

**Corporate Events & Team Bonding:** Communication and strategy are the keys to victory in gaming, making it the perfect tool for team building. Game Locker offers a professional environment where colleagues can swap the boardroom for the headset. It’s

an unbeatable way to boost morale, encourage teamwork, and blow off some steam after a busy quarter.

One of the standout features of Game Locker is that the fun isn’t limited to their Belfast headquarters. Understanding that every event is unique, Game Locker offers a premier call-out service. “We come to you!” is the motto. Whether you are hosting a private garden party, a community festival, a school event, or a massive corporate gala, Game Locker can bring the gaming rigs, the VR, and the excitement directly to your doorstep. They take

care of the setup and the tech, leaving you free to enjoy the hosting. It’s the ultimate “wow factor” for any private function.

With their slogan “Experience gaming like never before,” Game Locker is ready to host your next milestone. Between their cutting-edge Belfast facility and their mobile event services, the possibilities are endless.

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# WHAT COLOUR GOES WITH TAUPE?

**Taupe is a beautiful colour; with its natural hue and many shades, taupe can blend in with almost any colour scheme.**

Taupe is a classic, personality-infused, versatile colour and a great partner to many neutral and novel colours. With taupe, you can choose from a broad spectrum of shades, from light to dark. Choose light shades of taupe for a sleek and straightforward base and use darker shades to show a little creativity in your colour scheme.

Homeowners commonly ask, 'Is taupe brown or grey?' Or, you might hear taupe referred to as 'greige' (a mix of grey and beige), but neither is right. Taupe is a blend of brown and grey tones with warmer undertones. Available in many shades, taupe can appear warmer or cooler based on the hue and saturation. Before choosing taupe, always consider the natural light your chosen room

receives in a day. Taupe can change its tone and mood depending on how much natural light it gets.

Choose taupe with warm undertones like yellow, pink or red for a cosy, warm glow. Or, for a cooler, more contemporary vibe, go for taupe with green or blue undertones. Before you get to the decorating stage, decide if you want a warm or cool base. This will help you decide which colours to pair taupe with.

Opt for all taupe. A popular way to style taupe is to simply use taupe in various shades in a monochromatic colour scheme. You can use taupe in its darkest to lightest shades on multiple surfaces for a cohesive, interesting, timeless design. Different sheens, like matte on walls and satin

on wood surfaces like skirting and furniture, create a subtle contrast. Choose deeper taupe pillows, throws and rugs to add depth and interest. Using a monochromatic colour scheme also shines the spotlight on any interesting architectural details like moulding or old windows.

Do grey and taupe go together? Yes, you should absolutely consider pairing taupe and grey if you want a modern and minimalist space. Combine cool grey with warmer taupe, like greens or browns, for a look with more depth. Add accents of dark and warm grey for extra interest. To avoid these two colours looking too similar and drowning each other out, pair taupe and grey in alternate undertones.

'Do blue and taupe go



together?' Yes, taupe is the perfect base for bold blue colour schemes. When choosing a taupe base, bright and bold blues blend seamlessly while adding interest points. In contrast, warm, brown-based taupe look great with

pale and pastel blues like periwinkle and seafoam.

Pretty in pastel pink. Because taupe has warm undertones, it pairs nicely with pink. You can choose either blush pink or pastel pink.

Taupe and trusty green. Spruce up any

neutral shade with lush, warm undertones of vivid greens like forest green or dark emerald. If more natural shades of green are your thing: Sage, Olive green or moss green are perfect choices. However, for a cooler design scheme,

use taupe as a base with sage or olive green accents in combination with gold metallic details for a sense of luxury.

Darker shades of green look stunning as an accent wall. Add some green accent pieces like pillows and throws, and throw in some industrial style lighting and furnishings for a real contemporary finish.

Wrap taupe in warmth. The cosy undertones of taupe make it a perfect choice for: Warm woods, Brass and gold accents. Use taupe as a dominant colour on walls and combine it with deep, devilishly warm tones and accents to create a sense of elegance and sophistication.

Burgundy and taupe. If you need your bedroom decor to pop, consider combining taupe and burgundy to create a

warm and cosy feel. Paint your walls in burgundy and choose taupe and burgundy for flooring, textiles and accent pieces.

Don't forget metals. As a neutral tone, taupe is brought out of its shell with shiny metals. Use copper, bronze and gold that boast warmer metallic tones.

Choosing taupe in your colour scheme creates a calm and snug atmosphere. As a colour, it can be perfect for entertaining, relaxing, family time, and sleeping, like bedrooms and living rooms. However, taupe's serene nature is also perfect for spa-like bathrooms and modern kitchens.

Use taupe bathrooms to create a spa-like peaceful space - try taupe walls with crisp white tiles and vanities, or vice versa.



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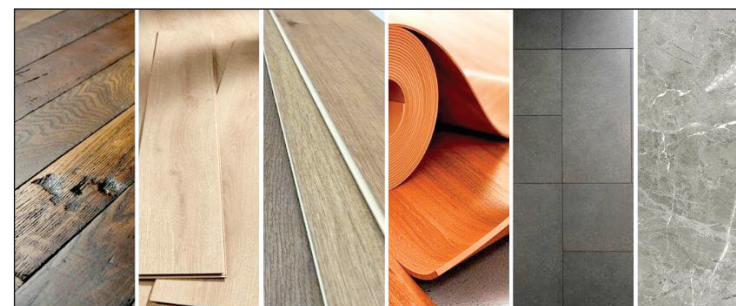
Paul Clayton

## Choosing Flooring For the Living Room

**Selecting the right flooring for a living room is perhaps the most significant design decision a homeowner will face as it serves as the literal foundation for every other stylistic choice.**

Because this space is often the busiest hub of the house the material underfoot must be robust enough to handle heavy foot traffic and the occasional wine spill while still feeling inviting enough for a lazy Sunday afternoon. The challenge lies in finding a balance between durability and the specific sensory experience you want to evoke during the warmer months when we tend to move between the garden and the sofa with greater frequency.

Hardwood remains the gold standard for many and it offers a timeless warmth that ages beautifully over decades. In a summer-inspired home lighter timbers such as oak or ash can lift the entire mood of a room by reflecting natural light and creating an airy Scandinavian feel. While solid wood is a significant investment it provides a natural insulation that feels comfortable underfoot regardless of the season. For those who worry about the practicalities of kids or pets engineered wood offers a similar aesthetic with added stability and it is less likely to warp when the humidity levels fluctuate during a



heatwave. If your goal is to create a sense of "Mediterranean cool" then natural stone or porcelain tiles are an excellent choice for the main living area. These materials have a high thermal mass which means they stay refreshingly chilled even when the sun is beating down on the windows. While stone can sometimes feel austere in a traditional setting choosing a honed finish rather than a high-gloss polish can soften the look and make the room feel more organic. Pairing these hard surfaces with large natural fibre rugs such as jute or sisal allows you to define the seating area and it adds a layer of texture that feels undeniably summery. For those who prefer the

softness of carpet the trend has shifted away from heavy shags toward flatter weaves and natural blends. A wool-sisal mix provides the best of both worlds by offering the durability of plant fibres and the softness of traditional carpeting. Choosing a neutral palette like oatmeal or pale sand can make a small living room feel significantly larger and it provides a versatile backdrop that allows you to swap out seasonal accessories like bright linen cushions or nautical throws. It is important to remember that the pile height will affect how much heat the room retains so a shorter loop is generally preferable for maintaining a breezy atmosphere.

Modern innovations like Luxury Vinyl Tile or LVT have also become a formidable contender for the living room floor and they are particularly useful for open-plan homes where the lounge flows directly into the kitchen or garden. These materials can convincingly mimic the look of reclaimed timber or vintage encaustic tiles while being entirely waterproof and incredibly easy to clean. This makes them a brilliant option for families who want a high-end look without the stress of constant maintenance. Ultimately the best flooring is one that invites you to kick off your shoes the moment you walk through the door and it should feel like a seamless part of your home's personality.



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# MISSION FARM STRONG RAISES VITAL FUNDS FOR FARM SUPPORT CHARITY

**Mission Farm Strong, a leading health and wellbeing campaign dedicated to supporting the farming community, has successfully raised £2,860 in aid of Rural Support — the only charity in Northern Ireland solely focused on providing practical business and wellbeing support to farmers and farming families.**

The funds raised will go directly towards supporting farmers and their families who may be facing isolation, stress, financial pressure, or mental health challenges. Through Rural Support's services, individuals will benefit from the charity's confidential Support Line, one-to-one business mentoring support, wellbeing programmes, and counselling and bereavement support. These programmes and services play a crucial role in helping farm families navigate difficult periods, build resilience, and maintain both their

mental and emotional wellbeing. Mission Farm Strong is a collaborative campaign that promotes the importance of physical health, mental resilience, and spiritual wellbeing within the agricultural sector. It is supported by a wide partnership of organisations, including Rural Chaplaincy, Farm Families Health Checks, Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland, Ulster Farmers' Union, Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster, Asthma + Lung UK NI and the Northern Ireland Agri-Rural Health Forum.

Over the course of the campaign, Mission Farm Strong visited six livestock marts across Northern Ireland — Kilrea, Clogher, Enniskillen, Markethill, Rathfriland, and Ballymena — engaging directly with farmers in their local communities. At each location, vital support services were offered, including free health checks delivered by the Farm Families Health Checks Van, helping farmers to proactively monitor and manage their physical wellbeing. In addition, the Rural Chaplaincy team extended the



campaign's reach into local communities by visiting nine primary schools, travelling by tractor generously provided by New Holland dealers, Burkes of Cornnascribe. These visits helped raise awareness of the importance of good

wellbeing from a young age and strengthened connections between farming families and support networks. The impact of this fundraising effort will be felt across the farming community, enabling more individuals to access early support, improve their wellbeing, and build resilience in an increasingly demanding agricultural environment. Mission Farm Strong is encouraging individuals, businesses, and rural organisations to continue supporting Rural Support through fundraising initiatives. As the only dedicated farm support charity

in Northern Ireland, Rural Support relies on public donations to sustain its vital work. By getting involved, you can help ensure that farmers and their families receive the support they need to thrive — both on and off the farm. Contact their Fundraising Team today on 028 8676 0040 to see how you can get involved such as hosting a fundraiser, signing up to their Rural Support initiative or by becoming a Corporate Member. For more information, please visit the charity's website [www.ruralsupport.org.uk](http://www.ruralsupport.org.uk) or email [info@ruralsupport.org.uk](mailto:info@ruralsupport.org.uk)

## Pecking Order: Feeding Garden Birds

**As we move into May and June, your garden bird feeders transition from a supplementary snack bar into a vital lifeline for exhausted parents.**

This is the peak of the breeding season, where the frantic nest-building of early spring has evolved into the relentless demands of hungry, growing chicks. While natural food sources like caterpillars and beetles are becoming more abundant, parent birds are burning an incredible amount of energy hunting for their young. By providing high-quality food, you allow the adults to feed themselves quickly and efficiently, giving them more time to forage for the specific live insects their offspring require for healthy development. It is a period of high drama and high stakes, where a well-stocked garden can significantly increase the survival rate of the season's first and second broods. Protein is the most critical component of the avian diet during these two months, making mealworms the absolute superstar of your feeding station. Whether you opt for live mealworms or take the time to soak dried ones in warm water, they provide vital hydration and protein that closely

mimic the natural diet of many garden species. It is absolutely vital to avoid offering whole peanuts during this window; while they are an excellent winter fat source, they present a significant choking hazard to fledglings who haven't yet learned how to break them down. Instead, stick to sunflower hearts, which are essentially the energy bars of the bird world, providing instant calories without

the exhausting effort of removing husks. High-energy suet pellets or crumbs are also helpful supplements, but you should ensure they are positioned out of direct midday sun to prevent them from melting or becoming rancid in the rising summer heat. The guest list in your garden will shift noticeably during May and June as the first waves of "avian teenagers" emerge from their nests. You

are likely to witness a lot of noise and movement, particularly from Starlings, who are famous for their chaotic family groups that descend on feeders and strip them bare in minutes. You will also see House Sparrows and Blue Tits flitting back and forth, often accompanied by scruffy, fluttering chicks who haven't quite mastered the art of landing. Look out for Goldfinches

bringing their subtly coloured young to the feeders, and Blackbirds hopping across the lawn hunting for softened mealworms or fallen fruit to carry back to a nearby hedge. This is also the prime time to spot summer migrants; while Swifts and House Martins will be screaming overhead in pursuit of aerial insects, you might find Blackcaps or Chiffchaffs exploring your shrubs for a quick

meal. As the temperature rises, hygiene and hydration become non-negotiable aspects of your garden's bird-friendly status. Bird baths become essential hubs of activity, serving as both a drinking station and a place for the rigorous preening required to keep feathers in flight-ready condition. However, warm weather also accelerates the growth of bacteria, making

it imperative to clean your feeding stations and water dishes much more frequently than you would in the winter. Stagnant water and old, damp seed can quickly become a breeding ground for disease, so a daily refresh is the best way to support a healthy local population.

Additionally, try to ensure your feeders are placed near natural cover, such as a thick bush or a leafy tree; this provides inexperienced fledglings with a quick escape route from predators and a shady spot to rest between their frantic feeding sessions.

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# RED SKY IN MORNING: HOW THE RISING COST OF FUEL MAY AFFECT THE FARMING SUMMER

Normally a dry spring and a forecast for a warm summer would be cause for celebration. This year, however, the “sunny” outlook is being eclipsed by the cold reality of the ledger book.

Driven by global instability and the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, fuel prices have surged to levels that are testing the resilience of even the most seasoned producers. Here is how the rising cost of “the red” is set to reshape the agricultural landscape this summer.

For the uninitiated, “red diesel” is the lifeblood of the farm. It powers the tractors, the harvesters, and the generators. According to recent data from the Ulster Farmers’ Union (UFU), the price of

red diesel has seen a staggering spike this year. With diesel prices in rising by roughly 35% since February, the cost of simply “turning the key” has become a significant overhead. For a large-scale dairy or arable farm, these extra pennies per litre translate into thousands of pounds in additional costs over a single summer season.

The Silage Squeeze Summer in Northern Ireland is synonymous with silage season. It is the most fuel-intensive period of the year. From the first cut in May to

the final push in late summer, tractors are on the move 24/7.

• Contractor Fees: Most farmers rely on contractors for harvesting. With fuel being the contractor’s biggest variable cost, those “per acre” rates are inevitably heading upward.

• The Winter Fodder Trap: If fuel costs make silage too expensive to harvest properly now, it creates a “fodder gap” in the winter. Farmers may be forced to choose between a smaller harvest today or paying for expensive imported feed come December.

The Fertilizer Connection It’s a cruel rule of thumb in agriculture: when oil and gas



prices go up, fertilizer follows. Because natural gas is a primary component in nitrogen production, the same geopolitical shocks driving up the price at the pump have pushed Urea prices toward the

£490 per tonne mark. Farmers are now facing a “double whammy.” Do they skimp on fertilizer to save money, risking a lower yield? Or do they pay the premium and hope that market prices

for beef, lamb, and milk rise enough to cover the difference? A Tale of Two Borders One of the biggest talking points in the farmyards this month is the disparity in government support. In

the Republic of Ireland, the government recently announced a €100 million fuel subsidy for farmers and contractors to cushion the blow.

North of the border, the UFU is lobbying hard for similar intervention. Their “Five Asks” to the UK Government include:

1. A further temporary reduction in fuel duty.
2. A one-off fertilizer support scheme for the 2026 season.
3. Designating agriculture as a priority sector in the event of fuel rationing.

“Food security cannot be taken for granted,” warns UFU President William Irvine. “Primary producers are carrying these costs now, and they cannot continue to absorb this pressure

indefinitely.”

The Silver Lining?

If there is any wit to be found in a crisis, it is in the legendary adaptability of the Northern Irish farmer. We are already seeing a shift toward precision farming: using GPS to ensure not a drop of fuel or a grain of fertilizer is wasted. There is also a renewed interest in clover-rich swards to reduce the need for nitrogen—a “green” solution born out of “red” necessity.

However, for the average family farm, the message for Summer 2026 is clear: keep an eye on the weather, but keep a much closer eye on the fuel gauge. It’s going to be a long, expensive harvest.

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## Top SUV’s for the farm

When you’re selecting an SUV for the farm, the “sport” in SUV takes a backseat to pure utility.

You need a machine that treats mud like a red carpet and views a 3.5-tonne trailer as a light backpack. In 2026, the market has solidified around “commercial-spec” vehicles—rugged versions of passenger SUVs that ditch the rear seats in favour of a massive flat floor and tax-efficient status for agricultural businesses. Toyota Land Cruiser (250 Series) The Toyota Land Cruiser 250 Series remains the gold standard for agricultural longevity. Recently redesigned to favor its

boxy, utilitarian heritage over luxury aesthetics, the 2026 model introduces a Stabiliser Disconnect Mechanism (SDM) that significantly improves wheel articulation for crossing uneven fields or deep ruts. The Commercial trim is particularly prized in the farming community, as it replaces the glass rear windows with solid panels and provides a vast, durable cargo area capable of hauling everything from feed bags to fencing tools. With a 3,500kg towing capacity and a warranty that can extend up to a decade

with regular servicing, it is built to survive a career rather than just a lease. Land Rover Defender (Hard Top) For those dealing with truly punishing terrain or flood-prone land, the Land Rover Defender Hard Top is arguably the most capable tool in the shed. Available in both the short-wheelbase 90 and the larger 110, this version features a full-height bulkhead and a load space lined with heavy-duty, hose-clean rubber. It retains a legendary 900mm wading depth and advanced Terrain Response electronics, which handle the heavy lifting of traction management automatically when the ground gets soft. The addition of the ClearSight camera system acts as a digital spotter, allowing the driver to “see through” the bonnet to avoid hidden obstacles like stumps or rocks in high grass. KGM Rexton (Commercial) The KGM Rexton



Commercial is the dark horse of the rural world, offering a level of capability that belies its more modest price tag. While it might lack the historical prestige of the Land Rover or Toyota, it matches them exactly where it matters: a full 3,500kg braked towing limit and a traditional body-on-frame construction with a selectable low-range gearbox. It is the pragmatic choice for a farmer who

views their vehicle as a pure overhead cost and wants the most pulling power per dollar. Recent updates have refined the interior, making it a surprisingly comfortable place to spend a day traveling between markets, while a generous 5-year warranty provides peace of mind for high-mileage rural work. Ultimately, the choice between these three depends on your specific

priorities. The Toyota is the choice for those who want a vehicle that might outlast the farm itself; the Land Rover is for those navigating the most technical terrain; and the KGM is for the budget-conscious operator who refuses to compromise on towing capacity. All three offer the heavy-duty credentials required to move livestock and machinery without breaking a sweat.

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# ABARTH ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO 600E RANGE

Abarth has announced a significant evolution of its electric lineup with the introduction of two new trim levels for the 600e range: the Turismo and the flagship Competizione.

These new variants are set to replace the previous Abarth 600e and the limited-run Scorpionissima launch edition, streamlining the brand's offering while honoring the performance-driven legacy established by Carlo Abarth.

Serving as the new entry point to the range, the Abarth 600e Turismo is priced at £33,995 on-the-road. Engineered for drivers who prioritize everyday sportiness and an effortless athletic style, the Turismo delivers a robust 240 HP. It successfully bridges the gap between daily usability and the unmistakable, aggressive character that enthusiasts expect from the Scorpion brand.

For those seeking uncompromising performance, the Abarth 600e Competizione stands as the new high-water mark for the manufacturer. Developed

in close collaboration with Stellantis Motorsport, this flagship model is priced at £37,995. It features a powerful 207kW electric motor that produces 280 HP, enabling a 0-62 mph acceleration time of just 5.85 seconds and a top speed of 124 mph. The Competizione is built upon the advanced Perfo eCMP platform, a state-of-the-art architecture derived directly from motorsport expertise.

The technical specifications of the Competizione reflect its racing DNA through high-performance hardware. It comes equipped with a Torsen limited-slip differential, Alcon monoblock calipers, and vented discs to ensure superior braking stability and a sporty pedal feel. Inside, the cabin features lightweight Sabell sports seats designed for maximum support during



dynamic driving and a premium Alcantara finish. To ensure maximum grip, the car is fitted with Michelin tires developed from Formula E technology, which also prioritize noise reduction and environmental efficiency. Visually, the

Competizione makes a bold statement with a striking two-tone livery that pairs a vivid orange body with a contrasting black roof. This aesthetic, combined with exclusive side graphics and an aerodynamically sculpted silhouette, highlights the vehicle's muscular stance.

By combining cutting-edge electric technology with hardware traditionally reserved for the track, Abarth continues to project its racing spirit into a new era of electrification, catering to "forever young" drivers who refuse to sacrifice thrills for practicality.

## New Nissan Micra EV

Nissan's iconic MICRA returns for its sixth generation in late 2025, marking a significant shift as the model becomes a fully-connected, pure electric vehicle.

Designed in London with European drivers in mind, this new iteration maintains the car's stylish, unpretentious heritage while embracing zero-emission mobility. Its arrival serves as a cornerstone of Nissan's broader strategy to launch four new electric models in Europe by 2027.

The exterior design is assertive and robust, featuring an SUV-inspired stance and 18-inch wheels as standard across all grades. Notable design elements include a choreographed "welcome wink" from the LED headlights and a distinctive "ice cream scoop" indent along the side panels. To ensure a personalized look, Nissan offers 14 different exterior colour combinations, including sophisticated two-tone options with black or grey roofs.

Inside, the cabin emphasizes understated elegance and subtle nods to Japanese heritage, such as a Mount Fuji silhouette integrated into the storage space. The driver-centric interior is anchored by dual 10.1-inch high-resolution screens for instrumentation and infotainment. Despite its compact footprint of under four meters, the five-door configuration provides a spacious interior with 326 liters of trunk capacity, which



expands to 1,106 liters when the rear seats are folded.

Performance is delivered via two battery options: a 40kWh unit providing 192 miles of range and a 52kWh version offering up to 253 miles. Built on the specialized AmpR platform, the MICRA is engineered for agility, utilizing a multi-link rear suspension and weighing as little as 1,400kg.

Charging is highly efficient, with 100kW DC fast-charging capability allowing a 15% to 80% charge in just 30 minutes. Standard features like a heat pump and Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) technology further enhance its practical appeal.

The driving experience is highly customizable through four distinct modes—Comfort, Sport, Eco, and Perso—and includes Nissan's

e-Pedal for seamless one-pedal urban driving. Connectivity is a priority, featuring Google built-in services for voice-controlled navigation and app integration. Safety is equally comprehensive, with the ProPilot assist suite providing lane-keeping, adaptive cruise control, and a wide array of emergency braking and monitoring systems to ensure a secure and intuitive journey.



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# Designing a Sophisticated Summer Outdoor Kitchen

**The backyard has undergone a fundamental architectural shift, evolving from a mere patch of grass into a fully realized extension of the home's footprint.**

Today's sophisticated utility of the indoors out outdoor kitchen is about into the open air. This bringing the high-end transition toward the

"garden room" reflects a broader desire to maximize our living space, treating the patio not as an occasional luxury, but as the primary hub for culinary creativity and social connection throughout the warmer months.

The hallmark of this modern evolution is the seamless integration of professional-grade appliances that go far beyond the standard

barbecue. Homeowners are increasingly investing in modular setups that include wood-fired pizza ovens, specialized smokers, and even outdoor-rated wine fridges and dishwashers. The goal is complete autonomy from the main house; a well-designed outdoor kitchen allows the host to prepare, cook, and clean without ever having to break the flow of conversation by retreating

indoors. By installing integrated prep sinks and durable stone countertops, the backyard becomes a self-sustaining ecosystem that can handle everything from a quiet Tuesday night dinner to a full-scale summer soiree.

To make these expansive spaces feel intentional rather than cluttered, designers are leaning heavily into the concept of "zoning." Just as an open-plan interior relies on rugs and lighting to define the dining area from the lounge, the sophisticated backyard uses architectural elements to create distinct environments. A pergola might define the cooking zone, while a transition to oversized porcelain pavers or a weather-resistant outdoor rug signals the move into a conversation pit or dining area. This strategic layout prevents the space from feeling like a vast, empty deck and instead imbues it with the cosy, structured feel of a traditional home, providing "rooms" that offer both sun-drenched exposure and shaded retreat.

Materiality plays a crucial role in ensuring these spaces remain aspirational rather than simply "cook outside"; we want to live outside. By investing in high-quality infrastructure and thoughtful design, the modern summer home transforms the backyard into a sanctuary of "Golden Hour" luxury. It is a space that invites us to slow down, linger over a meal, and enjoy the theatre of outdoor cooking, proving that the best seat in the house might actually be the one located just past the sliding glass doors.

high-maintenance. The current trend favours "living finishes" and rugged textures that age gracefully under the sun and rain. We are seeing a move toward Dekton or granite surfaces that shrug off UV rays, paired with cabinetry made from marine-grade polymers or powder-coated stainless steel that can withstand a sudden summer downpour. When these durable foundations are softened with performance fabrics and clever lighting—such as dimmable LEDs tucked into masonry or oversized solar lanterns—the result is an environment that feels just as polished at midnight as it does at high noon.

We are no longer content to simply "cook outside"; we want to live outside. By investing in high-quality infrastructure and thoughtful design, the modern summer home transforms the backyard into a sanctuary of "Golden Hour" luxury. It is a space that invites us to slow down, linger over a meal, and enjoy the theatre of outdoor cooking, proving that the best seat in the house might actually be the one located just past the sliding glass doors.

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# BRIGHT IDEAS TO TRANSFORM EVERY BATHROOM

Give your bathroom the glow up it deserves with our bathroom lighting ideas.

Today's bathroom is now a multifunctional space for relaxing and getting ready. An effective lighting scheme that provides both bright, task lighting and ambient mood lighting is crucial.

Bathrooms need to function on different levels: for relaxing, bathing the family or an invigorating shower before you leave for work in the morning.

Consider bright targeted lighting for shaving and soft, diffused lights for a relaxing soak in the tub.

Planning is the key to effective bathroom lighting design. Plan your lighting at the very beginning of any new bathroom or bathroom remodelling project and get advice from a qualified electrician as to what you can and can't do. Avoid retrofitting bathroom lights at all costs. Ripping out tiles or chasing wires into walls is messy and costly.

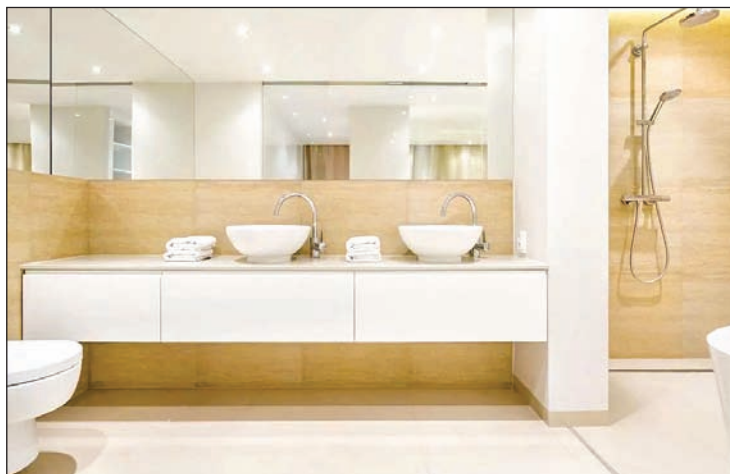
Go for layered lighting. Elevate your design with a layered lighting scheme - this works whether you prefer a contemporary or vintage style bathroom. You should aim for targeted task lighting around the vanity basin area to provide good, even illumination

for shaving, getting ready or putting on make-up. General ceiling lights create everyday bright lighting, and ceiling spotlights are ideal for this. Install ambient lighting around a bath or in tiled wall niches to create a spa-like mood for relaxing in the tub.

Know your lighting regulations. Water and electricity don't mix. That's why there are strict regulations around what lights are safe to use in bathrooms. Where in the bathroom you wish to install lighting is another key consideration. Check up on electrical safety regulations which divide bathrooms into zones.

Smart lighting. LED bathroom lighting is the most energy-efficient way to light your bathroom. Look out for smart lighting controls with pre-programmed settings that can save energy and time.

Take the tech up a notch with Wi-Fi and Bluetooth compatible lights which will help you create a really bespoke lighting scheme via an app or voice-controlled settings. Smart lightbulbs can be adjusted for operation time, brightness, intensity and colour



temperature.

Ask your electrician about wireless lighting that turns on via motion-sensor controls - these are super easy to use and safe for night-time use.

From barely-there, built-in spotlights to a statement chandelier, bathroom ceiling lighting is usually the main source of light. Make sure the lights aren't too white as this will create a harsh, clinical light in your bathroom. Experts recommend using between 2700k and 3000k (warm white) for the best colour temperature in the

bathroom. Remember that a layered lighting scheme will offer a really sophisticated edge in your bathroom design. Flush-fitting ceiling downlights are a popular choice. A simple grid pattern isn't the only layout. Try highlighting certain features by positioning downlights accordingly. In larger bathrooms, fit spotlights on the perimeter of the room.

Pendant lights. Inject a luxurious touch to a bathroom. Go for an oversized statement light as a focal point. Just make sure

it has the correct IP rating. Directional lights can help spotlight particular features of your bathroom design ideas. This is a great way to add an ambient lighting scheme with a gentle, diffused illumination.

Fabric pendant lights are not the best idea in the moist damp conditions of a bathroom. But you can make a statement with metal and glass overhead fittings.

As well as overhead shower lights, try hiding extra lights within bathroom shelves and niches within the shower. Light up mirrored bathroom cabinets

are a perfect space-saving piece of kit combining storage, mirror and lighting. Some even come with built-in Bluetooth speakers and a demister pad

LED flexible strip lighting can transform a small bathroom and create a mesmerising glow around baths, vanity units and bathroom shelving. You can't go wrong with flush-fit ceiling lights for a barely-there glow. Just consider the positioning of the spotlights to get the most out of your design features.

Illuminate dark corners in your small bathroom to enhance the feeling of space. Ceiling lights that have built-in extractor fans are key for shower rooms and mini bathrooms (especially those with no windows) to stop steam and moisture building up

Lights on a dimmer switch are flexible and perfect for switching moods - an ideal

choice if you have a smaller bathroom and don't have the space for an elaborate, layered lighting scheme.

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## Make your windows sparkle this summer

Windows are often the most neglected surface when it comes to deep cleaning. Most people approach the task with a bottle of blue liquid and a roll of paper towels, only to find that once the sun hits the glass, it looks like a Jackson Pollock painting made of lint and streaks.

Achieving a professional-grade finish doesn't require a background in industrial cleaning, but it does require a shift in strategy. The goal is to move beyond merely moving dirt around and instead focus on complete suspension and removal of debris.

The most effective cleaning solution is often the simplest one residing under your kitchen sink. A bucket of warm water mixed with a few drops of high-quality liquid dish soap is the industry standard for a reason. Dish soap is specifically engineered to break down grease and lift organic material without the aggressive evaporation rates found in alcohol-based sprays. If you are dealing with particularly

stubborn mineral deposits or "hard water" spots, adding a splash of white vinegar can provide the necessary acidity to break those bonds. Beyond the solution, you should retire the paper towels in favour of a professional-grade squeegee and a handful of clean microfibre cloths. Paper towels are essentially made of wood pulp, which leaves behind a microscopic trail of lint that ruins the "invisible" look of clean glass.

The actual cleaning process begins with thoroughly wetting the window using a soft scrubber or a sponge to loosen the accumulated grime. Once the glass is fully lubricated, the squeegee becomes your primary tool for moisture

removal. Start at the top corner and pull the blade across or down the glass in a single, fluid motion. The secret that distinguishes amateurs from pros is the "dry-to-wet" contact; you must wipe the rubber blade of the squeegee with a dry cloth after every single pass. This prevents the dirty water from the previous stroke from being dragged back across the clean surface, which is the primary cause of those dreaded vertical streaks.

When it comes to window cleaning, the weather is your greatest ally or your worst enemy. It is a common mistake to wait for a bright, sunny day to clean the glass, but direct sunlight causes the cleaning solution to dry almost instantly. This rapid evaporation leaves

behind soap residue before you can even reach for your squeegee. Instead, aim for a cloudy day or a time when the windows are in the shade. This gives you the "open time" necessary to work the solution and remove it properly.

Once the main pane is clear, use a dry microfibre cloth to "detail" the edges. Water often hides in the corners of the frames or along the seals, and if left alone, it will eventually crawl back onto the glass or drip down to create spots. By running a dry cloth along the perimeter of the frame, you ensure a crisp finish. It may feel like more effort than a quick spray-and-wipe, but the results are far more durable. A properly squeegeed window stays clean longer because

there is no static-charged paper towel residue left behind to attract new dust.

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