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Eco-School of the year, Tonagh Primary School with Live Here Love Here team, and Mayor of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Cllr Brian Higgison.

LOCAL SCHOOLS AWARDED INTERNATIONAL ECO-SCHOOLS GREEN FLAG

A total of 288 schools across NI were awarded the prestigious Eco-Schools Green Flag by environmental charity Live Here Love Here this year.

This brings the total number of schools flying Green Flags up to 593, or 53% of all schools in Northern Ireland. 14 schools have been awarded in Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

Achieving a Green

Flag requires schools to participate in a challenging seven stage programme, beginning with the establishment of a pupil-led Eco-Committee, and leading to the development of a school Eco-Code. Schools fly their flags for two years

before they must reapply.

Tonagh Primary School was awarded the Eco-School of the Year award for the area. The school was celebrated for several impressive activities including creating a new sensory garden; an anti-idling campaign to reduce

congestion at the school gates and participation in a hedgerow planting project. The Eco-School of the Year award is sponsored by Learn Play Nexus.

Continued on page 6

Invest NI support secures £38m of investment

Invest Northern Ireland performance results for 2025/26 show that its support has helped secure £38m of business investment in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

The agency offered £9m of assistance to help businesses in the area innovate, increase productivity and create new jobs. 169 new jobs will be created in the area as a result of this support.

Speaking about the results, Iain Joannides, Head of Eastern Regional Business, Invest NI, said:

"The number of projects we have supported and the amount assistance offered in the area increased this year.

We saw a significant increase in support for innovation and R&D projects in particular.

"We also saw more

businesses in the area getting investment and support through our Access to Finance funds – more than double last year – providing much needed finance to SMEs to help get business ideas off the ground.

"Our Ambition to Grow and Business Innovation Grant programmes are helping us reach small businesses that previously would not have been able to access Invest NI support. We have helped 37 entrepreneurs and SMEs in the area innovate, create good jobs and increase external sales through these programmes to date."

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AIR AMBULANCE NI CELEBRATES 9TH ANNIVERSARY

Air Ambulance Northern Ireland, in partnership with Northern Ireland Ambulance Service recently celebrated the ninth anniversary of the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) delivering life-saving, pre-hospital emergency care across the region.

It has been a monumental year defined by a historic leap forward in operational growth, national accolades and leadership growth.

Since its inception in July 2017, the HEMS has become an indispensable lifeline, reaching a staggering 5,731 taskings to date. It has been a busy start to the year for the dedicated crew, logging a total of over 125 flying hours since January 2026 alone.

Looking to the future, Air Ambulance NI has announced a massive operational milestone: the procurement of the first helicopter to be owned, as opposed to being leased, by the Charity. This would not have been possible without the generous support of the public, which Air Ambulance NI are deeply humbled by and grateful for. The new helicopter is scheduled to officially come into service in late summer 2026. This acquisition represents a major step forward in securing the long-term sustainability and resilience of Air Ambulance NI.

The past year has seen a high volume of advanced clinical interventions per-

formed directly at the roadside, in fields, and in homes across Northern Ireland. The clinical crew, comprising a consultant doctor and advanced paramedic administer blood products at the scene of severe trauma on average twice per month. This immediate intervention can stabilise patients suffering from catastrophic blood loss before they reach a hospital emergency department, significantly improving survival rates.

The HEMS crew spend an average of 43 mins on scene performing critical care interventions that can mean the difference between life and death as well as transferring a patient to the most appropriate hospital for their injuries by air or by road. On average, 65% of patients are transferred to the major trauma centre at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. The decision of which hospital a patient is brought to is determined by the clinical team depending upon the nature of patient's injuries or illness.

The medical team can deliver rapid sequence induction (RSI) to place criti-



cally injured patients into an induced coma at the scene. This complex procedure is performed for a variety of reasons including airway management and supports the stabilisation of a patient during the swift transit to definitive care.

As Air Ambulance NI look towards the future and an exciting new chapter, the local charity has launched 'Lift Off Together', inviting supporters to become a lasting part of the char-

ity's onward journey. The campaign offers the unique opportunity to have your name – or the name of someone special – featured on the underside of the new helicopter with a donation of £200. With space limited, it is a rare chance to leave a legacy while helping to ensure the new Air Ambulance is ready to respond when every second counts. For more information, please visit: airambulancenl.org/lift-off-together/

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Exhibition marks 250 years since the American Declaration of Independence

A new exhibition exploring Lisburn and Castlereagh's historic connections with the United States has opened at the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum.

'USA 250: Atlantic Connections', which marks the 250th anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence, was officially opened on Tuesday 7th July by Cllr Bronagh Magee, Vice-Chair of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's (LCCC) Communities and Wellbeing Committee. The launch was also attended by the Mayor of LCCC, Cllr Brian Higginson.



The exhibition explores the stories behind this milestone anniversary and the local connections that link Lisburn and Castlereagh to America's history. On 4th July 1776, thirteen colonies on the east coast of North America declared independence from Great Britain, leading to the creation of the United States of America. Looking beyond that

landmark moment, the exhibition highlights the many Atlantic connections linking local people, places and stories with America, before and after independence.

Councillor Magee said: "This exhibition is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the deep and enduring connections between Lisburn and Castlereagh and the

United States as we mark 250 years since the American Declaration of Independence. Through local stories, people and places, 'USA 250: Atlantic Connections' helps bring this shared history to life and highlights the important role our area has played in wider Atlantic history.

"I would encourage residents and visitors

like to visit the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum and take the opportunity to explore this fascinating exhibition, which brings our local heritage and transatlantic connections vividly to life."

The exhibition is free to attend, with no booking required, and will remain on display until December 2026.

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PCSP backs 18 local projects to improve community safety

Lisburn & Castlereagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) has announced the successful recipients of its 2026/27 Project Support Programme.

The programme provides funding for local initiatives designed to tackle anti-social behaviour, reduce crime, strengthen confidence in policing, and enhance community safety throughout the council area.

A total of 18 local organisations have each been awarded up to £5,000 to deliver community-based projects aligned with key PCSP objectives including:

- addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB),
- tackling the effects of drugs and alcohol,
- supporting victims of domestic and sexual violence, and
- reducing fear of crime.

Welcoming the announcement, PCSP Chairperson, Councillor Declan Lynch, said:

“We are proud to support such a wide range of community-led projects that are focused on making our neighbourhoods safer and stronger.

“The successful initiatives demonstrate the dedication of local



groups in addressing important issues affecting their communities. I commend each group for their commitment and encourage continued community involvement in these vital areas.”

The organisations that have been awarded

funding are as follows:

- Projects addressing anti-social behaviour: Ballybeen Improvement Group; Derriaghly Cricket Club; Dreamscheme NI; Dundonald Football Club; Glenavy Youth Project; Lisburn Féile; Lisburn YMCA; Logic, St. John’s Parish Church, Moira; Pride of Ballybeen; Seymourhill & Conway Residents Association; St Columba’s Derryvolgie; Youth Initiative, Lisburn
- Projects tackling the misuse of drugs and alcohol:

ASCERT (Drugs & Alcohol); Street Puppets NI

Projects supporting victims of domestic and sexual violence: Atlas Women’s Centre

Projects reducing fear of crime: Annahilt & Magheraconluce Community Association; Moira Friendship Group

Projects supporting road safety: Road Safe NI

All projects will be delivered within the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area and are expected to be completed

by February 2027.

PCSP encourages community groups, Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and Community Police Liaison Committees to get involved in future funding rounds and initiatives aimed at enhancing safety and wellbeing across all communities.

For more information on PCSP programmes and future funding opportunities, visit www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/pcsp or email pcsp@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk

Continued from page 1

Eco-Teacher of the year was awarded to Julie McGonigle from Dundonald Primary School. She was praised for her exceptional dedication in guiding the school through a range of environmental projects, including the collection of 350kg of clothing for recycling.

Eco-Pupil of the year was awarded to Eden from Tonagh Primary School. Eden was commended for helping younger classes develop good recycling habits, and delivering an impressive speech at the Environmental Youth

Speak Awards.

The Eco-Teacher and Eco-Pupil of the Year awards are sponsored by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Eco-Schools is the largest sustainability education movement in the world, with over 54,000 Eco-Schools worldwide. The programme is managed locally by charity Live Here Love Here and supported by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and ten local councils, including Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

Last year, Northern Ireland became only the second country in the Foundation for Environmental Education Eco-Schools network to achieve 50% of schools with Green Flag status.

Alice Buchanan, Environmental Education Manager at Live Here Love Here said:

“The Green Flag Award

ceremonies are a real highlight in the Live Here Love Here calendar. The passion, creativity and dedication of the teachers and pupils we support is truly inspirational, as evidenced by the standard of work this year.

We are proud to be one of the first countries in the world to reach, and now surpass, 50% of schools with an Eco-Schools Green Flag. This achievement is a reflection that schools and young people see the value of environmental education. As we come to the end of this assembly mandate and reform of the curriculum is being debated, environmental education should play a key role in the future.”

Local schools collected their Green Flags at an awards ceremony at Lagan Valley Arts Centre on the 10th June. The ceremony was attended by the Mayor of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Cllr Brian Higgison.

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Lisburn Rangers inspired by senior stars

The remarkable growth of the girls' game is one of the defining success stories of the O'Neills Foyle Cup, and few clubs reflect that progress better than Lisburn Rangers Ladies.

More than one in four teams competing at this year's (recent) tournament were girls' sides, underlining both the continued rise of women's football and the growing appeal of one of the world's leading youth football competitions.

For Lisburn Rangers Under-11 coach Claire McRoberts, the tournament represents far more than a week of football. It is another important step in the development of young players who can see a genuine pathway from the club's Academy through to its Sports Direct Women's Premiership side.

The club's senior team, who secured promotion from the Championship before establishing themselves in the topflight, have become role models for the next generation, inspiring young players to believe they can one day follow the same journey.

"The senior team are fantastic with all our girls and they really are such role models for them," said Claire.

"They always get them involved in their games doing things like flag bearing and stuff like that, and they come down to the girls' training as well and get involved with them."



"It really is great to see and I know how much it means to the girls. The senior team are doing fantastic as well. Having won the Championship a couple of years ago, they are now making their mark in the Premiership."

"They are a real inspiration for the girls coming through the Academy and it shows there is a pathway there for them."

Claire believes the opportunities now available to young girls are almost unrecognisable from when she was growing up.

She hopes that, by taking part in competitions such as the O'Neills Foyle Cup

and seeing players from across Ireland and beyond, her squad will return home inspired to continue their own football journeys.

"It's a brilliant experience for all the girls to be able to take part in the Foyle Cup," she said.

"It's fantastic to see how much the girls' game has grown and to be able to give them opportunities that simply weren't there before. Hopefully this is something they'll remember for a very long time."

A record 1,013 teams from across Ireland, the United Kingdom, Europe and North America recently competed across

boys', girls' and disability categories from Under-8 to Under-19 level, with 3,942 matches taking place at more than 60 venues throughout Derry/Londonderry, Strabane, Limavady, Claudy, Greysteel, Coleraine, Dungiven, Castledawson, Inishowen and Donegal.

More than 200,000 spectators are expected to attend throughout tournament week, delivering a significant boost to the regional economy through tourism, hospitality, retail and visitor spending.

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BIRD SPOTTING

Have you ever seen a white blackbird, or one that looks like it got splattered with whitewash?

Then they probably had a condition called leucism. Leucism (from the Greek for white) is not common, but in the UK and Ireland is most often found in blackbirds, house sparrows, dunnocks and some crows. Very occasionally they may be completely white, but more often only in spots or patches.

Feathers contain melanin, a substance which makes them dark, but occasionally there are genetic variations where melanin is absent, resulting in white feathers, either in whole or in part, which don't change as the bird ages. Of course, this makes them more vulnerable to predators, and in extreme cases unfamiliar to birds of the same species.

Even more rare are albino birds. Sometimes a bird with a few white feathers is referred to as 'partial albino', which is not possible; albino birds are totally white because of the complete absence of melanin pigments. Also, they have pink eyes,



which, incidentally, limit their lifespan because of poor eyesight. Bird plumage can have variations, but as in life, nothing is ever just black and white. JVA

Construction of New Research Facility at AFBI Hillsborough welcomed

DAERA Minister Andrew Muir has welcomed the award of the construction contract for the new Ruminant Emissions Research Facility (RERF).

The planned investment of £8 million by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in this innovative new research asset represents a significant step forward in Northern Ireland's efforts to address agricultural emissions and support sustainable livestock production.

The research facility will provide infrastructure to measure greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions from cattle under controlled conditions. The data generated will support research into mitigation strategies and inform national inventories, helping Northern Ireland meet its climate targets.

Construction work on the innovative facility is scheduled to commence early this month, marking a key milestone in the delivery of this strategically important project.

Welcoming the contract award, Minister Muir said: "I welcome that a contractor has been appointed and construction will soon be underway. This facility will support scientists develop innovative, low carbon farming practices with reduced ammonia emissions strengthening environmental outcomes whilst sustaining the productivity and economic resilience of our agri-food sector."

"This investment highlights our continued support for AFBI's research and its critical role in informing policy and driving innovation across the sector."

Prof Elizabeth Magowan, Director of AFBI Sustainable Agri-Food Sciences, said: "The Ruminant Emissions Research Facility represents a strategically important addition to AFBI's research infrastructure. It will provide a unique, specialist platform that bridges the gap between detailed laboratory studies and commercial farm systems, enabling us to deliver world class leading science that supports innovation and sustainability across the agri-food sector."

Hidden menopause symptoms affect thousands of women in Northern Ireland, new Specsavers research shows

While hot flushes and mood swings dominate menopause conversations, new Specsavers research suggests a common but lesser-known symptom is being overlooked: dry eyes.

New research from Specsavers polling 1,000 menopausal, perimenopausal, and postmenopausal women reveals that, in Northern Ireland, 54% experience dry eyes, causing their vision to feel gritty (31%), itchy (38%), blurry (54%), and light-sensitive (31%). Despite this affecting one in two menopausal women, only 28% were aware that dry eyes were linked to menopause, and the condition is not currently listed on the official NHS website page for menopause symptoms.

To address dry eyes, Specsavers is highlighting its advanced in-store ZEST (Zocular Eyelid System Technology) procedure. This procedure is also available through the Specsavers Home Visits service.

Leanne Lindsay, Optician Director at Specsavers Lisburn says: "We regularly see menopausal women experiencing dry eyes, often without realising it can be linked to hormonal changes, and the treatment can make a significant difference. Many patients say that after procedures like ZEST, everything becomes clearer, more comfortable, and easier to focus on. It's a simple step that can have a big impact on how you see and feel."

ZEST is a quick, painless 10-to-20-minute procedure using a natural, okra-based gel and a specialised swab to deep-clean the eyelids and lashes. By clearing away the biofilm, debris, and mites that block vital oil glands, it delivers immediate, soothing relief, allowing customers to regain comfort and focus on their daily lives. To book an appointment, you can make an online booking for an eye test and speak with your local branch directly to book in the ZEST procedure.



Dr Zoe Williams and Leanne Lindsay, Specsavers Lisburn

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charge for luggage it is a massive help with keeping the cost of a break down."

Wow Saturday Slimming World Lisburn 143 stone lost this year so far!

Saturday Slimming World Lisburn returned to its original building in Harmony Hill Presbyterian Moss Rd last July. Session times are 8am, 9:30 + 11am.

Linda, the Consultant, said, "it's been amazing being back with the Saturday group and with Slimming World. I returned to this role a year Two years ago and I have been blown away by Members dedication to their

health and by the weight loss achieved and life changing differences Members have gained as a reward.

It has been truly humbling and a joy to be part of such a positive, friendly and supportive group. I love starting my weekend with the buzz and chatter on a Saturday morning. I am still amazed

how much craic can be had this early in the morning along with genuine support and ideas, it really is a great place to be. Since January alone the group loss is 143 stone, just incredible."

At Slimming World you can lose weight without going hungry with out better than ever healthy eating plan



and tuck into tasty food your whole household can enjoy. Our new book with changes is now available in group. The exciting changes, particularly to the healthy extras, allows more flexibility while staying on track.

Linda says she is "so proud of what the members have achieved. We have members who have lost between 1 stone and 13

stone currently, including health benefits from reduced medication, reduced blood pressure, improved lung function, pain reduction in joints, remission from type 2 diabetes and much more, not to mention improved energy levels and improved sense of well being.

Everyone is welcome along", concludes Linda. Contact 07568476044

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Top tips to avoid injury when you are gardening

Gardening is not considered a risky activity. However, when we spend a few hours in the garden for the first time in months, there can be a risk of sore backs and elbows.

Basic gardening activities like weeding, digging and watering involve movement, effort and energy.

Too many hours spent enthusiastically bent over while seeding and weeding can lead to back pain - as can hauling around large buckets of water, heavy hoses or laden wheelbarrows.

The most common gardening-related injuries we see include neck and low back pain, shoulder tendinopathy, lateral epicondyle pain (tennis elbow), and carpal tunnel syndrome in the wrist.

These are mostly overuse injuries that tend to occur after long hours of unfamiliar work in awkward positions. Here are some tips to help prevent injury while you're enjoying gardening.

Plan ahead and set realistic goals

Don't expect to get all your gardening done on the first sunny day of spring. Set realistic goals and don't rush to complete a big project in a short period of time.

Plan for what you want to accomplish and then set certain tasks for different days. Be cautious on the first day back to gardening of the year and be careful not to overwork yourself.

Prepare your body for gardening

While preparing our bodies for any activity is excellent advice, many of us don't adhere to it.

Gardening is an active hobby and can be strenuous, so it is worth taking a few minutes to get yourself ready for action.

A simple walk around the garden will improve circulation and warm your muscles, and adding easy stretches like shoulder circles, neck and back movements in all directions and marching on the spot will limber up your muscles.

Take breaks every 15 minutes

Your spine is designed to move in all directions, but the forward-bending nature



of many tasks in the garden means that you may spend much more time in this position than any other.

After every 10-15 minutes of time spent bending forwards working, you should stand up and bend backwards and then side-bend your spine. Ease your body by taking a regular movement break to keep your spine supple and minimise stiffness. Walking around the garden every 15 minutes will also achieve this.

Preparing your lawn for mowing can take time. If there is significant tidying and bending over to pick up stones and toys to be done, take a movement break after the clear-up. Treat the clear-up and the mowing as two separate jobs.

Vary your jobs to avoid RSI

It's easy to lose track of time in the garden. Set a timer on your phone and rotate your tasks every 15 minutes to avoid repetitive movements. Plan what needs to be done, such as pruning, raking, digging, or pulling weeds, and ensure that you change between each job and body position regularly.

Consider your body position with each task. When pruning, have the plant in front of you, rather than to the side or at an angle, and avoid reaching. The closer you are to something, the less stress you are placing on your body.

Be careful when you are lifting

Lifting items maintains our strength, but we need to ensure we are strong enough to safely lift. If

a load is very heavy, eg carrying large buckets of water or bags of stones, you need to plan how you will manage it. You could consider lightening the load by making more than one trip or recruiting someone else to help you lift or pull, or even using a wheelbarrow to move it safely. When lifting, remember to bend at the knees, and harness the power of your stronger thigh muscles to push and pull heavy objects. Avoid heavy lifting while in a forward-bent position.

Prolonged gripping can cause strain

Avoid long periods of gripping tightly on hedge clippers or using an axe. The prolonged gripping action can increase the pressure on the tendons at the elbow and cause severe pain and weakness. This is commonly known as tennis elbow, which is a degenerative process in the tendon from overuse, rather than an inflammation, and can take many months to heal.

Choose hand tools that fit your grip and avoid over-gripping a very small handle.

Check the tools you need

It is worth considering your past injury history and using the correct tools to prevent aggravating the symptoms again.

Use long-handled tools to avoid needlessly working in a bent position and use slow, deliberate movements instead of rough or jerky ones. If your equipment is too stiff, you may strain yourself trying to use it. Instead of pulling weeds with your hands, use an old din-

ner fork to grab and loosen weed roots, making them easier to pull out.

Tools with smaller blades that weigh less will help you avoid straining your muscles. If you have a history of elbow pain, watch the grip size of your hand tools and how long you work for.

Watch the vigorous pull start on a manual mower - this can cause rotational back injury as well as straining your shoulder if you do it cold, so make sure you warm up first.

How to rest when you're finished

When you have finished gardening, don't collapse into a soft and low sofa. Instead, walk around the block or sit on a dining room style chair to rest. When your body is in the same position for a long time, eg. forward-bent, the soft tissue structures (muscles and ligaments) gradually lengthen and temporarily weaken. If you sit immediately without letting them gradually return to normal, you may find it hard to get up from the sofa.

This is also relevant if you try to lift something heavy after a long period of time spent bent over. Your ligaments need a few minutes to return to their usual length and strength, to be able to give the proper support needed to lift.

Gardening is a great physical activity and a meaningful one as it keeps us strong and happy.

It is worth being proactive and taking a few minutes to plan when gardening, to reduce your risk of getting injured doing an activity that you love



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Autumnal Design Trends for Your Home

As summer comes to an end and the nights grow longer, it is important to bring more vibrancy into your home.

This renewal of colour can come in various forms, from repainting your walls to upgrading wallpaper and from upgrading your lighting to reupholstering your furniture, the options are vast.

Nothing adds colour quite like pillows. When strategically placed, these splashes of colour can add the vibrancy that your home needs. Whether you decide to include bold, block colours or opt for a more daring patterned design, these simple additions can transform your home and uplift the mood of everyone

who visits.

Choosing to bring some natural elements into your home can add both vibrancy and fragrance. Placing flowers and plants in your living space are shown to encourage good moods and can bring you up when the weather is getting you down.

The darker days and poorer weather leave many of us feeling down. However it is important that when you are looking down, that bright colours cheer you up. A colourful throw or rug is the solution. Strategically placing this next to a chair or coffee table can add a level



of texture to your room that compliments other elements and bolsters the mood that you are trying to generate through your design.

Using a mirror in the correct way can generate an illusion of both increased

space and colour. Choosing a mirror with an interesting frame can add an element of colour itself, whilst the reflective properties of the mirror will leave the vibrant colours elsewhere in the room reinforced.

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As temperatures drop, transitioning your living space into a comforting retreat becomes a top priority.

Design experts at Country Living suggest focusing on simple updates that make a significant impact without requiring complete renovation.

Textiles offer the quickest and most effective route to seasonal comfort. According to style advisors at Elle Decoration, layering chunky knits, soft fleece and heavy wool creates immediate visual warmth. Swapping light summer cushion covers for rich velvet options transforms a sofa in seconds. Placing a plush woven rug on bare floorboards helps trap heat while softening the room.

Colour choices also play a central role in setting a soothing autumn mood. Trend analysis from Homes & Gardens highlights deep ochre, rusted orange and forest green as key seasonal hues. These earthy shades mimic the changing landscape



outside and bring a sense of grounding stillness indoors. Pairing these tones with natural timber furniture enhances the organic feel of your living space. Lighting forms another crucial element of successful autumn interior design. Consultants at Ideal Home recommend ditching main overhead lights in favour of softer ambient illumination.

Table lamps placed at varying heights work alongside scented candles to produce a gentle golden glow. Adding warm-toned LED light bulbs helps recreate the soothing atmosphere of a crackling fireside. Aroma also contributes significantly to a warm interior atmosphere. Experts at Good Housekeeping suggest burning candles scented

with cinnamon, clove and cedarwood. Finally, decorative accessories complete the seasonal transformation. Stylists at Architectural Digest suggest displaying ceramic vases filled with dried stems, branches and pinecones. These subtle touches celebrate the season while turning your home into a tranquil sanctuary for cold autumn evenings.

Tactile Texture for your home this Autumn

As daylight hours shorten, interior lovers turn their attention indoors to prepare living spaces for cooler weather ahead.

Autumn decor this year focuses heavily on tactile textures and grounding organic materials. Replacing light summer linens with heavy bouclé, wool, and plush velvet instantly creates an inviting environment for relaxing evenings.

Colour palettes are also shifting towards rich earth tones. Good Housekeeping notes that warm amber, deep forest green, and terracotta are dominating seasonal interior design collections. These hues introduce natural warmth while maintaining a sophisticated aesthetic across living rooms and bedrooms alike.

Bringing nature indoors remains a cornerstone of seasonal styling. Design experts at Homes & Gardens highlight the beauty of foraged foliage, dried botanicals, and handcrafted wooden accents. Simple additions such as a vase of dried reeds or a bowl of



pinecones effortlessly bridge the gap between outdoor landscapes and indoor comfort.

Lighting plays a crucial role in setting the ideal evening ambiance. Interior stylists at Ideal Home recommend layering light sources using soft table lamps,

warm wall sconces, and scented candles. Avoid harsh overhead lighting to create gentle pockets of warmth throughout your living space.

Small adjustments often yield the most dramatic transformations. Updating cushion covers,

draping a chunky knit throw over an armchair, and setting a seasonal table arrangement can refresh a room without a costly overhaul.

By blending natural elements with rich textures, you can easily turn your home into a sanctuary this autumn.

Preparing Your Garden for Autumn

As the summer months draw to a close, it is time to begin preparations to make your garden ready for the autumnal season.

Whilst spring was the ideal time for planting new plants and summer the perfect time to watch them grow, autumn is a time that you will need to protect your garden. The cooler weather and the increased amounts of rainfall will require certain measures to ensure that your garden is protected.

It might seem simple, but many forget to move some of their vulnerable plants indoors as the cooler weather begins to take hold. Either moving your potted plants and herbs indoors or into a dedicated greenhouse will give your plants to protection that they dearly need to continue growing for a longer period of time.

Throughout the summer period you will have had an abundance of seedlings fall all over your garden and it is important to apply weed killer at the beginning of autumn to stop these from sprouting. It is of the utmost

importance to keep your pets away from the garden if you put weed killer down as ingesting the poison can cause a great deal of harm to your animals.

As the days grow shorter, you will notice that the speed at which your garden grows will shorten considerably. This means that you will not have to cut your grass quite as often, however it is important to do so as regularly as required in order to ensure that your grass stays full when it grows back in the spring. Similarly, it is important to keep your garden tidy and not allow leaves to build up as they begin to fall onto your property. Letting them build up over time will cause considerably more mess as they will begin to decompose and be harder to remove.

The slower growth provides the perfect opportunity to tidy up your

flower beds and displays. Whilst their vibrancy might begin to decline, the slower growth means that they will be more manageable.

It is important not to forget about your evergreens. Every garden should have at least a few ever green plants to keep

some life throughout the cold winter months. Whilst these plants are tough, it is important not to neglect them.

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families can visit the office at 24 Castle Street in Lisburn or request a free assessment. Support is readily available by calling 02892 900 001 or emailing lisburn@a1care.co.uk today

SLIMMING WORLD SUCCESS

Two members of Christine's Lisburn Slimming World groups have slimmed to success shedding over 14 stone between them. Joy has lost an amazing 7st 7lbs while Debs has shed a fantastic 7 stone!

Joy says: "I started my weight loss journey in

March 2024. Being at my heaviest, I was finding mobility difficult and, with having arthritis in my hips, I was unable to walk by myself for any length of time. I was apprehensive about joining the Slimming World group but it was the best decision I ever made. Christine, our consultant, was great and supportive from the start. Food optimising is a fantastic way to lose weight without feeling hungry. It allows me to have plenty of food... from making my own takeaways to preparing healthy family meals and treats. Nothing is off limits just optimise chips, fries, lots of fruit and veg, rice and pasta, all made within Slimming World parameters. I make all my own sauces using Slimming World recipes... you never need to feel hungry. I find it all so easy. I love my Slimming World group and I have met some lovely people who have become great friends and supported me through my journey. At 7 1/2 stone lighter, I'm happier, have a lot more energy and am more active...I am proud to be a Slimming World target member!"

Debs says: "I began my Slimming World journey on 2/1/25 in my local group at Trinity Methodist Church. I was at my heaviest weight ever which was really affecting my mobility and my confidence. I didn't want to go anywhere or



do anything after work other than watching TV and eating junk foods.

As soon as I entered the room at group I felt welcome and quickly learnt that no food is banned. I had a daily allowance of SWIPS (Slimming World's individual picks). I could still enjoy my crisps and other treats within my allowance.

I told myself "no-one can do this for you-you have to make changes"

I was fed up relying on pain relief and rubs for aching joints due to my weight. I don't drive and relied on lifts and public transport as walking was too painful. If I was honest I had become lazy.

Food optimising is the way forward. With the help and encouragement from our Consultant Christine and the other members in group I made the changes which seemed massive at first but are now normal life.

The choices are endless. I can fill up on free foods without measuring, weighing or counting calories eg lean meat, poultry, eggs, pasta, rice, potatoes, pulses, fruit and vegetables.

I also have Healthy extras daily to ensure I have a balanced diet with calcium and fibre.

Before embarking on my weightloss journey I would have had takeaways, fast foods and high calorie snacks. Now I really enjoy making healthier options. My family have also benefited from eating healthier.

I haven't been abroad on holiday for over 8 years mainly because I didn't like the person I had become and wearing summer clothes or a swimsuit filled me full of dread.

I am now 7 stone lighter and feel like a new woman. My confidence has grown so much that I

went to Salou for a week and felt fantastic.

I can walk to and from work now. I don't need to be asked twice if I want to go out.

It's not only Slimming World's healthy eating plan that has worked for me but the support, encouragement and friendships

I have made at our group. There were times my weight-loss was slow and I felt like giving up. The encouragement from Christine and other members assured me it would be okay and it was. As Christine says it's not willpower it's choice power.

Making the right choices, planning ahead and preparing in advance.

I am at my chosen target weight and still attend my group every week so I can pass on the support and encouragement to help other members on their journeys."



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Autumn Health Hacks

Autumn might be one of the most picturesque seasons of the year, but few will deny that the colder, darker and wetter weather makes it harder to stay motivated to exercise.

Exercising during this season can feel somewhat daunting. Dragging yourself from the comfort of a warm and cosy bed to battle the elements during a morning run is the stuff of nightmares for many. However, you can reap serious rewards by braving the weather and remaining active throughout the autumn months.

Seasonal Affective Disorder, commonly known as SAD, is just one condition whose symptoms may be eased by regular exercise. Numerous studies have shown that incorporating physical activity into your daily routine can boost your mood while helping to reduce stress, anxiety and feelings of depression. Getting up and out will therefore benefit you not only physically, but mentally too.

Changing your routine is one of the best ways to remain motivated during autumn. While going for a morning run might have seemed attractive when the weather was dry and warm, colder and wetter mornings may be better suited to an indoor swim, fitness class or home workout. Joining a gym can also help you stay active over the winter by providing a warm, comfortable environment where you can exercise regardless of the weather.

However, outdoor exercise should not be



completely abandoned. A brisk walk through a local park or woodland can provide fresh air, natural light and a welcome change of scenery. Wearing suitable waterproof clothing, warm layers and reflective accessories can make exercising outdoors safer and more enjoyable as the days become shorter.

In the same way, mixing up your diet is important for staying healthy this autumn. Salads and fresh fruit might have been the order of the day during the summer months, but cooler weather often calls for something warmer and more filling. Soups, stews, chowders and nutritious shakes can be excellent ways to diversify your diet and prevent you from becoming bored with the same meals.

Seasonal vegetables

such as carrots, parsnips, squash, cabbage and sweet potatoes can be used to create comforting dishes packed with vitamins and fibre.

It is also important to continue drinking plenty of water, as people can sometimes forget to stay hydrated when the temperature drops. Herbal teas and warm drinks can help increase your fluid intake, although sugary drinks should still be enjoyed in moderation.

One benefit of the nights getting longer is that many people find it significantly easier to enjoy a good night's sleep. As darkness falls earlier, it can be easier to establish a consistent night-time routine and secure the recommended seven to nine hours of rest. Research has linked regularly getting fewer than six hours of sleep with

a higher risk of weight gain and other health concerns.

Try switching off phones, televisions and other screens before bedtime, as the light and stimulation they provide can make it more difficult to unwind. A warm bath, a good book or a few gentle stretches can help signal to your body that it is time to rest.

Finally, do not underestimate the importance of maintaining social contact. Dark evenings can make it tempting to stay indoors alone, but meeting friends, joining a class or simply going for a walk with a family member can lift your spirits. By making a few simple adjustments to your exercise, diet and sleep routine, you can remain healthy, energised and positive throughout the autumn season.

AUTUMN ACTION ACROSS LISBURN

As the new season begins the Lisburn area comes alive with an energetic calendar of community gatherings and seasonal cultural highlights.



Official event updates published by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council highlight a bustling schedule designed to entertain visitors of all ages across local venues. The iconic Twilight Night celebration returning to Wallace Park in October when families can gather to watch the community lantern parade weave through the city centre before enjoying a light show and fireworks display.

At the Island Arts Centre, local theatrical productions and creative workshops fill the autumn schedule. The venue offers live music tributes, family theatrical shows and hands-on art classes designed to inspire local residents throughout the cooler months.

Nature enthusiasts can explore outdoor autumn activities across local green spaces. The official tourism board, Visit Lisburn Castlereagh, promotes guided heritage walks and seasonal nature trails in the picturesque Castle Gardens. These outdoor events offer a fantastic opportunity to enjoy the rich harvest foliage while learning about local history.

Food lovers can look forward to seasonal food fairs hosted in Market Square. Event announcements from the council confirm that local food producers and craft makers will showcase regional produce, warm artisan treats and bespoke gifts.

How Game Locker is Revolutionizing Entertainment

The entertainment landscape is undergoing a massive transformation, and Game Locker is leading the charge by engineering high-performance, immersive gaming experiences across Northern Ireland.

Far more than just a typical gaming company, this innovative venture blends entertainment, state-of-the-art technology, and skill development into a cohesive community package. By designing elite esports arenas, cutting-edge virtual reality environments, and advanced driving simulators, Game Locker delivers unparalleled excitement, learning, and unforgettable engagement for any audience.

One of Game Locker's standout offerings is its complete mobile flexibility, bringing premium gaming

configurations directly to your preferred venue anywhere in Northern Ireland.

Their mobile expertise covers high-end console setups, top-tier PC builds, and immersive Virtual Reality rigs. Every booking delivers a comprehensive, hassle-free service that includes up to two or more hours of continuous gameplay, professional equipment hire, premium gaming furniture, and dedicated event coaches to ensure managed program delivery runs flawlessly. Their corporate excellence is highlighted by successful partnerships

with major clients, including managing full gaming suites for Allstate's Employee Fun Days in Belfast and Derry, as well as delivering high-profile eventing at the Waterfront Hall.

For those looking to host an exclusive party, Game Locker features a state-of-the-art private arena room located at Inspire Business Park in Dundonald. This venue is the ultimate destination for unforgettable birthday parties, friends' get-togethers, and high-energy game nights for up to twenty-five guests. This package includes a dedicated host, a customizable

food zone, and full access to consoles, VR, and sim racing. Additionally, their specialized Apex Racing Simulators division offers mobile simulator hire and structured e-sports coaching sessions for competitive racing enthusiasts.

To secure a booking, contact the team at Unit 5 Inspire Business Park, Dundonald, BT16 1QT. You can reach them by phone at 07519 312338, via email at gl.gamelocker@gmail.com, or online at www.gamelocker.online. You can also connect with them on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram.

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Knit + Stitch returns to Northern Ireland

The UK's largest craft show is returning to Northern Ireland and will once again be bursting at the seams with creativity and innovation.

Knit + Stitch returns to the Eikon Exhibition Centre outside Lisburn from November 12–15, bringing the show back to the heart of Northern Ireland's rich linen heritage.

Craft fans are in for a real treat with over 100 textile craft brands and a jam-packed line-up of more than 150 hands-on workshops in partnership with Janome, plus stunning curated textile art galleries.

Knit + Stitch Event Manager, Fatima Naqvi said last year's show at the Eikon Exhibition Centre exceeded all expectations, and organisers are determined to make this year's event even bigger.

Shoppers can stock up on everything they need for their next big project, from gorgeous yarn, fabric and thread, sewing machines, patterns, embroidery supplies and cross-stitch kits.

Crafters will be thrilled to see the return of popular exhibitors from England, including Brian's Best Wools, The Black Sheep, Italian Buttons, Jewellness



Craft, Roy's Material World, and many more.

The workshop programme is not to be missed, led by some of UK's most skilled textile crafters and designed to inspire makers at every level, from absolute beginners to seasoned experts.

Now in its second year at the Eikon Exhibition Centre, visitors can expect a great day out with significantly improved facilities including easy access from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, free on-site parking, a free shuttle bus service from the Lisburn train station and modern catering facilities with a variety of options and plenty of seating.

Amongst the highlights at this year's show are the Textile Art Galleries, showcasing inspiring work from artists across the UK and Ireland.

Included in the ticket price, the galleries feature work by Amanda Vencatasamy, Derry Factory Girls Quilts, Wild Art Textiles: Riptides, the Belfast School of Art Graduate Showcase, and the EQA Challenge: The Fantastic World of Insects, an eye-catching quilt competition hosted by the Irish Patchwork Society.

Don't miss the Prima Live Stage, where talks, demos and catwalk shows will take place with well-known sewing personalities and knitting experts.

The Knit Lounge, which is once again being hosted by Inspiring Yarns, will provide an opportunity to explore new products and learn the basics from experts.

THE SCIENCE OF AUTUMN MIST

Crisp autumn mornings frequently bring dense blankets of mist drifting across rivers, valleys and open countryside.

This serene seasonal phenomenon is driven by specific atmospheric physics that occur as night temperatures drop. According to meteorological studies from the Met Office, autumn mist forms through a process known as radiation cooling. As clear skies allow ground heat to escape rapidly overnight, moist air near the surface cools down quickly.

When air temperatures fall below the dew point, airborne water vapour condenses into tiny liquid water droplets. The Royal Meteorological Society notes that calm winds are essential for mist formation across low-lying terrain. Gentle breezes keep cool moist air trapped near ground level without dispersing water droplets into higher atmosphere layers. River valleys and marshlands provide ideal damp conditions required for thick radiation fog to develop overnight.

Autumn mist plays a crucial environmental role by providing vital moisture to plants, insects and woodland soil. Research from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology highlights how mist droplets deposit water onto delicate mosses and fungi. This localized



humidity supports sensitive microhabitats during drier autumn weather periods before heavy winter rain arrives. Spiders also benefit from damp morning mist, which highlights intricate web structures spun across vegetation.

Navigating through dense autumn mist requires extra caution from motorists, cyclists and outdoor walkers traveling locally. The AA recommends using dipped headlights and maintaining lower driving speeds when traveling through foggy patches. Reduced visibility can conceal hazards on rural roads, including farm vehicles, livestock and pedestrians walking along unlit paths. Checking local weather forecasts helps travelers plan journeys safely during misty autumn mornings.

Capturing images of misty autumn landscapes offers spectacular rewards for professional and amateur photographers alike. Early morning light filtering through rising mist creates ethereal atmospheric effects across forests and tranquil lakes. Exploring local parks during misty dawns reveals a quiet peaceful side of nature unique to the autumn season.

Understanding The Time Shift

As daylight hours decrease following the autumn equinox, many people experience noticeable changes in mood and energy levels.

This natural reaction is closely linked to shifting biological rhythms governed by natural light exposure. According to the NHS, reduced sunlight during autumn can disturb internal body clocks, leading to seasonal affective disorder. Understanding the biological mechanisms behind seasonal mood shifts helps individuals manage autumn transitions effectively.

Sunlight exposure regulates the production of key hormones that influence sleep patterns and general emotional wellbeing. Research published by the Mind mental health charity explains that lower light levels boost melatonin production, causing feelings of tiredness. Concurrently,

reduced sunlight can decrease serotonin levels, which affects mood, appetite and overall sleep quality. Recognizing these physiological responses helps remove stigma surrounding seasonal mental health challenges during darker months.

Simple lifestyle adjustments can help maintain healthy circadian rhythms as daylight hours continue shrinking towards winter. Sleep experts at the Sleep Foundation recommend spending time outdoors during morning hours to maximize natural light intake. Position desks near bright windows and maintain consistent daily outdoor exercise routines whenever possible.



Bright light therapy lamps can also assist by simulating natural sunlight during dark morning hours.

Nutrition and physical activity play supportive roles in sustaining energy levels through changing seasonal conditions. The British Dietetic Association recommends eating balanced meals rich in vitamin D,

complex carbohydrates and lean proteins. Regular physical movement outdoor releases endorphins that boost mood while counteracting seasonal lethargy naturally. Building healthy autumn routines supports physical and mental resilience during darker winter months ahead.

Community connections and social activities provide vital emotional support as outdoor daylight hours decrease steadily. Joining local exercise groups, book clubs or volunteer organisations helps prevent feelings of isolation during autumn. Discussing seasonal mood changes openly encourages healthy coping strategies across local communities. Adapting lifestyle habits to match seasonal shifts promotes long-term wellbeing throughout the year.





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FOREST CHEMISTRY REVEALED

The dramatic transformation of forest canopies during autumn is a complex chemical process driven by shifting environmental signals.

As daylight hours diminish, deciduous trees undergo a period of preparation for cold weather. According to research from the Woodland Trust, trees stop producing chlorophyll, which gives leaves their typical green colour. Chlorophyll breaks down quickly in reduced sunlight, which unmasks other pigments that were present inside the leaves throughout summer.

Carotenoids produce the brilliant yellow and orange hues commonly seen across British woodlands. Research published by the Royal Horticultural Society confirms that these pigments assist plants with light absorption during the primary growing season. As green tones fade away, yellow and orange shades become fully visible to observers. Meanwhile, certain tree species actively synthesise anthocyanins as temperatures drop and bright sunlight continues.

Anthocyanins create deep red and purple



shades that protect delicate leaf cells from intense sunlight. Studies from the Forestry Commission indicate that weather conditions significantly affect leaf brightness. Warm sunny days combined with cool crisp nights produce the most vivid colour displays. Conversely, heavy rain and premature frost can destroy leaves before pigments develop fully. Chlorophyll

reabsorption allows trees to store valuable nutrients inside trunks and roots before winter sets in. The Royal Society of Biology notes that nitrogen and phosphorus are preserved for new spring growth. Once nutrient recovery finishes, a layer of cells forms at the leaf stem base. This process, known as abscission, cuts off water flow and causes leaves to detach gently.

Understanding leaf chemistry provides valuable insights into ecosystem health amidst changing global weather patterns. The Woodland Trust encourages public monitoring of autumn leaf changes through citizen science projects. Observing canopy transformations helps scientists track seasonal timing shifts caused by climate variations over long periods.

Forgotten Flavours Of Harvest

Modern supermarket shelves display uniform fruit varieties year round, masking the rich diversity of traditional autumn harvests.

However, historic orchards across Britain contain hundreds of unique heritage fruit varieties maturing during autumn months. According to research from the National Trust, traditional apple and pear varieties offer distinctive flavours unavailable in commercial farming. Discovering these heritage crops provides a delicious connection to regional agricultural history.

Heirloom squash and root vegetables also reach peak maturity as autumn harvest season unfolds fully. The Royal Horticultural Society highlights that traditional crops often possess superior storage qualities and rich nutritional value. Varieties such as crown prince squash,

parsnips and kohlrabi thrive in cool local growing conditions. Supporting local farms growing heirloom produce helps preserve rare crop genetics and traditional farming methods.

Local farmers markets serve as excellent venues for discovering unusual seasonal produce and regional specialties. Farm stands often feature rare apple varieties alongside



artisanal preserves, ciders and freshly harvested squash. Food writers at the Sustainable Food Trust emphasize that buying local seasonal produce reduces carbon transport emissions significantly. Eating seasonal food ensures maximum freshness while supporting regional agricultural businesses directly. Preparing heritage autumn vegetables requires simple cooking techniques

that highlight natural flavours. Roasting root vegetables at high temperatures caramelises natural sugars, creating rich savoury dishes. Cooking experts from the Sustainable Restaurant Association recommend combining roasted squash with native herbs like sage and thyme. Experimenting with unusual harvest crops brings exciting variety to autumn home

cooking routines. Preserving traditional orchard landscapes remains vital for protecting rare fruit varieties from extinction risk. Community orchard projects supported by the Wildlife Trusts encourage residents to plant native fruit trees locally. Restoring old orchards safeguards agricultural heritage while providing valuable habitats for local wildlife throughout the year.

Hidden Underground Networks

Warm damp autumn soil triggers the sudden emergence of mushrooms across UK woodland floors.

These visible structures are merely the fruiting bodies of expansive underground fungal systems. According to researchers at Kew Gardens, vast networks of microscopic threads called mycelium stretch beneath the soil surface. Mycelium connects directly to tree roots, forming a mutually beneficial partnership known as mycorrhiza.

Studies published by the British Mycological Society show that trees and fungi exchange crucial nutrients continuously. Trees provide sugars generated through photosynthesis in exchange for essential minerals gathered by fungal networks. Research from the University of Aberdeen suggests that this subterranean system allows plants to

share resources across distances. Fungi even help transmit chemical warning signals between plants when pest threats arise nearby.

Autumn dampness provides optimal moisture levels required for fungal reproduction and spore dissemination. The Woodland Trust highlights that thousands of distinct mushroom species thrive in native British woods. These organisms break down fallen timber and dead leaves, recycling vital nutrients back into woodland soil. Without fungal decomposition, forest floors would quickly become overwhelmed by accumulated plant debris.

Foragers must exercise extreme caution when identifying wild autumn mushrooms in



local natural habitats. The NHS warns that consuming toxic fungi can cause severe illness or fatal poisoning. Species like the Death Cap look deceptively similar to edible wild mushroom varieties. Experts recommend joining guided foraging walks led by

certified mycologists before collecting wild mushrooms independently.

Protecting delicate woodland soil structures remains essential for preserving these delicate underground biological networks. Heavy foot traffic off designated forest paths can crush

fragile fungal threads beneath the earth. The Forestry Commission advises walkers to remain on established tracks when exploring local forests this autumn. Preserving fungal networks ensures local ecosystems remain healthy and resilient for future generations.



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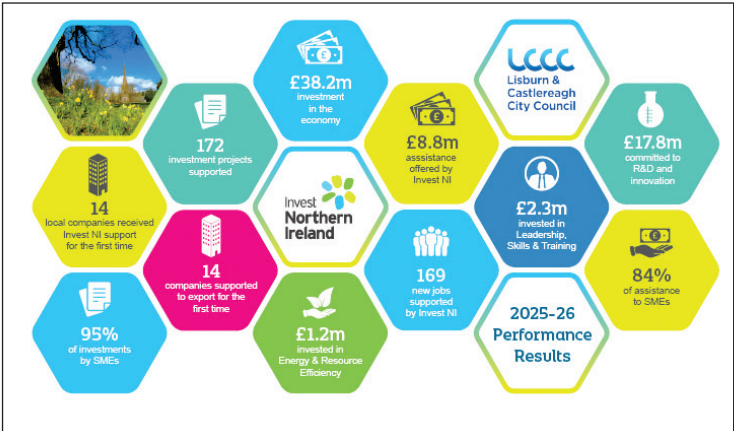
Invest NI support secures £38m of investment

Invest Northern Ireland performance results for 2025/26 show that its support has helped secure £38m of business investment in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area.

The agency offered £9m of assistance to help businesses in the area innovate, increase productivity and create new jobs. 169 new jobs will be created in the area as a result of this support.

Speaking about the results, Iain Joannides, Head of Eastern Regional Business, Invest NI, said: “The number of projects we have supported and the amount assistance offered in the area increased this year which means higher levels of investment and more jobs will be created.

“We saw a significant increase in support for innovation and R&D projects in particular, which accounted for 50 per cent of the support we offered to businesses in the area. A large proportion of this was as a result of a major investment by Cirdan. The company announced a £12.9m investment in R&D and skills alongside 72 new



jobs. We offered £1.9m of support towards this project.

“Fane Valley is also investing £1.1m in skills development across its workforce to meet customer demands. Our support will help the company to strengthen its collective skillset with training across sales and marketing, leadership capability, supply chain development and digital capabilities.

“We also saw more businesses in the area getting investment

and support through our Access to Finance funds – more than double last year – providing much needed finance to SMEs to help get business ideas off the ground.

“We are working with more companies in the area than before, thanks to our programmes

Ambition to Grow and Business Innovation Grant,” added Iain. “These programmes are helping us reach small businesses that previously would not

have been able to access Invest NI support. We have helped 37 entrepreneurs and SMEs in the Lisburn & Castlereagh area innovate, create good jobs and increase external sales through these programmes to date.

“Our strong relationship with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council also ensures businesses engaging with council programmes that have export potential get referred to Invest NI.”

New Community Network launched to strengthen connections

A new PEACEPLUS-funded Community Network has been launched to help communities across Lisburn and Castlereagh connect, collaborate and share ideas.

The programme will support urban and rural groups to build relationships at local District Electoral Area (DEA) level before linking into a wider cross-community network across the council area. It will also provide capacity-building and networking opportunities for groups and organisations representing a range of areas and interests.

The programme has been shaped by a co-design phase which identified a need for stronger connections between communities across the council area. By bringing groups together regularly through local District Electoral Area (DEA) networks, the project will support community development, strengthen sustainability and contribute to local regeneration. It will also build on work already undertaken by the council to develop the emerging community and voluntary sector infrastructure, with a focus on using innovation, digital technology and communication skills to help communities grow and adapt.

The outcome will provide opportunities and platforms from which



participants can learn from established forums to help communities to self-govern, network and build better relationships and partnerships. The network will provide support, sharing of information, advice, guidance, practical help and solutions to the members of the group. It will help to build the confidence of local community groups to maximise connections, development and growth opportunities leading to further cohesion, peace and prosperity.

Speaking at the event,

Councillor Uel Mackin, Chair of the Lisburn & Castlereagh PEACEPLUS Partnership congratulated all those who worked tirelessly in developing the Project and said: “The Community Network will bring communities together to connect, collaborate and share. This programme will help build confidence, strengthen local networks and support long-term sustainability across the council area.

“It is encouraging to see urban and rural groups being given opportunities to learn from one

another, develop new skills and build stronger relationships. This work has real potential to promote cohesion, peace and prosperity, and I wish everyone involved every success.”

The Community Network Project will run until April 2028 across the council area. For more information on the project and courses, please contact Gemma McCaughley at Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council on 07826536979 or Gemma.McCaughley@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk.

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‘LOVING HANDS’ KNITTING GROUP EAGER TO START AGAIN

'Loving Hands' Knitting Group are eager to start again after a very well deserved summer break.

The Group knit/crochet garments for the needy at home and abroad as well as enjoying one another's company alternate Wednesdays in Dundonald Methodist Church Hall, Islay Gardens, Dundonald, Belfast BT16 2WS
2.00pm-4.00pm.

We have ladies who travel from East Belfast, Comber, Newtownards and, of course, Dundonald. MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN TO EVERYONE.

Everything is FREE, including wool, knitting needles, patterns and, of course, the usual 'CUPPA'.

There is no better way to spend a few hours alternate Wednesdays at 'LOVING HANDS' KNITTING GROUP renewing old friendships, making new friends, combating loneliness and depression and, at the same time, 'HELPING THOSE IN NEED'.



A few members who joined recently said 'We are so glad we found 'LOVING HANDS' KNITTING GROUP' so,

why not come along and
enjoy the 'fellowship'
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Skills Showcase at Electrical Traineeship Intercampus Competition

South Eastern Regional College (SERC) recently hosted its first Level 2 Electrical Traineeship Intercampus Competition at the college's Newtownards Campus.

Bringing together top talent from Newtownards, Downpatrick and Lisburn Campuses, 10 competitors - who first competed within their own campuses - progressed to the intercampus final when they went head-to-head in a highly competitive event designed to showcase the technical ability, precision and problem-solving skills of the electrical trainees.

Following an intense day of practical challenges and assessment, Mark Jamison (24) from Belfast delivered an outstanding performance to secure first place; Reece Peak Bellerby (18) from Newtownards achieved a close second place; while Abigail Miller (17) from Bangor, took third place. All three winners are from the Newtownards Campus.

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Met Office experts present evidence on climate change

DAERA Minister Andrew Muir recently welcomed an event organised with the Met Office on the science and evidence behind climate change.

Leading experts from the Met Office were in Stormont to highlight the importance of deploying science and evidence to understand and respond to climate change and its impacts globally and in Northern Ireland.

At the event jointly hosted by DAERA in Parliament Buildings, the Met Office presented the latest data and analysis on projected climate trends, including the anticipated local impacts of a warming climate on infrastructure, public health and the natural environment.

Attendees heard about the specific challenges facing Northern Ireland's agriculture sector, with changing weather patterns, prolonged wet periods and increasing temperatures expected to have significant implications for our agri-food sector.

Professor Jason Lowe OBE, Met Office Principal Fellow Applied & Climate Science, said: "The role of the Met Office is to provide the very best climate intelligence through world leading science, enabling decision makers, business and individuals to make evidence-based decisions in



DAERA Minister Andrew Muir is pictured attending a Met Office climate change event at Parliament Buildings. Pictured (left to right) with Minister Muir is DAERA Permanent Secretary Katrina Godfrey, Met Office representatives Tom Crocker and Jason Lowe, DAERA Deputy Secretary Jane Corderoy and DAERA Official Claire Cockerill.

response to the challenges of our changing climate.

"The evidence is clear that our climate is changing, and we know that reducing our greenhouse gas emissions will help prevent the very worst impacts of climate change. However, it is also critical to adapt to the

changes we're going to see, and an evidence-based approach to assessing the risks will help ensure the most effective action is taken."

The session included a question-and-answer panel, providing participants with the opportunity to engage

directly with experts and explore the evidence in greater depth.

The event forms part of ongoing work by DAERA to raise awareness of the impacts of climate change and support informed, evidence-based action across all sectors.

LIVING TOGETHER APART

A solicitor explains how LTA works in law

More and more couples are choosing to continue to live together amicably after their relationship ends. The phenomenon of 'living together apart' (LTA) or a 'no split divorce' has gathered pace in recent years due to economic instability and the rising cost of living. It describes an arrangement where couples remain in the same household for months, or even years, after they have ended their romantic relationship. Couples can be married, but in many cases, parties are unmarried, cohabiting couples, who currently have no legal or financial recourse upon separation in Northern Ireland, very much the same as in England and Wales and therefore struggle to take the steps to physically and financially separate.

It's not an ideal scenario for any exes. There can be difficulties around financial separation and how to manage paying bills and the mortgage/rent. If divorce proceedings are



the preferred eventual goal, I recommend that all regular payments are maintained in the way they were during the relationship. Where couples have joint accounts, however, these should be split and everyone should have a sole account. This can, of course, be complicated where one person has been financially dependent on the other and legal and financial advice may need to be sought.

Many of these couples will also have

children who they will need to work out arrangements for. Children are extremely perceptive and will often feel tensions between parents, so it is best to be honest and explain the situation, as best appropriate to the children's age and understanding level.

Responsibilities for care will need to be organised, which could follow a similar pattern to pre-separation. However, it is wise for parents to have at the very least a verbal

agreement, preferably a written arrangement, which sets out the responsibilities of each person going forward in this new structure. A parenting plan can be a good way of doing this without the need for legal intervention at this early stage. Whilst it is a written document and formal agreement, it doesn't require the input of solicitors or the court.

Ciara Pugh is a Partner at Stowe Family Law, and is dual qualified (Northern Ireland and England/Wales)



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Buying New? Buy now and beat the September Rush

August offers a strategic window for savvy car buyers across the UK and Ireland.

Dealerships prepare for the September registration plate change by clearing existing showroom inventory. According to figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), September remains one of the busiest months for new vehicle sales. However, smart consumers can unlock significant savings by acting before the new plate arrives.

Recent market analysis from Auto Trader reveals that car retailers often discount outgoing stock during late summer. Dealers face strict targets from manufacturers and must make space on forecourts. Data from the Society of the Irish Motor Industry (SIMI) shows



similar market dynamics in Ireland following the summer registration period. Buyers willing to accept an existing registration plate can secure substantial deposit contributions and zero-percent finance offers.

Timing your purchase in August also improves your negotiation leverage. Research from the RAC

indicates that sales teams are eager to finalise deals before the month ends. Buyers interested in used cars benefit as well. As drivers trade in vehicles for new registrations, high-quality part-exchange stock enters dealership forecourts.

To maximise your savings, compare online price benchmarks against

local forecourt offers. Industry insights from What Car? highlight that pre-registered models with delivery mileage offer some of the steepest discounts available. Securing your vehicle before September ensures lower costs, quicker delivery and less competition from other shoppers.

GTi Thrills – The new Peugeot E 208 Electric

The legendary French hot hatch icon returns as a fully electric machine!

The new Peugeot E-208 GTi blends nostalgic badge appeal with serious modern performance. Powering the front wheels is a single electric motor delivering 281 horsepower and 345 Nm of torque. Official technical data confirms a sprint time from zero to sixty-two miles per hour in just five point five seconds.

Chassis upgrades are extensive across the vehicle. Engineers have lowered the body by twenty-five millimetres and widened the front track by fifty-six millimetres. The car features bespoke dampers with hydraulic bump

stops and a mechanical limited-slip differential to minimise cornering traction loss. Larger three hundred and fifty-five millimetre front brake discs ensure sharp and consistent stopping power during spirited driving.

Visually the GTi boasts eighteen-inch Belchamp alloy wheels inspired by the classic two hundred and five GTi. Inside, Peugeot Sport is fitted with Alcantara bucket seats, red seatbelts and signature red carpeting. Autocar reports a fifty-four kilowatt-hour battery providing up to two hundred and thirty-three



miles of WLTP range. Rapid DC charging restores eighty percent battery capacity in under thirty minutes. The result is a genuinely engaging electric hot hatch.

The model starts at £34,999 in the UK market. Drivers

seeking traditional hot hatch excitement in an electric era will find this small powerhouse exceptionally appealing. It successfully honours Peugeot's sporting heritage while delivering modern sustainable technology.

DIGITAL GO-KART ELECTRIC

The all-electric MINI John Cooper Works brings iconic retro styling into a digital era. This hot hatch combines premium heritage with instant electric torque.

Power comes from a front-mounted motor producing 255 horsepower and 350 Nm of torque. Official performance figures confirm a zero to sixty-two miles per hour sprint time of five point nine seconds.

Chassis enhancements focus heavily on sharp handling. Bespoke sport suspension tuning and negative front camber boost cornering grip.

An electric boost paddle mounted on the steering wheel delivers an instant extra burst of acceleration. Upgraded brakes with Chili Red calipers ensure dependable stopping performance during fast driving.

Inside, the cabin features high-tech minimalism centered around a large circular OLED



display. Synthetic sports seats provide extra lateral support. Autocar reports that a usable forty-nine point two kilowatt-hour battery yields up to two hundred and thirty miles of WLTP range. Fast charging capabilities allow an eighty percent top-up in thirty minutes. Official MINI UK

pricing places the flag-bearer model at £38,420. Premium materials and customizable digital driving modes elevate

its everyday appeal. Enthusiasts wanting fashion, agility and tech will find this British icon thoroughly compelling.

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Prepare Sheds For Winter

As summer garden gatherings draw to a close, outdoor furniture and power tools require proper storage preparation. A damp or leaking garden shed rapidly ruins expensive lawnmowers, cushions and metal hand tools over winter.

Research conducted by Which? Gardening reveals that damp timber sheds suffer severe decay when ventilation paths get blocked. Organizing storage spaces in late summer ensures valuable equipment stays clean,

dry and rust free until spring returns.

Begin your shed inspection by examining the roof felt carefully for tears, lifted edges or missing nails. Replace damaged roofing felt immediately using galvanized clout nails and dedicated lap adhesive. Treating exterior wooden shed walls with preservative repels heavy driving rain effectively.

Clean summer garden furniture thoroughly

before storing it inside out of damp weather. Wash fabric cushions, allow them to dry completely and pack them into breathable storage bags. Moisture trapped inside packed cushions breeds stubborn black mould within weeks.

The Horticultural Trades Association recommends servicing petrol lawnmowers and hedge trimmers before winter storage.

Drain old fuel from



tanks to prevent carburetor gumming, and wipe metal tool blades with oiled rags. Store tools off damp concrete floors to prevent rust forming on metal edges.

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CLEAR GUTTERS TO INVEST IN YOUR HOME

Late summer is the ideal time to inspect your roof and clear out accumulated gutter debris.



Summer storms often wash organic matter down roof slopes into drainage channels. Left untreated, these blockages cause serious structural issues.

According to research from the HomeOwners Alliance, overflowing gutters remain a leading cause of internal damp and penetrating water damage in British homes. Water cascading down

external brickwork eventually breaks through pointing and masonry. This creates costly structural damp problems inside living spaces.

The National Federation of Roofing Contractors recommends inspecting your roof line from ground level using binoculars. Look closely for slipped slates, cracked tiles and damaged flashing around chimneys. Spotting these

small defects early prevents sudden leaks when heavy autumn downpours arrive.

Clearing gutters requires basic safety equipment like a sturdy ladder and heavy duty gloves. Scoop out dried silt, moss and fallen leaves before flushing the system with clean water.

Check that downpipes flow freely without backing up near gully traps.

If your roof sits

high or access seems awkward, consider hiring a registered professional tradesperson. The Federation of Master Builders highlights that professional gutter clearing costs significantly less than repairing internal water damage. Spending a modest amount on simple maintenance during late summer protects your property investment through the harsh winter months.

Divide Perennials For Free

Overcrowded flower borders often produce smaller blooms and weaker stems after several growing seasons.

Dividing established perennial plants in late summer rejuvenates tired garden beds while creating healthy new plants without spending money.

Guidance from Gardening Etc confirms that late summer soil retains summer heat while rainfall increases naturally. These environmental factors encourage newly divided plant roots to establish quickly before winter dormancy arrives. Fast root establishment leads to vigorous growth next spring.

Target clumps of Hostas, Hardy Geraniums, Daylilies and Rudbeckia that show signs of overcrowding or bare centers. Gently lift the entire plant clump out of the ground using a sharp spade. Take care to dig widely around root balls to prevent damaging fine feeder roots.

The Royal Horticultural Society



advises levering dense root clumps apart using two garden forks inserted back to back. Alternatively, slice through tough fibrous root masses using a clean, sharp garden knife. Ensure every divided section retains healthy shoots and plenty of root structure.

Replant fresh divisions immediately into freshly dug soil enriched with organic compost. Water the new plants thoroughly and apply a thick layer of bark mulch around bases. Mulch insulates delicate young roots against early autumn frosts while locking in soil moisture.

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