

# **NORTHERN IRELAND'S FIRST ROYAL STATUS AWARDED TO HILLSBOROUGH VILLAGE**

- Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis announces Royal status for village of Hillsborough
- The first village or town in Northern Ireland to receive the rare and honoured title

The village of Hillsborough in County Down will become 'Royal Hillsborough' later in 2021, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP has announced today.

Home to Hillsborough Castle, the residence of Her Majesty The Queen and other members of the Royal family when visiting Northern Ireland, it will be the first village or town in Northern Ireland to receive the exceptional title.

Taking place during Northern Ireland's Centenary year, the decision follows a recommendation from the UK Government in support of an application from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

A unique village in Northern Ireland with close ties to the Royal Family, Hillsborough attracts thousands of visitors from across the UK and the world each year to admire its fine Georgian architecture, parkland and lakeside walks. Hillsborough occupies a unique place in the history and affairs of Northern Ireland. It has welcomed many important visitors throughout its history – from the American Founding Father Benjamin Franklin in 1771, to President George W Bush in 2003.

Hillsborough is also birthplace to the renowned Professor the late Frank Pantridge, who in addition to having a distinguished military career, also invented the portable defibrillator saving lives across the world. And for a time, the village was also home to television personality Gloria Hunniford who was awarded an OBE for her services to cancer charities in 2017.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis said:

"This is fantastic news for the village of Hillsborough, a truly wonderful place that deserves this special honour.

"The village's Royal status reflects the beauty of Hillsborough as well as its unique history and close connections to the Royal family through Hillsborough Castle.

"I have been privileged to enjoy Hillsborough Castle and the village of Hillsborough over the past year with my family, as have many other Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland before me.

“I hope this news will attract many more visitors to the area and the whole of Northern Ireland, as well as boosting further investment and local jobs as we level up right across the United Kingdom.”

The Mayor of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Councillor Nicholas Trimble, said: “This is a historic day for Hillsborough, for Northern Ireland and for the UK. Hillsborough has for a long time been a jewel in our local crown. We work closely with the community and local businesses and have invested significantly in the area in recent years, upgrading the Forest and installing new play facilities among other improvements.

“As a Council, we are delighted that our application has been successful. We are excited to support the continued development of Hillsborough as our number one project in the Belfast Region City Deal and the economic and tourism benefits this will bring to Northern Ireland.”

Laura McCorry, Head of Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, said:

“This very welcome news will provide a much-needed boost for tourism in Hillsborough, after a challenging year for the entire industry. Hillsborough is a truly remarkable place, with so much to offer visitors – rich history, stunning surroundings and brilliant spots to eat, drink and shop. Sitting at the heart of all of this is the castle we’re privileged to care for, which has been the backdrop for many milestones in the history of Northern Ireland.

“This week, we’re thrilled to be welcoming visitors back inside Hillsborough Castle again. We’re hopeful that this announcement will help us to really put Hillsborough on the map as a tourism destination, inspiring visitors from across Northern Ireland and beyond to come and see everything we have to offer.”

Following the granting of Letters Patent, the town will officially be entitled ‘Royal Hillsborough’.