

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The Future of High Streets: A Policy **Update**

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The changing retail climate has proven challenging for our high streets

- The retail environment remains challenging as the way we shop is changing.
- Vacancy rates remain high, with a total vacancy rate of 12.4%. Some areas experiencing vacancy rates over 25%.
- **Internet sales** counted for 32.8% of retail sales in May 2020.
- Covid-19 has caused significant issues in April 2020 footfall was down 80% compared to April 2019





We have changed – and so have our high streets and town centres

The way we shop, we move, we socialise and interact has changed:

- Experience is becoming an increasingly important reason to visit a high street – from personalised customer service to events and concerts.
- Community spaces and social interaction will also continue to bring people to the high street.
- People want to see more mixed use on their high street, including health and leisure services.
- Thriving high streets are underpinned by strong leadership at the local level.





Government has built on the outcomes of reviews to deliver a package of support

- Sir John Timpson led an Expert Panel to diagnose the issues facing the high street.
- The Panel focused on what communities particularly young people – want from their high streets.
- Held a number of evidence sessions across the country to ask people directly about their high street.
- Sir John's interim recommendations informed autumn
 Budget 2018. He published a High Street report with full recommendations in December '18
 - 1. Future High Streets Fund
 - 2. High Streets Task Force
 - 3. Short-term solutions

The High Street Report



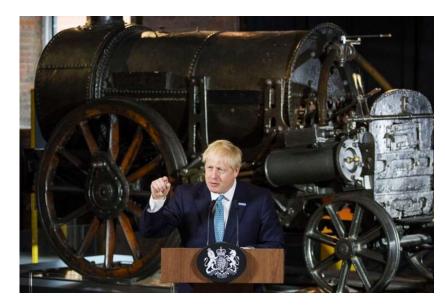


Our plan for the high street (Autumn Budget 2018)

- 1 Cutting **business rates** bills of small retailers by one third
- 2) £1bn Future High Streets Fund
- 3 High Streets Task Force
- 4 Planning consultations
- 5 Piloting a register of empty commercial properties
- 6 'Open Doors' pilot in 5 town centres

Government's ambition to level up

- £3.6 billion Towns Fund will support towns to build prosperous futures
- Towns across England will work with the government to develop innovative regeneration plans
- Town Deals at heart of the Prime Minister's commitment to levelling up our regions
- Additional £325 million for the Future High Streets Fund





Covid-19 has introduced new challenges to the high street and has increased the threat of existing challenges

- Businesses' inability to trade at pre-lockdown levels
- Decreased footfall
- Increased online shopping
- Adapting to social distancing measures





Government has introduced a package of measures to support businesses on the high street

- Support for businesses including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, business rates relief and VAT deferrals.
- Measures to support commercial tenants
- Commercial property Code of Practice
- £50m Reopening High Streets Safely Fund





Government support to enable recovery from Covid-19 and beyond

- Immediate support to help recovery from Covid-19 by way of the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund
- Support for levelling- up and longer-term structural change in the Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund
- Expert advice, data and training offer from High Streets Task Force



