

New raft of measures to prepare our high streets and seaside resorts for summer

- £56 million Welcome Back Fund to help boost the look and feel of high streets and seaside towns
- Funding will help councils prepare for the safe return of shoppers and tourists, including employing extra staff to keep festivals and events covid secure
- Pubs, restaurants and listed buildings given more flexibility to use their land to help more people meet up and enjoy themselves, including erecting marquees in pub gardens for the whole summer

Measures to support a safe and successful reopening of our treasured high streets and seaside resorts ahead of a great summer were announced today (20 March 2021) by Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick.

As the nation looks forward to life beginning to return to normal, with people making plans for domestic holidays and days out with friends, the Communities Secretary announced a comprehensive package of support to help kickstart local economies and businesses and give people reassurance they can shop and socialise safely.

A new £56 million Welcome Back Fund will help councils boost tourism, improve green spaces and provide more outdoor seating areas, markets and food stall pop-ups – giving people more safer options to reunite with friends and relatives.

Part of this funding will be allocated specifically to support coastal areas, with funding going to all coastal resorts across England to safely welcome holiday makers in the coming months.

The funding can also be used by councils to:

- Boost the look and feel of their high streets by investing in street planting, parks, green spaces and seating areas to make high streets as beautiful and welcoming as possible
- Run publicity campaigns and prepare to hold events like street markets and festivals to support local businesses
- Install signage and floor markings to encourage social distancing and safety
- Improve high streets and town centres by planting flowers or removing graffiti

Mr Jenrick has also today announced the first 70 councils who will benefit from targeted, hands-on support from the government's High Streets Task

Force, an elite team of high street experts who will advise them on how to adapt to meet changing consumer demands so they can thrive in the years ahead.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

“As we move to the next stage on the roadmap out of lockdown we are all looking forward to being reunited with friends and family outdoors and making a safe and happy return to our favourite shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants.

“Our Welcome Back Fund gives every city, town and high street support to prepare for a great summer. This funding will help councils and businesses to welcome shoppers, diners and tourists back safely.

“As soon as the roadmap allows, we need to get behind our local businesses and enjoy all that this country has to offer and that we’ve been missing so much.

“I’m allowing every pub in the country to erect a marquee in their garden for the whole summer as a one-off power to support our locals.”

To make sure that businesses can make the most of the summer, businesses such as pubs and restaurants, including where these premises are in listed buildings, will be allowed to use their land more flexibly to set up marquees and provide more outdoor space for diners as restrictions ease, allowing them to serve more customers and recover from the effects of the pandemic.

They can be kept up for the whole summer rather than the 28 days currently permitted.

In another major boost for the high street, the government has published its response to the Parking Code Framework which will curb unfair tickets and tackle cowboy parking firms through a new, simplified appeals process. Caps on private parking fines for millions of motorists are also set to be introduced. This will give drivers more confidence in heading into town knowing they won’t be unfairly penalised by rogue operators.

Support for the High Street

The measures announced today are just some of the ways the government is supporting the retail and hospitality sector including:

- £350 million from the Future High Streets Fund to be invested in 72 areas across England to renew and reshape town centres – making them a more attractive place to live, work and visit.
- Protections from the threat of eviction for businesses unable to pay their rent have been extended until the end of June 2021, helping businesses get back on their feet as restrictions lift across England.
- The High Street Homes Permitted Development Rights will make it easier for disused buildings to be repurposed and provide housing.
- Providing restaurants, pubs and cafes with the freedom to offer takeaway services; and making it easier for businesses and communities to host

markets and stalls so customers can be served safely.

- The provision of public toilets is also being reviewed to ensure that there are appropriate facilities for visitors to town centres.
- A generous package of support to businesses and communities, with over £35 billion in financial support since the start of the pandemic.
- Through the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, the £220 million Community Renewal Fund and the £3.6 billion Towns Fund the government is investing in long term infrastructure projects to level up our towns and rural areas and ensure the vitality of our town centres for years to come.

These measures are part of unprecedented wider support government is providing to communities and businesses, to protect jobs, support the most vulnerable and ensure no one is left behind as we continue to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic and begin to build back better.

European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) has been used to support the Welcome Back Fund.

Further information

Welcome Back Fund

This funding builds on the £50 million Reopening High Streets Safely Fund announced in May 2020 which funded local schemes to encouraged communities to shop safely and locally. Schemes which were supported by this fund include:

- Rushmoor Borough Council's 'Shop Safe, Shop Local' campaign which included increased signage in town centres and an interactive social media campaign.
- Charnwood Borough Council's campaign which featured radio and print advertising, engagement with businesses and a dedicate webpage.

The total regional allocations for the Welcome Back Fund are:

East Midlands (England)	£4.9 million
East of England	£6.1 million
London	£8.2 million
North East (England)	£2.5 million
North West (England)	£7.7 million
South East (England)	£9.6 million
South West (England)	£5.5 million
West Midlands (England)	£6.2 million
Yorkshire and The Humber	£5.4 million
Total	£56.1 million

High Streets Taskforce

Find more information on the [High Streets Task Force and its membership](#).

Local authorities to receive expert support from the High Streets Task Force have been selected on the basis of need by local authority. Need has been assessed using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), together with a measure of retail exposure.

This support will include a one-day diagnostic visit by a Task Force expert and, depending on the result of this diagnostic, may then include further support through expert advice on a specific issue, such as planning or design, workshops to develop a high street's vision, or mentoring or training. This builds on the Task Force's existing offer open to all high streets and town centres that wish to use it. This offer includes access to a range of online training, data dashboards and guidance, available to all on the Task Force's website.

Parking Code Enforcement

In response to the recent [Code Enforcement Framework consultation](#), the government is announcing a series of fairer parking measures which will benefit motorists and encourage people to return to high streets and town centres.

For example, we will support the creation of a single independent appeals service for motorists to turn to if they receive a private parking fine.

As part of our upcoming Code of Practice, we will also bring in a fairer system for private parking fines. In the new system, motorists will be given a 50% discount for early payment and the level of parking fine will be more proportionate to nature and seriousness of the breach.

More details will be available when the Final Code is published in due course.

The [Code Enforcement Framework consultation response](#) takes forward the implementation of the Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019, which was introduced by Sir Greg Knight MP, and supported by the government.

The Welcome Back Fund has received up to £56 million of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (and in London the intermediate body Greater London Authority) is the Managing Authority for European Regional Development Fund. Established by the European Union, the European Regional Development Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information visit www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding.