

Press release: Britain opens its doors to communities in need

- Stoke-on-Trent, Bradford, Rochford, Kettering and Slough to benefit from new trial project
- Government trial aims to support the changing face of the high street by welcoming community groups to make use of vacant spaces
- Spaces could be used for small group activities like book clubs or after school activities for young people

Towns across the country will benefit from a new scheme which will see landlords turn their empty shops into vibrant community hubs open to the public, Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP has announced.

The Open Doors project in partnership with the [Meanwhile Foundation](#), will help community groups transform their town centres by renovating unused retail units and making them fit for purpose.

Working with experts in managing the process of vacant high street properties which are temporarily available or for 'meanwhile use', the government will work to match public and private landlords with community groups offering vital services from well-being classes to business support sessions and mentoring for social enterprises.

The partnership will help tackle social problems linked to declining high streets such as crime, unemployment and loneliness.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

Our high streets are the beating heart of the places we call home and make a real difference to the wellbeing of our communities.

This pilot is a great way to tackle some of the challenges faced by landlords and communities. It will support groups across the country and demonstrate the potential 'meanwhile use' of unused spaces.

High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP said:

The Open Doors Scheme encourages us to be more creative when tackling the social and economic challenges faced by our communities.

This pilot is just a glimpse of what we can do to revamp vacant properties on our high streets, boost more community hubs and create more spaces for people to work, live and shop.

The confirmed locations that will be part of the scheme are Stoke-on-Trent, Bradford, Rochford, Kettering and Slough.

The Open Doors project, which has been backed by Sir John Timpson's [High Streets Expert Panel](#), is just one of the ways the government is feeding into the wider plan to transform our high streets.

The government recently announced [£9.75 million to local authorities](#) in England to champion community-led clean-ups of high streets and town centres all across the country ensuring they look their best.

The government is committed to helping local high streets evolve and adapt to the changing retail landscape and is keen to see thriving places where communities feel engaged and enjoy their vibrant town centres and high streets.

'Meanwhile use' refers to the short-term use of temporarily empty buildings such as shops until they return back to commercial use.