

Press release: Communities bid to make their high streets for the future

More than 300 local authorities across the country have bid for a share of the £675 million Future High Street Fund to transform their local high streets into modern vibrant community hubs, High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP has today confirmed (10 April 2019).

Minister Berry welcomed the positive response to the Future High Street Fund as evidence of the appetite across the country to re imagine and reinvent our town centres and high streets.

Launched in December 2018 as part of the Government's Plan for the High Street, the £675 million Future High Streets Fund will help local leaders implement bold new visions to transform their town centres and make them fit for the future with co-funding to consolidate properties on the high street, improve transport and access into town centres and convert retail units into new homes.

High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP said:

More than 300 bids to the Future High Street Fund is a fantastic response and shows the passion across the country to meet the challenges facing our high streets head-on.

The Government has the power to set the direction but those on the ground know best.

I look forward to reviewing the innovative proposals from local leaders to transform our high streets and town centres and make them fit for the future.

We're determined to ensure high streets continue sit at the heart of our communities for generations to come. Our Future High Streets Fund will sit front and centre of our Plan for the High Street as we work to achieve this aim.

Up to £55 million of the Fund has also been allocated to support the regeneration of heritage high streets. Bids will help to restore historic high street properties for new work spaces or cultural venues. More details of this will be announced in due course.

Eight ways the Government is backing the Great British high street:

- The Budget saw business rates relief cut small retailers' bills by a third, building on over £10 billion of business rates support since 2016.
- The Government appointed an independent expert panel, headed by Sir John

Timpson to diagnose and respond to the challenges facing the high street.

- In response to recommendations from the expert panel, the Government has announced a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to help improve infrastructure and access to high streets, put historic buildings back to use and make town centres fit for the future.
- We have also announced a Town Centre Task Force to give local leaders expert advice and support in implementing their plans to revitalise their local high streets.
- The Open Doors scheme will see empty shops being opened up to community groups offering services to the most vulnerable in our communities. This week we announced the first trial areas.
- The Great British High Street Awards 2018 was a hotly contested competition to find Britain's best high street, and the huge response highlighted retailers and community groups across the country working in innovative ways keep town centres vibrant and strong. The competition is returning later this year.
- We have published a planning consultation to help support change on the high street. This will aim to make it easier for high streets to adapt for the future, with a wider range of retail, residential and other uses.
- We are empowering businesses to contribute to the success of their high street by providing loans to establish Business Improvement Districts across the country

Further information

The Future high Streets Fund was launched 26 December 2018.

Applications for Phase 1 of the Fund closed on Friday 22 March 2019.

That stage called for local authorities to submit Expressions of Interest. We will assess these and make an announcement on places moving forward to Phase 2 in summer 2019.

For further enquiries about the Fund, please contact highstreetsfund@communities.gov.uk.