

Press release: Communities Secretary sets out vision for high streets as vibrant community hubs

The Communities Secretary, James Brokenshire will today (7 November 2018) set out his vision for tackling social problems linked to declining high streets – such as crime, unemployment and loneliness.

Speaking at the Locality Convention in Bristol the Communities Secretary will launch the government's flagship Open Doors project, linking landlords with vacant retail units with community groups offering vital services to young and old.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP will say:

We need to be imaginative in tackling the social and economic challenges our communities face.

This includes seizing the enormous opportunity before us to transform our high streets into vibrant community hubs where people work, live and shop.

That is why I'm delighted to be launching the new Open Doors project that will see empty shops being opened up to community groups offering services to the most vulnerable in our communities.

Reflecting on the scale of the opportunity offered by converting empty retail units into homes and community hubs the Communities Secretary will point to new figures showing that there are currently over 27,000 premises lying vacant in England's town centres.

If just a fraction of these vacant premises were turned into homes, thousands more people could have a roof over their head.

Research also shows that higher numbers of residents on our high streets can generate higher footfall and, in turn, higher demand for shops and services.

The Communities Secretary will also launch a new Community Roadshow, which will see him and his ministerial team travelling across the country to learn from and celebrate the work being done by community groups.

The first of the Roadshow visits will see the Communities Secretary visiting a winter shelter and a community-led housing project in Bristol.