

# Press release: Expert panel appointed to advise on the future of the high street

A panel of experts appointed to diagnose issues that currently affect the health of our high streets and advise on the best practical measures to help them thrive now and in the future, has been announced today (16 July 2018) by High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP.

Chaired by Sir John Timpson, Chairman of Timpson, the multiple service retailer, the panel will focus on what consumers and local communities want from their high streets. Their review will look at the current challenges and work out options to ensure our town centres remain vibrant.

The panel of experts have a wealth of experience and include representatives from the retail, property and design sectors.

Welcoming the establishment of the expert advisory panel, High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP said:

High streets and small businesses are the backbone of our economy and we want to see them thrive now and in the future.

People care about their local high streets because they are the centres of their community. But our high streets are changing, and the government is committed to helping communities adapt.

High streets of the future will still be commercial centres but consumers now look for a wider range of experiences, from leisure to health services. Our future high streets may well feature more homes, childcare centres and gyms to bring people back and ensure that they keep returning.

I want to thank Sir John who is bringing 50 years of direct retail experience to the review.

Sir John Timpson said:

Throughout my career, high streets and city centres have continually changed to fulfill the needs of society, but the recent shift towards more out of town and online shopping threatens the future of many high streets.

The panel cannot offer an instant, quick fix, solution but we hope to identify practical and common sense decisions that will help the government provide the support that local communities and

businesses need to provide the leisure and shopping facilities people will want 25 years from now.

Later this summer the expert panel in conjunction with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will put out a call for evidence seeking what members of the public and young people in particular want from the high streets of the future.

The announcement comes at the start of Great British High Street Week, a week of celebratory activity to promote [The Great British High Street Awards 2018](#). The awards, run by MHCLG, and sponsored by Visa, are currently open for nominations.

The deadline for entries is 22 August 2018.

The awards not only celebrate the best high streets across the nation, but will also champion 'Rising Stars' – the most ambitious high streets which are taking a lead and working together to revive, adapt and diversify.

By shining a light on great examples of how high streets can meet the challenges of changing consumer behaviour and a changing retail environment, the awards will provide all communities with top tips for success.

There will be 26 short-listed entries in the 'Champion High Street' category, 13 for England, 6 for Scotland, 4 for Wales and 3 for Northern Ireland, and 12 short-listed entries for the 'Rising Star' category. The Shortlisted entries will be announced in September, and the winners announced in November 2018.

Members of the Expert Advisory Panel on High Streets:

### **Sir John Timpson (Chair)**

Chairman of Timpson, the UK retail service chain with over 2,000 shops.

### **Vidhya Alakeson – CEO, Power to Change**

Vidhya Alakeson is Chief Executive of Power to Change, the independent trust dedicated to supporting community businesses to create better places across England. Vidhya was formerly Deputy CEO at the independent think-tank, the Resolution Foundation.

### **Gi Fernando MBE, Founder & CEO, Freeformers**

Gi Fernando is an engineer, social impact entrepreneur and investor, who founded Freeformers in 2012. Freeformers is a workforce technology and transformation company.

### **Councillor Graham Galpin (Cons) from Ashford council**

Graham Galpin has been a councillor in Ashford since 2011 and a Cabinet member since 2013. He has had responsibility for the town centre's economic

vitality for almost all of that time.

### **Emma Mackenzie, Director, NewRiver**

NewRiver is a property investor, asset manager and developer specialising in the UK retail and leisure sector. Emma MacKenzie is a member of the Executive Committee sits on the NewRiver REIT (UK) Limited Board and is principally responsible for NewRiver's Scotland and Northern Ireland Portfolio which includes acquisition, asset management, development and disposal.

### **Eric Reynolds – Founding Director of Urban Space Management**

Eric Reynolds established and ran some of the most significant regeneration projects in London since the early 1970's including Camden Lock Market, Merton Abbey Mills, Spitalfields Market, Gabriels' Wharf, Bishopsgate Goodsyrd and Trinity Buoy Wharf. He won the Regeneration & Renewal "Lifetime Achievement Award" for Regeneration in 2012.

### **Stephen Robertson**

Stephen Robertson has spent most of his working life in retailing, including roles at B&Q and Screwfix, before becoming Director General of the British Retail Consortium. He is now a non-executive director of a number of companies including Hargreaves Lansdown plc. and Timpson Group.

### **Sophia de Sousa, CEO, The Glass-House**

Sophia de Sousa is Chief Executive at The Glass-House Community Led Design, a national charity that supports communities, organisations and networks to work collaboratively on the design of buildings, open spaces, homes and neighbourhoods.

The government is taking measures to support high streets and reduce the burden of business rates – including introducing over £10 billion worth of business rate support by 2023.

In addition to providing business rate support, we've taken further action including:

- co-chairing the Retail Sector Council with industry to increase productivity and growth in the sector
- establishing the [Future High Street Forum](#), providing joint business and government leadership to better enable our high streets and town centres to adapt and compete
- supporting the industry led group that produced the Digital High Street 2020 report, which made recommendations on the key role digital can play in helping places to thrive digitally
- introducing planning reforms to support varied town centres that provide a mix of retail, residential and leisure uses

We're supporting small businesses by:

- launching the new £8 million [Business Basics Fund](#) to boost the productivity and performance of small businesses in England, unlocking £100 million of untapped benefit to our economy
- appointing the UK's first Small Business Commissioner to champion the voice of small business by encouraging a culture change in payment practices and how businesses deal with each other