

Press release: High streets to benefit from £62 million heritage boost

- Dozens of locations across the country will benefit from the investment.
- Culture Secretary says innovative programme will make our heritage work for modern life.

A new £62 million fund will breathe new life into historic high streets across the country, Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright announced today.

High streets lie at the heart of communities but are under increasing pressure as more people choose to shop online.

Building on successful programmes, the funding will be used to regenerate places by turning disused or underused buildings into creative spaces, offices, retail outlets and housing.

It is part of the Government's ongoing work to help high streets adapt to changing consumer habits.

Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright said:

Our heritage makes communities more attractive places to live, work and visit.

This £62 million investment will breathe new life into high streets right across the country, benefiting local people and businesses, as well as providing assistance to much-loved historic buildings.

It is right that we do all we can to not only protect our heritage, but make it work for modern life so it can be enjoyed by as many people as possible.

Today's initiative is part of the government's comprehensive plan for High Streets announced at last year's Budget, including a £675 million Future High Streets Fund and a £1 billion business rates discount for small high street retailers. Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

We're absolutely committed to seeing our high streets thrive now and in the future.

That's why we put a plan to secure the future of the high street, and are taking action to ensure they can adapt to changing consumer demand and the rise of online shopping.

This welcome announcement will help the high street to capitalise on local heritage by restoring treasured historic buildings for economic use. This is a proven way to drive footfall, increase further investment and generate even greater civic pride in our high streets.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride, said:

High streets are the lifeblood of towns and cities across the country.

By reviving older, disused buildings, we're ensuring high streets can not only adapt and change to suit our modern lives – but remain at the heart of our communities for years to come.

Research has shown that for every £1 invested in heritage in England, £1.60 is brought into the wider area.

The funding includes:

- £44 million of government and [Historic England](#) funding to create dozens of High Streets Heritage Action Zones overseen by Historic England. From today, local authorities can apply to the scheme, which will give councils, businesses and community groups access to expert advice and investment to bring historic buildings back into use and support historic high streets to adapt to the challenges they face.
- £3 million from the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) to support a cultural programme to engage people in the life and history of their high streets.
- £15 million for the [Architectural Heritage Fund](#) to support social enterprise organisations like Historic Coventry Trust to take ownership of and bring buildings of local importance – such as pubs, libraries or theatres, as well as shops – back into use. The Transforming Places Through Heritage Programme will open for applications in June.

Also in the run up to [UK City of Culture 2021, Coventry](#) will receive £2 million for a new project in shopping street The Burges. It is one of the few remaining parts of Coventry to survive the Second World War and post-war redevelopments of the city, which saw large numbers of ancient buildings destroyed. The money will be used to acquire, restore and regenerate Coventry's historic buildings to help create a sustainable future for each building.

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Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Historic England said:

We know that people value their high streets and town centres as spaces where they can meet and feel a sense of communal ownership and belonging. We are therefore delighted to be opening up for applications grants for High Street Heritage Action Zones.

Through physical improvements and cultural and community activities, we will work with partners to find new ways to regenerate our historic high streets. We recognise the scale of the challenge with empty shops and the significant shift in retail trends and we will combine our experience with the knowledge and passion of local councils, businesses and community groups, to help revive the streets which form the hearts of our historic towns.

Liz Peace CBE, Chairman, Architectural Heritage Fund:

With the right funding and expertise, thriving social enterprises can inject life into our high streets and the heritage assets around them. The Transforming Places through Heritage programme will help accelerate investment into many other places like Coventry and begin to reimagine our high streets as once more places of both social and commercial prosperity.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of the National Lottery Heritage Fund said:

We know from our track record of investing in the heritage of our high streets that economic activity increases and people feel a greater sense of pride about the place they live and work in. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is delighted to be working in partnership with Historic England to deliver a significant programme of cultural activities to bring these essential parts of our community to life.

Notes to editors:

- Information on applying for Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zones is available [here](#). □
- The funding builds on the success of projects in Margate, Grantham and Derby where the redevelopment of Derby Cathedral Quarter brought nearly 100 properties and more than 2,700 m2 of commercial floor space back into use through Historic England's Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas. □

- There are currently 18 Heritage Action Zones across England including Grimsby, which was announced as a key part of the Grimsby Town Deal in 2018. It is expected that this new funding will see the creation of 40 – 50 more across England. □

Ways the Government is backing the high street:□

- The Budget saw business rates relief cut small retailers' bills by a third, building on over £13 billion of business rates support since 2016.□
- In response to recommendations from the independent expert panel, the Government has launched 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.□

The [Architectural Heritage Fund](#) helps communities across the UK find enterprising new uses for the old buildings they love. It has supported a number of high street and town centre regeneration projects in recent years, including Havens Department Store in Southend, which is being revitalised by Age Concern Southend as a hub for older people. □