

Press release: Industry-led Retail Sector Council launched to act as champion for future growth

- The new industry-led Council will seek to encourage growth and positive change in the sector as it adapts to rapidly changing consumer habits.

The first industry-led Retail Sector Council was officially launched today (7 March 2018) by Retail Minister Andrew Griffiths and Richard Pennycook, Chairman of Fenwick, The Hut Group and Howden Joinery Group.

The Council will meet regularly with industry to discuss the challenges the sector faces. They will review how best retailers could adapt to changing consumer behaviour, the business environment and opportunities such as the development of new technologies to improve customer service, the chances to grow skills through a sector push on high-value training and ways to boost sector productivity and its economic health.

Senior management from Boots, Amazon and other renowned retailers will sit on the Council as well as the British Retail Consortium. Together, with government, they will provide expert advice to the sector and contribute to its future direction.

Retail Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

The UK's retail sector is undergoing rapid structural changes with consumers increasingly favouring online shopping and rising operating costs for retailers.

Our new collaborative Retail Sector Council will bring government and industry together to look at how best to ensure the industry adapts to meet the changing demands of consumers.

Richard Pennycook, co-chair of the Retail Sector Council:

I am delighted to be co-chairing the first Retail Sector Council, which comes at a moment of unprecedented change for our sector. Retail is one of the largest private sector employers in the country, and the Council will provide strategic oversight of the challenges we are facing by seeking positive change and increased productivity.

"We will be working together with industry and government to deliver our vision for the future of retail.

The UK's retail sector is a driving force in the economy and essential to our high streets, local and regional communities. The formation of the council follows other government action to create a Britain fit for the future including the government's response to the independent Taylor Review, which ensures employment law and practices keep pace with the modern ways of working, and its ambitious Industrial Strategy which sets out a long term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of businesses and people throughout the UK.

In 2016, the retail sector added a gross value of £94.6 billion to the UK economy; the new Council will aim to address key sector issues including skills and increasing productivity.

Notes to editors

Retail Sector Council members:

- Andrew Griffiths, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility, Co-Chair, Retail Council
- Richard Pennycook, Co-Chair, Retail Council, Chairman of Fenwick, The Hut Group and Howden Joinery Group and previously CEO of the Co-operative Group. Richard is also Chair of the British Retail Consortium and lead non-executive board member of the Department for Education
- Doug Gurr, UK Country Manager, Amazon
- Sir Charlie Mayfield, Chairman, John Lewis Partnership
- Elizabeth Fagan, Senior Vice President, Managing Director Boots UK & ROI
- Nick Beighton, CEO, ASOS
- Ursula Lidbetter, CEO, Lincolnshire Cooperative
- John Hannett, General Secretary, Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers
- Diane Savory, Chair, GFirst LEP
- Victoria Robertshaw, CEO, Keelham Farm Shop
- Helen Dickinson, CEO, British Retail Consortium
- James Lowman, CEO, Association of Convenience Stores