

Press release: Timpson says a locally-driven approach needed to rejuvenate high streets

- The Town Centres Expert Panel publishes recommendations to tackle issues facing high streets
- Local communities urged to create a community hub where leisure and social services sit alongside retail and residential property
- Report follows move by the government to establish £675 million Future High Streets Fund and Town Centre Taskforce

Retail industry experts, including Sir John Timpson, have called for a community-focused approach to tackling the challenges facing high streets and town centres in a [new report](#) published today (20 December 2018).

The government-appointed panel made up representatives from the retail, property and design sectors has published practical recommendations to reinvigorate town centres by creating a community hub which, alongside retail, includes leisure and social services and more residential property.

The report puts community involvement and local leadership at the centre of a plan to create the town centres of the future.

Panel chair Sir John Timpson called for an 'Upside Down Government' approach which would empower local leaders to implement their plans to reinvent their town centres. They would be supported with expert advice from a Town Centres Task Force and funding from the government's [Future High Streets Fund](#).

Another recommendation includes calling on local communities to celebrate their town centres with a 'National High Street Perfect Day' to tackle litter and graffiti so people can take pride in their local shopping centres.

Chair of the expert panel, Sir John Timpson said:

When the panel was formed, we knew high streets would never be the same again, but we were delighted to discover places where imaginative developments have increased footfall and reduced the number of empty shops.

By helping our towns create their own individual community hub, I believe we will have vibrant town centres to provide a much-needed place for face to face contact in the digital age.

I have learnt, from my own business, that the best way to get things done is to give people on the front line the freedom to get on with the job in the way they know best. We are applying the same Upside Down Government principle to the development of our town

centres, with our Town Centre Task Force there to mentor, encourage and clear any obstacles out of the way while giving the clear message to inspirational local leaders that they are free to turn their plans into reality.

High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP said:

High streets and town centres play an important role in the life of our communities.

I thank Sir John and the panel members who have worked extremely hard and proposed tangible ways to keep these treasured spaces alive and thriving for generations.

We have already taken action by announcing plans to set up a Future High Streets Fund and Task Force, alongside slashing business rates for up to a third of small retailers. We will carefully consider these recommendations.

The panel was appointed by High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP earlier this year to diagnose issues affecting our high streets and town centres and advise on measures to keep them thriving.

In October, the panel provided interim recommendations, which the government responded to by announcing the creation of a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to help improve and restore high streets as well as a Town Centre Taskforce to give local leaders support in implementing local schemes. Today's report sets out further advice of how to implement this funding.

Recommendations

The panel's recommendations include:

- The creation of the Town Centre Task Force supporting local leaders to act as a single voice in finding unique solutions for communities.
- The Future High Streets Fund to help local authorities with both finance and resource. In October's Budget, the Chancellor announced a £675 million Future High Street Fund towards better spaces for communities in response to Sir John Timpson's interim recommendations made earlier this year.
- Immediate measures to help high streets and town centres including a 'National High Street Perfect Day' – one day a year where local communities would take ownerships of ensuring their town centre looked as good as possible.

- The panel encourages local communities to think innovatively about empty properties and welcomes the government's Open Doors scheme which opens empty shops to community groups.
- Local authorities are also encouraged to review parking provision in favour of local businesses to encourage footfall.

Read the [full report](#).

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

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 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 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 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 established and ran some of the most significant regeneration projects in London since the early 1970s 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 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 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.