

Treorchy crowned “UK’s best” in the Great British High Street Awards

- Treorchy in the Rhondda Valley, Wales has been crowned ‘High Street of the Year’
- ‘Rising Star of the Year’ awarded to The Square, Kelso, Scotland
- The 2 high streets, commended for innovation and community engagement, win £15,000 for the local community

Treorchy High Street has been crowned the UK’s best in this year’s [Great British High Street Awards](#), after becoming the heart of community events and digital training.

The high street, in the Rhondda Valley, was named ‘High Street of the Year’ at the prestigious awards, in proud partnership with Visa, and wins £15,000 for the local community.

Boasting an occupancy rate of 96%, Treorchy was commended for its local community led year-round cultural events including an outdoor cinema, an arts festival and an annual Christmas Parade, that are driving footfall.

It was also highly-praised for the digital training and support offered to local businesses. The [Visit Treorchy](#) website and accompanying marketing campaign now provides businesses with an online platform, when only 32% of businesses had a website previously.

It is the second year in a row that a high street in Wales has claimed the top prize, following Crickhowell’s triumph in the 2018 Awards.

The winners were announced at a ceremony in Edinburgh, attended by the High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP and representatives from the 39 shortlisted high streets.

‘Rising Star of the Year’, which identifies the high street taking the lead to adapt and diversify, was awarded to The Square in Kelso, a thriving market town in the Scottish Borders. It was praised for its innovative initiatives designed to drive footfall and consumer spending on the high street.

Congratulating all the winners, Communities Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Congratulations to Treorchy on being crowned the UK’s best high street in this year’s Awards and to Wales for winning the top prize for the second year in a row.

Our Great British High Streets are one of the great cornerstones of our society. They are places where our economies and our communities flourish and key to our levelling up agenda.

This government, Visa and our other partners are committed to helping communities and businesses not just to survive but to thrive by adapting to the changing high street.

I am delighted to see so many other dedicated individuals and organisations recognised for their efforts to secure the prosperity and vibrancy of our high streets, too.

High Streets Minister, Rt Hon Jake Berry MP said:

Every place has its own unique strengths and challenges, but all our town centres and high streets have one thing in common – they are the beating heart of our communities.

The Great British High Street Awards celebrate the grit and determination of local people who are dedicated to supporting their communities, growing their local economy and finding innovative solutions to modern day challenges.

Today in Edinburgh I saw the very best of our high streets and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all of this year's winners and to give my personal thanks to the individuals and communities helping to build the future of the high street. I am delighted to see such strong examples of thriving high streets from every nation in our United Kingdom.

High Street or the Year, Treorchy

Adrian Emmett, owner of The Lion pub in Treorchy, nominated the village's high street for the Great British High Street Awards following successful high street initiatives undertaken by the local community, including regular cultural events such as a Christmas Parade and the Rhondda Arts Festival.

A newly launched '[Visit Treorchy](#)' website has also helped give local businesses a greater presence online, while a strategic partnership provides digital training and support to local entrepreneurs.

A 'Hop, Shop and Save' scheme offers businesses advertising space on local buses in return for high street discounts of up to 20% to bus users. The scheme is helping to promote public transport, reduce air pollution and drive footfall to high street outlets – 80% of which are independently owned.

Rising Star of the Year, The Square, Kelso

Tina Newton, of Border Cookware in Kelso, nominated the high street for the Rising Star Award to ensure survival of the community and boost the town's civic pride.

The Square, Kelso aims to launch a bespoke app to showcase all that the area

has to offer by promoting a variety of local events, activities, businesses and organisations in order to raise awareness and ultimately to drive continued footfall to the area.

Within the app will be a local guide, as well as an interactive PDF linking to the [Visit Kelso](#) website and individual business websites.

The initiative offers promotion and mutual benefit for other businesses and local events to drive consumer engagement and interest from locals and visitors alike.

Jeni Mundy, Managing Director, UK & Ireland, Visa, commended the community of Treorchy, saying:

Treorchy and The Square in Kelso are fantastic examples of communities that have made huge strides in transforming their high street to significantly improve the experience for locals and visitors alike. Their success goes to show that where you shop really does matter.

For Treorchy, a rich cultural calendar combined with a desire to experiment with new ways to drive people to shop local shows how independent businesses can come together to make the high street a better place for all. The Square, Kelso showcases a clear understanding of its community and drive to innovate to help the high street thrive.

Visa's research reveals four in five consumers (80%) say that a thriving high street makes a town or village a more appealing destination, underlining why we all need to get behind our local businesses.

Speaking at the Awards ceremony, Adrian Emmett of The Lion Pub, Treorchy, commented:

We are honoured to be named the UK's best high street and hugely grateful to both the Great British High Street Awards and Visa for putting our beloved high street on the map! It is undoubtedly the commitment, hard work, dedication and drive of the whole community of Treorchy and the surrounding area that has helped us to win this!

Tina Newton of Border Cookware, Kelso says:

We are delighted to be recognised as Rising Star of the Year. The Award is testament to the hard work of our community team in encouraging people back to the high street through innovation and customer experience! We are excited to deliver the initiatives

during the year ahead and are extremely thankful to the Great British High Street Awards and Visa for the opportunity.

Eight high streets, 2 from each Home Nation, also won awards in the Champion High Street and Rising Star categories, winning £5,000 for community initiatives. High Street Heroes – those individuals who have gone above and beyond for their local high street – were also recognised.

The full list of winners is as follows:

High Street of the Year:

Rising Star of the Year:

Champion High Streets:

- England: Belper Town Centre, Belper
- Scotland: Main Street, Prestwick
- Wales: High Street, Treorchy
- Northern Ireland: High Street, Newtownards

Rising Star High Streets:

- England: Yarm High Street, Stockton-on-Tees
- Scotland: The Square, Kelso
- Wales: Palace Street, Caernarfon
- Northern Ireland: Newry City Centre, Newry

The winning high streets across all the categories were commended for demonstrating their commitment to their local community, improving customer experience, having an environmental mind-set, an innovative approach to retail and providing community leadership.

The Great British High Street Awards 2019, run by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in proud partnership with Visa, recognises and celebrates local achievements on the UK's high streets and supports the communities in which we live and work.

For more information about the Great British High Street Awards 2019 and details on all the winners, visit: www.thegreatbritishhighstreet.co.uk