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Foreword

People up and down the country have been working hard to save their high streets and I think it’s time we celebrated their achievements. Not just because they deserve recognition and support but also so that others can learn from their success.

Since 2010, the government has invested over £18 million in financial support for town centres and high streets in England. This includes £2.3 million in 24 Portas Pilots (with a further three funded by the Mayor of London) following the publication of Mary Portas’ influential review of High Streets published in December 2011. These Pilots have showcased how strong, local partnerships can support and reinvigorate our high streets and town centres, putting them back at the heart of communities. There is much to learn from them.

The enthusiasm generated by the Pilots meant that we were able to establish 334 Town Teams in England, sharing £3.3 million between them and it hasn’t stopped there. There have been two further bidding rounds: the High Streets Innovation Fund in 2012, which supported 100 towns and secondly, the High Street Renewal Fund in 2013. The Chancellor also recently announced at the 2014 Autumn Statement a package of business rates measures with a doubling of Small Business Rate Relief for a further year (2015-16), a 2% cap on the inflation increase for 2015-16 and increasing the temporary £1,000 discount for shops, pubs and restaurants with rateable values below £50,000 to £1,500 for 2015-16. Many places have also been able to lever in other funding and support in kind and the engagement of town teams and others with this year’s Great British High Street Awards demonstrates that there is a real sense of momentum building under the leadership of the Future High Streets Forum that we set up to bring key partners together.

Since I was appointed High Streets Minister I have made it a priority to get out of London and visit town centres and high streets across the country. I have been impressed by how retailers, local authorities and other partners are working together to bring people back on to the high street and using their town centre – setting up markets, finding new uses for empty shops, and running special events. It is vitally important that high streets make a well balanced offer that does not rely solely on retail.

I know changing consumer preferences and spending patterns remain a challenge to all our high streets. But I also think it’s important that we recognise how people have met that challenge head on so I wanted to celebrate what I have seen in my visits. What is more, I believe that by sharing the experiences, successes and learning of all these initiatives that others can and will be able to help make their Great British High Street thrive in the modern world.

Of course this is only a snapshot of what is happening and no one is saying that everything is perfect in any of these places but they all show what can be done if people work together to improve their high streets. If you have other examples (you may even think better ones!) I would love to hear from you.

Penny Mordaunt
High Streets Minister
Celebrating the Great British High Street

Our high streets, towns and city centres have been at the centre of our way of life for hundreds of years. Down the centuries people have gathered there to do business, to trade, to meet friends, to eat and drink, to shop, and to enjoy themselves. They are at the heart of our community and are held in great affection. That is why people have always been prepared to come together to fight to save them and to find ways of bringing them back to life – they don’t want to lose them.

High streets have always had to adapt to survive. In fact that is one of their strengths – they have been reinvented many times. Now there are new challenges - the change in shopping habits and the rise of online retailing to name only two. Many town centres and high streets have found a way to move with the times rather than fight against the changes – by engaging with the local community and businesses, they have remained relevant.

Generally, this means building a partnership that gives people what they want from their local high street - the only way that your high street will thrive is if people use it.

Getting more people to visit by providing an experience that goes beyond, but includes, shopping: offering cafés and coffee shops, doctors and dentists, markets and street food, pubs and restaurants, events and special offers that makes a visit to your local high street an experience - a good experience that brings people back time and again to their high street.

The most successful places have found a way to celebrate and enhance what makes them different and to respond to the changing needs of their community; not looking back to an idealised version of the past but helping people build a better future for their community. Not just in the daytime but for the evening and night time economy – the UK evening and night time economy is worth £66 billion and makes up between 10%-16% of a town centres employment.

What is required to rejuvenate town centres and high streets? People coming together with energy, enthusiasm and ideas dedicated to helping to make their local area great. Some of the ideas set out in this document are ambitious; some are expensive. Others are simple and can be delivered with little or no budget while making a real impact.

There are more examples available freely online at www.100Ways.org.uk; all however are built on one specific element – co-operation.

A strong partnership, working together toward a shared vision of success is an incredible resource and one that is being realised and unleashed across the country through Portas Pilots, Town Teams, Business Improvement Districts, Town Centre Partnerships, Community Interest Companies and all the other excellent examples that were put forward for the Great British High Street Awards.
1. Work together

If your high street is to thrive people need to use it and everyone who has something to offer to the prospective visitor must work together. The one crucial element of success is an effective partnership of local authorities, the business sector and the community.

After the Portas Pilots talked about the overall importance of this, more Town Teams have sprung up all over the country, and many have received government support. The best partnerships bring together all those who have a crucial role to play, and when they come together to establish an agreed vision for the future and then work towards it, progress will be swift and lasting.

Colwyn Bay, Wales

Colwyn Bay won the Great British Coastal High Street Award in 2014 largely because an effective partnership was built between the public, private and community sectors. The Welsh Government has responsibility for regeneration and run a Support Your High Street campaign. They also designated the North Wales coast a Strategic Regeneration Area in 2008.

Conwy County Borough Council’s Bay Life Regeneration Partnership, Town Management, Townscape Heritage Initiative and Communities First worked closely with the town’s business groups, Colwyn Bay’s Chamber of Trade, Town Team, and the Business Network. Working together they have delivered a whole raft of initiatives that have breathed life back into their town centre.

Partnership working with a local charity has seen the development of Porters, a social enterprise running a coffee shop and bistro, which also offers training for the long-term unemployed, has meeting rooms and conference facilities, as well as office space for new business. The partnership has also organised award winning displays which have won Wales in Bloom for the last 13 consecutive years.

They are also behind an annual event called “Colwyn Bay 1940s Festival”. It attracted 5,000 visitors in the first year, 15,000 in the second year and generated revenue of £250,000 for the town in year three.

The town continues to work collaboratively to complete the first phase in the development of a Business Improvement District, a review of the town’s Masterplan with business groups, and a comprehensive funding application to the Arts Council Wales, for a three year arts in regeneration initiative called IMAGINE Colwyn Bay.
Broxburn, West Lothian, Scotland

Broxburn faced a severe challenge following the closure of a major local employer and the loss of 1,700 jobs. Local partners collaborated so well to make sure that the loss of their major employer didn’t drain the life from the village that they won the Village category in the Great British High Street Awards in 2014. The Scottish Government have responsibility for town centre regeneration and has a range of policies and funds designed to support town centres and high streets.

The local council worked with lots of partners to create a Business Gateway shop in the centre of Broxburn. The Gateway brings together services for business, employment, and financial advice, to help new and existing business, while providing employability skills to individuals. Ongoing feedback from customers and partners allows the Business Gateway Broxburn team to identify new needs and tailor the portfolio of services available in the ‘shop’. The shop also provides meeting rooms for community groups and businesses to use.

Other initiatives include working with local schools to produce public artwork which reflects Broxburn’s industrial past; and involving the community with proposals to change the boundaries of the existing conservation area, to protect more of the historic buildings in the village centre.

“
We’ve been working together with other young people to develop a new public square in Lodge Lane, Toxteth, Liverpool. It has been a really exciting process which has led to the development of all sorts of ideas including a programme of public art and a sandwich shop and coffee bar, which will train and employ young people. Young people will also be taking the lead in planning Tiber Square’s opening ceremony for early 2015.

Cherise Smith, Tiber Young People’s Steering Group”
Northam Road, Southampton, Hampshire

Old Northam Road is in the old docks area of Southampton and is one of the most historical trading areas in Southampton. However, many years of neglect and failed piecemeal attempts to address the issues has left a legacy of decline.

The Southampton Partnership, (which includes Southampton City Council, West Itchen Community Trust, St Mary’s Traders Association, and Southampton Solent University) have worked closely with major landowner Grays Developments Ltd to deliver a clear plan for the redevelopment of the road.

The plan is to establish Old Northam Road as the South Coast’s leading destination for antiques, fine art, collectibles and specialist restoration services and results have been astonishing. Grants from DCLG’s High Street Renewal Award and Southampton City Council are on track to lever in over £1 million of investment through Grays Developments Ltd in 2014.

Planning permission to construct an impressive 25,000 sq ft Antiques Auction House in the centre of Old Northam Road has already been approved and restoration works have commenced to restore the surrounding Victorian shops.
2. Find out what’s needed, and make a plan

By honestly and frankly assessing what a high street, town or city centre has to offer the community and visitors, you can develop a plan that focuses on developing your strengths.

Every successful business has a plan – the same goes for a high street. Be clear early on how decisions will be made, agree a terms of reference, decide how projects will be run and who on the team will be responsible for leading it. This government has also introduced neighbourhood planning which gives the community the right to plan what they want on their high street.

Wantage, Oxfordshire

Wantage won the Town Centre category of the Great British High Streets Award in 2014. In 2012 there were 26 vacant shops, 9 of them on one street alone (Mill Street). This left the street with no trading shops. Judges were particularly impressed with how the Town Team helped tackle vacancies by conducting a gap analysis to understand consumer preferences and responding to a wider public consultation. It got the whole town thinking about Wantage and its economic problems and how best to solve them. This gave them lots of ideas to formulate a plan which included approaching businesses that fit the gaps.

They created a pipeline of would-be occupiers by introducing and supporting new businesses in town through their popup ‘Wantage Flashop’. They helped organise live public performances in the Market Place on summer Saturday mornings and community events in town, along with arts displays in shops to attract people into the town centre.

The simple Wantage & Grove loyalty card scheme has acted as a marketing platform for all town businesses. Other team projects include a prospectus to attract in new businesses, working on the town look, replacing the town map, promoting the local museum and supporting improvements to town markets. They also worked with a local company to launch and test a town centre delivery locker allowing ‘click and collect’ from local shops for people who can’t get to the shops during normal opening times. Partnership working has been key to the successes.

There are now only 4 vacant shops and footfall has increased by 30%. The Town Team is now looking to identify new premises for people wanting to open businesses in the town centre.
The “Plan Do Review” Cycle

Developed by the Future High Street Forum, the Plan Do Review Cycle is a great model to refer to when local teams start developing plans and projects. Its core messages can be the foundation to a number of different partnership and business types, so is flexible enough to allow diversity while giving local teams the strong foundations needed to build a sustainable future.

1) Develop a Shared Local Vision & Town Baseline
   By developing a broad-based local partnership

2) Create Town Strategy & Action Plan
   To deliver defined benefits for the town, with clear timescales for delivery

3) Delivering on the Action Plan
   Through expert teams. This requires sustainable funding and appropriate resource.

4) Data Gathering
   Collating the ‘facts’ through regular and systematic reviews of benchmark data from Action Plan

5) Review & Communicate
   Establish insights; celebrate success & learn from the data, making changes where needed.
Newbiggin by the Sea, Northumberland

Newbiggin by the Sea is a Portas Pilot and Town Team that became a company limited by guarantee in early 2013. The Town Team prepared an action plan at the start of the process, which has provided a focus for delivery with all projects clearly linking back to this. It is updated on a regular basis to ensure projects remain deliverable and relevant to their objectives.

The Town Team has developed into a broad-based group with a core vision to support Newbiggin by the Sea. A small group help to deliver key projects and set the strategic vision of the team, focusing on the three core themes of promoting the area to visitors, fostering new and existing enterprises, and enhancing the high street. A second, larger group comprised of a community forum, where projects and deliverables are tested at meetings and with local people monitoring the work of the town team. Northumberland County Council provided support to the development of projects and governance arrangements.

Woburn Sands, Buckinghamshire

The Localism Act 2011 introduced statutory Neighbourhood Planning in England. It enables communities to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan for their area and is intended to give communities more of a say in the development of their local area. These plans can be used for communities to decide the future of where they live and work - giving people the opportunity to choose where new homes, shops and offices are built and have a say in what new buildings should look like. Neighbourhood Development Orders can grant planning permission for the types of development the community wants to see go ahead.

The Woburn Sands Town Council discussed whether or not to draft a Neighbourhood Plan. The first step was to consult local organisations to identify the key issues facing the local community which highlighted the need to protect the character of the high street. The high street currently provides a very wide range of shops and services that are particularly important to people who find it difficult to travel.

The Neighbourhood Plan was ‘made’ (i.e. adopted) in June 2014 following a referendum of residents that was held on 22 May 2014. The Plan contains a policy specifically designed to support developments and changes to use in the town centre that promote the vitality and viability of the high street. Developments outside of the town centre that impinge on the health of the high street will not be permitted. The Plan states that, amongst other actions, the range of retail outlets and facilities will be monitored, public transport will be promoted and wider community usage and more public events in the high street will be encouraged.

“The high Street is a key contributor to the welfare of the community. The Neighbourhood Plan ensures that we will retain a balanced and attractive shopping provision supported by community facilities such as the Library” Michael Geddes, Town Councillor and Neighbourhood Planning Champion.
3. Support local businesses

To encourage people to use their high street there has to be a reason to visit – a good range of shops, leisure opportunities, and places to eat. The Chancellor announced a further Business Rates support package in 2014 Autumn Statement and a review of the future structure of business rates. Setting up a Business Improvement District is a well proven way of local businesses working together to improve an area.

Cannock Chase, Staffordshire

Cannock Chase Council created the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme using the £100,000 received from the government’s High Street Innovation Fund. It is one of a number of initiatives the Council is delivering to help rejuvenate their town centres.

Twenty-six businesses that met the essential criteria received 100% discount on their business rates for the first 12 months or a £10,000 contribution - whichever was lower. The Council also works with landlords to reduce the number of empty units and encouraged them as part of the scheme to match the Council’s business rates discount or offer businesses a rent-free period.

Jon Banner from Card Stop in Cannock was the first successful applicant, and welcomed “the role of the Council in bringing new jobs to the town and supporting his family business”.

Natal Chapman, Manager of Cannock Shopping Centre, Jon Banner the proprietor of Card Stop and Cllr Diane Todd, Cabinet leader for Town Centre Regeneration celebrate the opening of his new shop.

Norwich Lanes
Rotherham Town Centre, South Yorkshire

Rotherham’s successful high street strategy is based on a five-year plan focused on increasing the distinctiveness of the retail and leisure offer by supporting independent and small and medium-sized businesses. There is a clear focus on supporting businesses on the Rotherham Town Centre website that helps drive footfall and spend for the benefit of all town centre retailers.

The shared retail space ‘The Makers Emporium’ is run in partnership with The Source Retail Skills Academy and offers fully staffed and professionally fitted-out units. The 35 makers can not only test trade but they receive the support and guidance to learn the art of retailing and the mechanics of running their own business and have an opportunity to grow within the shop before branching out to one of the new pop-up shops that were created as part of this project.

A systematic approach to business support, marketing grants, customer service development and broader ‘shop local’ schemes has seen a renewed and reinvigorated town centre and a net growth of 44 new businesses. The work of Rotherham Borough Council’s Retail and Investment Team developed the strong foundations required to listen, and then act, on businesses’ needs to create an environment they could thrive in.

Rotherham has been a market town for 800 years and in many ways it’s Rotherham Market that gives the town centre its unique atmosphere, creating a refreshing change from traditional high street shopping.
NE1 Ltd in Newcastle – A model for delivery

NE1 has demonstrated that the Business Improvement District model can be an extraordinarily effective method of delivering significant projects, at limited cost, in order to achieve demonstrable improvements to a town or city centre. This success is a direct result of NE1 being genuinely business-led, as well as democratically accountable to their business constituencies. Its activities are funded by local businesses through a levy which enables them to see how their money is being spent as well as the impact of its work on their business.

NE1’s main outputs over the last five years are:

- **Alive after Five** - introducing a retail offer in the city that extends beyond traditional opening hours – a £350m return to Newcastle on an NE1 investment of £2m
- **Central Station** - NE1 led and delivered a £20m redevelopment of Newcastle’s Central Station
- **Space2** - establishing a unique, business-funded centre to tackle youth unemployment in the city with around 25,000 visits by young people to use its facilities
- **Newcastle City Marina** – major city asset designed, built and installed by NE1 within six months

Newcastle’s businesses recognise this success when NE1 held its renewal ballot in October 2013; on a turnout of 70%, 78% of their 1,400 businesses, voted in favour of a further five year term (up from 63% in 2008).

Situated on Newcastle’s bustling Quayside between the Tyne Bridge and Millennium Bridge, Newcastle City Marina provides a unique experience to visitors, allowing them to moor in the heart of the city.
4. Market your town centre

Branding is more than a logo. It is establishing a simple and engaging identity for your town centre and then making sure that identity is used consistently. Every area is different, and working with the community to uncover the personality of an area is often the first step to create a meaningful brand identity. The brand then needs to be applied rigorously to how the area is marketed, using loyalty schemes, maps and signage that show people around, the architecture and public realm; and increasingly online and via social media.

Cullompton, Devon

*Cullompton Town Team* has a strong volunteer base at its heart, and has used its local cloth-trading heritage to shape an identity and brand to re-engage the community and bring footfall back to the town.

Once a unique brand had been determined, the Town Team did a terrific job of ensuring that brand was marketed as much as possible. A series of linked touchscreen panels in four key tourist venues help tell local stories, while Love Cully public clean-up days, shopping maps, welcome packs for new residents and shop-front improvement grants are helping to gain and retain footfall.

The most unique project was the community purchase of a rare manuscript from a Portuguese cloth trader, detailing the once thriving trade between Cullompton and Lisbon, that helps create greater awareness of the history of the town and a sense of community.

Southwold, Suffolk

‘*My Southwold*’ is the brand identity for the coastal community of Southwold in Suffolk. The local community rely on tourism as a major source of income, and the new brand was designed to help support the vibrant, independent-led high street. But it is so much more than a brand – it is an approach whereby every Southwold resident and guest are made to feel part of the town community.

The result has been lots of social media collaboration between local people and businesses, as well as a loyalty card, gift vouchers, street festivals, window competitions and forging links with local holiday cottage letting agents. The success of *My Southwold* has been to become more than a brand; it is an identity, a vision for the future, that local businesses, communities and stakeholders can get behind.
Barnoldswick, Pendle

Barnoldswick is a small town straddling the boundary between Lancashire and Yorkshire, with the highest proportion of independent retailers in Britain. That’s worth celebrating in itself and goes some way to explaining why it won the local centre category in the Great British High Street Awards in 2014!

The Town Centre Action Group created the “Visit Barnoldswick” brand based on features of the town; friendly and eventful, bustling and busy, independent, traditional, quality. A red and white rose motif features strongly in the brand designs and logos. The initiative involves promoting and branding the area including a brochure, social media and video footage.

The team ensures that friendly faces dominate images and convey the town’s welcoming aspect, and that general views of the town are bursting with people. They always emphasise the quality and popularity of the events held under the Visit Barnoldswick banner.

The branding and events have helped bring tens of thousands of visitors to the town, many of whom return after finding out what a lovely destination it is. Vacancy rates have been reduced to 4.3%, well below the regional and national average.

“Bishopthorpe Road Traders Association was formed in 2010 to protect a unique street in York from the worst of the recession. Our actions are not just about making money. It’s about giving something back. And that something is a street which the community calls its own, where people know you by name, where jobs are created, virtually anything you need is sold and great street parties are thrown. Every community needs a street like Bishy Road.”

Johnny Hayes Chairman of Bishopthorpe Road Traders Association
5. Develop digital high streets

We all know how much the internet has changed the way people shop, work and communicate with each other. Our town centres are not immune to this, and developing a digital high street environment is an important step to take for any place to succeed today and to be ready for tomorrow. Using social media, having a digital marketing strategy, public wi-fi and a town centre website are all important elements of this.

Norwich, Norfolk

Norwich Business Improvement District constantly updates the digital channels and tools it uses to communicate with its audiences. It currently uses Twitter, Facebook, Googleplus, Instagram and Yammer as well as a more traditional website www.norwichbid.co.uk.

All business and events within the Norwich Business Improvement District area also feature on the Discover Norwich App which was launched in April 2014. The app is free to download and features an interactive map, detailed event listings and directories for shops, restaurants, bars and accommodation. So far the app has been downloaded over 6,500 times.

In July 2014 the Norwich Lanes, which won the City Category in the 2014 Great British High Street Awards, launched Droplet, a new mobile payment service which enables users to pay their bill with a tap of their smart phone. The service was developed by city entrepreneur Steffan Aquarone and allows people to buy anything from coffee to clothes with no transaction fees to use the service. The benefits to the businesses is that it makes the payment process faster, cutting queues at busy times, it enables customers to pay with ease and businesses/customers do not incur fees for their payments.

Norwich Business Improvement District is also working in partnership with Proxama and has been successful in securing funding to use the latest mobile proximity technologies. So, for instance, as people walk past a shop they get information about special offers automatically on their phone. The project is now active and branded as LOKA. It claims to be the first British near field communication product.
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire

A traditional mining and market town. Mansfield’s Town Team, chaired by Mansfield Business Improvement District, aimed to raise the profile of the town, especially that of the evening economy and to help the town compete with out of town and internet shopping.

The team crowd funded the provision of free wi-fi for town centre visitors, in effect running a vibrant marketing campaign, asking local community and traders to donate. This created commitment and excitement from the local community, and within three months, in June 2013, the team were able to install the ‘Mansfield Hot Spot’ Wi-Fi.

The wi-fi provides a robust internet coverage using wireless mesh technology. On average 3,000 IP requests an hour take place, and downloads for the town centre app have doubled. Visitors can find information about the town and use the internet, and businesses can also market themselves through the wi-fi home page. Market traders are interested in using the wi-fi to take card payments in future.

Ashford, Kent

The Love Ashford town website is both a promotional tool for town centre businesses and events, and also an innovative ‘click and collect’ portal for local businesses. It is the first step to creating Ashford’s very own digital high street after they became a Portas Pilot.

There are currently 17 businesses offering a click and collect service through the Love Ashford website; including M&S, Debenhams and local independent retailers. The premise of the website is to ensure local businesses can take full advantage in the growth of online retailing and remain visible and relevant in the digital landscape for consumers, visitors and local people alike.
6. Make markets matter

Markets have always been part of our town centre – indeed most towns owe their very existence to markets. The best are often vibrant, colourful spaces and attract people in to the high street week after week.

After Mary Portas’ Review of the High Street recommended a national markets day, Love Your Local Market has been run by The National Association of British Market Authorities since 2012 to celebrate the UK’s markets, help them find new traders and encourage people to use them. There are many examples of great niche and regular markets throughout our towns and cities today and we need everybody to love them!

Warrington, Cheshire

Warrington’s indoor market sits inside the boundary of a major redevelopment scheme proposed for the town centre. The team supporting the market made it their mission to ensure that during the construction period the atmosphere remained vibrant; they arranged youth market events, engaged with wider community groups to get local people involved, and developed a craft market.

The local authority sponsored cooking demonstrations and a table tennis tournament, all of which helped get more people involved and won Warrington Market the ‘Best Love Your Local Market Event’ award from NABMA in 2014.

In 2013 a real life “Where’s Wally” was run in conjunction with Warrington Youth Club with the sales of outfits helping raise funds for the charity which is based at Warrington Peace Centre.
Market Rasen, Lincolnshire

Market Rasen Business Improvement Group (MR BIG) was formed by a group of independent business people. Following a successful pop up market in 2012, and becoming a Portas Pilot, the Group created a monthly ‘BIG’ Market. A virtual database manages bookings, and members, supporters and broad stakeholders are also connected through an electric communications system. Facebook and Twitter are used to build community support. In addition, two community shops (Greens of Lincolnshire and The BIG Corner Shop) give start-ups and market traders an incubator unit on the High Street to enable trade between markets.

Vacancy rates in Market Rasen have dropped from 12 in June 2012 to 5 in August 2014, and the BIG markets have won two awards from NABMA (Best Small Speciality Market 2013, Best Social Enterprise Market 2014).

Stockport, Greater Manchester

The Teenage Market was created by teenage brothers Tom and Joe Barratt in their hometown of Stockport, a Portas Pilot, in order to find a way to help revitalise the town’s market area.

Tom and Joe believed that there should be a specialist market offering young people in the town the chance to have a free platform to trade and perform. They saw the Teenage Market as the perfect opportunity for markets to connect with their town’s large population of young people, by providing a free platform for them to be entrepreneurs and try out a new a business idea or sell creative products.

The Teenage Market gives young people who are already trading online, a chance to trade at their local market. It also inspires young people who have never considered the idea of trading on a market, the chance to have a go. At the first event, in Stockport Market on 1 April 2012, there were over 70 traders and 20 performers taking part. The event quickly gained local, regional and national media attention. The event was praised for the way in which it was able to unite the local community and make a big impact on an area of the town which desperately needed more engagement. Stockport Council and the local business community quickly recognised that the Teenage Market could play a big part in the town’s regeneration strategy and, as a result, the brothers were awarded funding in order to develop the idea further and run events for two years. The Teenage Market has since developed as a national initiative, giving a platform to young entrepreneurs in towns and cities across the country.
NMTF ‘First Pitch’

First Pitch is a market trader start-up scheme run by the NMTF supported by market operators all over the country. For 2013-14 the scheme was part-funded by RBS’ Inspiring Enterprise programme.

First Pitch offered entrepreneurs the opportunity to test-trade for up to five days for free on their local market. 100 of these new traders received 12 months of additional support, including free membership of the NMTF, mentoring, retail training and discounted rent. Thirty-five continued to trade after 12 months.

The award for Outstanding Trader went to Louise Maddy of The Avocado Cafe who trades on street food markets in London.

“Great places have a vision at their heart; strategic thinking and inspirational management can make a significant difference to the social, economic and cultural value of our high streets, town and city centres. The examples in this document highlight that partnerships all around the country continue to step up to the challenge of making local centres relevant to local people once again, with a range of individuals and organisations coming together to deliver initiatives that are having a hugely positive impact on their communities.

The ongoing challenge is to ensure these partnerships have a sustainable future to allow them to continue their work. By looking at town centres as spaces not just limited to retailing, ambitious teams can begin to consider broader topics such as community use, employment, housing, accessibility and embracing the ‘digital high street’. Through this model, local people and businesses can support each other to make great places.”

Shanaaz Carroll, Acting Chief Executive, Association of Town and City Management
7. Make your town centre attractive

First impressions count; the first judgement someone passes on an event or town centre may well be their conceptual bedrock for years to come so it’s important to get this, and their last impression when leaving an area, right. Getting the bunting out, using public art, tackling litter and anti-social behaviour, and filling vacant shops have helped transform high streets across the country.

Hawes, North Yorkshire

A working group, comprising of the Parish, District and County Council, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, and local businesses and residents came together a year ahead of the arrival of the Tour de France to plan how best to maximise the opportunity this presented for Hawes, a small market town in North Yorkshire.

Planning focused on two key strands of work – one being activities and entertainment on the day itself; and one on the aesthetics of the town. For the latter, a theme and colour scheme was decided upon and the working group came together to ensure the theme’s prevalence throughout the town - residents put up 3,000 metres of hand-sewn bunting; a group of volunteers planted all hanging baskets and troughs with uniform coloured plants; bicycles were painted and displayed throughout the streets.

The event not only saw an unprecedented increase in footfall but also changed how the town is perceived by residents and visitors alike, with many commenting that they had previously forgotten all about the town, its beauty, local characters and wealth of activities and were keen to further explore the town on return visits.
Folkestone, Kent

In May 2013, the Folkestone Town Centre Management team worked with the Bradstone Road Association to fund and support the Town Sprucer and his team, working full-time to smarten up the retail and business sector of the town – fixing paving slabs, repainting shop fronts, clearing out gutters, repainting bins. The Town Sprucer is a great example of how a simple intervention can have a huge impact on the look and feel of a local area at minimal cost, and long term funding is in place including sponsorship from local businesses.

A creative quarter has also been established to regenerate the old high street and has bought new shops, artists, restaurants and galleries into the area. The Folkestone Triennial, an exhibition of public art held every three years, has established the town as one of the South East’s leading cultural destinations and left a legacy of a unique street art and installations. In 2014 a new park was created from a derelict area – Payers Park is now a safe and easy shortcut through town as well as a place to play, exercise or relax. A local organisation called Step Short has also played its part in making the town more attractive by commemorating Folkestone’s part in the First World War. In this centenary year, Prince Harry dedicated a striking memorial arch to the memory of the millions of soldiers who had to ‘step short’ as they marched down a steep hill to the port on their way to fight on the Western Front.

Buildings in Folkestone have been painted to brighten up the creative quarter.

To provide some interesting town centre benches we asked design pupils at Falmouth School to come up with options for a new bench. Falmouth residents were then invited to choose which design they would like to see installed with the winner being a design based on Morgawr’ – Falmouth’s legendary sea serpent!

Richard Wilcox, Falmouth BID Manager (to left of Mayor at 'opening' of bench)
London Road, Brighton, Sussex

Crime and anti-social behaviour was considered a key challenge in the London Road retail district of Brighton, decreasing both investor confidence, and consumer perception of the area. Brighton & Hove City Council has published a masterplan which underpinned a host of physical regeneration projects which included the redevelopment of Brighton’s Open Market.

The London Road Town Team has worked with the London Road Local Area Action Team, local businesses to help reduce the impact of crime specifically in relation to theft and antisocial behaviour but also provide advice and support for local businesses. The Town Team has employed two Town Centre Liaison Officers, who work closely with shop managers, security guards, Police Community Support Officers and the Business Crime Reduction Partnership.

The officers also act as ambassadors for London Road, giving directions and information to visitors to the area. This work has been welcomed by the local community and had a very positive effect on crime reduction, with an overall reduction in crime of 10% and a fall in anti-social behaviour of 19% over one year.

“High Streets are at the very heart of our communities, however they will need to adapt if they are to remain places where people shop, spend their leisure time and live. During the judging I have seen fantastic work being delivered, with local communities demonstrating passion and commitment together with an intense sense of pride in ‘their town centre’. The Great British High Streets Awards is a brilliant chance to celebrate what has been achieved. These Awards are not the end, we need to take this opportunity to learn from what works to ensure that high streets remain a relevant and valuable part of local communities, adapting to the changing needs of the customer.”

Simon Roberts, Managing Director, Health and Beauty UK and Republic of Ireland, Alliance Boots and Future High Streets Forum Co-Chairman.
8. Getting to and from town centres

If people can’t get to your high street you are fighting a losing battle and where possible, a range of transport options should be available. Regular, clean buses, cycle parking, well-lit walking routes, park and ride schemes and safe, well-managed car parks with clear signage are important. If you’re lucky enough to be on a train line, take the time to ‘manage’ the journey from train station to town centre too.

Cosham Business Association, Portsmouth, Hampshire

Local authorities are always going to be key players in any effective partnerships. Cosham Business Association has worked closely with Portsmouth City Council, Department for Transport and local contractors to maximise the potential offered by linking local transport schemes to large scale high street public realm improvements.

Following consultation of businesses and shoppers, Cosham Business Association put together a proposal for building a more accessible, and open town centre. By working closely with the local council to understand forthcoming scheduled work and the scope for maximising the funding available, Cosham Business Association were able to link the bridge replacement project with proposed high street improvement works – widening pavements; creating on street parking and re-siting pedestrian crossings.

The outcome is a better looking town centre, more accessible for pedestrians, with improved traffic flow via a new one way system; together with better parking.

Plans to improve access for pedestrian and traffic flow in Cosham.
Falkirk, Scotland

As with most town centres in recent years, Falkirk has faced challenges with vacancies and a drop in footfall. Falkirk Delivers, the local Business Improvement District along with key partners have implemented a series of ambitious initiatives aimed at encouraging local residents and visitors to start the process of falling back ‘in love’ with their High Street. Basic, but award winning ‘clean and safe’ initiatives created and maintained a ‘good first impression’, and the staging of major events and festivals such as the Funny in Falkirk Comedy Festival and this year’s Steeple 200 event attracted large numbers of people into the town centre. With the town centre sandwiched between two of Scotland’s leading tourist attractions – the Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies, Falkirk Delivers and local tourism partners created a year-long marketing campaign aimed at attracting day-trip and overnight stay visitors to the area. By utilising innovative as well as traditional marketing materials such as a bespoke smartphone app, social media, cash dispenser advertising, outdoor, print and radio, there were approximately 16 million opportunities to be exposed to the campaign. This on top of improved in-town wayfaring signage and the introduction of an 'After 3 it’s Free’ parking regime in all Council car parks, has paid dividends by increasing visitor numbers as well as boosting town centre morale. Recently, a fleet of 9 brand new specially liveried buses were introduced to link the Falkirk Wheel, the Kelpies and the town centre in readiness for the 2015 season.

Liskeard, Cornwall

The Portas Pilot Town Team consulted over 500 local people, and found that 60% of shoppers and 30% of respondents to a Town Council survey (aimed at local workers) said they would be more likely to shop in town if there were a car park refund scheme. Over 50 businesses in Liskeard subsequently signed up to a scheme to providing themselves a 50p refund from parking charges when someone spends £10 in their business. In the first three months of operation over 1000 vouchers were refunded.

Liskeard Town Team has worked with representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Traders’ Association to develop the scheme and co-ordinated and funded marketing materials. It’s also been supported by Cornwall Council which has paid for the changes to the ticket machines and to fund the new tickets for the first year.
9. Develop the evening economy

Our town centres are changing; retail is ‘going digital’ and people want somewhere not just to shop but to live, love and enjoy. The evening and night time economy is a great place to start creating a more rounded, ‘alive after five’ town centre economy and introduce leisure and cultural opportunities alongside retailing.

The Purple Flag scheme, run by the Association of Town and City Management, recognises places that meet or surpass the standards of excellence in managing the evening and night-time economy.

Kingston Upon Thames, London

Kingston council and Kingstonfirst Business Improvement District have approached their town centre regeneration by utilising the potential of Kingston’s Ancient Market and the outlets in its town centre. To do this the market was redesigned by Tonkin Liu architects. A ‘pop up’ element was added to ensure its offering remains fresh and to provide entrepreneurs with somewhere to test innovative retail ideas. The landscape was redeveloped to create a piazza style space that is now a vibrant hub for the community.

Most impressively the brand new market place includes state-of-the-art market stalls and other businesses located nearby that can capitalise on both the day, evening and night time economies. The new market stalls that have been installed illuminate the market square after dark and part of the market offer includes regular night markets, events and shops, pubs and restaurants. Kingston won the London category of the Great British High Street Awards in 2014 and were particularly praised for tackling challenges around the early evening economy which has been recognised through the awarding of Purple Flag status.
Bournemouth, Dorset

Bournemouth has been awarded with a Purple Flag for Night Time Economy in recognition of the town’s work to develop and improve the night time economy in the Town Centre. The Council, Police and Town Watch are delivering a safe, clean and enjoyable night time environment. The inspectors were particularly impressed with the well managed public spaces, including the Gardens, and how the various night time activities and facilities are managed, and the way in which partnership working is effectively regulating a safe night time experience in the town.

The partners involved encourage a broad outlook on how the town is presented at night and tackling all aspects from cleanliness to access and transport, street lighting to signage, entertainment variety and choice of styles in bars, clubs and restaurants. Even the very popular Air Festival has a spectacular three night programme with displays across the bay.

Liverpool, Merseyside

Every weekend Liverpool welcomes more than 250,000 visitors who come to enjoy the vibrant night life and the entertainment the city has to offer. In order to maintain a successful evening and night time economy, the City needed to be attractive and safe for visitors.

The City Central Business Improvement District teamed up with Land Securities, owners of St Johns Shopping Centre, to work in partnership with Merseyside Police to install Britain’s first ever city centre ‘Cop Shop’. This initiative works in collaboration with other crime and safety programmes, and has led to a greater sense of security on the street and a proven reduction in crime.

The close partnership working between all agencies and businesses, residents, Liverpool City Council and the Community Safety Partnership, has ensured a safe and welcoming environment for visitors and enabled Liverpool to achieve Purple Flag status which is given to places that create a safe, friendly evening night time economy.
10. Celebrate success

Be proud of your work and don’t be shy in letting the public and press know about what you’ve managed to achieve as a partnership. Enter awards – you may win!

Overall Winner of the Great British High Street Award 2014

Belper, Derbyshire

Belper is blessed with a wonderful history as a World Heritage Site but has much to offer as a thriving market town as well. The judges felt that this market town had shown how much more can be done to transform an outwardly successful town centre into a go-to destination for locals and visitors alike which is why it won the Market Town category.

The majority of ideas and innovations pouring from Belper Vision have been taken forward by volunteers and it is the scale of the involvement and collaboration from the community that the judges found as impressive as the solutions they are delivering. These include working with a public transport operator to provide branded buses on routes via Belper and replanting the old Railway Station as well as delivering a youth market, pop up shop and community space. Success is demonstrated by the widening programme of events, and declining vacancy rate.

The judges felt that the Belper Ambassadors scheme encapsulated all that impresses about Belper, with wide take up and the willingness of over 80 local individuals, predominantly retailers, to be trained as ambassadors and help ensure that locals and visitors alike know all Belper has to offer. The town is a well-deserving overall winner of the Great British High Street Award 2014.
Ashton Under Lyne, Greater Manchester

The National Association of British Market Authorities run an annual competition to recognise the best markets and last year Ashton market was voted ‘Britain’s Favourite Market’ in 2014.

It is one of the busiest in the North West and sits at the heart of the town centre. The operators, traders and Town Team have worked hard to make this a community hub as well as retail space. A communal seating area has free wi-fi, there are trader recycling schemes, and the market team delivers a broad range of events and workshops in partnership with local community groups. They are preparing for a major public realm redevelopment of the outdoor market in 2015 too, creating a further civic space for community use.

Deal, Kent

Deal won the Daily Telegraph High Street of the Year competition in 2013. Deal faces the typical problems encountered by some seaside towns and the many social and economic upheavals of the last 30 years including the recent economic downturn. The after effects of the closure of the local collieries in the 1980s, the departure of the Royal Marines School of Music in the 1990s and more recently the drastic cuts in the workforce at Pfizer, the area’s largest employer, are still being felt. Businesses, the council and shoppers are all working together for their town and the high street is clean and attractive to the local community and visitors.

The Town Team has marketed Deal as a quintessential English seaside high street. It has its own Deal High Street website and uses social media to proactively market the town. The town centre is lucky enough to have a number of interesting and innovative businesses, such as arts and crafts shops which use local wood; a store selling local flowers; and a fishmonger offering the local catch. Deal has its own loyalty card.

The town also offers affordable and accessible parking and there are twice weekly markets with traders selling local produce attracting visitors and locals alike. The Town Team promotes a number of evening events. The high street has many independent shops, coffee shops and restaurants, as well as bigger high street names like Marks and Spencer. All in all it exemplifies all of the themes that go to make a successful high street.
Conclusion

As these case studies have shown, (and don’t forget there are more at www.100Ways.org.uk) there are some excellent people working really hard all over Britain to help our high streets flourish as places to live, work, shop, eat and relax. For each of the locations showcased here, there are many more great examples of dedicated people helping to make great places in their own area, including everyone who went to the effort of entering the 2014 Great British High Street Awards.

There is a tremendous diversity in the projects, priorities and philosophies, that local partnerships employ to help connect communities with their town centre. One constant that runs throughout the case studies above though, is the attention of each to creating a strong partnership base as the foundation for future work.

By developing a shared, communal vision for the future with a broad range of partners, listening to peoples’ views and ensuring a high level of social (and if necessary, financial) capital is invested in the partnership, means these groups are best placed to support a sustainable, resilient high street or town centre.

But in the end it is up to all of us.

If we don’t use our high streets we will lose them.

If we work together to help shape our high streets they will not just survive but they will thrive.
Department for Communities and Local Government

ATCM
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THE GREAT BRITISH HIGH STREET

Celebrating the Great British High Street.
December 2014.