

Government Response to Portas Review into the future of High Streets



Decline of the High Street – the challenge

- The number of town centre stores fell by almost 15,000 between 2000 and 2009 with an estimated further 10,000 losses over the past couple of years;
- Nearly one in 6 shops stands vacant;
- Excluding central London, high street footfall has fallen by around 10% in the last three years;
- A bleak picture

Portas Review

- In May 2011 PM commissioned Mary Portas to do an independent review of the future of the High Street
- Review published in Dec 2011
- 28 recommendations to – not just retail focussed
- Grant Shapps asked to lead Government response to the review and take on responsibility for the high street more broadly



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Recommendations

28 recommendations, e.g:

- **Getting town centres running like businesses** e.g
 - Setting up a 'Town Team'
 - Establishing a 'National Market Day'
- **Getting the basics right to allow business to flourish**
 - Business rate discounts
 - Free controlled parking schemes
- **Levelling the playing field**
 - NPPF – Town Centre First
 - Large retailers support and mentor local businesses/independent retailers
- **Defining landlords roles and responsibilities**
 - Promoting the leasing code
 - Addressing the issue of empty shops
- **Giving communities a greater say**
 - Promoting the inclusion of the High Street in Neighbourhood plans

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It's about:

- Choice
- Change
- Communities
- Commitment



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Rec.28 - Pilots

- The purpose of the pilots is to set up Town Teams to test the ideas in the Portas report and come up with other innovative solutions
- Pilot competition launched 4th February
- 12 pilots to be selected and each to receive up to £100k each
- Applications to be submitted by 30 March

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Some of the steps we have taken to support High Streets

- giving councils new financial incentives to grow local high streets, by allowing them to retain the funds from locally-raised business rates
- amending planning rules to make it easier to convert empty offices into residential use, to help increase footfall
- focusing retail development in town centres through a 'town centre first' planning policy
- scrapped Whitehall planning guidance which forced up parking charges and changed planning rules so councils can provide more parking spaces in town centres
- updated licensing laws give councils more powers to tackle the anti-social behaviour and disorder created by late-night drinking in town centres

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What next?

- Expecting over 150 applications for pilots or more
- Looking to announce successful pilots in May
- We will be formally commissioning a national evaluation to measure impact and lessons learnt from pilots
- We will continue efforts to improve our high streets, the Government response is just the beginning

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