

100 Ways to Help the High Street

Executive Summary

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Introduction

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100 Ways to Help the High Street is a collection of tools which, if implemented in the right place, combination and time, can have a positive impact on town and city centres.

Some of the schemes, separated into eight different sections, are more ambitious than others, and some more expensive to put in place. However, with a range of ideas covering different dimensions of the high street it is hoped that, regardless of your town centre's size, whether or not you have developed a mature partnership, and the size of the budget at your disposal, you will find something here that is useful.

This is not just about making the most of best practice. There is also useful legislation available that can support champions of the town centre. The Localism Act, passed in 2011, has empowered local authorities, businesses and communities to do more if they feel they can. Take for example the general power of competence. The powers and responsibilities of local authorities were previously defined by legislation. They could only do whatever the law specifically stipulated, limiting innovation. However, with the general power of competence being introduced, local authorities now have the power to do whatever they want so long as they do not break the law. If used correctly, the general power of competence could be the catalyst for innovation by local government, opening up an incredible array of possibilities. The refreshed 100 Ways will examine the additional powers available to undertake positive change as a result.

100 Ways to Help the High Street is primarily for Town Centre Managers, local government officers and elected members. There are many locations where groups have formed and are already working cooperatively to achieve success. However, job title is not a precursor to the successful implementation of many of these schemes. A running theme throughout 100 Ways to Help the High Street is that whatever resources you have at your disposal, and whoever takes the lead on many of these activities, success is achievable through cooperation. For the purposes of this guide we will refer to these people using the term 'Town Teams' as coined by Mary Portas in her review of the high street at the end of 2011. A Town Team may be led by a Town Centre Manager, but will include representation from local businesses and the local community in order to meet the needs of all.

Using many years' experience and real life examples, this guide aims to be a resource and a starting point for those wishing to improve their place, however it can in no way be considered exhaustive. You can expand, shrink and adapt these schemes to suit local circumstances. Each section has one or more case studies at the end to demonstrate how some of these hints and tips emanate from real-life examples using the ingenuity of Town Centre Managers and other champions of the high street.

The following pages will summarise the spirit and implementation of each of the eight categories but further, more detailed information can be found on the 100 ways website at: <http://www.100ways.org.uk>

Working Together

Town centres are uniquely complex environments which serve many roles simultaneously. In order to manage the collective trading and operating environment for the maximum benefit of all the many and varied stakeholders, it needs to be done collaboratively.

Good town centre management is often dependent on strong partnership. The cooperation of the many different stakeholders who make up the town centre is essential if the place is to benefit holistically. It is important to establish and work from a position of shared interest and set achievable goals that the stakeholders can all support. However, strong partnerships are not easy to forge or sustain. Funds to operate the partnership and work to achieve the collective goals will be required. This section outlines what Town Teams can do to build the foundations for good partnerships, who can govern the high street with the interests of all stakeholders in mind.

- 1. Create a Town Team:** Representatives of all town centre user groups should be involved in developing a high street business plan.
- 2. Governing a Partnership:** Your partnership (or Town Team) will need a clear and simple structure that participants understand and feel confident about.
- 3. Encourage Representation from across your Local Government:** The partnership will want to influence priorities for local services and local politicians and officials are often keen to engage with town centre partnerships.
- 4. Form a Membership Scheme:** Membership schemes for partnerships are a key source of income and help to ensure commitment and engagement from your stakeholders.
- 5. Develop a Business Improvement District:** BIDs are private sector led partnerships created when a majority of businesses in a location vote 'Yes' to funding a business plan through an additional levy on their rates.
- 6. Understand your Town Centre's Performance:** To be able to improve the performance of your town centre, you first need a picture of what is happening now, known as a baseline, and then monitor activity and change.
- 7. Make a Plan:** As with any venture, the management and development of a healthy town centre needs a good clear achievable plan that all the partners and stakeholders can support and work with.
- 8. Working with the Property Industry:** As with any venture, the management and development of a healthy town centre needs a clear achievable plan that all the partners and stakeholders can support and work with.
- 9. Keep in Touch with your Partnership:** Continuous engagement with your partnership members is vital to retain cooperation. Ensuring that the dialogue is a two-way process is just as important.
- 10. Attracting Funding and Sponsorship:** As a legal entity with big ambitions and a small income from subscriptions your partnership will need to be creative to attract funding to achieve your objectives.
- 11. Consider the Skills Base of your Partnership:** Getting the right mix of skills, experiences and qualities is a key ingredient in building an effective board of stakeholders and a strong Town Team.
- 12. Be Charitable:** There is value in fostering goodwill amongst local communities and many other stakeholders by supporting charitable activity.

The Safe and Secure High Street

As a hub of social, political and economic activities, the town centre is a central point for many. Unfortunately, as with any place where there are gatherings of people, this can attract undesired activities that damage the visitor experience and threaten an otherwise healthy town centre. A lack of safety and security, and poor perceptions, can be enough to force businesses to trade elsewhere and shoppers to buy elsewhere. However, successful efforts are being mounted across the country to improve the safety and security of all town centre users. Here are some of them.

- 1. Creating a Crime Reduction Partnership:** CRPs have gained popularity because preventing crime is cheaper than reacting to it, and perceptions of safety impact directly on people's willingness to visit their town centre.
- 2. Working with your Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership:** There is great merit to linking high street specific crime reduction partnerships with existing partnerships covering wider areas.
- 3. Talk to your Local Crime Prevention Contacts:** Most police forces have a Crime Prevention Officer or similar, who will talk to and visit businesses to provide advice about 'target hardening' e.g. window locks, staff training, etc.
- 4. Community Alcohol Partnerships:** CAPs aim to tackle the problems caused by underage access to alcohol through cooperation between retailers and local stakeholders.
- 5. Radio Link Networks:** With the creation of a dedicated frequency, radios can become a valuable tool for linking together the members of a crime reduction partnership.
- 6. Restricting Alcohol Consumption through Designated Public Place Orders:** Many town centres have defined DPPOs restricting the consumption of alcohol; these must be clearly defined using signage.
- 7. Combating Crime through On-Line Technology:** With an active Crime Reduction Partnership it is possible to operate a database that all members can contribute to and benefit from.
- 8. Mobile CCTV:** CCTV is a proven crime prevention tool, deterrent and can provide evidence to secure conviction where criminal and anti-social activity takes place.
- 9. CCTV Analytics:** CCTV with output which is not monitored can still be effective in viewing historic events following a crime through the use of video analytics which use A.I. to flag up unusual behaviour.
- 10. Make Crime Reduction Visible:** Good news stories about reductions in local crime figures or the full range of business crime prevention work going on should be shared through all the media channels.
- 11. Community Wardens:** Community wardens can patrol a town centre in high visibility jackets, particularly in locations and at times when crime and anti-social behaviour is most likely to occur.
- 12. Exclusion Scheme:** The identification of repeat offenders through the intelligence gathered and shared amongst the members of the local crime reduction partnership can then be used to exclude them from the premises of all members of the partnership.
- 13. Child Safe Zones and Schemes for Lost Children:** The scheme works by encouraging the adult responsible for the lost child in a Child Safe Zone, to ring a number displayed on Child Safe Zones sticker or poster.
- 14. Penalty Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices:** These notices are both ways of deterring anti-social behaviour with wardens licensed by a local authority and/or the local police being able to issue fines.

Enhancing the Streetscape

The streetscape refers to the physical aspects of public spaces in town centres. While it includes the design and appearance of buildings, there is much more that Town Teams can do about the quality, character, safety and feel of the spaces between buildings. There are a number of different components which work together to create a streetscape which ideally will reflect the distinctive character of the town and area, while also being clean and orderly, avoiding clutter and dereliction. These include landscaping, lighting, paving, street furniture, planting, public art, attractive and effective signposting and easy access to the internet.

Enhancing the Streetscape explores some of these schemes, starting with identifying the strengths and weaknesses of your public realm.

- 1. First Impressions Exercise:** A First Impressions Exercise has been developed by the ATCM as a tool for gaining a clear understanding of a town centre's strengths and weaknesses, as seen through fresh eyes.
- 2. Streetcare Audits:** A streetcare audit identifies what type of improvements are required in the public realm to make it a safe, attractive and unified place.
- 3. General Design Guide:** A design guide for a town centre is desirable. It sets out policies and practices for a coordinated approach to the design of street furniture and signage, shopfronts, shutters, lighting etc.
- 4. Removing Clutter:** As pavements collect additional pieces of equipment and signs they contribute to making a street scene look untidy. Clutter ought to be minimised through the imaginative positioning of necessary items and the removal of any non-essential items.
- 5. Litter:** A few ideas to help tackle this persistent problem and to help improve the experience and reputation of your town centre are the installation of 'On-the-Go' recycling bins and zones, cigarette bins or even employing litter wardens.
- 6. Creating Coherent Fascia:** The design of each shop-front will vary, but the presence of consistent elements in all will create an impression that the varied businesses belong together and complement each other.
- 7. Pedestrian Signposting or Wayfinding:** Good quality pedestrian street signs look attractive and convey their information easily, often with clear symbols and few words.
- 8. Illuminating the Public Realm:** It is important to develop or influence a public realm lighting strategy which can both add to the appeal and safety of a town centre at night.
- 9. Festive Lighting:** Festive lighting displays, most commonly associated with Christmas in the UK, can help to make a visit to the town or city centre an essential part of the seasonal diary.
- 10. Public Art:** Art in public places can be; figurative or literal, walked through, walked on or walked around, tactile, functional or whimsical, live and interactive or still and passive, and permanent or temporary.
- 11. Planting and Floral Displays:** Planting in town centres is always popular with the public, helps to introduce seasonal colour to urban settings, and can help to improve air quality.
- 12. Managing Shared Space Effectively:** Stakeholders may be prepared to negotiate self-regulation and voluntary agreements which allow for the better coordination of activity in public walkways.
- 13. Window Dressing for Vacant Shops:** One of the most effective and inexpensive options for transforming the image of vacant shops is window vinyls.

Consumer Marketing, Animation and Events

Every scent, sight, sound and 'customer touch point' contributes to a unique and personal experience of a place and its reputation. Town Teams need to work collaboratively with the many disparate elements that make up a town centre to create and communicate an interesting cohesive package that attracts a wide range of visitors and consumers, encourages them to linger longer, spend more, and return more often. This section has a collection of tools to help champions of the high street to do what they can to increase footfall, dwell time, and market share.

- 1. Know your Consumers:** Before considering the direction of any communications programme or marketing campaign, it is vital to identify and define the target audience.
- 2. Developing a Town Centre Website:** The rapid growth of the Internet means having a functional, visually pleasing, up to date and user friendly website is a basic requirement for all destinations.
- 3. On-Line Town Centre Shopping:** Click and collect schemes have proven popular, a process where the customer orders online but collects from the shop to avoid delivery charges.
- 4. Creating Town Guides and Maps:** A basic essential for any town, particularly those looking to attract tourists, is to provide a well presented guide.
- 5. Street Parades, Stage Shows and Events:** Events are a tried and tested way to attract people to a place and town centres are great places for gatherings and activities.
- 6. Entertaining the Kids:** There are plenty of imaginative events and activities which could be hosted to keep children occupied, particularly during term breaks.
- 7. Introduction of a Crèche:** By making a crèche available, ensuring it is well managed and promoted, those with families could be tempted to the high street, giving it access to an important market segment.
- 8. Town Trails:** A trail might have a heritage or arts theme for example and guides the visitor along a route through the town calling at attractions and sites relevant to the theme.
- 9. Creating a Sense of Place through Narratives:** A place story can be brought to life through plaques, monuments, art or online media.
- 10. Social Networking, Bluetooth and Mobile Marketing:** Town teams should use a wide range of on-line and social networking tools in addition to traditional off-line media to reach diverse stakeholders.
- 11. Communicate your Achievements:** Communicating achievements allows you to generate good publicity and keep your profile high. Set your partnership achievable targets and shout about it when you achieve them.
- 12. Local Loyalty and Voucher Schemes:** Town centres now have the capacity to bring together all providers of consumer services to offer a loyalty scheme that rewards customers for shopping locally.
- 13. Make a Town Centre an Attractive Proposition for Residents:** By ensuring a town centre is as viable for residents as it is for consumers a lot can be achieved, including the retention of spend locally.
- 14. Participate in Independent Retailer Month:** www.independentretailermonth.co.uk is a global "Shop Local" campaign that runs throughout July each year.
- 15. Marketing with Neighbouring Town Centres and Attractions:** For smaller partnerships with limited marketing and resources the option of working with nearby town centres may be an attractive one.

Accessing the High Street

The wellbeing of the high street directly depends on the flow of people into it so getting access right is vital. With rare exception, British towns and cities were not designed to accommodate the current scale of car use. So, methods to equitably manage limited space, maintain public safety, and reduce pollution have resulted in regulation including car parking, pedestrianisation, and limited times for access by vehicles over a certain size. For both healthier lifestyle and financial reasons, cycling statistics have increased enormously over the last few years, and the advent of electric bikes and bike clubs see the trend set to continue. Public transport, where it is reliable, customer focussed and user friendly can carry large numbers of people into and out of the town centre. Car users will remain a large and profitable market segment so, town centres need to balance being car friendly with preserving an open, clean and safe environment for cyclists, pedestrians, users of public transport and some of the new schemes like car and bike clubs.

1. Maximising 'Gateway' Opportunities: Bus stations, train stations, car parks and key pedestrian routes into the high street all need to be clean and welcoming with a flavour of the distinctive character of your town.

2. Linking a Town Centre Together: Helping people to move around within town and city centres quickly and easily can encourage visitors to explore areas which might be less well known and to extend their stay.

3. Unifying the Transport Network: A review of your transport network, followed by genuine integration on everything from infrastructure to branding, can provide an attractive range of accessibility options.

4. Pick Up and Drop Bike and Car Schemes: Providing a wide range of modern transport options can improve the quality of life for residents, and the visitor experience.

5. Cycle Routes and Parking: There is genuine value to your town centre in making sure that there are clearly marked cycling routes into and through the town centre from the nearest national cycling network route.

6. Accommodating the Travel Needs of Young Families: Parents with young families are a significant portion of the population who can have additional travel requirements.

7. Shopmobility: This is a service that can help those who consider themselves to have limited mobility to make the most of the town centre experience.

8. Borrowing Private Car Parks: During busy periods car parking allocations for many offices may lie under used or completely empty. There might be an opportunity to borrow these car parks.

9. Provide a Balanced Consideration of Parking Charges: A Town Team or Manager has to try and balance the needs of all parties, which inevitably involves compromise and some of them not getting everything they want.

10. Replacing Pay and Display Car Parks with Barrier Operated Systems: Providing car users with flexibility for in-town parking without the threat of excessive fines could increase footfall and car park revenue.

11. Displaying Real Time Parking Information: In some larger towns and cities local authorities have introduced real time parking information to assist the flow of traffic and reduce journey times.

12. Park and Ride: A successful Park and Ride scheme offers the travelling public a suitable alternative to in-town parking.

13. Promoting and Improving Bus Services: Buses have a key role to play in making the town centre accessible to a wide range of people from the surrounding catchment.

Attracting Investment and Getting the Business Mix Right

It is not enough to expect new investors and consumers to just turn up. To make your high street the chosen destination for people and business, effort has to go into getting the basics and the mix right. This section presents tools that can act as building blocks to supporting and attracting a healthy mix of businesses and people to invest, trade, employ and reside on your high street.

- 1. Auditing your Town's Centre's Offer:** In order to target your local business generation and inward investment efforts accurately, start by auditing the 'stock' you already have.
- 2. Building Upon Existing Footfall Generators:** Once people have been drawn into town, it is important that key attractions are supported by a wide range of complimentary services that make people want to stay, and visit again.
- 3. Virtual Tour of the High Street:** An investor's interaction with a town centre on-line can be increased through a virtual tour.
- 4. Free Wi-Fi:** Increasingly, it is seen as vital for the modern town centre to provide free Wi-Fi hotspots.
- 5. Getting the Mix Right:** Town Teams, local authorities, and elected members must carefully consider what use is allocated to property, reviewing the ratio of everything from retail stores to residential and parking.
- 6. Promoting Unique Enterprises through Business Rates Concessions:** The Localism Act has seen the introduction of flexibility in the application of non-domestic rates (commonly referred to as business rates).
- 7. Using Evidence to Promote your Town Centre to Investors:** Town Centres, authorities and elected members need to be able to provide details their town's local data and strategic direction in order to entice investment.
- 8. Branding Elements of your Town Centre:** Many town centres may have existing strengths which themes can be developed and focused on for branding, not just to regular visitors but also to a much wider market.
- 9. Reversing Decline of Existing Markets:** Town Teams and Managers who want to re-invigorate a tired local market need to support and promote it, ensure its quality and support infrastructure.
- 10. Introduction of New Markets:** There are a number of travelling continental style markets who you can contact and invite to spend a few days in your town.
- 11. Business Incubator Units:** There are organisations and institutions around the UK who are providing space as incubator units for entrepreneurs to build their businesses.
- 12. Building a Strong Relationship between Landlords and Tenants:** One measure, when tackling the problem of vacant units, is to support landlords and tenants to stop properties becoming vacant in the first place.
- 13. Pop-Up Shops:** Pop-ups shops can contribute to the retail mix, helping to drive footfall and create a buzz.
- 14. Turning Empty Shops into Temporary Art Galleries:** One way of keeping empty units active and lively until a new commercial tenant moves in is to create temporary art galleries.
- 15. Town Team Shop:** One way to make the most of vacant property is to give the Town Team a shop front to use as an office, meeting place, or information point.
- 16. Community Involvement in Regeneration:** In the wake of economic and social change, collaborative and community models of town centre regeneration in different forms are emerging on quite a large scale.

The Evening and Night-time Economy

Versatility can be the making of a great town centre, so it needs to offer a clean, safe, vibrant and engaging environment for different types of people at different times. An arena that poses a big challenge in achieving versatility is a transition that takes place every day from the day-time economy to the evening or 'shoulder' period, and then on into the late night economy. With this shift, the uses of the town centre change with individuals and businesses shifting their needs accordingly. Here, you can find a number of schemes and tools to help make your town centre a safe and welcoming place during the evening and night-time.

1. Purple Flag: The Purple Flag scheme has been set up to establish national standards and raise the image of Britain's town centres at night.

2. Planning for the Evening: A detailed and achievable plan which draws on a town centre's strengths and weaknesses in the evening should be developed and implemented in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

3. Managing the Transition Between Day and Night: Fostering and promoting a range of activities with the help of the leisure and hospitality sectors can encourage increased activity on the high street during a period when it could otherwise be quiet.

4. Alive After Five: Town centres need to rise to the challenge of adapting to changing consumer needs and expectations. It doesn't need to mean longer working hours – just smarter working hours e.g. 10am – 6pm instead of 9am to 5pm.

5. Late Night Bus Service: Providing late night buses can encourage more visitors to take advantage of the entertainment and leisure activities on offer, and reduce the likelihood of drunk driving.

6. Promotion of Late Night Transport: The lack of frequent, efficient and safe public transport late at night, or at least the perception thereof, could be having a detrimental impact on your night-time economy.

7. Taxi Marshal Scheme: The marshals are professionally trained and highly visible uniformed teams who encourage people to form an orderly queue and wait patiently for their taxi.

8. Dedicated Ambassadors and Managers for the Night-Time Economy: Evening ambassadors can improve the night scene in a town centre by acting as liaisons between the police, door staff, licensees and the CCTV control room and providing additional re-assurance and assistance to the public.

9. Light Night: Light Night is a great showcase for gaining wide public interest and participation so that people 'buy into' their high street when enjoyed in a new setting. For more information visit www.lightnight.co.uk

10. Accreditation Schemes and Voluntary Schemes for Licensed Premises: Implementing an accreditation scheme provides an incentive to raise management standards leading to a safer evening economy.

11. Best Bar None: Best Bar None is a national award scheme supported by the Home Office and aimed at promoting responsible management and operation of alcohol licensed premises.

12. Pubwatch: In a Pubwatch scheme, participating licensee members will agree to work together to improve the safety of their premises for the benefit of both their staff and customers.

13. Street Pastors and Safe Havens: In some towns and cities, church and faith groups and the local youth service provide personnel, and in some cases, places of safety for vulnerable people after dark.

Training, Development and Accreditation

Managing the high street or town centre has come of age in recent years. Instead of instinct, gut feeling and anecdotal knowledge driving forward schemes, we have moved on to a culture where best practice is documented, and professionals with decades of experience help to provide training, development and accreditation for newcomers to the industry. This evolution has been recognised by the Mary Portas High Street Review which insists it is now mandatory for Town Teams to be led by highly qualified and experienced professionals with an appetite for continuing professional development. Town Centre and Place Managers are generally very willing to share their experience including successes and failures with colleagues in other locations, and individuals and organisations have developed specialisms. '100 Ways to Help the High Street' is far from exhaustive, and aims to provide those working to support and develop their high street with a resource with links to further learning.

To help your personnel, partnership, partners and initiatives to continue to learn and grow a few tips and ideas are outlined in this section.

1. Local Business and Industry Award Schemes: Creating local business awards is a great way to help raise standards, establish the town centre partnership as a local business leader, and raise the profile of the participating businesses.

2. National Skills Academy for Retail: The national network of retail skills shops in town centres and shopping centres across the country aim to improve retailer accessibility to professional development. Retail employers, employees, and prospective employees can walk into, or contact the retail skills shops to access advice, training and support.

3. Mentoring and Buddy Schemes: Matching local business leaders and individuals up as buddies and mentors can be a great free way to 'raise the game' and spread excellence in your network.

4. Networking for Town Teams and Town Centre Managers: Before trying to re-invent the wheel, take a look at what others are doing. Probably the best way to do this is by linking and networking with others in similar roles across the country through membership of the ATCM which also provides the National BIDs Advisory Service.

For more information visit: www.atcm.org

5. Professional Accreditation for Town Centre Managers: The Institute of Place Management is dedicated to professional training and qualifications for those involved in the 'making, management and marketing' of places. The Institute offers a range of courses and qualifications designed for busy working professionals.

For more information visit: www.placemanagement.org

Contributors and Acknowledgements

The organisations and individuals involved in the development of 100 Ways to Help the High Street include:

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<http://www.atcm.org/>
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- Local Government Association
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- European Regional Development Fund
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/regenerationfunding/europeanregionaldevelopment/>

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Disclaimer

It is important for all users of 100 Ways to help the High Street to remember it is only a guide and that responsibility for the impact of implementing suggested best practice and legislation lies with the user. There is a disclaimer against all comments referring law, legal implications and enforcement. The law is complicated, open to interpretation, differs from location to location and quickly evolves. Consequently, this resource should be used as a guide only, and unless specifically stated, references to the law apply to England only.

For all users, even those based in England, we ask that local legal advice is sought before acting upon any legal recommendations offered as disparate and evolving legislative frameworks could invalidate information presented here.

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