

FUTURE HIGH STREET FORUM
1st Meeting, 25 March 2013, 12.30 – 14.00
Ministerial Boardroom, Eland House

Attendees

Mark Prisk	Minister for Housing and Local Growth (Co-Chair)
Alex Gourlay	Alliance Boots (Co-Chair)
James Lowman	Association of Convenience Stores
Martin Blackwell	Association of Town and City Management (ATCM)
BIS Official	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Michael Green	British Council of shopping Centres
Alan Hawkins	British Independent Retailers Association
Liz Peace	British Property Federation
Helen Dickinson	British Retail Consortium
Jane Pritchard	Business in the Community
Jason Cotta	Costa Coffee
Graham Harris	Dartford Borough Council
Charlotte Cool	John Lewis Partnership
Cllr Mike Haines	Local Government Association
Graham Wilson	National Association of British Market Authorities
Joe Harrison	National Market Traders Federation
Peter Cross	Portas
Paula Venells	Post Office Ltd
Professor Neil Wrigley	Southampton University
Neil McCourt	Tesco Metro
Guy Laurence	Vodafone UK
Stephen Aldridge	Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
Cathy Francis	DCLG
Julie Carney	DCLG

Apologies

Emma Jones	PopUp Britain
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Welcome and Introductions

1. Mark Prisk and Alex Gourlay jointly welcomed attendees to the first meeting, and provided an overview of the Forum. It will be jointly led by Government and Business, with the aim of helping high streets and town centres to adapt, with the focus on practical action.

Review of the Evidence on High Streets

2. Mark Prisk noted the importance of using evidence to focus the Forums work, and introduced Stephen Aldridge, the Chief Economist for DCLG, to present a review of the evidence available. This presentation is available online at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-advisory-groups/future-high-streets-forum>

3. The presentation provided a summary of some of the key trends and drivers for change on our High Streets, and what we know about the enablers for adaptation to change. Stephen concluded by identifying some of the gaps in our knowledge and evidence base, including:
 - The evidence we have tends mainly to be about retailing. Non-retail activities are also important.
 - More data on the performance of the High Street property market would be useful
 - It would be useful to have more robust evidence on what works best in rejuvenating town centres and high streets.
4. Neil Wrigley presented a short paper summarising unpublished research by the University of Southampton on the change in composition of retail units between 1999 and 2012 (available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-advisory-groups/future-high-streets-forum>). The paper demonstrates that the impact of change over the recent periods of prosperity and economic downturn are not what might be expected. Some categories of small and specialist retailers are performing better during the recent period. Other categories appear to be facing accelerating decline, such as music/video stores.
5. In discussion, the Forum made a number of points:
 - There is currently an overcapacity of retail space on high streets
 - Our approach needs to be sensitive to changing consumer demands in helping high streets to adapt, and make the best use of growth areas such as convenience stores and digital.
 - We need to consider the whole of the High Street, including the impact of extended hours, evening and night-time economies.
 - Conceptual high street models, such as the toolkit designed by the ATCM with the Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), could help with benchmarking high streets and sharing what works. Further information is available below.

Successful town centres –developing effective strategies

<http://www.atcm.org/tools/successful-town-centres---developing-effective-strategies-.php>

Terms of reference - aims and scope of the Forum.

6. Alex Gourlay introduced the draft terms of reference for the Forum. These are attached as an Annex to these minutes.
7. The Terms of Reference were agreed. The Forum agreed that its overall role falls into four categories:
 - The Forum acts as an umbrella Group for the Task and Finish Groups, which will lead work in support of the objectives outlined in the Terms of Reference.
 - Supporting the current work of members, such as the support ATCM is delivering to the Portas pilots)
 - keeping up to date with other areas of work, to ensure that the Forum's work complements and does not overlap with other areas, such as the work of the Distressed Property Taskforce

- feeding into the development of Government policy at an early stage
8. It was agreed that succinct minutes of the Forum meetings will be made available on line to keep the wide range of interested organisations up to date.

Action 1	Invite members to suggest topics to be covered at future meetings.	DCLG
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Task and finish groups.

9. The Forum considered three initial Task and Finish Groups, and agreed these with an amendment to the description of Group 2.

Task and finish group One will cover management of town centres and strong local leadership to deliver community high streets of the future. It would aim to consolidate and build on all the work going on focused on local leadership.

The group will help build capacity and capability in local teams, and encourage them to use tools already out there, ie pop up shops, markets via the 'love your local markets' initiative and beyond.

The Group will need to recognise the importance of place and vision in its work, the need to leverage in business skills to support town teams, and the role of strong leadership.

Task and finish group Two will cover enabling competitive modern high streets, which could embrace a wide range of factors including planning and de-regulation.

The Group will need to consider issues including disparate ownership and management of the high street, and the opportunities for and barriers to investment

Task and finish group Three will look at research into future trends and anticipating the future high street.

The Forum agreed that it should particularly consider the current gaps in the evidence, identifying what is working and the consumer and social trends driving future changes.

10. Each group would be chaired by a forum member, but the membership will be extended to draw on an even wider pool of experts able to provide expertise and resources. The members will appoint their chair and secretariat at their first meeting, and consider their focus, objectives, timeline for delivery and measure of success. These should be put to the Forum at its next meeting, in June 2013.
11. Thereafter, the task and finish groups will meet in between forum meetings and report back to the Forum at each meeting through their Chair.

Action 2	Invite expressions of interest for membership of the Task and Finish Groups, and recommendations for further invitees from outside the Forum membership.	DCLG
Action 3	Coordinate and agree with the Co-Chairs the initial membership for the Task and Finish Groups, and arrange the first meetings.	DCLG

Press and Communications

12. Mark Prisk reported that a press notice would be issued following the meeting. He suggested that at its next meeting, the Forum should look how to have a more balanced public debate about high streets, and developing an agreed approach to communications for the work of the Forum.

13. The Forum also noted that the Business Innovation and Skills Select Committee will be looking into retail and the high street. The deadline for written evidence is 15 April.

Action 4	A proposed approach to Communications for the Forum to be put to the next Forum meeting for agreement. DCLG will coordinate.	DCLG
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Close and Date of Future Meetings

14. Mark Prisk and Alex Gourlay thanked everyone for their participation. Future meetings have been arranged as follows:

- 11 June 2013, 9.30 -11.00am
- 15 October 2013, 9.30 - 11.00am
- 21 January 2014, 9.30 - 11.00am

All meetings will be hosted by DCLG at Eland House London.

Annex to Draft Minutes – Agreed Terms of Reference for the Future High Streets Forum

1. Aims:

- To provide joint business and government leadership to better enable our high streets and town centres to adapt and compete in the face of changing consumer and social trends.
- To advise the Government in the formation and delivery of policies to support high streets and town centres, in the short and longer term.

2. Objectives:

- Establish and help deliver a national workplan for the implementation of policies, including from the Portas Review, involving councils, business, third sector parties, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Government.
- Support Portas Pilots and Town Team Partners in developing and implementing their action plans, through oversight of local mentoring, online information and sharing of best practice.
- Support new and small businesses in starting up and competing. In particular to:
 - (i) support the roll out of pop up shops
 - (ii) support the markets industry and the Working Group on Retail Markets to expand the role of markets;
 - (iii) have regard to the costs and regulatory burden for small retailers.

3. Membership of the Forum:

Membership of the Forum reflects individual expertise as well as seeking to achieve a balanced representation of high street and town centre interests. See Annex A for the list of invitees to the first meeting.

a) Chairs

The forum will be co-chaired by Mark Prisk, Minister for Housing and Local Growth and Alex Gourlay, Chief Executive of the Health & Beauty Division, Alliance Boots.

The role of the chairs will include:

- chair each meeting of the Forum;
- appoint members of the Forum and task groups;
- agree agendas, papers and meeting notes; and
- invite speakers to attend relevant Forum meetings.

b) Forum Members

The role of forum members will include:

- agree their practical contribution to the Forum, for example, chair a task group;
- attend and contribute to forum meetings (or send a representative as required); and
- speak as one voice when representing the Forum.

c) Department for Communities and Local Government:

The role of Departmental officials will include:

- provide a secretariat service for the Forum meetings;
- co-ordinate comments from officials and other Government Departments as required; and
- publish minutes from the Forum to give transparency and accountability.

4. Frequency of meetings:

The Forum will meet approximately every three months, starting from the end of March up to April 2015. Views and decisions may also be sought between meetings by email if required.

5. Task and Finish Groups:

The Forum will be supported by task and finish groups to focus on key topics, agreed by the Forum. The Forum will agree the objectives, outcomes/outputs and key milestones for each task and finish group.

Each task and finish group will:

- have a chair and secretary appointed by forum members;
- be constituted of forum members or of individuals appointed by forum members;
- agree deliverables with the Forum;
- agree a timeline, including a completion date for the groups work; and
- report their progress at forum meetings as required.

Findings of task and finish groups will be considered by the Forum before they are published.

Membership of the Future High Streets Forum

Name	Position	Company
James Lowman	Chief Executive	Association of Convenience Stores (ACS)
Martin Blackwell	Chief Executive	Association of Town & City Management (ATCM)
Michael Green	Chief Executive	British Council of Shopping Centres (BCSC)
Alan Hawkins	Chief Executive Officer	British Independent Retailers Association (BIRA)
Liz Peace	Chief Executive	British Property Federation (BPF)
Helen Dickinson	Director General	British Retail Consortium (BRC)
Jane Pritchard	Director	Business in the Community (BiTC)
Jason Cotta	Operations Director UK	Costa Coffee at Whitbread
BIS Official	Retail Unit	Department for Business, Investment & Skills (BIS)
Graham Harris	Managing Director	Dartford Borough Council
Charlotte Cool	Head of Public Affairs	John Lewis Partnership
Cllr Mike Haines	Vice Chair Economy and Transport Board	Local Government Association (LGA)
Graham Wilson	Chief Executive	National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA)
Joe Harrison	Chief Executive Officer	National Market Traders Federation (NMTF)
Peter Cross	Managing Partner	Portas.
Paula Vennells	Chief Executive	Post Office Ltd
Emma Jones	Founder	PopUp Britain
Professor Neil Wrigley	Professor of Geography	Southampton University
Neil McCourt	Managing Director Tesco Metro	Tesco
Guy Laurence	Chief Executive	Vodafone UK