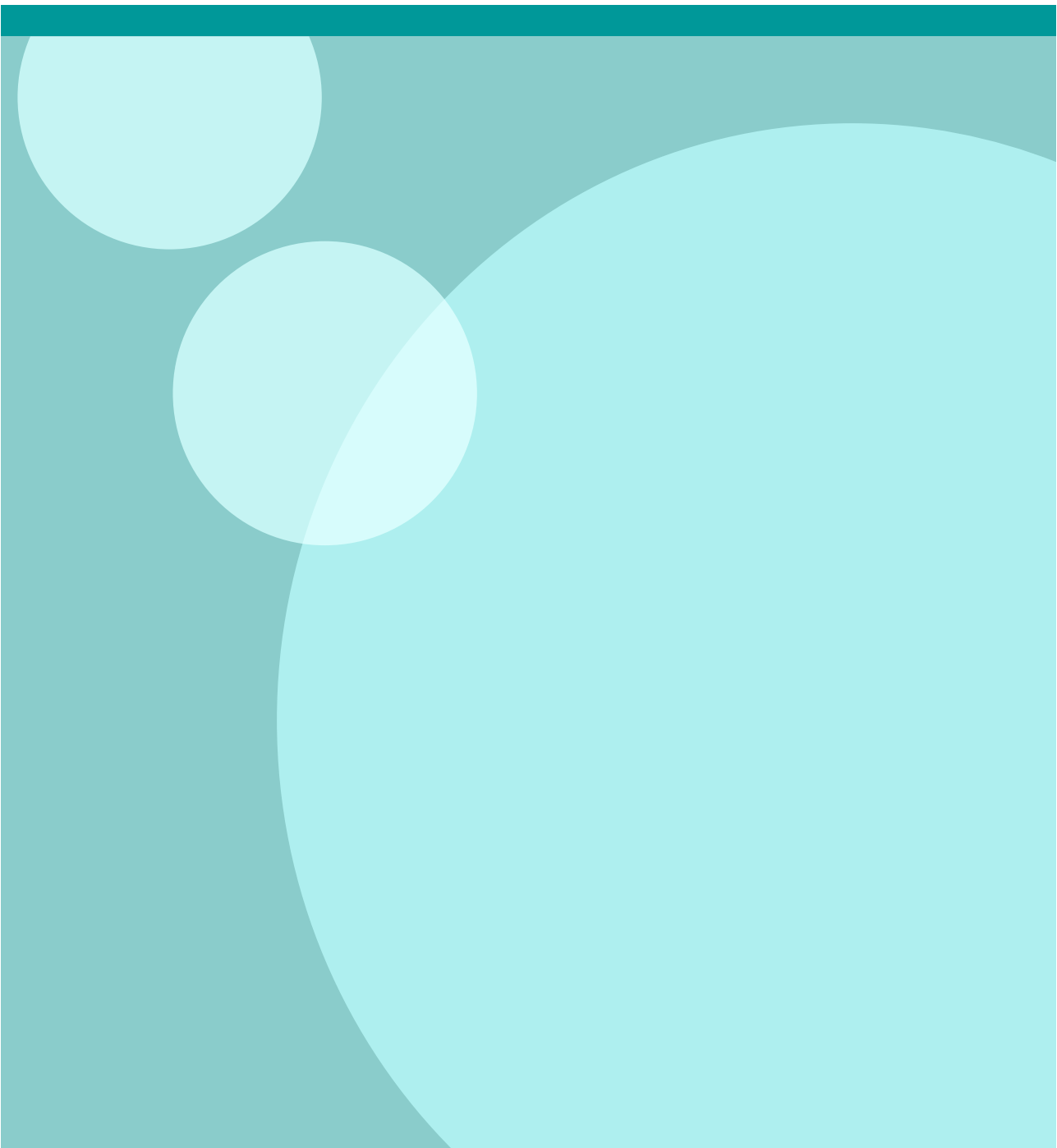




Supporting retail markets
Executive summary





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September 2010

Department for Communities and Local Government

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Ministerial foreword

One of my top priorities as a Government minister is to get out and about, meeting people around the country and listening to their opinions. As markets are often at the hub of a community, with a friendly atmosphere, they are an ideal place to meet people, and I hope to meet some of you at your market on one of my visits across the country.

It is clear to me that markets make a valuable contribution to the local area and to local life. They can be an important element of vibrant town centres and thriving local communities. Local people tend to be unhappy when local markets are neglected. They have grown up with them. They value them.



And that's because markets can offer so much more than a place to buy and sell. At their best, markets are a meeting place and a focal point for local people, a place where different communities can come together for a common purpose. As such, markets have a role to play in helping to build the 'Big Society'—bringing people and communities together, and acting as a 'community builder' that initiates civic pride and somewhere to meet and learn about new cultures.

Markets are also centres of enterprise, they can support the local economy; they offer access to cheap and healthy food; they can act as important cultural and tourist attractions; and they can support action that benefits the environment.

The work that Government has been doing in partnership with the retail markets industry has served to highlight the benefits that markets can bring to a range of central and local Government priorities. I have been impressed that this work has, over a relatively short period of time, successfully culminated in the production of two guides and training material: one guide on realising the benefits of the market to the local community and the other looking at a range of market management models, plus an extensive training package of 15 modules for existing traders.

Although the UK markets industry contributes a large amount in terms of jobs and business supported, it is right that the industry doesn't rest on its laurels. There is always room for improvement, and I am confident that the guidance and training that we have produced together will be helpful to market operators and existing and potential market traders. It will offer the opportunity to learn new ideas, new ways of managing and to adapt to changing conditions and challenges. The guidance and training will also encourage prospective entrepreneurs with a bright idea to become traders, further strengthening the industry and supporting the community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Stunell".

Andrew Stunell, MP

Executive summary

Markets are the birthplace of towns and cities across the world. Starting in some cases as crossroads where travellers would barter their goods and chattels for food and made goods they were the catalyst for the development of hamlets into villages, villages into towns and towns into cities. In England, markets that were founded over 1000 years ago are still going strong today.

But, despite the success of speciality markets such as farmers' markets, many traditional retail markets have seen a decline in recent years. This is a cause for concern because the successful retail market can bring real benefits – economic; social and environmental – to local communities.

In order to ensure that such benefits were fully realised, the Government tapped into the knowledge and expertise of the markets industry to identify the key issues that would support retail markets going forward.

The key issues were whittled down to three separate areas:

1. **A good practice guide:** highlighting areas of good practice and signposting users to sources of more detailed information.
2. **Market management:** examining the pros and cons of a range of different ways in which markets can be managed
3. **Business support:** 15 training modules and guides to support new and existing traders.

This summary document brings together our work in these three areas.

Realising the benefits

There are over 1,100 traditional retail markets and over 600 farmers markets operating in the UK today. Turnover is in excess of £3.5bn from 45,000 micro businesses supporting almost 100,000 jobs.

Markets offer the economic opportunity for aspiring entrepreneurs – at a low cost and risk. This new talent, especially in London, is often from migrant communities who bring a new flavour (often literally!) to markets, as well as becoming economically active in their local area.

They have a role to play in helping to build the 'Big Society' and the good practice guide gives examples of where markets are the hub around which the community revolves.

Markets also support environmental objectives, including through recycling and by promoting organic produce (particularly through farmers' markets); reduced travel miles for food (and customers) and more efficient packaging methods.

The CLG Select Committee Report on retail markets¹ recognised the need to share good practice, and recommended that the industry look in particular at how it can provide further good practice guidance and support. The good practice document therefore seeks to highlight such areas and signpost users to sources of more detailed information.

Managing markets

One of the key issues that has been identified as crucial to the viability and success of the market is the way in which the market itself is managed. The second report therefore examines this issue.

Although over half of all retail markets are operated by local councils, there are a number of different models in use across the UK, for example: private; trader-run; social enterprise and partnership models, to name but four.

Although the report provides information on, and examples of, alternative models, it does not advocate one form of market management over another. Its purpose is to help inform debate, so that the most appropriate management model can be identified and implemented at a local level.

This will support operators in reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of their market, but whatever model is considered, the operator will need to consider the implications of any market right issues and the extent to which an existing market's policy can be accommodated.

Business support: increasing turnover

The National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) has developed the first national programme of business support and best practice guidelines specifically aimed at market traders, to deliver help where it is most needed.

Working closely with traders and identifying their needs, the NMTF, hand-in-hand with the Retail Group, have devised a training package consisting of 15 modules and 15 guides for new and existing traders.

The NMTF 400 Programme is being launched to traders and the wider markets community at the beginning of October 2010. By offering practical assistance to established traders, as well as providing help and guidance to new start-ups, the Programme aims to create new employment opportunities in the markets industry as well as help secure existing jobs.

In addition, it is envisaged the business support will help traders to successfully tackle the fundamental issues of increasing sales, improving profit levels and providing excellent customer service in the face of increasingly difficult trading environments.

Further details can be found on the NMTF website.

¹ *Market Failure?: Can the traditional market survive?*, July 2009

Conclusion

The document on good practice is available at
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/publications/all/>

The document on market management models is available at
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/publications/all/>

Further details on the new training modules will be available on the NMTF website later this year – www.nmtf.co.uk

Together, the Government and the markets industry believe that the three products will support existing and potential traders so that they can continue to contribute to the rich variety of local life for many years to come.

Acknowledgements

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