



100 Ways to Help the High Street

A Tool-kit for Town Centres

ATCM
association of town centre management

Local Government
Improvement
and Development

The National
Skills Academy
RETAIL
Led by
skillsmart retail™

IPM
Institute of Place Management

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Introduction

100 Ways to Help the High Street is a collection of schemes which, if implemented in the right place at the right time, can have a positive affect for town centres. Some of these schemes are more ambitious than others, and some more expensive to put in place. However, with a variety of schemes covering different dimensions to the high street it is hoped that regardless of your town centre's size, regardless of whether you have developed a mature partnership and regardless of the size of the budget at your disposal you will find something here which is useful.

100 Ways to Help the High Street is primarily for town centre managers and local government. 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 may of these activities, success is achievable through cooperation.

With the UK home to a diverse range of town centres, it will be for town centre managers, officials of local government, elected members and anyone else leading high street rejuvenation to decide which mixture of these schemes would make a difference, and how those schemes should be implemented.

To ensure 100 Ways to Help the High Street is easy to follow, all schemes have been grouped into 8 sections:

- **Building a Sustainable Partnership**
- **Accessing the High Street**
- **Enhancing the Streetscape**
- **Place Identity, Branding and Experience**
- **Attracting New People and Businesses to the High Street and keeping the Old Ones**
- **The Safe and Secure High Street**
- **The Evening and Night-time Economy**
- **Training, Development and Accreditation**

Some case studies are included 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.

Building a Sustainable Partnership



Good town centre management is often dependent on strong partnership. However, strong partnerships are not easy to forge. Funding is often required to ensure the costs of a partnership can be met. Furthermore, the co-operation of different stakeholders is essential but, sometimes these stakeholders can have competing objectives. This section outlines what town centre managers can do to build the foundations for good partnerships, who can govern the high street with the interests of all stakeholders in mind.

one.

The Basics - Create a Partnership

Town centres are one of the few locations which are used by every section of the community. To ensure a high level of inclusivity representatives of all town centre user groups should be involved in developing a high street business plan. Representation might come from spheres as diverse as the economic, social, political, cultural, religious or educational. The resulting partnership might include:

- local authorities,
- retailers,
- shopping centre managers,
- landowners,
- employers,
- Chamber of Commerce,
- transport operators,
- the leisure and hospitality sector,
- media,
- police,
- residents,
- charities,
- community groups, and
- other working groups.

two.

Include a Member of the County Council in your Partnership

Including a member of the County Council in your partnership can have a myriad of benefits, including; partnership access to knowledge on the region, improved decision making, and strategic direction. The involvement of a County Council representative can also be useful when considering the relationship between neighbouring centres.

three.

Form a Membership Scheme

Membership schemes are being set up with businesses invited to become formal contributors in town centre management partnerships. For an annual fee they buy a share in the town centre management operation with the promise of a return in the form of an increase in forecast cash flow or business cost reductions at levels that exceed their subscription rate. Various incentives and opportunities can be provided but essentially services and discounts are offered which are exclusive to the membership. The service offering for members can differ depending on the needs of each town centre.

The more far-sighted partnerships have focused on ways to engage a broader representation of the business community both financially and by direct involvement via town-wide membership programs.

four.

Planning for a Healthy High Street

Evolution is an enduring featuring for many of our high streets. Often, the most positive evolution is that which is managed, grounded by strategic planning. It allows actors on the high street to be pro-active in the light of rapid change which can be forced upon town centres. A plan needs to identify the strategic priorities for a partnership over a 3 to 5 year period.

To write a good plan it will be important to review the internal factors affecting the high street such as resources available, size, character etc... This should be combined with a review of the external environment in order to identify a high street's aims and objectives. For those with little experience of writing business plans, it may be best to follow popular models to help guide the process. Use a 'SWOT' analysis for the internal review. This is a study of the high street's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Use a SLEPT analysis for the external review. This is a study of the Social, Legislative, Economic, Political and Technological factors that are affecting the high street. Finally, ensure all resulting objectives meet the SMART test. This means making sure they are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Orientated.

five.

Limited Company Status for Partnerships

By using limited company status, a partnership can be formalised and transformed into a legal entity. As well as creating a defined structure, this could have a number of other impacts including expanding the influence and credibility of the partnership and making it eligible for larger funding streams.

six.

Form a Business Improvement District

Business Improvement Districts, or BIDs, are a great tool for partnerships to raise money to improve the high street, especially in areas where local authorities do not have the resources needed to make the high street as attractive a proposition for consumers and investors as possible. BIDs involve charging businesses within a designated area a negotiated additional supplement on top of their existing business rates. A BID levy is typically compulsory, but can only be legally enforced once a majority of businesses vote to accept the BID's prospectus. This provides a framework for accountability which improves the operations of BIDs.

To make a BID more effective voluntary agreements with property owners could be negotiated. Many will be happy to contribute if the BID proposal is strong because a vibrant high street is also in their interest.

For more information, visit www.ukbids.org.

seven.

Building an Evidence Base to Monitor Performance

To be able to improve the performance of your town centre, you first need to construct a picture of what is actually happening. By selecting Key Performance Indicators, such as footfall, vacancy rates or local spend, you can quickly build an evidence base which informs you of the strengths and weaknesses of your town centre. Collecting this data over a number of years can tell you how your town centre is evolving and bring to light interesting trends. Knowing these trends is vital for a strategic approach to town centre management.

The Research Team at Skillsmart Retail regularly prepares and publishes authoritative reports, looking at different issues within retail, often with regional breakdowns. Recent research has included The Impact of Online Trading; Quantifying Perceptions of a Career in Retail; Skills Priorities for the Retail Sector and its Four Nations, as well as a series of regional background briefs. In-depth market intelligence will help you assess the sector as a whole and allow you to plan a way forward for your town.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

eight.

Keep in Touch with your Partnership

Continuous engagement with your partnership can help retain cooperation. Make sure you keep in touch with your partnership, especially to communicate your achievements. The media, emails, newsletters, performance panel reports, websites, lunches and meetings are all viable ways of keeping in touch. Ensuring that any dialogue is a two-way process is just as important. Membership surveys are a useful tool of achieving this by providing a feedback outlet.

One way this can be implemented is for the town centre partnership or local authority to have a physical presence on the high street by making the most of otherwise vacant property. Such a presence could act as a first point contact for stakeholders, deal with partnership enquiries face-to-face and even act as a vehicle for the distribution of certain local services.

nine.

Attracting Sponsorship

Town centres are good environments for companies to promote themselves. The key is matching specific business objectives to particular projects.

Be aware that companies have different reasons for sponsorship: brand awareness, charitable impulse, a source of customer information, community

and business to business involvement, new product launches, PR benefits, local staff loyalty, customer communication etc...

ten.

Apply for Funding

Widening the participation of different parts of the community in the high street is a social agenda valued by numerous local, regional, national and international bodies. Consequently, there will be plenty of opportunities to bid for funding where innovative ideas exist to enhance community cohesion.

case study

Remaking the Heart of Sheffield's City Centre

This ambitious project was made possible by a creative funding cocktail, which drew £130 million from the Millennium Commission, Central Government and European sources. It was designed to bring a vibrant new focus to Sheffield city centre, attracting jobs and investment through a sea change in the quality and sustainability of the public realm. A series of co-ordinated regeneration works began with the transformation of the city's Peace Gardens, creating an award-winning, busy and beautiful public space that set the tone for additional major improvements to the quality and attractiveness of the Town Hall Square and other central thoroughfares. The project's crowning glory is the spectacular Winter

Garden, a massive, arched, architectural icon which is the largest glasshouse in any European city centre, housing 2,500 exotic plants and supporting social enterprise through a number of associated business starter units.

eleven.

Learn from Others

Many town centres share common problems. Meetings and workshops attended by town centre managers, local authorities and elected members provide an environment where people can bounce ideas off each other, learn new approaches and bring fresh impetus to high streets can help to solve these problems.

Although town centre management might be a product of the UK, Britain does not hold a monopoly on progressive ideas to rekindle interest in the high street. Wherever possible Town Centre Managers should look to work with those abroad, through twinning schemes, funded projects or international events to learn about some of the fascinating schemes happening across the globe.

One opportunity for Town Centre Managers to do this is through ATCM's Summer School which takes place every year, bringing together individuals and partnerships in the industry to discuss themes common for many of our high streets.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

Accessing the High Street



Transport considerations are amongst some of the most important for town centres. With limited amounts of space, busy roads quickly become congested bringing hazards and pollution to open spaces. Yet, car users are a large and profitable market segment thanks to shifts in consumer lifestyles in recent decades. Therefore, town centres have to balance being car friendly with preserving an open, clean and safe environment for cyclists, pedestrians and users of public transport.

twelve.

Borrowing Private Car Parks

Town centres which struggle to meet the car parking needs of shoppers, could consider borrowing well located parking space from businesses and institutions in times when these organisations are closed. This measure can be used during busy shopping periods such as weekends and Bank Holidays.

thirteen.

Park and Ride

Park and Ride helps alleviate car-parking pressures in the town centre by promoting commuter parking on edge-of-town and out-of-town sites. This ensures that shoppers parking requirements can be met.

A successful Park and Ride scheme offers customers a suitable alternative to in-town parking. They should be located on the main routes into the town and must be prominently signed. The cost of Park & Ride should be competitive compared with town centre car parks and the service must be frequent.

Park and Ride routes should also be integrated with railway stations and other major public transport interchanges to offer commuters a viable alternative to driving and parking in the centre.

fourteen.

Replacing Pay and Display Car Parks with Barrier Operated Systems

A significant percentage of car crime happens in car parks. To improve the security of vehicles, Pay and Display car parks could be replaced by barrier operated ones? This removes the need for car owners to publicly display a return time on the windscreen which opportunist thieves may take advantage of. This also reduces the chances of a vehicle leaving the car park without its owner and their ticket.

Furthermore, if a customer uses Pay and Display they must predict how long their shopping trip will take. An enjoyable visit could be brought to a hasty end to avoid a parking fine which results in loss of income for town centre businesses. A barrier operated system allows the customer greater flexibility.

A barrier operated system would not necessarily incur costs from employing a car park attendant. A “payment on foot” policy where the customer obtains a ticket on arrival and then pays at a self-service machine on their return to the car park removes the need for barriers to be manned.

fifteen.

Displaying Real Time Parking Information

Real time electronic parking information, can significantly assist the flow of traffic and lessen customer frustration. These systems could promote alternative car parking as popular and convenient parks reach capacity.

sixteen.

Linking a Town Centre Together

Helping people to move around inner town and city centres quickly and easily can be a good way of encouraging visitors and increasing footfall in areas which might not be a regular destination for many. This can be especially helpful in larger centres where people may be put off carrying shopping longer distances.

case study

Manchester Metroshuttle



Manchester city centre is linked together by its free city centre bus service, the Metroshuttle. In operation since 2002, the Metroshuttle consists of three routes that traverse the city centre, linking the city's major thoroughfares and stations with its main commercial, financial and cultural districts.

The Metroshuttle is a partnership between the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive, Manchester City Council, National Car Parks and the property developer Allied London, and is partially supported by advertising. The service is completely free and does not require any tickets or passes. It costs approximately £1.2million a year to operate. Similar smaller scale schemes are in operation in nearby Bolton and Stockport.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

seventeen.

Unifying Public Transport

A holistic review of public transport followed by genuine integration on everything from infrastructure to branding could offer visitors a viable alternative to the car. A unified transport system for the town centre depends on high levels of cooperation between transport operators but can have a significant affect on convenience for shoppers and commuters.

Transport for London have utilised this method to great effect with the introduction of the Oyster Card – a pay as you go card which can be used to travel on any public transport in London by simply scanning it as you enter and depart stations or vehicles.

The Oyster Card offers cheaper transport than standard fares and makes it easy for people to move around the city without the need for numerous paper tickets. Whilst a scheme of this nature requires significant planning and investment, for larger cities a similar incorporative transport card could be something to consider.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

eighteen.

Shopmobility

Shopmobility is a service that can help those who consider themselves to have mobility problems make the most of the town centre experience. Whether a person suffers from a disability, injury or illness, Shopmobility can help them get around a town centre as well as take advantage of the local services on offer. A Shopmobility scheme can work well when integrated with public transport and disabled car parking spaces.

For more information, visit www.shopmobility.org.uk.

nineteen.

Maximising 'Gateway' Opportunities

Bus stations, train stations, car parks and key pedestrian routes into the high street are all gateways to the town centre. Use these entry points to promote what tourist, cultural and retail attractions your town centre has to offer. Town maps and visitor information should be made available at these points.

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 town centre managers, local authorities and elected members can do about the quality of the spaces between buildings and the furniture and equipment that occupies these spaces. There are a number of different components which work together to create a streetscape which ideally will be unique to the town, while also being clean and orderly, avoiding clutter and dereliction. These include landscaping, lighting, paving, planting, public art and effective signposting.

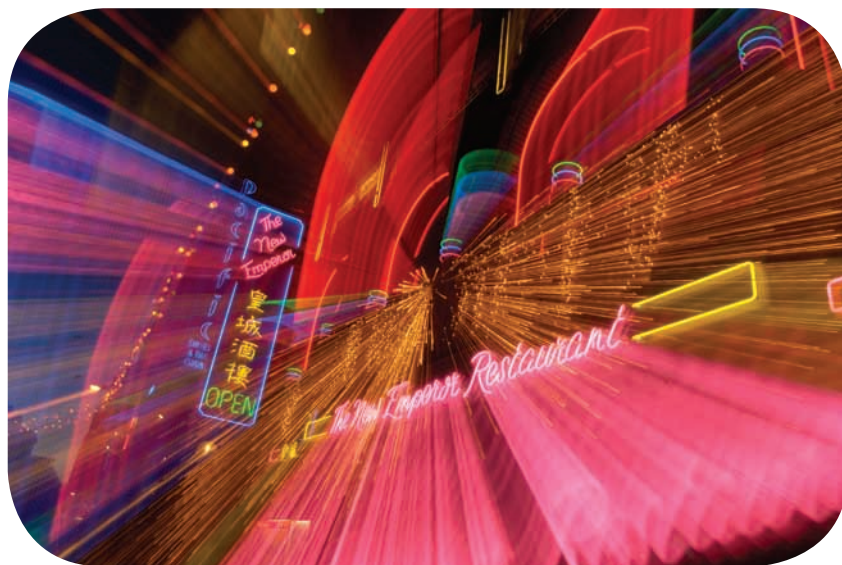
twenty.

General Design Guide

A design guide or streetscape manual for a town centre is desirable. It typically sets out policies and practices for coordinating the design, choice of materials, management criteria and quality of workmanship for a town centre's streets, pavements and public squares. It also brings together the activities of all the different agencies who have a responsibility for delivering a service affecting the appearance of the streets. It is a statement of agreed policies and practices which can infuse some order and strategy into the complex processes by which a streetscape both evolves and is maintained.

twenty one.

Strategy for Illuminating the Public Realm



There are broadly three types of lighting in town centres: street lighting for safety and convenience; decorative lighting for special occasions such as Christmas or Diwali; and public lighting which may be used to accentuate important buildings, spaces or monuments in a more permanent way. The floodlighting of important or interesting buildings is quite common, and normally occurs according to the inclination of the individual owner. However, because architecturally or socially important buildings may not necessarily have owners who are willing or able to undertake a lighting scheme, it is important to develop a public lighting strategy which can add much to the appeal of a town centre at night.

twenty two.

Creating Coherent Fascias

Shopfronts are an important part of the streetscape, providing colour and an overall sense of the quality and diversity of a town. In order to create a sense of cohesion, it is important to develop design guidelines to assist building owners and architects. Shopfronts should relate visually to the overall design of the building. Without this, a high street can appear cluttered and advertising signs can obscure the architectural uniqueness of the building. The design of each shopfront may vary, but the presence of consistent elements in every shopfront will create an impression that the street is complete.

twenty three.

Pedestrian Signposting

Traffic signs have to conform to national standards governing their colour, size and position, but pedestrian signs do not. Pedestrians also have more time to read street signs which means more scope to make them imaginative and interesting. Good quality street signs look attractive and convey their information easily, often with clear symbols and few words.

Increasingly, towns which have refurbished or upgraded their signposts have sought sponsorship from the private sector, enabling higher quality signs to be purchased in return for the incorporation of a small logo.

case study

Capital Streets Project in Edinburgh

The Castle Street project was the first of a series of public realm improvements undertaken through a city centre management Capital Streets project to improve the quality of streets and spaces in order to enhance the city centre experience and generate economic activity. Supported by funding from the City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian, the work aimed to increase footfall, whilst improving the amenity of the space for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors. A new road surface was laid using granite setts and Caithness flags, along with new street furniture and improved lighting. Power pods were included in the infrastructure to enable activation of the street for events, an essential facility to ensure that enhanced spaces achieve their full potential and reduce opportunities for crime by providing a people-friendly environment.

Castle Street's location within Edinburgh's World Heritage site demanded extensive consultation with conservation bodies, residents and other agencies throughout the city, ensuring that everyone had an opportunity to participate in the design process. The outcome has exceeded expectations, both by creating an extremely attractive streetscape and generating very positive feedback across the spectrum of city centre stakeholders. Controlled vehicular access and the restoration of a quality streetscape has made walking and exploring the whole area a more pleasant and satisfying experience.

twenty four.

Streetcare Audits

A streetcare audit identifies what type of improvements are required in the public realm to make it a more attractive and unified place. This could be the removal of unnecessary street signs, graffiti and flyposting, repainting of street furniture and cleansing of underpasses. A streetcare audit can help town centre managers to prioritise which street improvements to undertake first as finite resources usually prohibits all of them being undertaken simultaneously.

twenty five.

Removing Clutter

Clutter is a term to describe the affect of redundant street signs and visually discordant objects which collectively define the street scene. Clutter accumulates as pavements collect additional pieces of equipment and signs over time. Clutter has the affect of reducing the individuality of a town centre, making a street scene look confusing and shabby. Clutter cannot be dealt with in a piecemeal fashion, since to remove only one unnecessary object at a time will lack impact. Following a streetcare audit redundant objects could be removed in a 'clutter blitz'.

Clutter ought also to be minimised through the imaginative positioning of

necessary items. For example, it may be possible to attach signs and street lights to buildings, and careful planning can minimise the number of separate street signs.

In circumstances where landowners may be responsible for clutter then local authorities have the power to ensure they are responsible for the clean up of an area under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. For guidance on this please visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

twenty six.

Installation of 'On-the-Go' Recycling Zones

Recycling is becoming a part of the daily routine for many people. The installation of an On-the-Go Recycling Zone designed for post-consumer waste can provide an image for a town centre that is clean, attractive and environmentally friendly. Although there are costs to installing a recycling zone, service costs associated with traditional landfill activities can be reduced in the long term.

case study

Cardiff's Thanksbank

This project was devised by city centre management in association with Cardiff City Council, the Keep Wales Tidy campaign and a range of private sector

partners as an innovative and direct way to engage with the growing population that chooses to live in the city centre. It featured a unique process of recycling, designed specifically to meet the needs of a highly populated area of the city centre. Key locations were chosen to house recycling facilities branded 'Thanksbanks.' A unique circular drum design based around a multi-pole facility, the banks were introduced to high customer flow areas throughout the main shopping parades to encourage recycling by the residents and visitors alike and provide an effective means of collection. The facility and its associated branding campaign has demonstrated increased public awareness of environmental issues generally, as well as promoting the benefits of recycling among city centre residents. As a result, more waste is now recycled than deposited in standard litter bins and recycling in the city centre has increased by 43%.

twenty seven.

Window Dressing for Vacant Property

The image of boarded up shops and permanent shutters do not offer positive perceptions of high streets. However, the streetscape does not need to be dogged by boarded up shops, even if there are vacant properties. With the property owner's consent, vacant properties can display high quality images which enliven the streetscape. With additional planning consent, shop windows could be used to display advertising that can bring in a small revenue stream for property owners. The overall result is a high street which avoids the image of run down shops making it a more attractive prospect for those wanting to rent commercial property.

twenty eight.

Graffiti Removal Scheme

Graffiti is an illegal and anti-social activity that, in general, can create negative impressions of an area contributing to peoples' perceptions of crime. Belfast City Centre Management launched a novel scheme to help tackle the problem. The scheme offers all property tenants a free graffiti removal kit comprising of graffiti wipes and protective gloves. The idea is that businesses are keen to avoid images associated with graffiti, and so with a little help, will willingly keep their own premises graffiti free. Therefore, the manpower required to keep an entire town centre cleansed of graffiti can be shared resulting in a low cost initiative. Improving the appearance of the area may consequently have a positive effect on visitor numbers and crime perception levels.

twenty nine.

Litter Wardens

If litter is a big problem in your town centre, it may be worth considering employing litter wardens. Whilst this type of scheme is generally suited to larger places, smaller areas may find scope for incorporating aspects of the job into existing employee roles. The litter warden patrols the streets, ensuring that both the public and businesses are disposing of waste responsibly. If anyone is caught breaking the law, fixed penalty notices can be issued – in addition, the

presence of litter wardens represents a key deterrent for people who drop litter or illegally dump.

thirty.

Dedicated Cigarette Bins

Although not a new development, cigarette bins can be extremely useful for maintaining a clean environment. Most bins are small in size and can be wall mounted, meaning they are discrete and do not act as an eyesore on the public realm. They are fairly cheap to obtain (a standard wall mountable cigarette bin costs in the region of £100), and they will provide years of service thanks to their fire-proof metal construction.

thirty one.

First Impressions Exercise

The first impressions exercise has been developed by ATCM as a means of gaining a clear understanding of a town centre's strengths and weaknesses, as seen by other town centre managers. ATCM guide the scheme, matching participating towns and providing templates for evaluation. If you are unsure of how your town is perceived, this could be a good cost-effective way of finding out. It also presents the opportunity for working with other towns and making new contacts.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

thirty two.

Improvement of Planting and Floral Displays

Planting in town centres is central to sustainable development and regeneration, introducing seasonal colour to urban settings. Trees can be used to enclose public spaces, providing movement, colour and contrast, and bringing a different quality of light to a street. However, they take time to grow so their affect is not immediate, and young trees are both expensive and vulnerable to vandalism and disease.

Effective planting should take account of the local environment. It is essential that care be taken over the species of trees which are planted since some trees can damage property, block out light and obstruct views as they mature. If well trimmed, trees can also be a visual asset during the winter and therefore should be pruned so as to preserve their basic branch structure.

In the short term, flower baskets can provide splashes of colour throughout town centres during the summer months. It is very important that these are carefully maintained, as neglected baskets quickly start to look unpleasant.

thirty three.

Using Public Art

Public art encompasses a wide cross section of physical forms, including sculptures and murals, shop signs and window displays, paving patterns and street furniture. These features can add humour, colour, movement and talking points for a town centre. Art in public places can be figurative or literal, walked through as well as walked around, tactile as well as robust, live and interactive or still and passive, and permanent or temporary.

Successful public art should relate in some way to the setting in which it is placed, contributing to a sense of place by reinforcing existing themes and character. In this way it will be easily accepted, owned and enjoyed by a wide audience of town centre users.

case study

Art at the Centre of Reading

This project forms part of Reading Borough Council's 'Art at the Centre' programme, an Arts Council England initiative which aims to involve artists in regenerating the city centre by exploring different ways to influence the spirit of the places in which people live, work and play. Known as 'Dwelling,' the artwork introduces a new element of lighting to stained glass panes installed in the

upper windows of city centre buildings of historical and architectural interest. It draws attention to this element of the city's heritage by using specially made light boxes, each controlled by an astronomical clock to intensify the coloured glass from the street with a consistently bright glow. The effect is to punctuate the area with irregular points of light and colour, providing a permanent piece of public art that links the city's recently restored Museum and Art Gallery with a new mixed use development and adds a unique flavour that will attract visitors and investors alike.

thirty four.

Town Trail

Signposts are particularly important for tourists who may be visiting a place for the first time. An effective option for tourists is the creation of a 'town trail', which provides a route through the town calling at the major visitor attractions and heritage sites. This can be marked out either with signposts or with paving stones. In addition to directional signs pointing the way to visitor attractions, heritage plaques which offer a brief explanation of the historical interest of a building or area can enhance both visitor enjoyment and the physical appearance of an area.


case study

The Kirkcaldy Art Trail



With the aim of inspiring and encouraging people to visit different areas of the town centre, Fife Council introduced the Kirkcaldy art trail at the beginning of 2010. 'Art in Shop Windows' was a creative initiative which transformed eight empty shop windows in Kirkcaldy town centre into works of art.

Beginning on the intersection between Whytes Causeway and the High Street, the trail went north onto Esplanade before coming full circle onto Hunter Street. An art trail leaflet was produced, providing a map and information on the displays which feature a diverse range of art works, from coloured doilies to a creative display using items washed up along the Kirkcaldy coastline.



The idea was spearheaded by Fife Council Development Services and a group of local professional artists, Blacksand Contemporary Arts. A temporary drop-in gallery and workshop was created in the middle of the High Street for the duration of the project. This provided a place where the public could meet the artists who have created the artwork in the windows. Art enthusiasts were able to benefit from a tour of the windows by the artists on scheduled days.

A series of art based workshops for children and adults were also held over the course of the exhibition. This initiative was consequently very popular with town centre users of all ages.

thirty five.

Alfresco Dining



In areas with a concentration of bars, cafés, and restaurants with informal arrangements for outdoor dining, why not pool together the resources of local businesses to invest in unified; screening, branding and high quality furniture. By combining these resources with an effort to reduce street nuisances and anti-social behaviour a pleasant and attractive destination for outdoor dining can be created which could prove a key footfall generator during the summer and autumn months.

Place Identity, Branding and Experience



We cannot interact with the high street in the same way we interact with a product brought off the shelf. In contrast to an item, every scent, sight and sound contributes to a unique and personal experience on the high street which cannot be standardised. It is impossible for town centre managers to dictate, or predict what type of experience each visitor may have because there are so many disparate elements which make up a high street. This section has a collection of schemes to help champions of the high street do what they can to make every experience a memorable one for all the right reasons.

thirty six.

Street Parades and Stage Shows

Although there are a lot of consultative, management, security and practical considerations, creating a carnival atmosphere through Street Parades and Stage Shows on the high street can be a great way for significantly increasing footfall and bringing colour into a town centre. One element to making an open-air parade or show a success is choosing a unique theme which reflects positively on the character and history of the town. Another is to ensure the event meets the needs of the local demographic.

thirty seven.

Community Workshops

Hosting workshops on the high street could be a good way of bringing a community together. By using themes of interest to specific communities, for example local heritage, ethnic cookery or workshops for kids, then a great deal of interest could be developed. There may be some businesses on the high street who would be willing to lend their premises to such a good cause, especially if this reflects well on the image of the business as well as the image of the town centre as a whole.

case study

Wood Green: International Short Film Festival

Wood Green in north London needed an event to change its image and win more positive press. As a film fan and filmmaker the town centre manager thought the best way to achieve this would be through the magic of cinema, and in 2003 the Wood Green International Short Film Festival was launched as a one-day event. By year three it was selling out within minutes of opening and now attracts short films from all over the world.

Film festivals have traditionally taken place in more affluent places, but in previous years economically depressed Wood Green has now proved the potential for an initiative to both change local perceptions and become a highly respected international event in its own right. This success is reflected in the number of external partners wanting to take part now and in the future.

For more information, visit www.woodgreenfilmfestival.co.uk.

thirty eight.

Entertaining the Kids

In the spirit of being welcoming to all, town centre managers and local authorities must remember that an adult's experience of the high street is not the only one that is important. Kids are the decision makers of the future and entertaining them

will do wonders for drawing in young families. There are plenty of imaginative events which could be hosted to keep children occupied.

case study

Easter Hops – Jump into Poole this Easter

Poole Town Centre Management brought together a wide range of partners from the public sector, private sector and the faith community to organise and promote a unique Easter celebration, incorporating entertainment and themed decorations. “Easter Hops” was designed as a free family event, centred on the creation of an ‘urban zoo’ with rabbits, new born lambs, guinea pigs and baby chicks. A large marquee was installed in a main shopping and entertainment square. The whole area was decorated in yellow and green garlands and floral displays around the town followed the chosen colour template of yellow, white, green and orange.

An Easter Continental Market was staged on the High Street and several supplementary events were organised around the town, including appearances by Scooby Doo and Angelina Ballerina, an Easter Bunny Hunt, an Easter arts project for children and performances by the brass section of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. By working closely with Churches Together in Poole, the events were linked to a number of religious celebrations and services. As well as promoting local arts and culture, the event delivered a marked improvement in footfall. Town centre counters showed that 500,000 people passed on to the High Street over the two-week event period compared with an average 300,000

for a typical fortnight. The local shopping centre recorded a 4.6% rise in footfall over the Easter week.

thirty nine.

Reversing Decline of Existing Markets

The market is one of the oldest forms of retailing and the origin of many of today's high streets. Although they have been a cornerstone of retailing for hundreds of years, many traditional markets are suffering from a lack of investment and nurturing. Not only do town centre managers need to ensure that the highest calibre of entrepreneurs are running markets but also that basic infrastructure is provided where necessary such as toilet facilities, credit card payment systems and refrigeration for fresh produce.

forty.

Introduction of New Markets

Far from being in decline, there are many new markets which have become gems of the retail sector, encouraging high footfall and astonishing growth rates. These small businesses are as diverse and as innovative as the people who run them. The UK is now home to a selection of farmers, craft, ethnic, continental and other specialist markets which add colour to the high street. By introducing new, well managed markets an extra dimension can be added to

your retail offer.

The strategic positioning of new markets can be used to bring footfall to areas of the town centre that do not traditionally get as many visitors, enticing people to explore what the town centre has to offer off the beaten track. This could make better use of public spaces in areas outside of the retail core that do not receive the same footfall levels as more prominent locations.

case study

Barking's African Showcase



African Showcase is a London-based market festival that travels from borough to borough, presenting and promoting a variety of African art and culture including textiles, fashion, the visual arts, dance and food. Recently they have built a strong working relationship with Barking and Dagenham Town Centre Management, who they feel support the concept and have provided both physical and financial support. It is based on the traditional African concept of the 'Market Square', featuring a day of trading and celebration that would have been attended by all of the neighbouring townspeople. As well as the market stalls, a central stage features entertainment from bands to fashion shows. Barking and Dagenham is home to communities from all over the world and the council believes that holding international markets is an excellent way of celebrating those communities. A programme of speciality events including

French and Italian markets has been held since 2004, and the African Showcase was a response to the large and growing African community in the borough.

forty one.

Introduction of a Crèche

Young families may be put off visiting the high street because of the inconvenience of navigating their way around with children. Yet, a key remit of the high street is to be inclusive. By making a crèche available, ensuring it is well managed and promoted, those with young families could be tempted to the high street giving the town centre access to an important market segment and allowing parents to enjoy the town centre experience knowing their children are well looked after.

forty two.

Visible Collection Boxes

Aggressive begging can be a particularly difficult problem for town centres to face. On the one hand there is a desire to make a visitor feel as safe and secure as possible while, on the other, not losing sight of the genuine hardships disadvantaged people such as the homeless, face. One approach to this is to use visible collection boxes on the high street. If the money collected is distributed by local charities in the right way, to those whom it is intended, then aggressive begging can be greatly reduced.

It is important that the people who will be relied on to contribute are informed

of where the money is going and how this helps to make the high street a better place.

forty three.

Charitable Donations

A charitable high street can foster goodwill amongst local communities and many other stakeholders. Not only can donations reflect well on the character and image of a town centre but there have also been examples where people have been willing to contribute more to the high street, (both in time and money) because the high street itself represents a worthy cause.

One good way of directly linking customer spend to charitable donations is through a loyalty card system whereby a small percentage of revenue is earmarked for a cause of the town's choosing.

forty four.

Creating a Sense of Place through Narratives

Creating narratives for your town can invoke a sense of place. Narratives for your town could be based on anything from history to heritage, from local celebrities to famous local inventions, from grand architecture to the natural landscape. You cannot rely solely on the development of an interesting narrative but must

also find an imaginative way for your town centre to convey the story. A place story can be brought to life through plaques, monuments, art or on-line media. This could be developed using ideas from residents, schools, community groups and artists.



case study

Broad Street's Walk of the Stars



In January 2007 the idea for the Birmingham Walk of Stars was conceived as a Hollywood style pavement attraction, to honour Birmingham's homegrown stars and to raise the profile of the Broad Street BID. In order to make a credible impact the scheme needed some famous names, but rather than installing a number of plaques in one go it was felt by all partners that the scheme would have a stronger 'uniqueness' and long term potential if each star attended an individual ceremony. Rock musician Ozzy Osbourne and comedian Jasper Carrott were approached, and following negotiations to outline the scheme's credibility dates were agreed for them to appear at their own Walk of Stars induction ceremonies in July and September 2007. These were attended jointly by over 20,000 people, with over 100 worldwide media present.

The outcome was a spectacular event independently assessed as having a media value of £1.72M. The Walk of Stars has become a popular attraction in Birmingham city centre and presents something very different from Broad

Street's usual offering of late night drinking establishments.

For more information, visit www.walkofstars.net.

forty five.

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is the name given to a new era in on-line activity. No longer is the Internet just a forum which institutions can talk to people. Web 2.0 means even those Internet users with little technical knowledge can talk back, talk to each other and be heard. For a high street it means the creation of brand identities are longer the sole preserve of the town centre manager as conversations across the Internet can overpower any formal co-ordinated marketing campaigns. This is a great challenge for town centre managers but also a great opportunity for those who can embrace the technology and lead the conversation.

Social networking on the Internet means you can open a dialogue with all kinds of stakeholders from major investors to individual consumers, keeping them informed and being kept informed of a range of developments and opinions. Web 2.0 can mobilise social opinion and social action for the good of the high street.

Activists in the town of Dunstable have been influential in this respect, creating Facebook and Twitter accounts which supporters are invited to join. Updates are linked to the Dunstable website, meaning multiple platforms are kept up to

date constantly, which in turn keeps the public informed of developments in the town. In turn, public opinion on specific events or on the town in general can be garnered informally, acting as a very cost effective form of market research. Facebook, Twitter and many other social networking tools are free to set up, and require minimal technical knowledge, yet their value can be great.

For more information, visit www.longlivedunstable.com.

forty six.

Communicate your Achievements

Communicating achievements is a key part of ongoing success, and allows you to build on previously generated good publicity. If you are finding it difficult to generate the right publicity in the right places, including a representative from the local media on your steering group is a good way of ensuring that information regarding your successes is communicated as widely as possible.

forty seven.

Make a Town Centre an Attractive Proposition for Residents

It can be easy to forget that a town centre is not just about shopping, café culture and the evening economy. With the right kind of development it can also be a great place to live, bringing people to the heart of the action. By remembering to ensure that your town centre is as viable for residents as it is for consumers then a lot could be achieved. Each resident, with the high street on their doorstep is likely to make the most of local services, insulating your town centre against the threat of out-of-town developments and internet shopping.

The ‘Managing District Centres in Northwest Europe’ project has highlighted how residents can be made to feel ‘at home’ in a town centre. Participants, Hagen City Council, based in the Northwest Germany, appointed a co-ordinator of residential services to ensure dwellers had access to whatever they needed. The co-ordinator acts as a caretaker on behalf of the town centre residents ensuring they have a first point of contact for any problems they may encounter.

For more information, visit www.district-management.eu.

Attracting New People and Businesses to the High Street and Keeping the Old Ones



The wealth of commercial destinations available today means it is no longer enough to expect people to turn up on the high street. Effort has to go into getting the basics right to make any high street the primary destination for people and business. There are many schemes that can act as the building blocks to constructing a viable place for people to trade, employ and reside. Here are a select few.

forty eight.

Developing a General Town Centre Website

The rapid growth of the Internet means having a functional, visually pleasing and user friendly website is a basic requirement for the marketing effort of all town centres. This can transform your town centre from one that is promoted to a few thousand people locally, to a global brand.

A website can be used to keep people up-to-date with the services on offer and special events taking place. Businesses can contribute to the costs of building and maintaining the website through advertising. A good website would even allow businesses to keep their own offers up-to-date through a modern 'Content Management System' which could reduce staffing costs. This would provide each business with a unique login so they could up-date their own section of the website.

forty nine.

Virtual Tour of the High Street

A user's interaction with a town centre on-line can be increased through a virtual tour. This allows users to view 3D images of the town centre to simulate walking down the high street, entering shops and leisure facilities.

The costs of developing a virtual tour can be reduced by allowing businesses to gain a greater prominence on the site in return for financial contributions. Furthermore, property owners could be asked to contribute in return for virtual tours in vacant units, allowing them to promote their property effectively.

fifty.

On-Line Town Centre Shopping

One of the biggest challenges facing the high street is Internet retailing which is widely assumed to have latent growth potential. Town centres may be able to combat this by pooling together resources to offer a home delivery service on the behalf of all locally based businesses. With unified branding, a dedicated on-line shopping portal and investment in high quality infrastructure and management to allow for home delivery, town centres can meet the challenges of Internet retailing head on.

fifty one.

Free Wi-Fi Hotspots

Whether for personal, leisure or business reasons, many people want to have continuous connectivity to the World Wide Web, even when on the move. Increasingly, it is seen as vital for the 21st century town centre to offer this through dedicated Wi-Fi hotspots. This could give town centres a competitive

edge over other commercial centres as Internet access is becoming an important part of the decision making process for the choice of destination for individuals and businesses.

fifty two.

Town Centre Loyalty Card

Due to technological progression loyalty cards are growing more sophisticated in delivering a flexible offer. Town centres now have the capacity to bring together all providers of consumer services to offer a loyalty card that rewards customers with discounts for shopping locally. These discounts can be varied depending on the level and frequency of spend. Businesses can retain the ability to dictate the levels of discounts offered by their individual stores through rented card readers.

Loyalty cards can encourage repeat shopping visits in many other ways, not just discounts from shops. Through the use of a bonus points system, loyalty card users could be given discounts on car parking, public transport, sporting or cultural events. This could be a useful way of linking town centre shopping with other amenities which allow visitors to benefit from a wider and much more convenient experience of the high street.

The town centre of Dundalk has harnessed the possibilities offered by the modern day loyalty card through a gift card scheme. To find out more about this initiative please visit www.dundalktccm.ie.

fifty three.

Empty Property Scheme

In areas where vacancy rates are high during downturns in the economy there is a need to bring property owners and entrepreneurs together to create a scheme where both stakeholders can be protected long-term. During a recession newer businesses, especially ones with higher start up costs, will be priced out of the market stifling economic recovery. Meanwhile, property owners will suffer a double hit, paying rates on empty properties, plus a fall in the value of vacant units as this value is dependent on rental income.

An Empty Property Scheme could persuade high street property owners to rent long-term vacant properties at a set discounted rate (for example 20% of the advertised market value), for a short-term period of up to three years. When this time frame elapses, tenants are given the first refusal of leasing the unit at full market value. By this time, if the rental market has recovered the property owner can be confident of leasing in much more favourable conditions.

During the short-term tenancy, the new business would have been given time to develop with a lower cost base providing it with a much better chance of long-term survival. For the property owner, not only are rates paid for by the tenant during the length of the contract but the temporary nature of the short tenancy contract as an 'inducement' means there is no fall in the book value of the property. An Empty Property Scheme during difficult economic conditions

can support long-term financial viability.

Such a scheme has been launched by the Mayor of London for businesses and property owners in the capital city. 'London New Enterprise' not only offers a boost to the city's economy but could also serve as a template for other local authorities to utilise. For more information on London New Enterprise visit www.londonnewenterprise.co.uk.

fifty four.

Offering Incubator Units

There are many institutions around the UK transforming available space into incubator units for entrepreneurs to build their businesses with the assistance of low cost office space. Organisations in and around the town centre could do the same including shopping centres, office blocks and universities. New businesses with low start-up costs could one day flourish and become fresh sources of employment and the cornerstones of the local economy for a town centre.

fifty five.

Community Ownership of Businesses

In smaller centres, there will inevitably not be as many local services available. Every service takes on a greater role in binding a community together. During

tough economic conditions, operating certain services may be too much of a burden for a sole trader and not an attractive proposition for larger businesses. Regardless such services remain fundamental to the functioning of that community. In these circumstances the potential exists for the community to share the burden of running its own business, whether it be a pub, a post office or a leisure centre. If the service offers an important social function, then social models of ownership may be more sustainable in the long-term.

fifty six.

Temporary Pop-up Services

Temporary businesses can be set-up (and taken down again) in order to create a stir on the high street. Bars, cafes, restaurants, art galleries or even shops could be opened using temporary units such as stalls or could even, with a property owner's permission, occupy vacant units in return for pop-up owners helping to meet the costs of rates.

As temporary businesses, risk is not so much of a factor for entrepreneurs. With low overheads they are able to experiment with service offerings providing an opportunity for more creative and daring businesses to capture people's imagination. As the hype settles and the novelty wanes the temporary business could disappear and be replaced with something new. With the right mix of fascinating pop-ups it could also be a key footfall driver. Low property costs could make this something to be considered in times of recession.

The temporary pop-up could also be used as a form of incubator to hone the management talents of potential entrepreneurs allowing them to continuously experiment with new offers. By working in partnership with the Jobcentre Plus, pop-up businesses could provide short, bite-sized learning experiences for managers, employees and those seeking pre-employment training. Similar enterprises have been piloted as part of the National Skills Academy for Retail by members in Sheffield and Birmingham and have proved successful.

fifty seven.

Entrepreneurial Competition for Incubator Space

Expanding on the idea of incubator space for young businesses, implementing an open, competitive process can have many benefits. Firstly, the quality of entrepreneurs given the opportunity to benefit from low cost space to trade is likely to be higher. Secondly, by working with the local media, positive publicity can be achieved raising awareness of efforts to support business development in the guise of something like 'Dragon's Den' or 'The Apprentice'. Thirdly, by involving property owners who are having difficulty with leasing a number of units, an agreement could be negotiated whereby they offer the incubator space in return for publicity which helps them to promote other units.

Such a scheme is being successfully implemented in a number of places including a partnership between The Mall and the National Skills Academy for Retail. With 20 shopping centres across England and Scotland, including Lakeside and The

Metrocentre, The Mall is the largest specialist owner and operator of retail space in the UK. Its Make Your Mark in Retail competition is designed especially for any small retail business hoping to grow with one business benefiting from six months free trading in one of its shopping centres each year. As well as free trading space, the winner receives free business banking for two years, access to a business relationship manager, a place on a National Skills Academy for Retail masterclass and a ticket to the Oxford Summer School. Retailers on your high street may want to think about entering future competitions.

A similar competition for market traders is also being co-ordinated by the Retail Markets Alliance called Make Your Market for Markets in which trading facilities are available free for six months for successful applicants.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

fifty eight.

Building Upon Existing Footfall Generators

Footfall generators are the magnets that draw people into a town centre, such as late-night shopping, cinemas, theatres, restaurants, pubs and clubs, sports centres and bingo halls. Once people have been drawn in, it is important that key attractions are supported by a wide range of complimentary services that make people want to stay, and visit again. This could include promotional initiatives with special offers linking together a series of activities. For example, discounts could be offered to cinema goers who decide to include a trip to a wine bar or restaurant with their film.

fifty nine.

Branding Elements of your Town Centre

Many town centres may have existing strengths which themes can be developed around. These strengths can have huge potential for the focusing of branding and marketing, not just to regular visitors but also to a much wider market. It may be that a particular street or area of the town centre can in itself be branded as a destination if it is renowned for a specific offer which is a footfall driver.

case study

Style Birmingham

This project was designed to promote Birmingham's official status as the 'best shopping destination in the UK outside London's West End' through a high quality fashion offer that would inspire customers to make repeated and more frequent visits. Led by Retail Birmingham, a city centre partnership working group comprising all major shopping centres, department stores, major retailers and markets, Style Birmingham aimed to elevate fashion from the pavements of the city centre onto the catwalk. It was built around three distinct, closely linked elements: a dedicated website at www.stylebirmingham.com, a high quality magazine, distributed to 100,000 target homes in the city's wider catchment area and Style Birmingham: The Show - a professionally produced catwalk event that showcased the best of Birmingham's fashion offer – from designer

outfits and exclusive handmade jewellery to high street fashion on a budget.

A highly effective publicity campaign led to a sell-out event for the show generating more than six times the original investment by the city centre partnership and a media return of more than sixteen times the investment. A huge success in its own right, Style Birmingham has also delivered an extremely positive message about the city as a whole with its innovative approach that presented new talent and 'Made in Birmingham' alongside luxury brands from Harvey Nichols and Selfridges.

sixty.

Marketing with Neighbouring Town Centres

For town centre partnerships with limited marketing and promotional resources the option of working with nearby town centres may be an attractive one. The Rhonda Cynon Taff area in South Wales is a good example of this. Eight town centres in the area took a joined-up approach to their marketing effort, creating a comprehensive response to competition from other nearby towns and out-of-town shopping outlets.

Another benefit of working with nearby centres is that it can be useful for adding weight to any proposals for sponsoring, funding or investment.

sixty one.

Turning Empty Shops into Temporary Art Galleries

One way of keeping empty units active and lively until a new tenant moves in is to install temporary art galleries. These galleries present the opportunity for local artists to feature their work in prominent locations, engaging the public whilst contributing to the vitality of the town centre, which would otherwise be adversely affected by the empty shops. By creating a partnership often involving agents, landlords and artists, this type of scheme can have a really strong impact in towns of any size.

sixty two.

Getting the Right Mix of Businesses



Whatever short-term trends may affect the high street, planning for the right mix of businesses is an important long-term consideration. Town centre managers, local authorities and elected members must carefully consider what use is allocated to property, reviewing the ratio of everything from retail stores to banks, restaurants to take-aways or even night clubs to charity shops. Their location in primary, secondary and tertiary areas must also be taken into account. If the mix is right then a vibrant and profitable high street can be created which, to some extent, is recession proof.

The difficulty here is that there is no set template for the mix of businesses which can be suggested. Factors such as customer profiles, market segmentation and your high street's positioning within the region will all impact on the appropriate mix of businesses. What should remain true for any high street is that a long-term plan is in place and is flexible enough to accommodate natural evolution.

sixty three.

Cheque Book Promotion

This scheme involves the creation of an exclusive 'cheque book' which is designed to encourage more shoppers to the town centre by providing a range of special offers from local retailers. Cheques bearing details of individual offers are produced by town centre traders and incorporated into a cheque book. The book is then distributed free of charge to local residents and employers.

When a cheque book promotion was introduced by Woking Town Centre Management it triggered a significant increase in footfall and retail sales which helped to change a declining trend in visitor numbers among residents and encouraged more shopping by commuters. The idea, which was entirely self-funded by the participating retailers, quickly created a buzz and generated a spirit of partnership among local businesses, who, by working together were able to create a valuable, varied and successful offer.

sixty four.

Using Evidence to Promote your Town Centre to Investors

For a business to benefit from the impetus provided by investors it will usually be asked to present a well researched business plan. Town centre managers, local authorities and elected members need to be able to provide details such as demographics, spend, local trends and the strategic direction of the town centre in order to entice major investment. The selection of relevant key performance indicators and the building of a strong evidence base will be important for this. Not only will having this knowledge help to encourage desired investment, but it will also help town centre managers identify which developments are not in the best interest of the high street.

It is also a good idea to keep a property register listing all the available commercial space together with details of its size, managing agent and rent, to support the attraction of businesses interested in moving into the area.

case study

Building Market Share in Belfast



This project was designed to provide robust economic facts, figures and campaigns for key development stakeholders in the private and public sectors, reflecting Belfast's major retail-led renaissance which will see the transformation of the city's retail core over the next fifteen years. A Retail Inward Investment Guide was produced detailing market size, age and expenditure profile, retail offer and diversity, national rankings, retail yields and vacancy, retail investment opportunities and footfall counts, along with a map locating development sites. DTZ Peda were commissioned to compile the Belfast Retail Healthcheck & Benchmarking Report, which measures and tracks the city's performance and progress against similar sized UK cities and identifies areas for action to further improve performance.

Retail led regeneration has been identified as a major opportunity for economic growth in the city centre. The Market Share project has been developed to support this potential and includes the creation of a Retail Sales Index, a Retail Gap Analysis to identify European Brands not represented in Belfast and a £20,000 investment in computerised footfall cameras in prime retail areas. The Retail Inward Investment Guide has been pivotal in promoting Belfast at numerous trade shows throughout the UK and Europe. Initial successes have included the Spanish giant Mango's new store in Donegall Place, and the arrival of UK retailers Jane Norman and La Senza, Dune, Quicksilver, Supercuts and Trade Secrets in Castle Court.

sixty five.

Distribution of Shopping Guides to Households

Often, potential visitors living within the catchment of a town centre may not be aware of the unique products, services and experiences on offer. It might help to distribute a guide of the town centre featuring the unique aspects of a shopping experience or cultural activities on the high street. Costs can be shared by businesses that wish to be featured in the publication with unique businesses that may act as footfall drivers being subsidised.

sixty six.

Know your Consumers

Before considering the direction of any marketing campaign, it is vital that the target audience is identified and defined. The make up of the customer base of your town centre, both geographically and demographically, can be ascertained in a number of ways. Existing research including retail studies, visitor surveys, shopper surveys, housing and demographic analysis, can all be used as sources of valuable information. If this material is unavailable to you, it could be worth considering carrying out your own research. Once you know who your consumers are, you will be better placed to appeal to them.

sixty seven.

Auction

An auction can have many benefits for a town centre. While its primary purpose is to raise funds for the high street, an auction can meet other needs. It can be a fun activity for communities to participate in. It also, acts as a showcase for the businesses who get involved. In return for contributing goods and services to the auction, businesses can thrive on the subsequent media attention and consumer interest emanating from bidding wars. Thanks to these contributions auctions can be held at a low cost.

case study

Mansfield Christmas Auction

An auction conducted in partnership between Mansfield Town Centre Management, the local authority, the media and retailers was designed to raise funds for the town's Christmas lights by selling a wide range of goods and services pledged by local businesses. Auction lots including a second-hand Porsche, a London weekend theatre break, pizza delivery, plastering and painting services, beauty treatments and hotel rooms were previewed in the Chad newspaper before the local radio station, Mansfield 103.2, ran the day-long auction live on air. Bidding was brisk and a total of £23,000 was raised between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. All newspaper space, radio airtime, goods and services and staff time were given free of charge, proving that the concept can be easily adapted by towns of all types and size. It demands effort and goodwill but virtually no cash outlay.

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 this can attract undesired activities that threaten otherwise healthy high streets and damage people's perceptions of the town centre. A lack of safety and security 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.

sixty eight.

Creating a Retail Specific Crime Reduction Partnership

Retail crime is a great challenge for the high street. Retailers doing their best to make merchandise attractive and accessible to genuine customers simultaneously become vulnerable to theft. Far from being a victimless crime, it increases the insurance premiums for retailers with costs being passed on to consumers. In a sector where profit margins are traditionally tighter than other sectors, crime can be the difference between a profitable shop and a vacant unit.

Retail specific crime reduction partnerships have gained popularity because of this. As all shop owners are faced with a common challenge, town centre managers have found it possible to foster cooperation between businesses, police and local authorities, each contributing what they can. These contributions go into infrastructure for information sharing, data recording and the apprehension of offenders.

case study

Cynon Valley Business Crime Reduction Partnership

This partnership between the local authority, police and businesses was established to reduce crime and the fear of crime in Aberdare town centre, with a particular focus on cutting violence in the night-time economy. A business crime coordinator was appointed, enabling information on crimes and criminals to be shared between all partners on a regular basis. The use of photographs of target criminals soon led to arrests and an exclusion scheme being set up to bar offenders from members' premises. The project now encompasses many fee-paying businesses, whose contributions have paid for a radio link system and enabled the launch of a safe child scheme. Night economy initiatives, including a successful application for Home Office funding for high visibility policing and the purchase of unbreakable plastic glasses for town centre pubs and clubs made a significant contribution to reducing violence over the festive season.

sixty nine.

Working with your Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

It is rare that offenders discriminate against potential victims. Depending on circumstance and opportunity, anyone can find themselves the target of crime. As such, there is great merit to linking high street specific crime reduction

partnerships with existing partnerships covering wider areas. The offenders that plague the high street could also threaten surrounding neighbourhoods and residential areas. Sharing information could be a mutually beneficial activity. Sharing learning experiences and best practice could also be of great use.

seventy.

ShopWatch Scheme

ShopWatch is an initiative that unites the police, the retail industry and government to help make shops and town centres safer.

The way it works is shop staff volunteer as ShopWatch Special Constables and carry out patrols during some of their working hours, acting as additional eyes and ears for the police. Their presence seeks to actively deter theft and fraud and discourage anti-social behaviour, as well as offering additional reassurance for shoppers. The other advantage is that when staff return to undertaking their daily roles in-store they will benefit from a wide range of transferable, security based skills they have picked up. Skills like assertiveness, conflict resolution, leadership, confidence and management could be useful in difficult circumstances.

seventy one.

PubWatch Scheme

PubWatch is a community based crime prevention scheme for licensed premises. It is organised by the licensees themselves to afford each other confidence and support, as well as some form of protection. The scheme, at its simplest, is a message-passing link between licensees, the object of which is to combat violence and other criminal conduct. It also provides better communication between licensees and police and provides a forum for the discussion and solution of problems relating to violence on licensed premises.

seventy two.

Community Alcohol Partnerships

Community Alcohol Partnerships aim to tackle the problems caused by underage access to alcohol through cooperation between alcohol retailers and local stakeholders, such as Trading Standards, police, local authority licensing teams, schools and health networks. Central to the operation of CAPs is the sharing of information between partners to combat the purchase and possession of alcohol by those under 18, coupled with rigorous enforcement of laws designed to tackle anti-social behaviour. A total of twelve schemes are now in operation in England and Scotland.

seventy three.

Retail Radio Link

With the creation of a dedicated frequency, radios can become a useful tool for linking together the members of a crime reduction partnership. This hands the initiative to those working to reduce anti-social behaviour including retailers, licensees, door staff, police and CCTV control rooms who are able to instantly share information on related events in real time.

A scheme can be set up whereby local businesses can rent the necessary audio equipment in order to play their part which could provide the foundation for something financially sustainable.

seventy four.

Using On-Line Technology for Real-Time Crime Tracking

When an offender has been apprehended, details of the offender could be stored electronically, so all members of a scheme remain informed of the latest criminal activity. This allows members to identify potential criminals.

With developments in web 2.0 technology, websites can easily be kept up-to-date. This makes displaying real-time crime information for your town centre

possible allowing retailers to be aware of spates of criminal activity as they happen, encouraging vigilance.

seventy five.

Re-Deployable CCTV Capability

CCTV has been useful for defusing crime hotspots. However, criminal activity is often just displaced to other remote locations. Re-deployable CCTV means the cameras can be relocated so that crime hotspots can be tracked.

seventy six.

CCTV Video Analytics

CCTV with output which is not monitored is effective in viewing historic events following a crime but less useful in early prevention. However, labour cost to monitor CCTV output is expensive, and not likely to yield positive results if many cameras are monitored by one person.

One solution is the use of video analytics which uses artificial intelligence to flag up unusual behaviour in an environment. Whilst this method does have limitations, particularly in busy environments, when deployed in the right areas it can be very effective and reduce costs.

seventy seven.

Making Crime Reduction Visible

Sometimes the fear of crime is a bigger problem than crime itself. Perceptions can often lag behind reality leaving town centre managers, local authorities and elected members with the challenge of convincing people their high street is safe. Town centre managers can therefore, do much to bring people back into the high street by making crime reduction visible through media, on-line communications and newsletters.

case study

Rochdale's Safer Communities Strategy

This wide ranging project led by Rochdale Town Centre Management has been designed to reduce crime and the fear of crime under the banner, Everyone is Safe and feels safe. By working with the borough council, police, safer communities and regeneration partnerships, an impressive list of initiatives have been delivered and publicised in the media to ensure a positive impact on public perceptions.

Some of the initiatives introduced include:

- Talking signs placed around the town centre which give warning and reassurance

- **Dispersal orders and high visibility patrols introduced**
- **Subway murals introduced to enhance perceptions of safety and local pride**
- **A magazine distributed to 30,000 people informing them of what business is doing to combat crime**
- **Local press advertising employed to promote safe venues**
- **Plaques sited around the town centre to remind visitors that the town has received a Safer Business Award in recognition of its combined initiatives**
- **Monthly town centre columns in the local newspaper to promote activity**

This determined and sustained drive to promote successful crime reduction measures generated considerable public interest and added to the town centre as a whole. Specific achievements include increased footfall in the newly cleaned and decorated central areas, enhanced pride of place and increased turnover among town centre businesses.

seventy eight.

Community Wardens

Using the shared resources of a crime reduction partnership, community wardens in high visibility jackets can be employed during times when crime and anti-social behaviour is most likely to occur. So long as they are visible, then they can have a positive impact on a town centre user's perception of safety and deter potential offenders. They can also act as liaisons, being a first response to reports of crime and ensuring the local police force are kept fully

informed of criminal activity.

seventy nine.

Member Exclusion Scheme

Statistics show that thefts from shops are conducted by a small number of repeat offenders. By using a Members Exclusion Scheme many high streets have found they are able to significantly reduce offences such as shoplifting. This involves the identification of offenders who are caught in the act, maybe by CCTV, and ensuring they are excluded from the premises of all members who participate in the scheme.

eighty.

Safety Scheme for Lost Children

Promoting the safety of children by reuniting them with their parents could do a lot to put the minds of young families at rest. During busy shopping periods where it is easy for children to lose their parents, participating shops can be used as meeting points. 'Caring traders' could provide lost children with a place to stay until they are reunited with their family.

This idea was implemented in Weston town centre where free child wristbands have been circulated. Each wristband bears two emergency contact numbers

specific to the child. Each 'caring trader' can be identified through relevant promotional material and branding in the shop window.

You could look up information on Safe Child Schemes on the website of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children at www.nspcc.org.uk.

eighty one.

Penalty Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty notices and fixed penalty notices are both ways of deterring anti-social behaviour with wardens or the local police being able to issue fines. Fixed penalty notices are typically used for litter offences while penalty notices apply to disorders. Failure to pay a fine would result in court action with a significant increase in that fine becoming likely.

It is important that genuine repeat offenders are carefully targeted using such a scheme as there is the potential for bad publicity if the wrong person is issued with a notice or taken to court. If used appropriately, it can help to curb the behaviour of those who can make a town centre unwelcoming without the level of bureaucracy involved in pushing for criminal convictions.

The Evening and Night-time Economy



Versatility can be the making of a great town centre. An arena that poses a big challenge in achieving versatility is a transition that takes place everyday from the day-time economy to the evening economy. With this shift, the uses of the town centre change dramatically with individuals and businesses shifting their needs accordingly. While it can be difficult to cope with many of the changes, the basics remain the same. A town centre must strive to offer a clean, safe, vibrant and engaging environment for different types of people. Here, you can find a number of schemes to make this a possibility during the evening and night-time.

eighty two.

Planning for the Evening

It is important to plan for the evening economy. In the context of current legislation, with the help of evening economy businesses, local police, transport operation and CCTV provision, it is vital to understand how anti-social behaviour can be minimised whilst ensuring the town centre encourages a vibrant night scene.

A detailed and achievable plan which draws on a town centre's strengths and weaknesses in the evening must be developed and implemented in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

eighty three.

Managing the Transition between Day and Night



A shift between day and night-time activities bring a number of problems for town centres. As the business day ends and a large flux of workers simultaneously make the commute home pressure is placed on transport infrastructure causing congestion and pollution. This is compounded by lost opportunities for town centre businesses as there is a lull in activity on the high street until the evening economy gathers pace. With careful planning, the transition from day to evening can be a profitable duration for the high street. Ideas such as working with retailers to agree later closing times could entice many town centre workers to stay in the centre a little longer, cutting congestion at peak times and increasing custom for the retail and service sectors.

Hosting a range of activities with the help of leisure and hospitality sectors could also be positive in increasing activity on the high street during a period when it can be quiet.

eighty four.

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 affect on your night-time economy. As such, one way of increasing night-time visitor numbers is to promote late night travel provision. This could be done in a number of ways, including announcements which could be made inside bars and clubs at the end of a night to inform people of their options for getting home.

eighty five.

Taxi Marshal Scheme

Taxi ranks late at night are often hotspots for anti-social behaviour. This problem can be alleviated through a taxi marshal scheme. This scheme could be part-funded by cab drivers, and would encourage people to form an orderly queue for their taxi, eliminating potential flashpoints and moving people quickly and efficiently out of the town centre.

eighty six.

Late Night Bus Service

Increasing the number of late night buses is a good way of encouraging visitors and moving potentially inebriated revellers out of the town centre quickly. Funding for this increased service could be part-funded by local bars and clubs.

case study

Summer Sounds Better in Colchester

This programme of live music in the streets was developed in partnership between Colchester Town Partnership, Colchester Crime & Disorder Partnership, retail and leisure businesses, with a view to bridging the daytime and evening economies. It encouraged shops to stay open later and motivated office workers to stay in town longer leading to reduced traffic congestion and an enhanced café culture. With match funding from the East of England Community Safety Fund and Colchester Town Partnership, the project ran from July to September. A list of local musicians was collated and matched with suitable venues around the town, including outside shops, cafes, bars and restaurants, in shopping centres and the local music library.

eighty seven.

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. By meeting the standards set by Purple Flag, a great night-time offer can be developed by town centres.

The scheme has been developed by ATCM to recognise excellence in the management of town and city centres after dark. Obtaining a Purple Flag shows that a town's night-time economy offers clean and safe environments, great bars and clubs, a variety of arts and cultural attractions and excellent transport links.

Purple Flag is supported by the Home Office, Association of Chief Police Officers, the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Service, Diageo and many other organisations.

For more information visit www.purpleflag.org.uk.

eighty eight.

Dedicated Ambassadors for the Evening 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.

Bolton has pioneered a night-time management structure that involves the employment of ambassadors for the evening economy. The aim is to reduce alcohol related anti-social behaviour and reassure the public that the town centre is a safe place to visit at night. An evening economy manager and three evening ambassadors have been employed in the past. Their tasks included organising seminars for door staff and licensees and collating data on problem customers and venues.

eighty nine.

Light Night



For one night a high street can stay open for business so that its attractions and symbols are seen in a new light - literally. Light Night is an initiative where visitors get to see the unusual in a familiar environment and ‘lose themselves’ in the town centre, which is transformed into a stage for the night. Light Night is a great showcase for gaining wide public interest and participation so that people ‘buy into’ their high street overnight. A key element of the programme in each town centre is that all events are free.

Light Night is a chance for everyone to come together and celebrate the city, focusing on their shared culture, history and identity. It is a national programme of events supported by ATCM which covers the whole of the UK.

For more information visit www.lightnight.co.uk.

ninety.

Accreditation Scheme for Licensed Premises

While licensees are already required to meet a set of basic standards in order to retain their license, they can still attract anti-social behaviour. Implementing an accreditation scheme provides an incentive to raise management standards leading to a safer evening economy. If the rewards in terms of publicity, credibility and ultimately, high quality custom are great enough for licensed businesses, then they will be willing to apply.

Training, Development and Accreditation



Instinct, gut feeling and anecdotal knowledge are some of the aspects that have been driving forward schemes on the high street for years. Moving away from this and encouraging a culture where training, development and accreditation are prerequisites is a necessity. This cultural shift has already begun and here are some reasons why.

ninety one.

Professional Accreditation for Town Centre Managers



The Institute of Place Management is the first international Membership organisation dedicated to professionalising the place management industry. Individual town centre managers can join up to receive regular place related updates, access to monthly CPD opportunities, access to the Emerald published Journal of Place Management & Development, as well as networking opportunities with other members. Local authorities and town centre partnerships can also join as Approved Partners, affording multiple benefits and demonstrating a certified commitment to making places better.

For more information, visit www.placemanagement.org.

ninety two.

Support for the Retail Property Industry

While many retailers need flexibility in leasing conditions to help their business adapt to changing times, many property owners hope for stability because of the nature of their long-term investments. These two conflicting needs make the retail property industry a unique and challenging sector. Town centre managers can support retail property owners by pointing them towards credible trade associations such as the British Council of Shopping Centres and the British Property Federation who will be able to help them develop new ideas to contribute to a healthy high street.

The British Council of Shopping Centres and the British Property Federation can each provide a number of services including education and professional development but also, networking opportunities with others in the industry and assistance in forming partnerships locally which create vibrant high streets.

For more information, visit www.bcsc.org.uk or www.bpf.org.uk.

ninety three.

Auditing the Quality of your Town's Retail Offer

More than 80 towns across the UK, from Aberdeen to Wrexham, have benefited from audits designed to pinpoint improvements that could be made to independent shops, as well as how the town centres could be improved as a whole. The Location Model, designed by Skillsmart Retail, the Sector Skills Council for Retail, includes a mystery shopping exercise, street interviews and a town centre assessment, all carried out by industry professionals who also work for some of the country's biggest and most famous retailers.

Many towns throughout the UK have struggled with their retail offer in recent times, and while there is no easy solution, Skillsmart Retail's Location Model gives independent retailers, and a range of stakeholders, intelligence and a series of practical recommendations that will contribute to the development of a diverse retail sector. Town centre managers have been at the forefront of this initiative in towns which have taken part so far, and many have found funding to be able to participate.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

ninety four.

Pointing Retailers Towards Advice on Training

A network of retail skills shops with advice on hand to meet the training needs of retailers have opened in shopping centres across the country. Their aim is to improve retail skills through a network of retail skills shops located in shopping centres and on high streets across the country. Retail employers and employees, as well as those hoping to enter the sector can walk into, or contact, any retail skills shop to access the training on offer. As a town centre manager, you can point retailers in your town to their local retail skills shop, where they will find everything from pre-employment training and licence to trade courses, to management and leadership programmes. More and more skills shops are opening across the country.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

ninety five.

Learn from a Real-life Retail Expert

Being launched in 2010, the Mary Portas Guide to Successful Retailing is a series of seven insightful masterclasses offered by the National Skills Academy

for Retail. Delivered through retail skills shops, the Mary Portas Guide provides a unique opportunity to learn from one of the UK's most respected retail experts, in areas such as merchandising, selling, display, buying and marketing. This is a perfect opportunity for retailers in your town to tap into Mary Portas' knowledge without breaking the bank.

For more information on the range of topics covered and to register your interest, visit the [National Skills Academy for Retail website](#).

ninety six.

Become a Retail Ambassador

Many who manage the high street have experience within the retail sector. In fact, there are hundreds of thousands of people involved in retail across the country, who are perfect candidates to become Retail Ambassadors, and help promote the sector as a place where rewarding careers can be developed. The Retail Ambassador Programme has been designed by Skillsmart Retail and is being delivered through the National Skills Academy for Retail, to allow retail professionals at all levels to champion the sector to young people in schools and colleges. Ambassadors are needed from shop floor to boardroom level; motivated people, prepared to relate personal experiences and real life scenarios to help capture the imagination of young people, raise awareness of the diverse range of jobs in retail and present the sector in a positive light. Many Town Centre Managers will make perfect ambassadors. All Ambassadors are trained to deliver the presentations and given full support and materials.

For ambassador training dates and an application form to register to become an Ambassador, as well as information on how to book an Ambassador for a school or college event in your town, visit the National Skills Academy for Retail website.

ninety seven.

Encourage Junior Managers to Apply to Oxford Summer School

The Oxford Summer School is the 'jewel in the crown' of UK retail training and the first destination many junior managers will have circled in red for the summer. Skillsmart Retail and the Retail Trust are joining forces to offer ten scholarships to attend the Oxford Summer School unique centre of excellence - free. This means retailers in your town can learn all the tips to reaching the top from the biggest names in the industry.

This is a credible course which counts Ian Cheshire, Charlie Mayfield, Nick Robertson, and Peter Williams amongst its past speakers. These leading stars of retail have all commended the City & Guilds accredited programme for its ability to enhance expertise in leading successful teams, monitoring stock performance, improving financial management, marketing the business and visual merchandising.

Skillsmart Retail and Retail Trust are urging every junior manager from retail

businesses with less than 1000 employees to apply. Aside from the learning, an enviable list of evening events will give delegates the perfect chance to let their hair down and network with representatives from some of retail's biggest businesses.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

ninety eight.

Get Young Learners to Learn through Retail

There will be hundreds, if not thousands, of school and college students in your town, all looking to work out what direction they will take in their education and in the working world. For many, the traditional GCSE and A level option will seem the most appropriate, but others will seek something with more of an emphasis on vocational studies, while losing none of the academic rigour. From September this year, students aged 14 to 19 years old will have the option to take the new Diploma in Retail Business – a qualification designed by top retailers to provide a way into the sector. Championed by John King, CEO of House of Fraser, the Diploma in Retail Business will combine elements crucial to working within retail, whilst also providing a thorough grounding in subjects such as English and maths, to ensure it is a qualification which is valued in all sectors; not just retail.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

ninety nine.

Know What Qualifications are Out There

The retail qualification system in the UK used to be a minefield with hundreds and of different courses available. Under the new Vocational Qualification Reform, however, navigating your way through what is available couldn't be easier. Designed by Skillsmart Retail, delivered by the National Skills Academy for Retail and regulated by top awarding organisations, there is now a simple structure in place for each of the four UK nations. Brochures detailing current retail qualifications are available to download from the Skillsmart Retail Careers pages.

one hundred.

Local Business Awards

Having an awards event for local businesses can bring many benefits to the town centre. Achieving an award for a credible competition is a great boost to the confidence for those who are successful, or even just nominated. Awards act as a marketing tool which managers can use to grow and develop the business. From the consumer perspective, an award acts as a quality mark meaning visitors have a way of spotting the best a high street has to offer. There can even be a positive affect for those businesses who are not nominated by the scheme. Awards showcase best practice allowing other managers to learn new techniques and develop their business if they aspire to participate in future

events.

Huddersfield Town Centre Partnership has had success developing a scheme which celebrates environmental best practice. The Green Business Awards showcase businesses who adopt measures to reduce their environmental impact through reduced energy, water, transport, and waste disposal, encouraging other businesses to follow suit.

For more information, visit www.100-highstreet.co.uk.

Contributors

Association of Town Centre Management

The Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) is a not-for-profit membership organisation dedicated to promoting the vitality and viability of town and city centres. It has more than 540 members including key stakeholders in town and city centres. Over 400 of its members are town and city centre management initiatives. Nearly all of these work as partnerships, some with several hundred contributing members themselves, to develop and implement shared visions, strategies and action plans for a total of more than 700 district, town and city centres across the UK.

www.atcm.org

Local Government Improvement and Development

LG Improvement and Development (formerly the IDeA) supports improvement and innovation in local government, focusing on the issues that are important to councils and using tried and tested ways of working. We work with councils in developing good practice, supporting them in their partnerships. We do this through networks, online communities of practice (CoPs) and web resources, and through the support and challenge provided by councillor and officer peers. We also help develop councillors in key positions through our leadership programmes. Regional associates work closely with councils in their areas and support the regional improvement and efficiency partnerships (RIEPs).

www.local.gov.uk/improvementanddevelopment.

National Skills Academy for Retail

Launched in April 2009, the National Skills Academy for Retail has been created to help provide, consistent, quality retail training and deliver qualifications. Led by Skillsmart Retail, it provides access to consistent, high quality training for retail businesses, their employees and future workforce, delivered through a network of quality-marked retail skills shops. It plays a key role in driving forward skills and qualifications for current and future employees within this vast sector.

www.nsaforretail.com

Institute of Place Management

Institute of Place Management (IPM) is the international professional body that supports people committed to developing, managing and making places better. It aims to support and develop the profession of place management.

The concept for the Institute was developed by the Manchester Metropolitan University and the ATCM in the UK. Coming together to work on a £2.7 million pound EQUAL project known as AGORA, they recognised a need to create a professional body capable of developing and supporting the creation of sustainable formal structures of place management, ensuring professional standards amongst all those involved in the management, development and marketing of places.

www.placemanagement.org