

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

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REVIEW OF THE FUTURE OF THE HIGH STREET

13 DECEMBER 2011

Together with the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, I would like to inform the House that Mary Portas has today presented the Government with a report presenting the findings of her independent Review of the High Streets, and recommendations for action.

This timely report is published alongside new Government commissioned research, 'Understanding High Street Performance', which shows that although some high streets continue to thrive, a third are degenerating or failing, and by 2014 less than 40% of retail spending will be on the high street.

In May, with town centre vacancy rates doubling in the space of two years, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister asked Mary to look into how we can create more prosperous and diverse high streets.

The report sets out Mary's recommendations which include:

- Free car parking in all town centres and a national league table of the best places to park in England.
- Introduction of 'Town Teams' made up of landlords, shopkeepers, businesses, local politicians and residents to put in place a visionary management structure to create high streets that people want to use.
- Empower successful Business Improvement Districts (BID) to take on more responsibilities and powers and become 'Super-BIDs'
- A new 'community right to try' allowing local people who do not have the means to buy empty property to test co-operative ventures.
- Making explicit a presumption in favour of town centre development in the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- A new national market day to encourage the talent of the future and bring people into our high streets.
- A number of pilots across the country to put the recommendations of the report into practice.

The report is the culmination of six months of diligent inquiry by Mary Portas and we thank her for her hard work.

The Government will respond to the recommendations in the spring.

Copies of the Portas Report have been placed in the library, vote office and printed paper office, and an electronic copy is being sent to all MPs.

