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Place Making Programme

Final Report and Action Plan Paignton



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Introduction: the main challenges

High street revitalisation is complex. Although facing common challenges, places are unique and there are no prescriptive solutions. Taskforce experts can provide guidance, but it remains incumbent on stakeholders to use their local insights and capacity to deliver bespoke activities which ensure their high street or centre is attractive and prepared for the future. It is vital stakeholders share a common understanding of the structural change affecting the high street and create a well communicated plan that identifies clear tasks, allocated to specific groups to deliver. This is effective place management and is what gets places onto a path of transformation (see Appendix 1: the 4Rs Framework). Based on a major research programme, the 4Rs helps places develop their plan by distinguishing between the processes of: Repositioning (analysis and decision making), Rebranding (communication), Restructuring (place management and planning), and Reinventing (effecting change).

In Paignton, Task Force experts think the best start point is [Reinventing](#). This is prescribed when there is a lack of activity in a place, or too much reliance on the existing offer to drive footfall. Reinvention, therefore, involves creating activities which increase footfall and spend, attract a wider range of visitors, or encourage visitors to stay longer. This might include events, festivals, pop-up retail, reuse of vacant shops, and basic improvements to the appearance of the town centre. This could also involve trialing new products or services which will diversify the offer and start adapting the centre to meet the needs of future users.

To help places tackle reinvention, the Task Force provides a Placemaking Workshop, developed, and delivered by the [Institute of Place Management \(IPM\)](#). This aims to:

1. bring stakeholders together and collectively identify the challenges and opportunities for their high street,
2. agree underpinning priorities for a placemaking action plan,
3. equip stakeholders with low resource ideas to activate the centre in the short-term.

In Paignton, this workshop took place on 22 June 2023. Participants included representatives from the council, businesses, community organisations (Appendix 2: Attendance List). Useful contributions were made from all, and it is clear stakeholders want to create a thriving centre, one which fulfils its potential, a place to be proud of. This report draws on evidence gathered from this session (see Appendix 3: Workshop Findings), together with desk-based research and observations from a walking tour of the town centre.

In summary the main challenges relate to:

- **Improving the general appearance of the centre**
- **Growing a promotional presence**
- **Growing the number of events and activities to diversify the offer**
- **Creating space of new business development**
- **Developing local governance and action plans to achieve a shared vision**

There are many opportunities for Paignton, but it is important stakeholders act quickly to coordinate their activities more effectively. The recommendations below, therefore, are organised into quick wins linked to longer-term actions, and supporting resources.

The High Streets Task Force is offering the assistance of a mentor to work with Paignton to help develop local partnerships, a package which will form the end of the Task Force's direct support in Paignton. However, online resources, training and support are available through the website¹.

With your permission, the High Streets Task Force would like to check in with you after 12 months to evaluate how delivery of your transformation plan is progressing. Please indicate whether this is possible in your response to this report.

About the High Streets Task Force and Report Authors

The High Streets Task Force

[The Task Force](#) is an alliance of placemaking experts working to redefine the high street. We provide guidance, tools, and skills to help communities, partnerships and local government transform their high streets. The programme, funded by HM Government will run in England until 2024.

The report authors

[Dr Steve Millington](#) is the Director of the Business Transformations Research Centre, based at Manchester Metropolitan University. His academic career spans over 20 years. As a Senior Fellow and a director of the Institute of Place Management, he leads on several projects including the IPM's Vital and Viable programme and the placemaking programme for the High Streets Task Force for England.

[Ben Stephenson](#) is a place professional with over 20 years' experience. He is Chief Executive of angel.london BID and has worked in senior place management roles across the capital and nationally. He also runs BAS Consultancy, Ben's specialisms include Business Improvement Districts, high streets and economic development, community and business engagement, neighbourhood planning, street markets, co-working, food and culture. He is also a Senior Fellow of the Institute of Place Management.

¹ <https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/resources/>

Recommendations

The workshop findings are based on three group discussions, which tasked participants to prioritise the future changes they would want to see, the barriers to placemaking activity; and ideas for quick wins. Whereas the 4Rs provides stakeholders with a strategic guide for activating a long-term vision, to help stakeholders identify and respond to their local challenges, the recommendations draw on the [IPM's 25 Priorities](#), which are organised into five basic questions:



What affects the look and feel of the high street or centre?

4) Experience 5) Appearance 12) Place marketing 20) Crime and Safety 22) Liveability



How does the town centre function?

1) Activity Hours 7) Necessities 14) Accessibility 11) Walkability 24) Functionality



What does the town centre have to offer?

2) Retail Offer 8) Anchors 9) Non-Retail Offer 10) Merchandise 16) Attractiveness 17) Markets
18) Recreational Space



How does the town centre need to change?

15) Diversity 19) Barriers to entry 21) Adaptability 25) Innovation 23) Redevelopment Plans



How is the town centre managed?

3) Vision and strategy 6) Place management 15) Networks and partnership

This framework is then used to organise the evidence gathered from the workshop, town tour, and background research. The tables below, therefore, summarises the views of all participants, aligned with the most appropriate of the five themed priority. The views expressed obviously only represent those who attended but there was quite a diverse range of stakeholders with different perspectives on the town.

1: Improving the look and feel of the town centre

Challenge	Quick wins	Longer-term actions	Supporting resources
Elements of poor-quality and poorly kept public realm, lack of greenery, and under-utilized space. Flytipping and litter.	Complete an audit of poor-quality public realm under council ownership and identify community-led micro projects to improve each site e.g., street trees, planters, murals, parklets, street furniture, bollards etc.	Establish a more extensive murals programme, commissioning local arts organisations to brighten the town centre. Ensure green space embedded in any renewal schemes. Start a community 'guerilla gardening' club	Great Public Spaces: Guide and Evaluation Tool Street Art and Community in Oxford Pocket Park: Product Urban Design Creating parklets
Poor place reputation. Unrealistic expectation that Paignton can be returned to how it used to be.	Undertake surveys and place sentiment analysis to establish the nature and scale of reputational challenges.	Establish a Communications Hub for stakeholders to share good news, and updates on local plans. Undertake work on refreshed place brand identity and messaging.	We are Withington Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities From Neighbours to Neighbourhood: Learning how to boost Pride in Place The changing face of the high street: decline and revival
Perceptions of crime and ASB impact on footfall and local trade, but the nature and scale of the problems need defining	Work with crime reduction/prevention partners to collate data on, which underpins targeted initiatives e.g., general ASB, alcohol/drugs, business crime, aggressive begging.	Work with appropriate partners to deliver a programme of formal and informal safety and crime measures and monitor impact against footfall	Safety and Crime The Impact of Enforcement on Street Users in England The role of lighting in supporting regeneration
Inconsistent quality of shopfronts, shop display and premises upkeep	Undertake an audit of shop fronts and displays and provide guidance on merchandising.	Implement a collaborative initiative for shop displays to attract new audiences – Easter Egg Hunt / Christmas light displays / trails etc Shop front renewal grant scheme	Plinth Rating Manual The Art of Window Design

2: Improving the functionality of the town centre

Challenge	Quick wins	Longer-term actions	Supporting resources
Concern about lack of activity after shops close.	<p>Trial early evening events, markets, and pop-up stalls,</p> <p>Undertake analysis of hourly footfall data and share insights with traders and event organisers to maximise trading opportunities.</p> <p>Establish a baseline against which to measure impacts of events</p>	<p>Locate or scale up events and activities to draw visitors to quieter streets and spaces e.g., Station square, Victoria Square.</p> <p>Use footfall data to monitor the impacts of the expanded events/activation programme for daytime and night-time economies.</p>	<p>Approaches to Managing the Nighttime Economy</p> <p>Encouraging a thriving and diverse night time economy</p>
Lack of cohesive offer between (locally focused) town centre and the (visitor economy focused) sea front.	<p>Work with the English Riviera BID, Chamber of Commerce, Council and business leaders to establish a broad, shared vision for the future of Paignton. Be clear about what you want.</p>	<p>Develop more formal all-stakeholder governance model with potential for fundraising, event management and joint promotion as single offer – and as part of wider Torbay offer</p>	<p>Putting communities back in charge of their town centres</p>
Concerns about removal of parking availability and lack of buses as alternative mode of access.	<p>Some parking is available at Victoria Car Park, and on street but evaluate effectiveness of new on-street parking arrangements and charges at 6 months to assess impact on the local economy</p>	<p>Consider trial uses of top floor of multistorey car parks to enable culture-led events which utilise space and views.</p>	<p>Innovative Practices in Parking Provision</p> <p>Guidance on Parking Provision in Town Centres</p> <p>Peckham Levels</p>
Train line bisecting town centre. Lack of legibility and poor physical connectivity throughout.	<p>Seek help of transport planning in Council (working with local resident and business knowledge) to map out networks of routes prioritized for different modes, walking, buses, cars and cycling.</p>	<p>Develop wayfinding and public realm schemes to reinforce, starting with tactical urbanism, street art and timed closures for pedestrian friendly streets. Where success is demonstrated, make permanent.</p>	

3: Improving the town centre offer

Challenge	Quick wins	Longer-term actions	Supporting resources
Paignton has a market charter but no market. Having introduced markets before to little impact, how does the town get a market offer right?	Placement is key so try out small local / guest markets in various locations around the town centre before attempting to grow. Council should enable 'can-do' permissive approach	Work with additional specialist/themed operators to provide new markets that meet new demand patterns e.g., Teenage Market / makers markets, street food	Foodie Friday (Stockport) Teenage Market Trader and community run markets – a guide
Lack of on-street activation.	Review barriers to alfresco trading and hospitality and trial community, cultural, leisure and hospitality meanwhile uses on underutilised sites or in vacant/shops and underused buildings. Winner Street is a key opportunity.	Establish meanwhile / pop-up food and drink hubs, extending café culture and alfresco dining experiences to neighbouring businesses and the linkage routes to other areas of the town (e.g. harbour, seafront, Winner Street).	Advice for the hospitality sector on outdoor dining Glaston-Bury Tactical urbanists guide A guide to pop ups
Lack of an evening offer, particularly out of season.	Review and adjust opening hours for pop ups, evening uses in cafes and club meets. Encourage daytime food operations to sub-let to others for evening pop-ups at affordable rents.	Use publicly owned spaces and buildings for community-based evening activity and club meets. Review local plan / licensing policy etc to relax restrictions on evening activity where they are unnecessarily strict	A guide to managing your night time economy How can I improve the night time economy in my town centre?
Need of more specialist and independent shops	The market is a great starting point to encourage local produce, crafts and additionality to the retail offer, so encourage preferential rates for locals and check quality as part of permissions process	Redevelopment could include element of affordable retail to encourage smaller enterprises and start up retailers – important to create move-on space / pipeline for those that want to move into units from markets.	Explore Indie Streets ahead – how small businesses are saving the high street

4: Creating opportunities to change

Challenge	Quick wins	Longer-term actions	Supporting resources
Bureaucracy and lack of agreed strategy prevents swift delivery of events, projects and initiatives	Conduct a 'wish list' audit of street-based interventions, physical improvements and pop ups to demonstrate the ambition.	Use wish list as a negotiating tool with the council and to challenge bureaucratic blockages. Council to challenge internal approach by empowering cabinet member with business portfolio to advocate for locals	Networks and Partnerships with Councils Developing strategies for effective town centres Partnerships Shrewsbury Big Town Plan
Lack of economic resilience in off-season	Focus on developing the off season events and activations offer – even small things which involve different audiences including marginalized groups can make a difference – photography competitions, a busking day, a spring clean, a free day of screenings at the cinema and markets can all have an impact.	Quality of life for local people and a diversification of the economy should be key components of long-term strategy for Paignton. Vision should capitalize on emerging sectors already present in the town to create cluster and they should be engaged to find out what facilities they need to grow	Understanding community resilience in our towns Health on the High Street Defining the 15 Minute city Liveable Exeter: People, place, prosperity
Empty units need filling according to a curation strategy – what does Paignton need and how can landlords be incentivized so their empty unit can meet that need?	Conduct a landlord audit starting with key vacant properties. High Street Rental Auctions process (empowering councils to force landlords to let vacant units) will be seeking pilots in coming months.	Willing landlords to contribute to empty unit strategy. Wider network to help identify local demand and help source potential tenants alongside agents	Dealing with Empty Shops: A guide for councils Changing tenant covenant perceptions and flexibility in the lease model in UK city centres

5: Improving place management

Challenge	Quick wins	Longer-term actions	Supporting resources
There is a lack of shared focus on what should be done to improve the prospects of the town centre with no coordinated placemaking action plan or events programme	Create a dynamic placemaking action plan based on this action plan with key actions to be delivered by partners (not necessarily the Council).	Identify and cost smaller-scale projects and events, such as those outlined in this report, with micro-funding, sponsorship or help in-kind from a wider range of stakeholders/ national funding etc.	Altrincham revitalisation Hackney Central Withington Case Study High street 2030
Paignton needs a strong new place brand based on its trajectory of change not how it used to be	Consider what new functions Paignton will need to perform to meet the needs of its specific catchment and visitor economy, including in relation to other places in Torbay. Use this as the basis for a new identity.	Develop a set of 'brand values' for Paignton – what does it stand for? What messages do you want to convey about it to the wider world? What unique function does it perform? Develop place brand and annual campaigns from that, as a sub brand to English Riviera.	Decentralised place branding through multiple authors and narratives: the collective branding of a small town in Sweden Rebranding the High Street Telling your story
There is no central point of promotion for Paignton on events, activity, night time offer and retail offer for both locals and visitors	Investigate mechanism for single online hub to promote Paignton to locals and visitors alike – push for expansion of ' Explore Paignton ' and allow content to be populated and promoted locally and separately	Develop a longer-term marketing and communications plan that includes a dedicated website.	We are Withington Digital, cultural and social connectivity
Removal of parking spaces without alternatives	Investigation of current parking provision and need across the year	Need for a more cohesive parking plan, including viable alternatives to car use, introduction and/or maintenance of parking and charging where appropriate and economically positive alternative uses for any removed parking	People, Places and Parking The future of transportation Sleaford case study

Appendix 1: the 4Rs Framework

The High Streets Task Force has been providing support to Paignton since Spring 2022, with work to assess strategic documentation, an Unlicking Your Place Potential Visit and report, a Design Council workshop focusing on place vision and more recently a Place Making Programme event with the town's stakeholders. The initial assessment, undertaken against the Four R's Framework still holds true: Paignton is a town with a great deal of potential, but a starting point for its transformation should be in the provision of 'activation'.

Activation refers to the short term interventions that can transform people's experience of a place, from small events, performances and street art, to tactical urbanism, pop-ups and markets. The Unlocking Your Place Potential found that in Paignton, there was a clear need for interventions like these, even where a longer term vision was also needed. Starting with short-term interventions provides interest and focus for both visitors and locals and can also help to focus the town on longer term aspirations that require more careful planning – working together on smaller events brings townspeople together in a joint endeavour, which paves the way for trust to be built and for more ambitious projects to be tried. This also creates the conditions for developing a long-term vision.

The 4Rs are not mutually exclusive but are connected to one another; each is a potential start point on a journey to transformation; and different places will be at different stages. The Four Rs are a centrepiece of our community toolkit. An editable version of the transformation routemap with instructions can be [downloaded here](#) to help you create an Action Plan. Depending on where you start, this will take time to deliver but is a useful tool for planning both short and long-term priorities. Actions under each R may happen simultaneously, consecutively, or repeatedly.



If delivered correctly through effective leadership and collaboration with all key stakeholders, placemaking has the potential to improve the local economy, environment, and society, as well provide cultural benefits. The underlying aim of any placemaking intervention should be to create and promote places that are sustainable, attractive, sociable, accessible, active, secure, welcoming, healthy, and friendly. Temporary activation of underutilised or neglected sites can showcase these to potential investors. Reinventing, however, is just one element of the routemap. It is important, therefore, to work through the implications of the recommendations above in terms of the other Rs on the routemap.

Appendix 2: Attendance List

Appendix 3: Workshop Findings

Exercise 1: The future of the high street/centre: stakeholder perspectives

First, workshop participants were asked to individually identify one broad change that should happen to attract people to the centre and to ensure its sustainability. Each group was then asked to agree what the most important change should be.

Themed Priority	Stakeholder comments
Improving the look and feel of the centre	Cleaning (4) Art (2)
Improving centre functionality	Clearer signage (2) Pedestrianisation (1) Cheap parking (1) Reopen Torbay Road (1)
Improving the centre offer	Better independent / chain shops (4) Local produce market (4) Events / evening events (3)
Creating opportunities to change	Better opening times (1)
Improving Place Management	

Exercise 2: Barriers to activation: stakeholder perspectives

For the second exercise, participants were asked to consider what barriers need to be removed to enable change to happen.

Main Barriers to Making Things Happen	Stakeholder comments
The look and feel of the centre	
Improving centre functionality	
Town centre offer	
Needing opportunities to change	Infighting and negativity. Lack of trust (5) Apathy (8) Lack of community cohesion (1) Assumption that it's 'always the council's job' (1)
Place management	Poor communication (2) Lack of leadership (1)

Exercise 3: Activating the centre: stakeholder perspectives

The final workshop exercise asked participants to highlight activities that can be done quickly to animate the city centre. The responses are detailed in the table below.

Activities to quickly animate the city centre	Stakeholder comments
Improving the look and feel of the centre	Cleaning (5) Architectural improvements / maintenance (4) Greening (1)
Improving centre functionality	Dog friendly (1) Greater accessibility (1)
Improving the centre offer	Events and trails (7) Markets (3) Creating shopping outlet in centre (1) Make Winner Street specialist antique street (1)
Creating opportunities to change	Collaboration for pride in place (2) Open communications (1) Trader collaboration on marketing (1) Be open to change and stop fighting! (1)
Improving place management	Better promotion and talking up the town (5) Creation of town centre BID or Town Centre Manager (2) Property / landlord register (1)

References/further reading

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