



Budget 2018

Our Plan for the High Street

- **High streets are a crucial part of our communities and local economies. We recognise that changing consumer behaviour presents a significant challenge for retailers in our town centres and we are taking action to help the high street and town centres evolve.**
- **The Budget announces Our Plan for the High Street. The government will cut business rates by a third for up to 90% of retail properties for two years, to provide upfront support for high streets.**
- **To support the transformation of the high street, the government will create a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to help local areas make their high streets and town centres fit for the future.**
- **The government will consult on planning reform to make it simpler to create more homes, jobs and choice in town centres, and will trial a register of empty shops.**
- **A High Streets Task Force will support local leadership with expert advice on helping local high streets to adapt and thrive.**
- **And the government will strengthen community assets, including the restoration of the historic buildings that make our high streets special, support community groups to use empty properties and providing business rates relief for public toilets and local newspapers.**

Business rates discount

1. From April 2019 small retailers will benefit from a business rates discount, cutting their bills by a third for two years. The discount will be available to occupied retail properties with a rateable value below £51,000. Up to 90% of all retail properties will benefit, subject to State aid limits.
2. This represents a maximum saving of around £8,000 per property per year. A retailer with an annual bill of £16,203 in 2019-20 (based on a rateable value of £33,000) will save £5,401 a year. In total the relief is worth almost £900 million to retailers.
3. The relief will be available to a range of retail properties including, but not limited to, shops, restaurants, pubs, and hairdressers.
4. To ensure that the maximum possible support can be provided to those retailers that most need it, certain services – such as professional services and estate agents – will not be eligible. The government will publish guidance by the end of the year.

Future High Streets Fund

5. While the business rates discount will provide upfront support to the high street, the government is taking long-term action to help high streets and town centres evolve and keep up with changing consumer behaviour so that they can remain at the heart of local

communities. To support that transformation, the government will establish a Future High Streets Fund.

6. The £675 million fund will invest in improvements to town centre infrastructure, including to increase access to high streets, reduce congestion, support redevelopment around high streets and enable housing and new workspaces to be created. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will publish further details on how the fund will work.

Reforming planning

7. The government will consult on modernising planning rules to ensure that they support the transformation of the high street. The government will publish two consultations on:
 - This includes consulting on supporting the conversion of commercial properties into offices or homes and the implementation of new mixed-use business models that could form the vibrant high street of the future
 - The government will also consult on how to support local areas to use other planning tools more effectively
8. In addition to these consultations, the government will trial a register of empty commercial properties to help prospective retailers to find empty properties and help local stakeholders tackle fragmented ownership on their high street.

High Streets Taskforce

9. The Future High Streets Fund will support the establishment of a new High Streets taskforce. This will provide hands-on support to local areas to develop innovative strategies to help high streets evolve, connect local areas to relevant experts and share best practice.

Strengthening community assets

10. The fund will also support the regeneration of heritage high streets, helping Historic England restore the historic buildings that make our high streets special and destinations that people want to visit. It will also support community groups looking for affordable space by trialling a service to match them with empty properties.
11. The government is taking further action to strengthen vital community assets, including:
 - a 100% business rates relief for public lavatories, taking up to 3,500 facilities, many of which are run by town and parish councils, out of business rates entirely
 - continuing the £1,500 business rates discount on office space used by local newspapers in 2019-20 to support a strong and vibrant local press

Implementing Our Plan for the High Street

12. MHCLG will publish implementation guidance on the retail discount for local authorities in due course. Existing published guidance on the local newspaper discounts will continue to apply.
13. The government will introduce primary legislation to implement the public lavatories relief in due course.
14. Local authorities will be fully compensated for loss of income as a result of business rates measures.
15. The measures are available in England. Funding will be provided to the Devolved Administrations in the usual way to ensure they can introduce similar discounts if they wish.