

£50 million boost to support the recovery of our high streets

- New £50 million fund for councils across England to prepare for the safe reopening of high streets and other retail spaces
- This new money will support practical measures so businesses can re-open quickly when they are allowed to, staff get back to work and customers return to shops confident it is safe.

A new £50 million fund for councils to support their local high streets get safely back to business announced today by High Streets Minister Simon Clarke (24 May 2020).

To prepare for the reopening of non-essential retail when the scientific advice allows, the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund will help councils in England introduce a range of safety measures in a move to kick-start local economies, get people back to work and customers back to the shops.

It will also support a range of practical safety measures including new signs, street markings and temporary barriers. This will help get businesses get ready for when they can begin trading safely, not only in high streets and town and city centres, but also in other public spaces like beachfronts and promenades.

Councils will also be able to use this money to develop local marketing campaigns to explain the changes to the public and reassure them that their high streets and other commercial areas are safe.

It is the government's ambition to reopen non-essential retail in a phased way from 1 June, subject to the scientific advice. The government will set out further detail on how and when these can reopen safely shortly.

High streets are critical to the economic recovery of our towns and cities and this new fund builds on longer-term funds already in place to support their revival and boost their economic fortunes including the [Future High Streets](#) and [Towns Funds](#).

High Streets Minister Simon Clarke MP said:

As we begin to slowly return to normality, the re-opening our high streets will be key to kick-starting our economic recovery.

Levelling up the regions and supporting our high streets has always been central to the mission of this government.

Many businesses have already introduced creative ways of trading such as contactless collection or taking orders by instant messaging and shows that they are ready for the challenges ahead.

That's why we are providing an extra £50 million for councils to support a range of safety measures that will help get these businesses back on track and ensure that people can enjoy their time visiting their local high street safely again.

Today's £50 million funding comes from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) that the government is making available to councils to support businesses to re-open safely following [guidance published on 13 May](#) to help adapt urban centres and green spaces for social distancing during the pandemic. The money will be allocated to councils on a per capita basis and will be ready to spend from 1 June 2020. Further information can be found in the [Reopening High Streets Safely Fund guidance](#)

The Fund is in addition to the [£3.2 billion package](#) of support announced for councils to help them deal with the immediate pressures they have said they are facing.

The government has already introduced a comprehensive package of support for business and workers during the economic emergency including:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where small and large employers are eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month, backdated to March 1. The scheme will continue until end of October 2020.
- £330 billion worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses including a new Bounce Back Loans scheme, which will provide loans of up to £50,000 available to the smallest businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic.
- Businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors in England will not have to pay business rates for the 2020 to 2021 tax year.
- A deferral of the next quarter of VAT payments for firms, until the end of June 2020 – representing a £30 billion injection into the economy.
- A £12.3 billion package for local authorities to deliver grants of up to £25,000 to eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors; and
- New temporary measures to safeguard the UK high street against aggressive debt recovery actions during the coronavirus pandemic.

The High Street Task Force, backed by government and run by the Institute for Place Management has already started delivering support for the coronavirus recovery effort and is aligning its work to provide expert advice, training and long-term planning and guidance to councils, business and community leaders. More about the work the Task Force are doing to help plan for recovery from the pandemic can be found on the [High Streets Task Force website](#).

The government has published COVID-secure guidelines for people work in or run shops, branches, and stores. This guidance supports shops that are currently open, such as supermarkets and pharmacies, but will also be useful for those in non-essential retail to consider now for when they are allowed to open.

See the full list of councils receiving funding:

PDF, 349 KB, 8 pages

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The £50 million Fund is supported by the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is the Managing Authority for European Regional Development Fund. For more information visit the [European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020 page](#).

Due to the coronavirus emergency, we have recently extended the deadline for the submission of final business cases for the latest round of Future High Streets Fund and have written to local authorities to inform them of this.