



The Pedestrian Pound: Updated report outlining the business case for better streets and places

The first edition of *The Pedestrian Pound*, prepared by independent experts Just Economics in 2013, has become a much-quoted reference point helping individuals and organisations make the economic case for investing in better streets. Since 2013 further evidence has emerged of the benefits of attractive places where people on foot feel welcome.

Highlighting this evidence is vital, as many high streets continue to struggle with economic change and rising challenges, such as air pollution and internet shopping. We are therefore delighted that support from Transport Scotland has facilitated a comprehensive and timely update of the original publication.

Building on the original report the new edition expands the evidence and includes 20 new and updated case studies showing what works, citing examples of best practice from across the UK.

Read the full report at <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3890/pedestrian-pound-2018.pdf>

Key points

- A review of academic evidence in the report shows that shoppers on foot can spend up to six times more than those who arrive by car.
- **Businesses, residents, developers and visitors all benefit from investment in the public realm and walkability.**
- Data on streets where the pedestrian experience has been improved shows footfall increasing **20-35 per cent**. This bucks a **22 per cent** decline in footfall across the UK between 2007-2017.
- When streets are regenerated to boost walking, there is a corresponding impact on turnover, property values and rental yields. For well-designed projects, sales can increase by **30 per cent** or more when footfall is boosted.



Context

- Since the 1950s the UK population has grown by 0.4% each year, with annual retail spend increasing exponentially. However, town centres have not reaped the benefits of this increase in retail expenditure.¹
- High streets have been under pressure for many years. In 2018, high street vacancy rates are 11.1% in England, 11.9% in Scotland and 14.5% in Wales.²
- The growth of out-of-town retail shifted the balance away from the high street and has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in use of the car to go shopping.
- It's time for town centres to be rediscovered as places where people get together, socialise and feel part of a real community. High streets where people walk together, shop together and have coffee together are safer, more attractive and more economically vibrant.



The Pedestrian Pound 2018 Report

The Pedestrian Pound report was first published in 2013, this 2018 edition is an update, presenting new evidence that investment in better streets and places delivers quantifiable returns.

The first Pedestrian Pound made the case that investment in better streets and places can deliver a range of commercial returns. The evidence then, and now in 2018, suggests there is a positive impact on retail footfall, turnover, property values and rental yields, particularly for well-designed projects. There was and still is evidence that well-planned and implemented public realm investments could support regeneration efforts.



¹ Encams. 2005. The Link Between Local Environmental Quality and Economic Improvement.

² British Retail Consortium, 2018, Footfall and vacancies monitor.

Six Take Away Points

1. **Investments in the public realm and walkability make economic sense.** The evidence we have – from the UK and internationally – demonstrates increased footfall and trading.
2. High street decline is a long-standing trend with many causes and variables. It is not, however, inevitable. Businesses, high streets and urban centres are responding to the changing ways we shop and live with a range of actions to encourage footfall and increase sales. The most successful of these recognise the economics of place and the need to **improve the pedestrian experience and accessibility.**
3. Consumers, and increasingly businesses, are willing to pay for improvements to the public realm that enhance the walking environment and increase accessibility. **Public realm interventions should be carefully designed to ensure that local people – as well as the high street – benefit from them.**
4. Business owners and organisations still over-value the importance of parking and car access to their footfall and sales revenue. Business organisations need to be aware of the evidence in this area **to promote the economic benefits of walkability, public spaces and provision for cycling and active transport users to members.**
5. **Improvements to the public realm and pedestrian environment increase residential and commercial property values.** High rents restrict local access to home ownership and reduce retail diversity, as smaller businesses are priced out of the market. Regeneration should be designed to ensure that high street and residential diversity is promoted.
6. **Evaluation needs to be built into all project design.** Information deficits act as a barrier to investment and sharing what works to create vibrant and economically successful high streets and town centres.

Case Studies

The report outlines 20 case studies from across the UK and beyond outlining innovative ways that public realm improvements have helped local development. These case studies are a great source of inspiration for innovative projects you could begin in your area.

1. Scottish Government Town Centre Toolkit
2. Sheffield, Heart of the City
3. Make it Ealing, West London
4. Railton Road, Herne Hill, South London
5. Kelso, Scottish Borders
6. San Francisco: Pavement to Park
7. Grassmarket, Edinburgh
8. Stockton -on-Tees
9. Oxford Circus diagonal crossing, London
10. St. Anne's on the Sea
11. Church Street regeneration, Ebbw Vale
12. Lochgelly, Fife
13. Peckham Youth Project
14. Wayfinding: Legible Leeds
15. Reinvigorate York
16. Waltham Forest, London
17. Connecting Leicester
18. Transport for London's Urban Realm Toolkit
19. Bird Street, London
20. Swansea, Wales

Example case study: Sheffield, Heart of the City

Background: In the early 1990s, Sheffield faced several challenges, not least the decline in steel and engineering industries, and the opening of Meadowhall, a huge shopping centre on the outskirts of the city. The city had to rethink its offer to bring investment, employment and visitors back into the centre.

Intervention: The Heart of the City project was the first in a succession of regeneration projects (that now make up the Gold Route) designed to welcome visitors to the city. Phase One of the project was completed in 1999 with the delivery of three key public realm improvement projects: the re-construction of the Peace Gardens; the re-alignment and narrowing of Pinstone Street to create a new event and gathering space outside the Town Hall (the new Town Hall Square), and the narrowing of the carriageway in Surrey Street to give pedestrians more space.

Outcome: An evaluation of the public realm improvements to the Peace Gardens reported a 35% increase in footfall in the City Centre³. The authors estimated an attribution rate of 20% – 44%, or a net increase of visitors of 350,000 – 770,000, and a net increase in spending of £4.2 million (based on 7% attribution of additional spend of £12.20 per visitor). Reported regeneration outcomes included an increase of £1.60 – £2.40 / sq. ft. rental value and the creation of 341 – 527 additional net jobs⁴.

The full report can be found at:

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3890/pedestrian-pound-2018.pdf>

For further details please contact campaigns@livingstreets.org.uk

³ Genecon. 2010. Research & Evaluation of Public Realm Schemes.

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