



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

[The Pedestrian Pound](#) is a much-quoted reference point helping individuals and organisations make the economic case for investing in better streets. Living Streets Scotland, part of the UK walking charity is pleased to bring forward the second edition fully updating research by independent experts Just Economics in 2013. The updated edition funded by Transport Scotland provides further evidence of the economic benefits of attractive places where people on foot feel welcome.

Key points on boosting struggling high streets

- 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.



The report highlights the case for investment, in response to economic change and challenges such as internet shopping and air pollution. We are therefore delighted that support from Transport Scotland has facilitated a comprehensive and timely update of the original research, including four Scottish case studies in Edinburgh, Fife, the Borders and East Dunbartonshire, alongside 16 other best practice examples from the UK and other countries.

Context

- 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.¹
- 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 suggests there is a positive impact on retail footfall, turnover, property values and rental yields, particularly for well-designed walking and public realm projects. There is evidence that well-planned and implemented public realm investments could support regeneration efforts.



What can MSPs do

- Lend support to investment programmes that improve the public realm for people walking contributing to delivery of the Scottish Government's Active Travel Vision.
- Support organisations such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to implement innovative schemes that improve the pedestrian experience.
- Support legislation in parliament to bring forward law to outlaw footway parking and promote 20mph as the default speed limit on all high streets
- Support a full debate on new uses for high streets to create attractive places for people to live, work in and socialise, not just spaces dominated by traffic and parking

¹ 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 (Kirkintilloch)**
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

The full report can be found at:

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

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