



**BID to Transform Your Town
With the Power of WiFi**

The UK high street is currently recovering from its worst year on record and facing an even bigger challenge with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Retail has been struggling because some retailers have been slow to adapt, meaning even department store giants had no choice but to fold. As business rates have continued to increase, lockdown has closed all but essential stores and consumers shift towards online shopping, the decline of the high street has affected us all.

However, with technology growing at a rapid rate, you can reap the benefits of innovation. This guide will assist you in returning from lockdown, combating the cost increases and competing with evolving shopping habits to ensure your local high street isn't just another statistic.

<u>How Have Town Centres Changed Over the Years?</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Bringing the Town Centres Back to Life</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>The Power of Public WiFi</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>The Role WiFi Has Played in Reviving Town Centres</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>What's the Solution?</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Get a Winning Vote</u>	<u>16</u>

HOW HAVE TOWN CENTRES CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

Besides the pandemic, the most obvious difference that put town centres on the backfoot is how consumers shop. Online shopping is worth around £106.46 billion each year in the UK and that figure is only heading in one direction.





TOWN CENTRE

Ecommerce websites are thriving because consumers can shop when they want, where they want and receive their items the next day - perfect during this time. Online retailers also have the advantage of using sophisticated digital marketing tech, increasing the number of touchpoints with a customer.

Although retailers need to compete with convenience, the change in customer behaviour, and the retail environment as a result, has been caused by more than just the rise of online shopping.

**It's not just about how customers are shopping.
There's been a change in why they're doing it and
what their expectations are.**

Today's customers aren't interested in the traditional shopping experience and that's the keyword - experience. They want to be immersed in something unique, personalised and easily shareable on social media. If shoppers aren't completely engaged from the moment they pass through the doors, you're missing a trick.

The retail environment doesn't sit still for long, which is why it's so important for retailers to embrace change. The good news is there are many ways to bring these benefits into the physical store environment to future-proof the high street. Accessible WiFi, contactless payments and Internet of Things (IoT) technology are just a few of the ways you can start looking deeper into how your customers shop.

The more retailers implement these innovative methods, the more they can bring town centres back from the brink of extinction.

BRINGING TOWN CENTRES BACK TO LIFE

There's no getting around the fact that things are getting more expensive for businesses. Business rates, pensions, commodity prices and plenty of other costs are rising. Set this against the backdrop of reduced customer confidence, a global pandemic and increased competition, both online and offline, and there's definitely an uphill battle ahead.

However, with challenges in the retail industry comes opportunities for improvements too. High streets and stores that embrace sensors and the IoT, in general, are better equipped to meet shifting consumer demands.

So, what can retailers do to achieve a more customer-centric approach and adapt to the changing retail environment to bring back the high street when we come out the other side?

FAST AND SEAMLESS SHOPPING

The rise in contactless payments illustrates that consumers want a fast and effective shopping experience.

Click and collect was the first example of a more streamlined experience. The next evolution of this concept is to head to a store, find what you're looking for and just leave. Amazon Go has achieved this. You can simply go into one of their stores and leave without having to worry about any checkouts or queues.

If you don't already offer quick, seamless card payment options, you're starting to fall behind. Three quarters of adults in Britain have used less cash since the start of the pandemic. Even more of an incentive is a Visa study actually estimated that some businesses could save up to £6,000 by switching to card payments. With many citing that coronavirus will be the death of cash, it's vital to keep your business relevant in an increasingly cashless society.

iBEACONS AND SENSOR TECHNOLOGY

iBeacon is technology that allows mobile apps 'to understand their position on a micro-local scale and deliver hyper-contextual content to users based on location'. Basically, smart technology devices broadcast radio signals to a consumer's smartphone once someone is close enough.

Imagine you're an appliance store that sells electronics. As a customer gets close to a laptop, the sensor can ping them a notification. Once accepted, the shopper can access all of the information they could ever need about that particular model - reviews, size, CPU, battery life, colours and more.

This is a gamechanger with social-distanced staff in the workplace. The sensors provide all of the essential information right there and then.



EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL

We've talked about the importance of experiences for retailers before. It's all about subverting customer expectations. Don't just offer the same shopping experience as everyone else - launch effective pop-up shops or provide live product demonstrations to entice passersby.

When visiting the high street, shoppers are far more likely to stick around when there's an experience or engaging activity to occupy them. A staggering 73% of customers are more likely to spend more too, which is a great opportunity for local businesses to take advantage of.

Increased customer engagement can get tourists through the door. Anything that attracts customers or makes your store memorable can help kickstart the resurgence of the high street, which will be crucial after the coronavirus chaos has subsided.

AUGMENTED AND VIRTUAL REALITY

Borrowing from modern technology, stores can now host a range of experiences that challenge reality as we know it to entice customers.

For example, Augmented Reality (AR) can be used to direct customers through stores in an entertaining way by blending product details, tech and surroundings together.

Most consumers see stores that make use of virtual reality (VR) as interesting and progressive. An abundance of brands have already taken the plunge, from TopShop's AR fashion fitting room to Samsung's completely VR store that purely promotes experiences.

Generation Z has a dwindling attention span of eight seconds, so it's more important than ever to offer something truly immersive that grabs their attention. Revolutionising the retail sector with this technology could be just what the high street needs to entice shoppers who quickly adjusted to the online shopping lifestyle.

FREE WIFI

Can your customers access WiFi when they're shopping? If not, then you'll find they're less likely to stick around for too long. WiFi is available on trains, in restaurants and at sports venues. We're so accustomed to it that it's almost disorientating when we're in a restaurant or store that doesn't offer it.

Although for the time being we want to discourage people from shopping for longer, it'll play a pivotal role when it's safe to do so. Not only does the WiFi attract customers and keep them shopping, but it also provides valuable insights for retailers. If stores know dwell times and high traffic areas, they can make more informed business decisions that can drive revenue.

With the right tools in place, the right data follows suit. This helps you to personalise offers, understand your customer's journey and engage with them when they need it most. Visitors will then share their experiences online and the town can establish itself as a digital hub - something that has the potential to tempt shoppers back to their local towns for a spree.



THE POWER OF PUBLIC WIFI

The initial rise of shopping centres and then later consumers' reliance on online shopping has caused serious problems for town centres, high streets and local communities. Areas that used to thrive saw visitor numbers drop dramatically and financial hardship as a result.

The internet has clearly impacted shopping patterns and will continue to do so. But fail to provide a network and visitors are less likely to be enticed back to engage with local businesses.

From how customers manoeuvre your store to all-important purchasing decisions - WiFi networks that integrate seamlessly with other elements of your business to allow you to have all this data in one place, on one platform.

Here are some other impressive advantages and opportunities you gain with an effective public WiFi solution.

ACCESS TO VALUABLE ANALYTICS

A whopping 74% of businesses say they want to be data-driven, but only 29% are successful at connecting analytics to action.

Big data harnessed from a WiFi solution can allow retailers to make better-informed decisions, increase customer satisfaction and continuously optimise their offering.



WiFi has become so advanced now that it can recognise devices that have previously entered the high street and connected to the WiFi. So, when customers enter retail space, their devices can automatically connect - without needing to do it themselves.

By looking at analytics like footfall, dwell times and user demographics holistically, you'll have a better understanding of who shops at your store. This information can highlight infrastructure improvements and even eliminate staffing challenges.

Retailers who want to thrive can't afford to dismiss data into their decisions. Just make sure the WiFi provider you chose for your rollout gives you access to these valuable insights without any further costs.



AREA PROMOTION & MARKETING

60% of retail shoppers want to receive real-time special offers and promotions while they shop. Public WiFi is an opportunity for you to connect with visitors and raise awareness for the town and specific retailers.

It's no surprise that 96% of consumers prefer to shop at stores that have free WiFi - they're also more likely to return in the future too.

Over time, you'll also gain valuable analytics from in-store browsing behaviours to further personalise content and targeted messaging offers. It can even integrate with any existing loyalty programs you have in place to really delight the customer and give them a seamless experience of your brand.

Choose a WiFi provider who allows you to have complete control over the branding so you can feature your iconography and promotional messaging.

It's also a more economical choice as you can display ads on mobile devices rather than posters and leaflets. This eco alternative is something that continues to resonate with consumers and a more proactive approach to sustainability will be something they appreciate from their local high street.

FEWER PROCESSES

Retailers are quickly becoming dependent on technology to manage a wide variety of business processes. This includes tools for things like mobile payments, accounting, stock management, marketing, loyalty schemes and more.

It's not just about choosing which technology to use - but choosing technology that can work together in one integrated ecosystem. However, what if a WiFi system could marry all these processes together? It's more efficient for your business and fewer manual processes can give you the time back to spend on customer satisfaction and growth.

The right WiFi solution will also ensure everyone has access to the same accurate, real-time data that will enhance future decisions.

ENHANCES SECURITY

Some WiFi solutions can even assist with policing, tracking devices and their location to quickly identify and resolve potential risks.

Moonlight services in high population areas can help to keep pedestrians and shoppers safe, keeping devices connected even when there's no phone signal.

BUILDS CONSUMER TRUST

Shoppers can connect to public networks everywhere. On their commute, stadiums, large venues and even hospitals. Despite the clear benefits of WiFi for shoppers, some might be reluctant to connect because of fears over security and content filtering.

This gives you an opportunity to show you're a technologically savvy retailer who's taken steps to create a welcoming and engaging platform for all users. Work with a WiFi provider who is passionate about [the Friendly WiFi scheme](#) as this shows that you've met filtering standards and restricted access to inappropriate content. You should also look for providers who are industry accredited, with ISO27001 for example.

Offering free WiFi that's accessible to everyone encourages consumers of all different types through the doors. It shows you understand their needs and you're willing to go the extra mile to ensure their safety is protected too.

All this functionality helps to improve customer engagement and thus, revive the town centre.

THE ROLE WIFI HAS PLAYED IN REVIVING TOWN CENTRES

Areas that have established themselves as 'digital towns' have seen significant improvements in visitor figures and a boost to the local economy. It's a great selling point for a town and it can be the difference between shoppers flocking to the high street or heading to the nearest shopping centre.

The predicted behaviour of consumers as restrictions are lifted, raises concerns over how successfully brick-and-mortar stores will bounce back post-coronavirus. To halt the decline we've seen on our high streets, town centres need to embrace innovation and technology. Don't settle for just WiFi though. Choose a solution that's going to delight visitors and give businesses the insights they need to boost sales.

Think about the last time you had a bad experience when connecting to a WiFi network. You might have been asked for personal information you didn't really think was necessary. Or, once you eventually connected to the network, the sluggish internet speeds made any kind of browsing futile.

A poor WiFi experience is even more infuriating than having no WiFi at all. If you implement a network that has capacity or connectivity issues, you'll face backlash from anyone trying to use it.

With an effective WiFi platform, businesses can allow consumers to connect to the internet and harness their data for future decision-making. At WiFi SPARK, we offer a revolutionary WiFi platform that can do just that.



FALMOUTH

Falmouth wanted to consolidate their position as a popular destination for visitors by investing in a public WiFi network. The Falmouth Business Improvement District (BID) and Falmouth Town Council worked together to find a solution that would be able to support high usage during peak visitor periods.

After WiFi SPARK implemented a robust and high-speed network, Falmouth is now reaping the benefits of increased dwell time from visitors which has, in turn, helped local businesses. It's been such a success that the Falmouth Town Council are considering an expansion of the network. You can read more about this case study by clicking the link below.

FALMOUTH CASE STUDY

CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL

With a network in place, local communities can collect valuable data that can be used to inform the decisions they make. That's why Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council introduced a free WiFi system into four of its main towns. Having a spectacular impact on businesses there, it's a valuable attraction for tourists and residents alike.

You can see how the council utilised a public WiFi system to collate and track powerful visitor data. This information is continually used to analyse customer trends and determine what is and isn't working on the high street. With this detailed data, the Ballymoney community can ensure it makes decisions that visitors will benefit from.

You can learn more about the successful implementation by clicking the case study below.

CAUSEWAY COAST CASE STUDY

SUTTON TOWN CENTRE

Sutton Town Centre wanted to become a more attractive and vibrant retail, office and leisure destination after being voted as one of the top five places to live in London. Bringing together more than 500 local businesses and organisations, the BID worked as a key partner alongside the council's masterplan.

It significantly strengthened Sutton's offering and established it as 'a better place to live, work and do business'. With their 2017 BID renewal promising annual events, better waste management and incentivised journeys to the town, they've continued to evaluate the effectiveness of their promotional spend annually.

Through footfall cameras and regular feedback from retailers, their district-centric approach has seen a combined footfall of over 18,000 as a result of 'experiences' otherwise unattainable by strict budgets. The implementation of free mixed recycling collections saw over 80,000kgs of waste collected in 2019.

Their reactivity has ensured they were a destination of choice, not habit.

[You can learn more about Sutton's success here.](#)

THE RIGHT SOLUTION CAN HELP...

It might be that your high street stores already have wireless networks, but they're not maximising their potential. Using the robust wireless infrastructure that's already in place, we can help you to harvest new insights that were previously missed.

If technical issues do occur, we're equipped to deal with them quickly and effectively. We offer technical support to ensure that issues are resolved as fast as possible and are on hand 24/7.

We understand your high street WiFi needs to offer coverage for the whole area. That's why we'll complete an audit before we tactically locate access points, this way we can guarantee that there are no connectivity black spots. Secure and fully managed, contact us to learn more about how the SPARK® Platform allows high street stores to lead the way in the retail industry.

Contact Us

WIFISPARK.com



+44 (0) 344 848 9555



@wifispark



company/wifi-spark

GET A WINNING VOTE

The 290 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in the UK are tasked with using combined levy income to implement projects that will benefit the local area. It's their responsibility to use these funds wisely and ensure local businesses, residents and visitors all enjoy the enhancements. You can learn more about the best practices for BIDs in this blog.

Here are the components that make up a successful BID proposal, organised into a simple checklist you can follow.

TO SUCCEED, YOU NEED TO INCLUDE:

A statement of the works or services to be provided, the name of who will provide them and the type of body the provider is.

A statement of the existing baseline services (if any) provided by the relevant billing authority or other public authority, it typically comprises a draft of the baseline agreement.

A description of the geographical area (including a map showing that area) in which the proposed BID arrangements are to be carried out.

A statement of whether all non-domestic ratepayers in the geographical area or a specified class of them are to be liable to the BID levy.

An explanation of how the amount of the BID levy is to be calculated and whether any of the costs incurred in developing the BID proposals are to be recovered through the BID levy.

A statement of the specified class of non-domestic rate payer (if any) for which and the level at which any relief from the BID levy is to apply. The BID regulations do not require the BIDs to offer any exemptions.

A statement of whether the BID arrangements may be altered without a ballot and, if so, which aspects of the BID arrangements can be.

A statement of the duration of the BID arrangements (also includes the the start and end date of the BID).

Some BID proposals are published in two parts – a short, digestible marketing document and a more comprehensive technical document. While the first will be published in hard copy and distributed to all BID-eligible businesses, the second will live on the BID website.

Now you're ready for your formal approval and ballot, whether you're looking to revamp your town using innovative WiFi solutions or improve the scenery - together we can revive the high street.