

Save the High Street Five Point Plan

1. Easy, free or low cost, flexible parking

We need:

- Local control/ ownership of our car parks so that easy, low cost, accessible parking can be provided
- A supportive and imaginative Planning and Transport function to help make access to car parks easy and integrated into a progressive town plan.

Currently, our car parking is in the wrong place with poor access, badly signposted with punitive and inflexible charges. The car parks are generally owned by the unitary authority (Cornwall Council) who primarily regard them as an income stream. They are managed with no imagination and little consideration of supply and demand. The charges/parking arrangements do not seem to take account of the wider economic impact that car parking plays in town regeneration.

Compare the easy, available, free parking with convenient access provided by supermarkets and out of town retailers VERSUS the challenge of visitors finding their way through prohibitive and unfriendly signage, congested and constrained roads through to very expensive car parks where the fright of Clamp Notices for going over time send shoppers scurrying back to their vehicles whether they have finished their shopping or not!

2. Co-ordinated, imaginative and well-integrated local public transport which meet customer needs

Public transport provision needs to be convenient, reliable and integrated to tempt customers away from their cars. I can't remember ever being asked to participate in or comment on any local public transport service provision. We need to encourage the provision of alternative, customer oriented, green transport **developed by the private sector and supported by imaginative councils**. Private sector ferries have grown very successfully in Falmouth using the waterways but there is plenty of room for other imaginative schemes such as pedal power, electric shuttle buses and the like.

The problem is that much of the innovation will not stem from tired, moribund councils battling with cuts and reductions. Instead of subsidies for large empty buses running the same routes at inconvenient times through rural areas to tick "inclusion" boxes, why not pave the way for smaller private sector operators running more micro level and customer focused schemes?

3. Well-funded and professional town management which can form proper retail strategies and plans

Big retail centres, malls or retail parks are developed and managed by professional, private sector retail managers and developers who focus firmly upon gaining the right retail mix of tenants to meet the needs of the customers they are targeting. They also focus on the total retail experience from arrival, parking, lighting, ambience, cleanliness, toilets, entertainment and information etc.

How can the High Street compete? It starts off with a great theoretical advantage – location, location and location – but then potentially throws it all away with a **complete laissez faire, ad hoc approach with no tenancy strategy and the management of the shopper experience delegated to an assortment of non-integrated public sector departments and agencies.**

High Streets need managing like the total business of a shopping centre with real business plans focused upon building footfall, improving the public realm and enhancing shopper experience.

4. More business rates need to be kept local with businesses involved in how the business rates are spent.

Our business rates (or taxes) grow incessantly and disappear off to central government where the customers (the businesses paying those rates) have no involvement or say. If we work hard and grow our businesses, we are dramatically penalised by huge increases in rates. There needs to be a proper connection to business rates and the services we receive with proper local accountability.

5. Cut VAT in half to 10% on retail/restaurants/hotels/tourism businesses

Tourism and its economic multiplier effect is Falmouth's biggest industry. If the Government is serious about driving economic growth through tourism – **which is critical in the West Country, the UK's leading visitor destination** – then action to cut VAT on tourism is vital. The tourism industry acts as a major economic driver and this is crucial in Falmouth, providing income for shopkeepers and farmers alike.

Britain needs to be competitive. Consider that the French have cut VAT down to 5%, the Germans have recently cut it down from 19% to 7%, Spain was already at 8%. The beauty of cutting VAT here is that you will see a return on your investment through more jobs and more economic activity being created which will reduce work related benefits and deliver more tax income to the treasury from the expanding businesses – from farmers to shop fitters – as a result.

How to get involved!

- **Back the campaign!**
- **Contact your local newspaper who will continue to tell the story**
- **Write to your local MP, let them know your thoughts and ideas for revitalising the High St**
- **Write to your local or Cornwall Councillor, again with your ideas and opinions as to what policy changes are needed**
- **Get onto the Facebook page Falmouth – Spirit of the Sea and leave a comment on the Discussions page**