

## **rTown: a project in the Innovate UK SBRI competition** ***“Re-Imagining the High Street”***

The team taking forward the **rTown project** in Ross on Wye have, from before the bid proposal worked closely with the Town Council, Association of Traders and Town Plan Group. In continued collaboration, the team<sup>1</sup> have now identified a package of measures designed to help revive and revitalise the town centre.

A survey undertaken amongst town centre users and businesses in Ross<sup>2</sup> reveals that the current traffic arrangements, including the one way system, are not well-regarded. In addition, traffic and on-street parking in the main shopping streets have a very negative impact on the attractiveness of the town centre and the general trading environment. The **rTown** team therefore wishes to see improvements in the town centre that will involve changes to the traffic arrangements, and therefore will require the support of Herefordshire Council as traffic and highway authority.

Success for the **rTown** project in the next competitive round could result in substantial Government funding through the SBRI, and so it is important to make the most of the potential for change.

The measures we are suggesting that involve access and transport include:

1. A signing strategy to create an identified Parking Route, to direct drivers away from the sensitive (historic and retail) streets, and directly to the most appropriate car park;
2. Removal of on-street car parking in the core retail area, and reallocate streetspace for pedestrians and public realm improvements;
3. Creation of pedestrian priority arrangements in Broad Street, and possibly Brookend Street, by the removal of motor vehicles during the main retail hours, with deliveries before or after this period;
4. A re-structuring of the car park technology (payment and enforcement systems);
5. The improvement of certain streets and footpaths to create a more attractive environment for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users;
6. The improvement of links between the riverside and the town centre.

Obviously all of these would be subject to local and stakeholder consultation and involvement, but potential funding from Government will be dependent on a convincing case being made at this stage of the project. This can only happen with both Town and Herefordshire Council support.

Other measures that we are suggesting involve upgrading the existing WiFi communications infrastructure; improving materials, facilities and events to encourage tourism; and strengthening the retail offer by encouraging some re-balancing in the mix of outlets.

We already have strong engagement with, and support from, the Association of Ross Traders which is seeking to build on the project work to further enhance aspects of the town for which it can take responsibility.

**Melvin Reynolds**, Project lead  
2014-11-07

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<sup>1</sup> See: ‘Work Themes’ at [www.rTown.org.uk](http://www.rTown.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> See: ‘Documents’ at [www.rTown.org.uk](http://www.rTown.org.uk)



**Ross Town Centre - the need for revival**  
 Half of users rate the retail offer as poor (surveys, August 2014)



The *rTown* aims for Ross, with some of the proposed measures to achieve them.