

The high streets across the UK are under continuing pressure from the economic downturn, changes in consumer expectations and competing forms of retail. Recent policy reviews of planning in the form of the draft national planning policy framework, the consultation of which closed in October 2011, and [Portas review of England's High streets](#), published in December 2012 have again



focused people's attention on hundreds of struggling town centres in every corner of the country. There have been renewed calls in the media for action to reverse the decline of these centres of local economic and social activity: [nef's response to Portas is here](#).

nef has provided responses to the Portas review and were consulted on its development. We have long been arguing for greater recognition of the role local, independent traders play in the retail mix – and for high streets to be [reimagined](#) as locally distinct places of cultural, leisure, social and economic opportunity, more generally. nef consulting has been working across the UK, putting these ideas into practice and helping to [plug the leaks](#).

- **Local money flows in the Upper Llynfi Valley:** Bridgend County Borough Council have been working with nef consulting to build economic literacy, facilitating action planning workshops to ensure that a new market square development brings new vitality to Maesteg town centre. The objective is to make sure that the money spent in the local economy can stay re-circulating locally. New entrepreneurial ideas are forming through the project, and the Council has a clearer understanding of the priorities for fulfilling its role.
- **Post Offices and town centres:** Our Post Office spending survey earlier this year, based on research in a large village in Midlands, found that 70% of Post Office visitors visited other shops on the High Street, and those who did spent £22 each, on average.
- **Highlighting distinct local attractions:** North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) commissioned nef consulting to investigate how the council and residents could improve the sustainability and identity of Sleaford town centre. Through use of appreciative inquiry surveys, local stakeholders identified those assets of Sleaford that matter most to them; their experience of Sleaford, i.e. with regard to well-being, distinctiveness, and resilience, and how this experience can be improved. The report and subsequent sustainability framework is now a part of NKDC's material [planning considerations](#) for all future developments.
- **Calculating local economic multipliers:** 20-25% of the John Lewis Partnership profit-sharing Partnership Bonus, which every Partner at every store receives annually, is spent on shops within the same local authority area. Of expenditure by Partners who work in city centre John Lewis stores in Leicester and Liverpool, around 30% occurs in the city centre. Our research for John Lewis Partnership can be viewed [here](#).

For more information on our work in the built environment, please contact David Tyrer on david.tyrer@nef-consulting.co.uk or 020 7820 6367.