



# Annual Report July 2010 - August 2011

[historictownsforum.org](http://historictownsforum.org)



## Chair's Report

As I look back over another busy year as Chair of HTF, it is with a measure of wonder that I must consider the rapidity of changes across the business, financial and political worlds, as well as at the changes within the sector. Yet the HTF has risen to these challenges. Over the year the HTF has been a sector leader in the understanding of, and dissemination of information about and engagement with Localism; we have responded not only to the demands of the changing political agenda but have taken the opportunity to engage with Local Enterprise Partnerships, highlighting their links with tourism and heritage; capitalised, along with English Heritage, on the opportunity to collaborate with leaders in the retail field offered by the Business Innovation & Skills (BIS) High Street Review; have worked with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to plan and deliver a research exercise on Localism and academia; delivered a series of well-attended seminars on Localism, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); and have maximised the growing trend for using Social Media as a communication tool, as well as offering training in it. In addition we have attended parliamentary and other sector events in Scotland and Wales, and increased our membership and partnership working; and built on our relations in Northern Ireland. We have continued our partnership working with organisations such as the Heritage Alliance and English Heritage, our local partners across the four countries, and we have developed a much closer involvement with Government, through joint working with our contacts in Communities and Local Government (CLG), BIS, and the Local Government Association (LGA). In addition to this we have worked closely this year with the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM), Action for Market Towns (AMT), Civic Voice and the Prince's Regeneration Trust. The support of the Prince of Wales as our Patron, and of the University of the West of England (UWE) as our host in Bristol has contributed to our success this year, and I make particular mention of the support of our Corporate Partners who have made such a positive contribution across all the areas of the HTF work this year. Under the directorship of Noël James, the team in Bristol has risen to the challenge in so many ways, not least to the considerable financial challenges which everyone in the sector will be familiar with. We move forward into 2012, our 25th anniversary year, with some hard times ahead, but in the full knowledge that the work of HTF in bringing members together from across the disciplines and sectors to share experience and to act as an effective forum for historic towns, remains as current and crucial as ever.

Debbie Dance  
Chair



## Director's Report

In another difficult year for the heritage sector, more of our allies have disappeared and many more, including the HTF, continue to face drastic budget cuts. HTF has not been unaffected. All of our income streams have been impacted by the recession and its consequences and careful management is still required. However, with continuing support from our Members and Partners and very careful attention to the financial strategy we have continued to offer affordable conferences and seminars and to respond on behalf of Members to emerging policy developments and the changing political environment.

This Annual Report marks my first full year as Director of HTF, and it has been an exciting and challenging year filled with new direction, consolidation and rigorous planning for the future. I have met all of our Partners, new and old; many of our enthusiastic Members; and have worked closely with our dedicated team in the Directorate at Bristol and with the Executive of the Forum. We have responded this year to a record number of consultations; we have held 12 events, mostly responding to changes within the political environment and the effects of this upon the sector; we have worked with English Heritage, The Prince's Regeneration Trust, and other partner organisations on guidance; we have attended, presented and exhibited at over 10 events other than our own, with more planned; and we have cemented partnerships and brought more corporate, associate and reciprocal members on board. In a year where we have, due to unprecedented public sector cuts, lost a significant number of Local Authority members, we have attracted new Local Authority and Civic members to the Forum. While we were sorry to lose RPS after several years of solid Partnership, we have been thrilled to attract new partners CgMs, foremost planners within the sector, and have already carried out joint projects with them, with more planned. It is also a year in which we have seen much closer working partnerships with Corporate Members, who have continued to show the Forum their staunch support.

While it has been a challenging year for all, it has also been an exceptional one in much of the work we have achieved – and the work that is still to come. Next year we celebrate our 25th Anniversary – and with exciting events and projects planned for the coming year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for continued support, and to enjoin you to celebrate the coming year with us – 25 years and we are still here!

This report summarises activities over the past year and looks forward to the work planned for 2011 – 12.

Noël James  
Director



# 1. Events

## 1.1 Conferences

## 1.2 Executive Committee Meetings

Meetings were held on 26 November 2010; 14 January 2010 (Officers and Executive Strategy Review), 18 February (Officers and Executive), 20 May (Officers and Executive), 08 July (Officers and Executive) and 22 September (Officers). We are grateful to Land Securities Group PLC and Bircham Dyson Bell for hosting these meetings.

Title/ Location	Date	No of Delegates	Income £	Costs £	Net Profit £
Climate Change; Mitigation and adaption in historic towns - Oxford	20/22 October 2010	80	15,040	7,488	7,552
Understanding Localism London	04 Feb 2011	75	11,876	3,272	8,604
Newcastle	08 April 2011	39			
Chester	7 June 2011	29			
Bath	21 July 2011	58			
Purple Flag ATCM - London	25 February 2011	13	Free event	-	-
Maximising Tourism in town centre economies: engaging with Local Enterprise Partnerships London	14 April 28 July 2011	24 29	2,846	562	2284
Bury St Edmunds					
Social Media - London	29 Sept 2011	26	1,445	673	772
NPPF consultation Bath	30 Sept 2011	32	670	241	429
BIS Review	07 Sept 14 Oct 2011	20 16	Policy event - invited delegates	-	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>12 events</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>31,877*</b>	<b>12,236*</b>	<b>19,641</b>

\* These totals may differ from those in 9.2 as some relate to previous or subsequent financial accounting years.

# 2. Publications

## 2.1 Newsletters

e-news and e-updates have ensured regular communication with Members and other contacts, in a cost effective way. The development of the current website gives us a facility to do this more efficiently. Membership feedback shows that the quality of both our e-news and e-updates has improved markedly, and we are investigating methods of more effective delivery in the New Year.

We are still able to offer the opportunity to Members to advertise in e-news, which is circulated to c.1500 member contacts. This service helps to generate income to offset overhead costs.

This year we have introduced further use of social media as a communications tool with a new presence on LinkedIn, FaceBook, and Twitter. We have also instigated an online payments system for the first time. This has proved to be popular, efficient and cost effective.

## 2.2 Published Guidance

Income from sales of publications for the year ending 31/07/11 totalled £77.50.

Although paper publications still sell and the principles of good practice they offer remain as relevant today as when they were first written, guidance is more likely to be developed as a web-based facility in the future and publications will become out of date. Therefore, as well as selling publications at discounted prices, we have now ensured that publications be made available electronically - free to download - for HTF Members. Charges will still be made for paper and CD versions as a contribution to costs.

Work is underway to update key publications and provide new guidance.

## 2.3 Online Guidance

The HTF website ([www.historictownsforum.org](http://www.historictownsforum.org)) has been developed to include topic areas which relate to the work of the Forum and to bring together expert presentations, conference reports, case studies and examples of good practice.

Currently these are: Heritage Protection, Managing Growth, Public Realm, Regeneration, Retail Development, Sustainable Tourism, Transport and Traffic Management and Park & Ride. The facility to add to these pages and develop ideas offers Members the opportunity to share good practice and to obtain up to date guidance. Links to other key organisations are also provided. It is planned to update this part of the website to include other current topical areas of interest such as Localism and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

# 3. Projects

## 3.1 Retail Development

In response to the BIS High Street review, headed by Mary Portas, key stakeholders were called upon to proffer suggestions as to how to 'bring back the bustle' to the high street. HTF and English Heritage jointly convened a series of two roundtables to discuss the protection and revivification of historic cores, and the wider retail issues entailed by this. These were hosted by HTF Partner Bircham Dyson Bell, and attended by HTF partners John Lewis Partnership, Land Securities, and CgMs. Government representatives and key organisations involved in retail, including Royal Institute of British Architects, CLG, LGA, ATCM, Design Council, British Retail Consortium, Heritage Lottery Fund, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Institute of Historical Building Conservation, Heritage Alliance, National Retail Planning Forum, Royal Town Planning Institute, British Council for Shopping Centres, British Property Federation, and VisitEngland either attended or contributed.

One of several planned results has been a joint submission to the Portas review including suggestions to Government; others will include an update of the popular EH/HTF publication *Retail Development in Historic Areas*; an Action Plan; and an HTF conference on related retail issues in the New Year.

### 3.2 Heritage Counts

This year the HTF has been involved through the Historic Environment Forum with *Heritage Counts 2011*, contributing text, a case study, content suggestions and editorial help. The theme of *Heritage Counts 2011* is the Historic Environment and the Big Society.

### 3.3. AHRC

The HTF has been working closely with the Arts and Humanities Research Council on potential project ideas within the historic environment. Funding has been secured to host a Westminster Briefing on Localism and the Historic environment, which will take place after the Localism Bill has been passed in November. It will involve Government, leading academics and practitioners in the field.

### 3.4 Developing Partnership Working in Scotland

HTF has continued working with Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) and has attended two BEFS parliamentary events as well as BEFS's second Annual Congress. In addition HTF has attended other parliamentary reviews and networking events in Edinburgh, held meetings with Historic Scotland, and took part this year in the 'Big Debate' also held in Edinburgh. We are currently talking to the Scottish Towns Partnership, with the aim of becoming a working member of the group, and are working with ATCM to hold a joint purple flag event in Glasgow.

### 3.5 Developing Partnership Working in the Republic of Ireland

The Forum remains committed to its working relationship with colleagues in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Meetings and joint working earlier this year have led to a planned summer conference in Derry in 2012.

### 3.6 Developing Partnership Working in Wales

Meetings with Cadw, the Government Department of the Welsh Assembly responsible for heritage, and the Civic Trust for Wales, have explored areas of potential partnership working where the expertise of HTF might support the work of Cadw. Further discussions are expected to identify specific projects for progression in the coming year. Cadw have now joined HTF as associate members and are represented on the Executive.

### 3.7 HTF and Prince's Regeneration Trust joint guidance: Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in historic houses

This year the HTF and the Prince's Regeneration Trust collaborated on a guidance leaflet to help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in historic houses. The idea was first raised at our Oxford conference in October 2011, **Climate change: mitigation and adaption in historic towns**. 4th year UWE architecture and planning student, Heidi Tremlett, helped to produce this as part of her five week placement with HTF over the summer. The leaflet will be available for download before the end of the year.

### 3.8 VisitEngland

HTF has been actively involved with VisitEngland this year, presenting at the launch of their Strategy and Action Plans in March 2011, attended by HRH prince Charles and John Penrose MP, Minister for Tourism and Heritage. Members of the Executive and Directorate have been invited to sit on strategic advisory groups and HTF has been proactive in contributing to VisitEngland's Action Plans, in particular the Wise Growth Action Plan. We are planning to hold a joint conference with VisitEngland at Blenheim Palace during English Tourism Week in March 2012.

### 3.9 Universities Project

In partnership with English Heritage a project to develop more heritage awareness content for undergraduates in relevant degree courses has been established. After desk top research into course content, four Universities were invited to participate and are now engaged in work to support lecturers and to develop teaching resources. This will enhance and encourage awareness for students entering planning, architecture, urban design and other professions which potentially impact on historic towns. Negotiations have been underway this year to continue the project, and subject to funding allocations, the project will continue in the latter part of 2011.

### 3.10 Website / CESW

Our website developer and Graphic Designer, Caroline Dorling, continues to generate additional income for HTF through maintenance of the website that she developed for CESW last year. We have also been awarded a 9 month service level contract to support CESW with events and dissemination in the construction sector.

### 3.12 Photography Competition 2011/ HTF Calendar 2012

Following the success of the 2009 and 2010 \_space-sponsored HTF calendar, this year the HTF has invited members to submit photographs that demonstrate Localism at work in our communities. The 2012 calendar has been kindly sponsored by Powell Dobson Urbanists. This year we are trialling a different style of calendar that will also be produced electronically.

The winner of this year's competition will be awarded one night's dinner, bed and breakfast for two people at any UK Barceló hotel of the winner's choice, and has been kindly donated by Barceló UK. The winner will be announced shortly.

## 4. Sponsorship

**4.1** Despite the difficult times I am delighted to report that we continue to receive invaluable support from our Corporate Partners: Bircham Dyson Bell, John Lewis Partnership, Land Securities Group PLC, and the University of the West of England. In addition to financial contributions and providing rooms for London meetings, several of this year's conferences have been hosted by our Partners Bircham Dyson Bell, who also offered delegates their expertise on the subject of the events. Sadly we have had to say goodbye to RPS as Corporate Partners after many years working together, but are delighted to welcome aboard CgMs, who have already shown an active presence.

**4.2** A very successful Partners' dinner was hosted by Bircham Dyson Bell in May offering the opportunity for Members of the HTF Executive and representatives from our Corporate Partners to exchange ideas.



University of the  
West of England



*John Lewis Partnership*

**Bircham Dyson Bell**





**4.3** Sponsorship for individual events has helped to make them viable, offered direct engagement for private and public sector Members and meant that delegates' fees can be kept low – thus encouraging attendance.

This year event sponsorship was received from:

- \_space group
- ATCM
- Bath Preservation Trust
- Cheshire West and Chester
- City of York Council
- Continuum
- Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners
- St Edmundsbury Borough Council
- Silverlink Buildings Limited

## 5. Membership

**5.1** Losses have been expected in view of the financial conditions and the creation of Unitary Authorities, but new Members continue to join and overall membership figures are only down by 17. It was agreed by the Executive Committee and the Director that efforts in the coming year should concentrate on delivering services and maintaining a good profile with a view to recruiting more Members when the fiscal climate improves.

The Membership is currently made up of the following categories:

Local Authority	51
Associate	05
Civic & Amenity	24
Corporate	60
Honorary	04
Individual	27
Reciprocal	13
Town & Parish	09
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>

**5.2** Work continues to establish effective partnerships in Scotland, Ireland and Wales (see above) and currently Membership stands at: Scotland 4, Wales 7, Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland 4 (with 2 more preparing to come on board).

## 6. UWE

**6.1** The Annual Review Meeting was held in January 2011 with follow up meetings in July and August. UWE continues to give ‘in kind’ support to HTF and we are working more closely with UWE to help contribute to university targets.

### 6.2 Student Placements

As the Forum is based in the Faculty of the Environment and Technology at the University, student placements are supported when appropriate project work can be identified. (See above)

HTF staff were interviewed by final year students carrying out architectural surveys concerning place making and architectural design, and the Director gave a talk to first year students on the importance of Conservation Areas and historic buildings. We were also invited to judge a UWE buldings design project.

## 7. Partnership Working

**7.1** HTF continues to work in partnership with other organisations to strengthen its position and to contribute on behalf of its Membership to policy debates. Partnerships also add value and make best use of limited resources within the sector. During the past year HTF has worked with many of the Local Authority Members and the following organisations:

Academy of Urbanism	Action for Market Towns
Arts and Humanities Research Council	ARUP
Association of Town Centre Managers	Bath Preservation Trust
Bennetts Associates Architects	Bircham Dyson Bell
Blue Sail	Bradford MBC
British Council for Shopping Centres	British Parking Association/Parking Forum
British Property Federation	British Retail Consortium
Built Environment Forum for Scotland	Business Innovation & Skills
CABE	Cadw
Carbon Trust	CgMs
Cheshire West and Chester	Chester Civic Trust
Choose Suffolk	Churches Conservation Trust
City of Lincoln Council	City of York Council
Civic Voice	Communities and Local Government
Constructing Excellence South West	Continuum
Corsham Town Council	DJC1 Planning Limited
Department of Culture, Media & Sport	Department for Transport
Design Council	Donald Insall Associates
Drivers Jonas	Drury McPherson Partnership
English Heritage	Environment Agency
Freedom Digital Networks Ltd	Globe Consultants
Greater Cambridge Greater	
Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership	
Homes & Communities Agency	Historic Environment Forum
Heritage Alliance	Heritage Lottery Fund
Historic Scotland	IHBC
John Lewis Partnership	Kellogg College, Oxford
Land Securities Group PLC	Landor Travel Publications
Listed Property Owners Club	Local Government Association
Mendip District Council	Mid Suffolk District Council
Nash Partnership	Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners
National Retail Planning Forum	National Trust
North of England Civic Trust	Oxford Castle
Oxford City Council	Oxford Preservation Trust
Oxford Spires Four Pillars Hotel	Oxford University Estates
Oxfordshire County Council	Partnerships for Renewables
Placemarque	PLB
Pocket Places	Pop up Power
Prince's Foundation	Prince's Regeneration Trust
ProjectBook	Responsible Tourism
RIBA	RICS
RPD Consulting	RPS
RTPI	Scarborough Borough Council
St Edmundsbury Borough Council	Shaping Norfolk's Future
Silverlink Buildings Limited	Stagecoach
Steven Bee Urban Counsel	The Tourism Alliance
Tourism Management Institute	Turley Associates
UK HRG	Urban Solutions
Urban Vision Enterprise CIC	UWE
Visit York	VisitEngland
West Oxford Community Renewables	Westgate Oxford Alliance
Winchester BID	Winchester City Council
Wood Window Alliance	York Civic Trust
_space group	

## 7.2 HRH The Prince of Wales - Patron of HTF

Exciting plans are emerging for our 25th anniversary year, which will involve our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales.

## 7.3 Consultations

The Forum responds to consultations relevant to its Members, in order to highlight the special concerns of managing historic towns and cities, and where possible to influence policy.

As well as giving and sharing guidance to and with other organisations, this year the HTF responded to:

- The Mary Portas BIS High Street Review
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Local Planning Regulations
- How change of use is handled in the planning system
- Relaxation of the planning rules for change of use from business to residential
- Moving inland waterways into a new charity in England and Wales
- Bishop review of design support
- EU consultation on the future of VAT
- Good practice guidance for local listing
- Community right to buy
- HLF's strategic framework for 2013-2019
- 'Preserving what is special': the conservation strategy for South Northamptonshire
- West Northamptonshire joint planning unit joint core strategy pre-submission
- Creative and Cultural Skills (CCS) Sector Qualifications Strategy
- National Conservation Education and Skills Strategy (ICON)
- 2011 Budget comments
- DEFRA agency consultation
- Communities and Local Government Committee Inquiry into Regeneration (joint with IHBC)
- VisitEngland Strategic Framework for Tourism in England 2010 – 2020 Action Plans
- Localism Bill
- National Planning Policy Framework initial response
- DCMS Business Plan 2011-15 transparency consultation
- National Heritage Protection Plan: Interim Version Consultation
- Tree Preservation Orders: Proposals for streamlining
- The Setting of Heritage Assets: EH Guidance
- Inquiry and call for evidence into the Funding of Arts and Heritage

In addition we have worked closely with English Heritage on *Heritage Counts 2011*; fielded the Heritage Alliance with two executive members to sit on their Policy Advisory Group; provided guidance to the Heritage Alliance Funding Advisory Group; and given advice to VisitEngland both through detailed response to their Action Plans (in particular their Wise Growth Action Plan) and through presence on their new Strategic Industry Advisory Group and Visitor Economy Forum. HTF is also a proactive member of the Historic Environment Forum, on which the Director and another Executive member sit, and contributes to the UK HRG (UK Heritage Research Group).

## 7.4 25th Anniversary Celebrations

We will be planning a series of events to celebrate our 25th Anniversary. We hope you will join us in these celebrations when they are unveiled.

## 7.5 Reciprocal Membership

HTF maintains formal links with 13 organisations; it is also a member of the Heritage Alliance, the IHBC, and the Academy of Urbanism.

# 8. Executive Committee

## 8.1 Position of Chair

The current Chair may be appointed for a further year; the AGM will be asked to agree this.

## 8.2 Election of the Executive Committee

Having canvassed current Members and circulated to the whole Membership for nominations, to date nominations for the Executive Committee for the coming year are:

Offering to stand for another year:

James Blackwell	Worcester City Council
Steve Carvell	Chichester District Council
Stephen Langtree	Civic & Amenity representative
Steve Tilbury	Winchester City Council
Richard Tuffrey	High Peak Borough Council
Tony Wyatt	Corporate representative

Offering to be co-opted for a further year:

Steve Bee	Independent
Brian Human	Independent/former Chair & Vice Chair
David Humphreys	Northern Ireland representative
Michael Loveday	HEART/Living Streets
Ian Poole	St Edmundsbury Borough Council
John Preston	Cambridge City Council
Prue Smith	Independent
Dave Chetwyn	Independent
Judith Alfrey	Cadw
Ian Brown	Canterbury City Council

The Forum is very grateful for the support of these Members who will be standing down:

Sean Coughlan	Lichfield District Council
Mel Barrett	Oxford City Council
Nick Hayward	Partners' representative

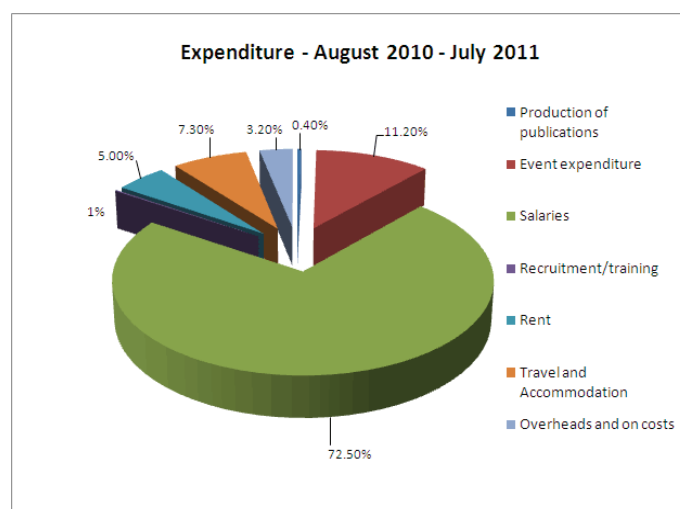
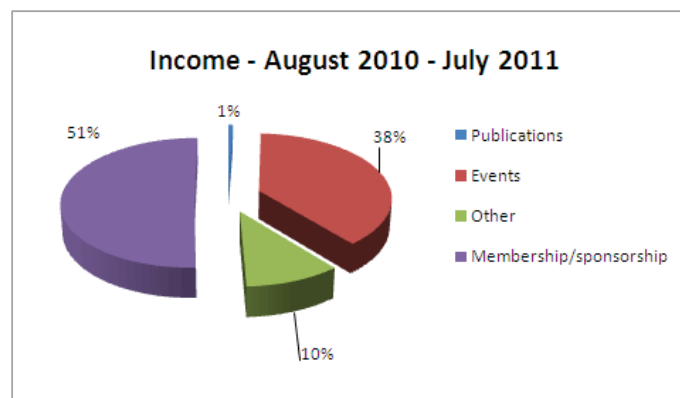
## 9. Treasurer's Report

**9.1** This year the Forum has been at pains to examine its activities and to put in place a financial strategy which would ensure its ability to continue to offer value for money services to its Members and to remain a key player in the sector despite the difficult fiscal context in which we are all working. Close scrutiny of previous accounts unfortunately uncovered anomalies between accounting systems. Consequently, it was discovered that our financial situation was not as positive as previously thought and that the deficit at the end of last year was £39,037 - some £13,000 worse than was previously reported. While this is regrettable, we are moving forward in a positive and transparent fashion and with much hard work, have managed to deliver the wide variety of events during the year while still cutting our running costs by whatever means possible. We will continue to look at ways of driving down our costs in the coming year.

As the Director has already reported, we have been affected by the downturn in the economy coupled with public sector cuts. This has reduced the income from membership and conferences which, together with Partners' funding, have been the traditional key sources of income for the Forum. Our response to this has been to look at alternative income sources and so we are in the process of establishing a number of partnerships and projects that are of value to our membership while also bringing in vital funding. By doing this, we are convinced that the emerging business model is more balanced and, and under constant review, will be more sustainable for the future.

While this year has been one of adjustment to our new circumstances we have worked to find a sound strategy to allow us to approach financial stability in the New Year. 2011-12 will be a special year for the Forum - something that will be reflected in our planned activities and, we hope, that this will in turn help the Forum's prosperity. In the meantime, we remain grateful to our Members and Partners for their continuing support.

## 9.2 Accounts Summary



*A full copy of our accounts is available on request*

Richard Tuffrey

*Noël James  
Director  
October 2011*





Patron:  
His Royal Highness  
The Prince of Wales

John Lewis Partnership  
Bircham Dyson Bell



University of the  
West of England



ARUP

Bennetts Associates  
Architects



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

fdn - Power to:  
• Connect • Communicate • Control • Monitor

projectbook.co.uk



RIBA South East · RIBA South



Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough  
Enterprise Partnership

Drury McPherson Partnership  
Historic environment policy and practice

BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM  
for successful and responsible retailing



Pop-up Power



TURLEY ASSOCIATES

