

## Welcome Back Fund

The government has announced new measures to support a safe and successful reopening of the high streets and seaside resorts ahead of the summer season.

A new £56 million Welcome Back Fund will help councils boost tourism, improve green spaces and provide more outdoor seating areas, markets and food stall pop-ups – giving people safer options to reunite with friends and relatives. The local authority of Wigan has been allocated £290,046 of this fund.

The funding can be used by councils to:

- Boost the look and feel of their high streets by investing in street planting, parks, green spaces and seating areas to make high streets as beautiful and welcoming as possible
- Run publicity campaigns and prepare to hold events like street markets and festivals to support local businesses
- Install signage and floor markings to encourage social distancing and safety
- Improve high streets and town centres by planting flowers or removing graffiti

To make sure that businesses can make the most of the summer, businesses such as pubs and restaurants, including where these premises are in listed buildings, will be allowed to use their land more flexibly to set up marquees and provide more outdoor space for diners as restrictions ease, allowing them to serve more customers and recover from the effects of

the pandemic. They can be kept up for the whole summer rather than the 28 days currently permitted.

The Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick said:

“As we move to the next stage on the roadmap out of lockdown we are all looking forward to being reunited with friends and family outdoors and making a safe and happy return to our favourite shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants.

“Our Welcome Back Fund gives every city, town and high street support to prepare for a great summer. This funding will help councils and businesses to welcome shoppers, diners and tourists back safely. As soon as the roadmap allows, we need to get behind our local businesses and enjoy all that this country has to offer and that we’ve been missing so much.”



The government has also launched the High Streets Task Force, which will provide targeted, hands-on support to councils, advising them how to adapt to meet changing consumer demands in order to thrive in the years ahead. The first 70 councils were announced last month, and Wigan is amongst them. Also included are numerous other councils in the North West, including St Helens, Bolton, Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley and Liverpool.

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