

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Stirling</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: C19 Business and Management Studies</p>
<p>Title of case study: Retailing, Retail Planning and Town Centres</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research undertaken by retail academics at Stirling Management School has stimulated, informed and shaped public and political debate, and policy development and practice on the planning requirements for retail developments, retail regeneration and town centre futures. This work has enhanced Scottish public policy towards retail development, underpinned the development of Business Improvement Districts in Scotland, the £60m Town Centre Regeneration Fund and been integral to the National Review of Town Centres.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>There is a long heritage of retail research at Stirling informing retail planning policy development in Scotland (for example in 1985 and 1988 John Dawson and Leigh Sparks researched, for the Scottish Development Department, retail provision in Scottish cities and towns). There is a specific body of research from the 1990s: for example in 1998, Leigh Sparks was commissioned by the Scottish Office to report on Town Centre Uses in Scotland (recommending development of Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) and targeted investment in town centres). On the basis of this research expertise (see Burt and Sparks 2003), and after a competitive tendering process (agreed price £52k), the Stirling retail team were commissioned in 2003, with others, by the Scottish Government, to evaluate the effectiveness of the then main retail planning policy (National Planning Policy Guidance NPPG8). The report of the work of the Stirling team (Leigh Sparks, Anne Findlay and Andrew Paddison), together with co-investigators from CB Richard Ellis and Colin Buchanan and partners was published by the Scottish Government in 2004. This work was the subject of extensive public and governmental consultation, leading to the revision of NPPG8 and its publication as a revised retail policy (Scottish Planning Policy SPP8) in 2006. This policy has had sustained impact on retail development in Scottish towns and cities and shaped further policy discussion and direction since its introduction.</p> <p>The NPPG8 research consisted of an extensive literature review, an assessment of retail statistical data, and reviews of sample policies, planning decisions and general transport issues. Household surveys collected information on general shopping patterns. Discussion groups, interviews, and a public and private sector questionnaire focused on specific areas of NPPG8 policy. The main conclusions and recommendations included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of the overall effectiveness of NPPG 8. • The development of a higher profile in policy for town and other centres by defining them as "urban centres" in Scotland. • Policy revision proposals seeking to promote town centres as efficient, competitive and innovative locations and increase activity. This included a stronger requirement for town centre strategies and vitality/viability studies and annual bids as part of a 'Town Centre Improvement Fund'. • A place based policy context encouraging flexibility at the local and especially rural levels. <p>With continued interest in retail policy and town centres, the Scottish Government subsequently (in</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

2008) directly commissioned (£4k) Leigh Sparks and Anne Findlay to undertake a review of policies adopted to support a healthy retail sector and retail led regeneration and to assess the impact retail has had on the regeneration of town centres and local high streets. This research met three objectives

- Identification of the characteristics of a healthy/vibrant town centre/local high street;
- Identification of, in the UK, what policies/approaches have been implemented to: (a) Support a healthy retail sector in local high streets and town centres, and (b) Undertake retail led regeneration;
- Consideration of the impact retail has had on the regeneration of town centres and local high streets, and how this has impacted on the wider community (see Cummins et al 2005, 2008 for our research on this wider regeneration impact).

3. References to the research

Burt S and L Sparks (2003) Power and Competition in the UK Retail Grocery Market. British Journal of Management, 14, 237-254.

Cummins S, A Findlay, M Petticrew and L Sparks (2005) Healthy Cities: The impact of food retail-led regeneration on food access, choice and retail structure. Built Environment, 31, 4, 288-301 (2005).

Cummins S, A Findlay, C Higgins, M Petticrew, Sparks L and H Thomson (2008) Reducing inequalities in health and diet: findings from a study on the impact of a food retail development. Environment and Planning A, 40,2, 402-422 (2008).

Sparks L (1998) Town Centre Uses in Scotland. Scottish Office Development Department Research Programme Research Findings Number 59.(See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/1998/12/75aff4b2-b190-4a3c-a6db-f586895779b2>)

CB Richard Ellis, University of Stirling (Institute for Retail Studies) and Colin Buchanan and Partners (2004) The Effectiveness of NPPG8: Town Centres and Retailing Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/02/18952/33422>

Findlay A and Sparks L (2009) A review of the literature exploring what policies have been adopted to support a healthy retail sector and to undertake retail led regeneration and what impact retail has had on the regeneration of town centres and local high streets. Available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/01/12112520/8>

4. Details of the impact

The Scottish Government commissioned NPPG8 research led directly into the revision of the national retail planning policy (revised retail and town centre planning policy SPP8). In this section we concentrate on its impacts since 2008.

The introduction of this policy produced sustained impact on retail development. The town centre first policy has directed retail development to town centres and sought to enhance and support town centre planning and activities. Outcomes of this are seen in the renewed interest in town centre stores in some sectors (e.g. Food) and the increasing and enhanced focus on town centres generally in public, political and policy debate.

Town centres have received great coverage in recent years (e.g. the British Retail Consortium 21st

Impact case study (REF3b)

Century High Street Project, the Portas Review on High Streets in 2011 and the Grimsey Review in 2013). In Scotland concern generated by the situation facing town centres led to legislation in 2007 (implemented from 2008) to deliver Business Improvement Districts, especially in town centres (identified as a policy direction in our 1998 report for the Scottish Office), and the development of a learning network on town centres and local high streets (2009-2011 and now superseded by Scotland's Towns Partnership). The Scottish Government commissioned retail-led regeneration review suggested a much tighter focus for the activities of local and national governments in regeneration in town centres and led to extensive and continuing political and business debate on regeneration and town centres (for example via the learning network, the Parliamentary Cross-Party Group on Towns and Town Centres, Scottish Towns Policy Group and Scotland's Towns Partnership, all of which have been influenced by presentations, research and reports on the subject by Leigh Sparks).

These planning policy and regeneration strands came together in the development of the Town Centre Regeneration Fund in 2009, which invested £60m into a series of retail and town centre regeneration schemes across Scotland. This more focused investment followed the recommendation for a town centre improvement fund in the 2004 research and the need to focus investment identified in the 2008 research (and presented by Leigh Sparks to the relevant Cabinet Minister John Swinney at the Vital and Viable Town Centres conference that year). The TCRF has received substantial publicity and is recognised as innovative in this policy area in the UK; its lessons and impacts have been assessed by Douglas Wheeler and Associates for the Scottish Government.

Our initial research on town centres and retailing led to Leigh Sparks being invited by the Scottish Government to become a Board Member of IDS Scotland – the 'arms-length' company set up to deliver Business Improvement Districts in Scotland (there are now 20 operational BIDs in Scotland) – and to being invited to chair Scottish Towns Policy Group by the Centre for Scottish Public Policy. The CSPP work (including establishing Scotland's Towns Partnership and the Cross-Party Group) raised public and political pressure in Scotland, especially after the Portas Review into High Streets in England. This culminated in the Deputy First Minister announcing a National Review of Town Centres in 2012. Led by Malcolm Fraser and supported by an External Advisory Group (to which Leigh Sparks was appointed by the Scottish Government in recognition of his retail and town centre research), this review was published in July 2013 and suggested a range of proposals to government. The formal Scottish Government response to this review is due to be published in November 2013, but an initial £2m has been announced to assist opening up living accommodation in town centres (<http://www.scotregen.co.uk/2m-town-centre-regeneration-funding-announced/> and <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/-2m-Town-Centre-Housing-Fund-opens-4aa.aspx>).

The Fraser Review focuses on town centres and the activities needed to actively support and re-imagine them in Scotland. The recommendations of the review derive from the main findings of the Town Centre Uses report and the NPPG8 evaluation; e.g. town centre profile, town centre efficiency, bottom-up local policy and practice development, town centre first policies. The thinking from the 2004 evaluation has continued to inform and direct policy debate, development and Government action in this area in Scotland, aided by the work on regeneration in town centres and the role of retail in that regeneration.

Impact case study (REF3b)**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

The revised planning policy is:

Scottish Planning Policy 8 (SPP8) Town Centres and Retailing. Available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/07/26112710/8>

The impacts from 2008 are corroborated as follows:

Example of discussion of the issues of town centres, retail policy high streets and regeneration (informed by or with reference to the Stirling work):

British Retail Consortium (2009) 21st Century High Streets. Available at http://www.brc.org.uk/ePublications/21st_Century_High_Streets/

Douglas Wheeler and Associates et al (2011) Town Centre Regeneration: How does it work and what can be achieved. Report for the Scottish Government available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/358309/0121114.pdf>

The Fraser Review:

National Review of Town Centres External Advisory Group Report (2013) Community and Enterprise in Scotland's Town Centres. Available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/town-centres/review>

Websites of bodies mentioned in impact section:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/pir/learningnetworks/towncentres>

<http://www.bids-scotland.com/>

<http://www.scotlandstowns.org/>

<http://www.cspp.org.uk/public-services/town-centre-regeneration.html>

Since 2011 Leigh Sparks has maintained a retail blog (<http://www.stirlingretail.com>), which includes details of media commentaries and presentations on these subjects.