

Agenda 15b)

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03/09/26

Via email: 18th August 2026

Let's Celebrate Towns Returns for 2026:

Visa and Nationwide launch national competition spotlighting the UK's high streets and communities

17/08/2026

- Towns across the UK are being invited to enter the 'Let's Celebrate Towns' competition, the UK-wide showcase delivered by Visa in partnership with Nationwide, now in its fourth year.
- Winning towns will each receive a £20,000 grant towards community-led projects or new initiatives that give small businesses a boost.
- This year, towns can enter across five categories: High Street Revival, Backing Local Business, Protecting Valued Places, Connected Places and Community Pride.
- The launch comes amid a renewed national focus on local pride, as the Government invests up to £5.8 billion in nearly 300 communities through its Pride in Place Programme, an ambition Let's Celebrate Towns shares by helping the best local ideas spread across the country.
- Entries will be judged by an independent panel spanning business and industry bodies, with winners announced at an awards ceremony in Parliament on 14th December 2026.

Monday 17th August 2026: Building on three years of success, this year Visa has partnered with Nationwide to launch Let's Celebrate Towns 2026: a national showcase of the towns helping local businesses and communities to thrive.

Visa and Nationwide want to hear stories from across the UK: examples of brilliant entrepreneurship, fresh initiatives that help revive high streets, ideas that protect valued places, innovative ways communities are staying connected, and displays of local pride that make towns what they are.

Communities can encourage their local MPs, councillors and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to share their success stories to be in with a chance of winning. The competition will run from Monday 17th August to Sunday 25th October 2026 with entries then shortlisted before being judged across the five categories.

This year's competition comes at a moment of renewed national focus on local pride. Through its Pride in Place Programme, the Government is investing up to £5.8 billion

in nearly 300 communities across the UK, empowering local people to build stronger communities, create thriving places and take control of their neighbourhoods' futures. Let's Celebrate Towns, run by Visa and Nationwide, shares that ambition, shining a light on the local innovators, community leaders and businesses driving renewal and investing in the health of their high streets, so the best ideas can spread across the nation.

Since launching in 2023, Let's Celebrate Towns has recognised more than 30 towns across over a dozen counties, investing £20,000 in each winning town, and allowing community projects up and down the country to grow and thrive. In 2025, winners in Ramsgate, Gosport, Morecambe, Swanley, Malton and Norton, and Wallsend, showed innovative ways to drive good growth in their towns and bring local ambitions to life.

Let's Celebrate Towns builds on Visa and Nationwide's Towns Fund partnership, which invests in practical initiatives in communities across the UK. Publicly accessible defibrillators and bleed control kits have already been installed at 225 Nationwide branches as part of a commitment to equip all 605 branches, with over 46 deployments to date. Speak Easy cards in Nationwide and Virgin Money branches enable customers to communicate by pointing to information, pictures, questions or requests when speaking may be difficult, helping them access essential services such as savings and payments, or reporting a lost or stolen card and raising fraud concerns. Over 2,000 digital lessons have also been delivered, supporting in excess of 10,000 people to build confidence in getting online safely.

Rob Cameron, Group Country Manager, UK & Ireland, Visa, said: "Our towns and high streets are the beating heart of our communities, our economy and, for many of us, the place we call home. Up and down the country, businesses, community groups and local councils are doing amazing things for their towns. We launched Let's Celebrate Towns to showcase and support the people and places driving positive change in their local areas, because growth starts at home, on high streets up and down the country. We are delighted to partner with Nationwide to deliver the 2026 competition."

Mandy Beech, Group Director of Retail Services, Nationwide, said: "Through our Branch Promise, we are proud to have a strong presence on high streets. Our 'Towns Fund' partnership with Visa is already making a real difference in local communities - funding defibrillators and bleed kits in branches, providing Speak Easy cards to help customers communicate with us, and delivering digital lessons to help people build confidence online. Let's Celebrate Towns is the next step in that partnership, recognising the people and organisations who go the extra mile to support their local communities. We look forward to hearing your town's story."

Helen Dickinson OBE, Chief Executive, British Retail Consortium, said: "Retailers sit at the heart of every town and high street, providing jobs, investment and a sense of community. Having partnered with Visa on Let's Celebrate Towns since its earliest years, we have seen first-hand the difference it makes when local success stories get the recognition they deserve. We are delighted to see the competition return for 2026 alongside an exciting new partnership with Nationwide, and would encourage towns across the country to put themselves forward."

For further detail, and to enter, visit [Let's Celebrate Towns 2026](#)