

THE ALTERNATIVE HIGH STREET



THE FUTURE IS 'OURS' TO CREATE



WHAT IS AN ALTERNATIVE HIGH STREET?



An Alternative High Street is the vision of the Re-Action Collective. It is a space that champions repair, reuse, repurposing, sharing, and upskilling. It promotes a culture where caring for what we have and sharing it becomes the norm, rather than defaulting to buying new.

How to Create a Pop-Up Alternative High Street

The clothing industry has a massive impact on the planet - we already have enough clothing to clothe the next six generations. And it's not just clothing, we have created so much stuff and it's simply not sustainable.

At the same time, our high streets have seen continued decline with competition from the supermarkets and online, combined with rising rates and poorer public transport connections. Many high streets have been overtaken by charity shops - many overwhelmed with donations, they have become a sticking plaster to the impacts of our overconsumption.

How can we transition to a better way, one that prioritises people and the planet, without first showing what that future could look like?

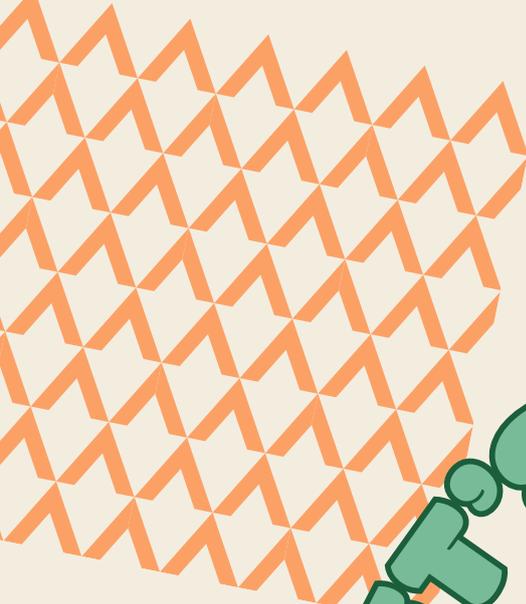
Re-Imagined high-streets.

A Collective Vision

FROM THE RE-ACTION
COLLECTIVE



"..a space where both environmental and personal well-being are prioritised..to promote a culture where caring for what we have and sharing it becomes the norm.."



LET'S RE-IMAGINE

The Alternative High Street is a joyful, collaborative space for those already working to keep clothing out of landfill. It's an opportunity to showcase their work, connect with others, and inspire more people to get involved.

ENCOURAGE SHARING OVER INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP



PROMOTE REUSE, SWAPS, AND REPAIRS OVER LANDFILL



BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



vibrant hubs of community interaction

We need to create engaging spaces that can demonstrate just what a more sustainable future will look like.

Spaces that highlight solutions, offer knowledge sharing, and act as a way to inspire people to attribute more value to the items we already have. To consider: do I need to buy this new thing or is there another way? To show there is a way we can live better while using less.

At Re-Action our reimagined Alternative High Street represents a shift towards a more inclusive, environmentally conscious, human experience. Moving **beyond the consumer towards the citizen**. We reimagine public spaces as vibrant hubs of community interaction, building connections between individuals, promoting sustainable living practices and bringing life back to our high streets.

What is an Alternative High Street?

A vision of the Re-Action Collective, and something to create in your community



An Alternative High Street is the vision of the Re-Action Collective. It is a space that champions repair, reuse, repurposing, sharing, and upskilling. It is a space where both environmental and personal well-being are prioritised. And it aims to promote a culture where caring for what we have and sharing it becomes the norm, rather than defaulting to buying new.

The Alternative High Street provides a platform for those already working in clothing repair and repurposing to showcase their work and for their community to see what the joy of using less can look like. It can give people a chance to try out repair techniques and to learn new skills.

While the collective is dedicated to driving change in the outdoor industry, this concept could be applied to all types of clothing.

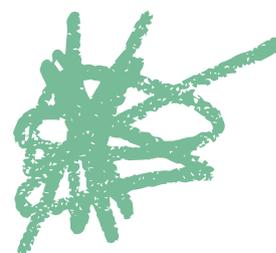
At the moment, the Alternative High Street is a pop-up feature that can appear at events, festivals, or come to your community space to demonstrate the possibilities and inspire change.

The Alternative High Street is designed to:

- Promote reuse, swaps, and repairs over landfill
- Encourage sharing over individual ownership
- Foster up-skilling and knowledge-sharing
- Build resilient communities
- Boost the local economy
- Champion a local, adaptive approach



Moving beyond the consumer towards the citizen.





WHO IS IT FOR?

The Alternative High Street is a joyful, collaborative space for those already working to keep clothing out of landfill. It's an opportunity to showcase their work, connect with others, and inspire more people to get involved.

The event could be run on its own or part of a larger community event such as:

- Eco Fairs
- Fetes
- Community Centres
- Festivals
- Conferences and business events



How does it work?

Visitors explore the Alternative High Street, stopping at different stations to learn, engage, and, in some cases, take part.

Donation Station: A space for visitors to donate unwanted clothing that can be reused or repaired, demonstrating how items can be saved from landfill. The Re-Action collective asks for outdoor gear to be donated which is shared with partners to be reused or repurposed, but your Alternative High Street might have a different requirement depending on the needs and activities of your community.

Repair Centre: A hands-on area where visitors can have items repaired and learn simple repair techniques. From sewing and patching to darning, this station showcases skills that keep clothing in use for longer. The space can also be used to connect visitors with local repair services that can extend the life of their items.



A creative space that closes the circular loop by transforming discarded, unusable items into something new.

Rework Hub: A creative space that closes the circular loop by transforming discarded, unusable items into something new. It is a chance to showcase the work already happening in your community to do something innovative with waste. This could be turning event banners into bags or combining two damaged shirts to create a new wearable piece. The hub could include crafting workshops, upcycling demonstrations and skill-sharing session.

Share Shop: This area illustrates the value of sharing what we already own to reduce the demand for new products. It showcases local sharing initiatives, rental services, libraries of things, and swap groups, helping visitors discover ways to borrow within the local community instead of buying.

Take it further

Community Workshops: A schedule of organised workshops would be a good way to increase the number of visitors who can learn at once and by promoting the workshops ahead of the event entices more people to visit. This would also be a good opportunity to invite other local organisations or businesses to share their skills at your event.

Swap Shop: Bring one, take one - a hub where anything can be swapped. It's best to choose a theme such as a celebration clothes swap. People can bring in their 'worn once' party outfits and swap for a 'new' party outfit.

Food Share: A food swap could work as well. Bringing in fruit and veg seedlings to swap and plant, or excess fruit and veg or herbs that have been grown. Such as an abundance of potatoes could be swapped with someone else's abundance of courgettes.

Community Action Wall: A space for visitors to share a commitment inspired by their visit. Whether it's learning to sew on a button, finding a local tailor to repair a jacket, or starting a community swap group, this wall turns inspiration into action.

Reward Booth: As visitors make their way through the Alternative High Street, they can collect ribbons or tokens for engaging with each station. Those who complete the challenge earn a limited-edition patch, perfect for repairing or upcycling a garment or bag.





WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

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THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

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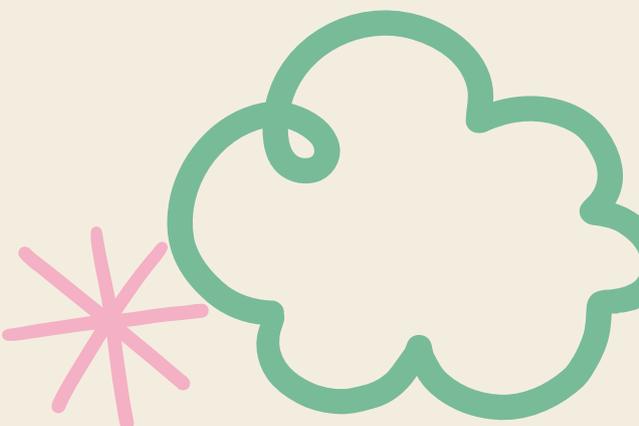
"Being a member of the Re-Action Collective has given me a voice. Without this dynamic group, the 'Alternative High Street' would have been consigned to brain landfill, wasted and discarded. Instead, what began as an idea morphed into a reality at the The Better Business Network Summit. This couldn't have happened without massive collective support." - Rebecca Heaps

What we learned from our first Alternative High Street

The first Alternative High Street took place at the Better Business Summit in Manchester, an event that brought together purpose-driven businesses.

There was a real buzz at the event, and visitors to the Alternative High Street gave incredibly positive feedback. Engaging with visitors was easy, and we quickly discovered that the space encouraged collaboration - we learned just as much from visitors as they did from us!

We saw that, when given the opportunity, people love keeping their belongings in use for longer. The high demand for our repair stations highlighted that many people lack the skills or confidence to tackle their own repairs. Sharing knowledge and signposting local opportunities to learn or access these skills is essential in helping people continue their journey beyond the event.



"The Alternative High Street from the Re-Action Collective stole my heart with their "Born out of Protest" ethos. Their passion for rescuing, reviving, repurposing, and redistributing gear proves we don't need shiny, overpriced kit to enjoy the outdoors. My inner anarchist is cheering!"

Visitors really enjoyed collecting ribbons from each station and trading them for a badge. This not only boosted engagement with the Alternative High Street but also made the experience more memorable.

Hopefully, the badge serves as a reminder at home that small changes in how we buy, care for, and share items can make a big difference.

HOW TO HOST YOUR OWN ALTERNATIVE HIGH STREET

Here's an overview of the planning activities and considerations needed to host an Alternative High Street:



The Plan

First, decide which stations you want to showcase on your high street, as this will determine your space, equipment and staffing needs.

Think about who in your community is already working in the reuse, repair and sharing world and might be interested in collaborating with you. They might be small businesses, community projects, such as repair cafes, or other local organisations. Your local council might be able to help connect you with initiatives already running within your community.

Confirm your partners early and ask them in advance about their space and equipment requirements.

If you plan to collect donated items, clearly define what types of items you will accept and where they will go after the event.

The Space

Consider how visitors will move through the space, this can help tell a story. For our Alternative High Street, we had the Donation Station, Repair Centre, Rework Hub, followed by the Share Shop. While not all visitors followed a linear route, this layout illustrated the journey of an item through repair, reuse, and sharing.

Think about how much space each station requires, and if you're working with an event organiser, clarify early exactly how much space is available and any wet weather contingencies (if relevant). If possible, visit the space before the event.



For the Repair Centre or any demonstration areas, ensure there is adequate lighting, ample storage for supplies, and access to electricity for sewing machines and other equipment. For workshops, provide enough space so visitors can easily see and hear what's happening.

Think about how banners or signage can help explain the concept and guide visitors through the Alternative High Street space. We used a display made from cardboard boxes with posters - an affordable, reusable option. With the addition of bunting made from reclaimed tents, it created a bright and inviting space.



Organising the Team

Ideally there should be at least 1 person assigned to each station throughout the event, however if you are offering repairs, this is always popular so the more repairers the better!

Use a WhatsApp group (or similar) to ensure everyone in the team is connected and understands what is required to make the Alternative High Street a success. Organise at least two meetings before the event where everyone can meet, even if this is just online.

Create a reference sheet so that everyone in the team has key information about the event. Also include details about each of the businesses and projects involved so that the team can promote each other.

If you are running your Alternative High Street as part of a larger event, nominate one person in your team who will be the main point of contact for the organisers.

It is useful to have a way for visitors to identify everyone who's part of the Alternative High Street. We have used branded aprons, which can easily be used again.

Have someone in the team who is responsible for taking photos, to capture the joy at the event which can be shared later.

And make sure you have a rota for breaks and plenty of snacks!



Moving beyond the consumer towards the citizen.



STATION SIGNAGE



Rework Hub

If selling items at the Rework Hub, make sure it's clear items are available for purchase, the cost of items and how to pay.

Repair Centre

If offering repairs on the day, either have a set price list for common repairs or allow people to make a donation if they can. If visitors are leaving items with you for repair, ensure there is a clear drop off and collection area and that items are labelled. And offer a directory of local repair and share initiatives which visitors can take away.

General

Display signage highlighting the benefits of repair and sharing, covering environmental, financial, and community advantages.

If showing statistics on consumption rates, present them in a meaningful and engaging way rather than a confrontational one which might shame people who aren't yet aware of all the issues.

If your group has a newsletter, or another way to keep connected with you after the event, make it easy for visitors to sign up.



Equipment List

This is a general list of equipment:

- Tables and chairs
- Dress rails and coat hangers
- Place to store repair equipment and materials, including extra sewing needles, threads and spare trims.
- Extension cords, portable lighting
- Equipment and/or materials for workshop attendees
- Materials for signmaking - whiteboard / chalkboard / cardboard
- Waste and recycling bins
- Set up supplies, such as safety pins, pens, tape, string, scissors, bulldog clips, Blu Tak, etc.
- Decorations, such as bunting or tulle pom poms, which are both easily reusable and could be borrowed.





Other Considerations

Here's a list of other things you will need to consider or check with the event organiser:

- Access to WiFi and power points
- Conduct a risk assessment for each of the activities
- PAT testing requirements
- Public liability requirements
- A waiver form to be signed by the owner of the items before repairs are carried out.
- Access to first aid kit and first aiders



How to promote your Alternative High Street

First be sure that you can clearly explain what is going to be on offer at your Alternative High Street and people can understand how they can get involved. Then tell everyone!

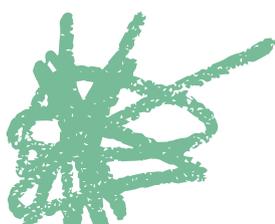
Contact local networks or organisations with shared values. Ask them to come along and tell their communities and your event.

Ensure that visitors know about what donations you may be accepting.

If running workshops, you may want to allow visitors to sign up to specific slots ahead of the event to ensure there's adequate space and materials.

Link to a Re-Action Collective toolkit - [Creating Ripples](#)

This toolkit is designed for everyone who has set up a community-led project which aims to make a positive impact for both people and the planet.



POP-UP PLANNING TIMETABLE

Here's a suggested week-by-week action plan for creating your own Alternative High Street pop-up event:

8 Weeks Before the Event

- Confirm date, time, and venue.
- Recruit your team.
- Seek funding or sponsorship if needed.

7 Weeks Before

- Plan event layout and signage display
- Start to arrange necessary equipment and tools.
- Start creating promotional materials (posters, social media posts, press release).
- Set up an online registration system if needed.
- Start to promote your event with a "Save the Date" announcement.

6 Weeks Before

- Contact local media, community groups, and partners for promotion.
- If collecting donated items, agree what type of items and where they will go.
- Host a meeting with everyone taking part, this could be online.
- Organise insurance or risk assessments as required.

5 Weeks Before

- Continue promotion (you could share stories of past successful repairs)
- Set up a way to collect visitor feedback.

4 Weeks Before

- Do a venue walk-through to confirm logistics (power outlets, furniture, signage).
- Arrange waste disposal and recycling options for irreparable items.

3 Weeks Before

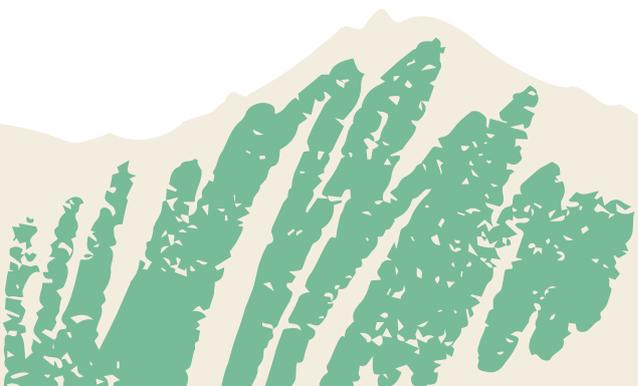
- Finalise signage (welcome signs, station labels, retail notices)
- Review equipment list and who will bring what
- Draft a volunteer rota and start to assign roles for the event.

2 Weeks Before

- Create the team reference sheet with key information about the event and the businesses and organisations involved.
- Create a set up plan. Try to be realistic about how much time it will take you to set up. Ensure this is shared with the rest of the team.
- Host a meeting with everyone taking part, this could be online.

1 Week Before

- Do a final push on social media and community networks.
- Double-check all supplies, tools, and logistics.
- Prepare a thank-you plan for volunteers





EVENT DAY

- Brief volunteers and confirm roles and rota. Ensure everyone has a copy of the reference sheet and is aware of any particular concerns which came out of your risk assessments.
- Capture photos and stories for post-event sharing.

After the Event

- Share event highlights on social media.
- Thank volunteers and supporters.
- Collect and review feedback, including from the businesses and organisations who took part.
- Celebrate!



A NOTE FOR THE FUTURE

The Alternative High Street pop-up concept is just the first step. It demonstrates what's possible and how this approach could become common on high streets across the country.

The more people who understand the benefits of access to repair and sharing initiatives, and the value of shifting away from always buying new, the more momentum we'll build toward a future where these spaces are not only readily available in our communities but breathing life back into our high streets and supporting local businesses.

If you're interested in setting up a permanent space in your town, we'd love to hear from you!

REACTION COLLECTIVE

Credits

The first Alternative High Street Pop-Up was hosted at the Better Business Summit 2025 in Manchester. The original idea came from the wonderful Rebecca Heaps (Tentshare). Before it became a collective vision. It is safe to say though that it would not exist without Rebecca's fantastic thoughts.

Thank you to Hannah and the Better Business Network for supporting us.

The following members of the Re-Action Collective took part:

Heather Davies, Ellie Meredith, Gavin Fernie-Jones, Rebecca Heaps (TentShare), Lisa Matzi (Rebel Patch), Lauren Davies (Iron Keld Repairs), Kirsty Little (Little Creations), Adam Jackson (Reclaim Tentware), Rebecca Evans (Utilifolk), Rousseau Jean-Julien (Nucha), Isabel Mack (Party Kit Network).

About the Re-Action Collective

We are a collective of businesses, not-for-profit organisations, charities and clubs in the outdoor industry working with communities to introduce circular models that reduce waste and carbon emissions. We believe in creating a joyful and more just future. And we're passionate about sharing our vision and empowering more people to take action.

re-action-collective.org

