

Focus sessions we want to see at conference 2026

Are you interested in delivering a focus session at our 2026 Charity Retail Conference at ICC Wales, Newport on Tuesday 23 – Wednesday 24 June? Below are some of the themes the conference planning group would like to see on the programme.

Shop security

Shop lifting/security/CCTV etc - what (cost effective) options are available to us to support with managing this, plus the legislation that goes with putting in CCTV as well as policies in place and reasons behind having CCTV or other safety and security measures.

Designing the future of charity retail

Developing a set of principles to help charity retailers navigate how to get the most out of individuals. Designing the future of charity retail, redefining structures, leaderships, governance structures and purpose for the next decade, which is around organisational design, agility and efficiency, succession planning and skills development and future proofing teams, balancing mission with commercial sustainability and exploring new models of leadership and governance in retail. Financial robustness.

Recognising the value of a donation and maximising it

How do you do this – is this through ecommerce, with the help of AI, by streamlining our processes? Where is the evidence that shows what sells best in which way and perhaps on which specific platform.

AI – how are you using it and what can we all learn from each other

A session delivered by 2 or 3 members together, or one where we all work on a solution together and share experiences. How are you using AI and what can I learn to bring back into my retail operation? How are you planning to use AI in the future. Getting ideas and initiatives from the collective expertise in the room. How does AI benefit a shop?

Recruitment

We want to hear from two charity retailers who are excelling in this area – what can you showcase and share with the room about this topic. We know our sector doesn't pay the highest wages, how are you appealing to and recruiting the right people for your roles. How to get new recruits up to speed about 'charity retail' if they've not worked in the sector before and how do you avoid being stretched beyond capacity. Encouraging younger people to work in our sector.

Efficiency and effectiveness

How do you drive operational efficiency? How have you closed those gaps on cost? Ideally a slightly larger charity retail member (or two) would share their successes in driving efficiencies within the whole organisation and give specific examples in areas such as (but not limited to) logistics, technology, staffing.

Structures

How do you run your retail chain without gigantic marketing teams or whole fundraising departments to seek advice from? What do your FTE and structure look like and what could we all learn from this. (Probably a sharing session, rather than a workshop).

Donations, donations, donations!

Unpicking everything around donations. How do you get high quality donations and avoid the wrong items being donated? How do you/can you say no when donation levels are at record highs? Is it possible to set customer expectations whilst also ensuring they keep shopping and donating to you in the future. Warehouse vs self sufficient model. How do you process donations on a huge scale efficiently?

Retail landscape

Trends across the whole retail landscape (ideally from a commercial retailer). A chance to lift our heads up and see the bigger picture – how we can embed these trends and stay current, whilst strategically planning for the future (like session delivered by BDO, Tom Holt). Can we use our agility to our advantage when it comes to future gazing?

The customer of the future

What is the charity retail customer of 2027 and beyond going to look like? How can we delight, amaze and encourage them to spend with us, and keep coming back. How can we adapt our stores, communication and brand positioning to meet these new customers and their expectations?

Volunteering in new ways

How are we responding to the changing demographics in volunteering and offering more flexibility of roles and opportunities. What does 2026 volunteering look like, so it's innovative and engaging. How do you onboard and induct volunteers so it's informative, fun and doesn't take weeks to do – when maybe they'll only volunteer for a month.

Tik Tok Shop – social commerce

How you can bridge the gap between digital marketing and storytelling, content creation and online selling. Tik Tok shop might be interested in attending conference and speaking about it all – they presented at another conference recently and were brilliant. How does it create trends and how can charity retail benefit from this?

Large format stores – a 360 review

What are the pitfalls of opening larger format stores? We know that some commercial retailers are moving away from large formats because of the sustainability aspects, cost controls are difficult and rent hikes, utility costs. How do you use your knowledge of commercial estate management to ensure any large format store you're interested in is successful. The governance of large format stores. Whilst also hearing from success stories – how did you get sign off, what worked well, would you do it again?

Wellbeing, resilience and something for the individual

A session that offers support and insight for the individual, not just the charity. Personal development, whether this is support on resilience, given the sector is challenging right now. What are we offering to ensure our delegates and teams have wellbeing support?

Waste & recycling

How are members unpicking the tricky topic and making it work for their business, when textile collections are getting harder to secure and prices are very low. With more legislation around waste management, how can we all tackle this in a positive and meaningful way, rather than it just being a huge challenge.

Sustainability

How are shops increasing their green credentials e.g. plans for installing LED lighting; what are they doing about carrier bags and black/coloured sacks to reduce single use plastic. Can sustainability measures save you money or add to the USP of your shop?

Digital transformation

Exploring how digital innovation can be practically and meaningfully integrated into charity retail. What digital solutions are most impactful for small and large charity retailers? How can digital tools enhance donor engagement, improve the volunteer experience or increase sales? What challenges and opportunities come with digitising traditional processes?

Turning data into decisions

A session focused on building confidence and capability in understanding and applying retail data. What key performance indicators (KPI's) matter most for charity retail? How can store teams use data to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement? What systems and tools can make data collection and analysis easier and more actionable?

If you're interested please fill in our online speaker submission form:
<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8570968/Charity-Retail-Conference-2026-Speaker-Submission>

If you have any questions or queries please contact Julia Edwards, Head of Outreach, on **julia@charityretail.org.uk**