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Bolton businessman to help 'protect France's high street shops from Amazon'

Jeremy Culley [CulleyBN](#)
crime reporter

The French government has called in a Bolton businessman to help it protect their high streets from online retailer Amazon.

Mike Phillips, the managing director of IT firm Purepages Ltd, based in Churchbank, Bolton, will travel to Paris on September 24, to meet members of the French government.



The 64-year-old, from Edgworth, is an expert on urban regeneration and was invited by the minister of culture and communications, Aurelie Filippetti, to present his solution to combating Amazon's power.

Miss Filippetti has been a vocal critic of Amazon and in June raised concerns that foreign internet firms were suffocating small French businesses.

"In essence, the French government is really concerned about the damage Amazon are causing to bookshops. They are interested to hear what I have to say," said Mr Phillips.

"Private shopkeepers would deal with Amazon better if they communicated with each other and were a united front, but this just does not happen."

"I think I have a solution to get them to work together."

Mr Phillips said his solution involves a web system, where economies of scale are produced to allow independent shops to compete with Amazon and big supermarkets on price, delivery and choice.

He added: "The problem is that Amazon has reached the stage where it can force publishers to sell stock at half-price."

Socialist Miss Filippetti, aged 40, has been a member of France's National Assembly since Francois Hollande became president last May.

"Today, everyone has had enough of Amazon, which through dumping practices, smashes prices to penetrate markets only to then raise them again because it has become dominant.

"The reading sector is facing competition from certain sites which are using every possible means to enter the French and European book market, which is destroying bookshops."

Bolton town centre's only independent book shop, Sweetens, closed in August, 2011. Owner, Stella Morris, blamed the rise of online book sales and electronic book devices for the shop's demise.

Before setting up Purepages, Mr Phillips was the head of retail for a division of KPMG, a director of PWC's ECR Centre of Excellence in Utrecht in Holland, a writer for the Financial Times and a consultant for the Department for Trade and Industry.