

WS6: Cargo Bikes and Walking Freight

City Soil Lab



Project Overview

As part of the Smarter Greener Logistics programme, Cross River Partnership (CRP) supported a 6 week pre-pilot of the City Soil Lab, a community-led circular food waste scheme in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Food waste was collected from local restaurants and residences, before being composted at Spitalfields City Farm and turned into soil for local community gardens. CRP supported the trial by providing funding for an electrically-assisted cargo bike for food waste collection from local restaurants, and by helping to quantify the air quality impacts associated with the pre-pilot trial.

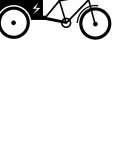
The pre-pilot started in April 2024 and finished in June 2024, servicing 2 restaurants and 3 coffee shops. It forms part of a wider trial to develop the project for further rollout, expanding to service several more restaurants and to include food waste collections from housing estates and local schools.

City Soil Lab sees food waste as a valuable resource for recycling nutrients to create better soil for locally grown food while also contributing to cleaner air and water. By recycling food waste on a local scale, City Soil Lab works as a flexible, circular system, creating soil for specific crops on underutilised space. This soil is then used for local community gardens inside housing estates in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

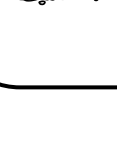
Key Outputs



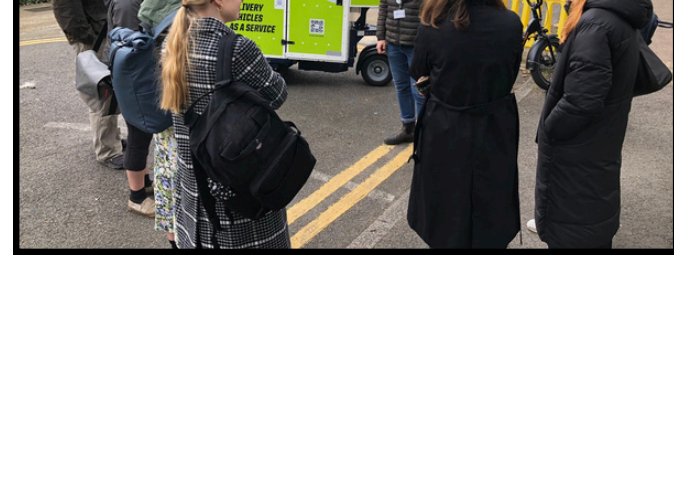
Within 6 weeks, an estimated 2,100kg of food waste has been diverted from incineration as part of the pilot. This translates to roughly 1,470kg of CO₂ emissions that have been omitted.¹



In Tower Hamlets, food waste accounts for 30% of overall waste and is currently only collected separately from street-level residential properties.² By servicing apartment blocks, like housing estates, and collecting commercial food waste by cargo bike, City Soil Lab has the potential to decrease the number of waste collection trucks required in the area, which could lead to significant air quality benefits.



The project encourages more residents to be involved in growing their own food and works towards facilitating nutrient recycling workshops with children in local schools to make them aware of circular economy projects.



Did you know?

London's households produce **780,000 tonnes** of food waste each year.³

Individual households waste **£600** worth of food every year, most of which is edible.³

Most of this food waste goes to landfills or incineration, producing around **250,000 tonnes of CO₂** emissions per year.⁴

With the Mayor's London-wide target to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030 and cut associated CO₂ emissions,⁴ locally oriented projects like City Soil Lab promote awareness of food waste reduction through creative, community-focused initiatives while mitigating the negative environmental impacts associated with food waste.

A huge thank you to our partners at City Soil Lab and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for leading this exciting and collaborative community project.

[1] Environment Agency, 'Pollution Inventory Reporting Incineration Activities Guidance Note', 2018, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923125/Pollution-inventory-reporting-incineration-activities-guidance-note.pdf>. Based on the Environment Agency's Guidance Note, we have assumed that 0.7 tonnes of CO₂ is generated per tonne of municipal solid waste incinerated.

[2] London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 'Food waste collections', 2024, <https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/environment_and_waste/recycling_and_waste/food_waste_collections.aspx#:~:text=You%20can%20recycle%20all%20of,by%20farmers%20as%20a%20fertiliser>.

[3] Leonie Cooper AM, London Assembly Labour, 'A Wasted Opportunity: Reducing and Managing London's Food Waste', 2020, P.3, <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/leonie_cooper_am_a_wasted_opportunity_report.pdf>.

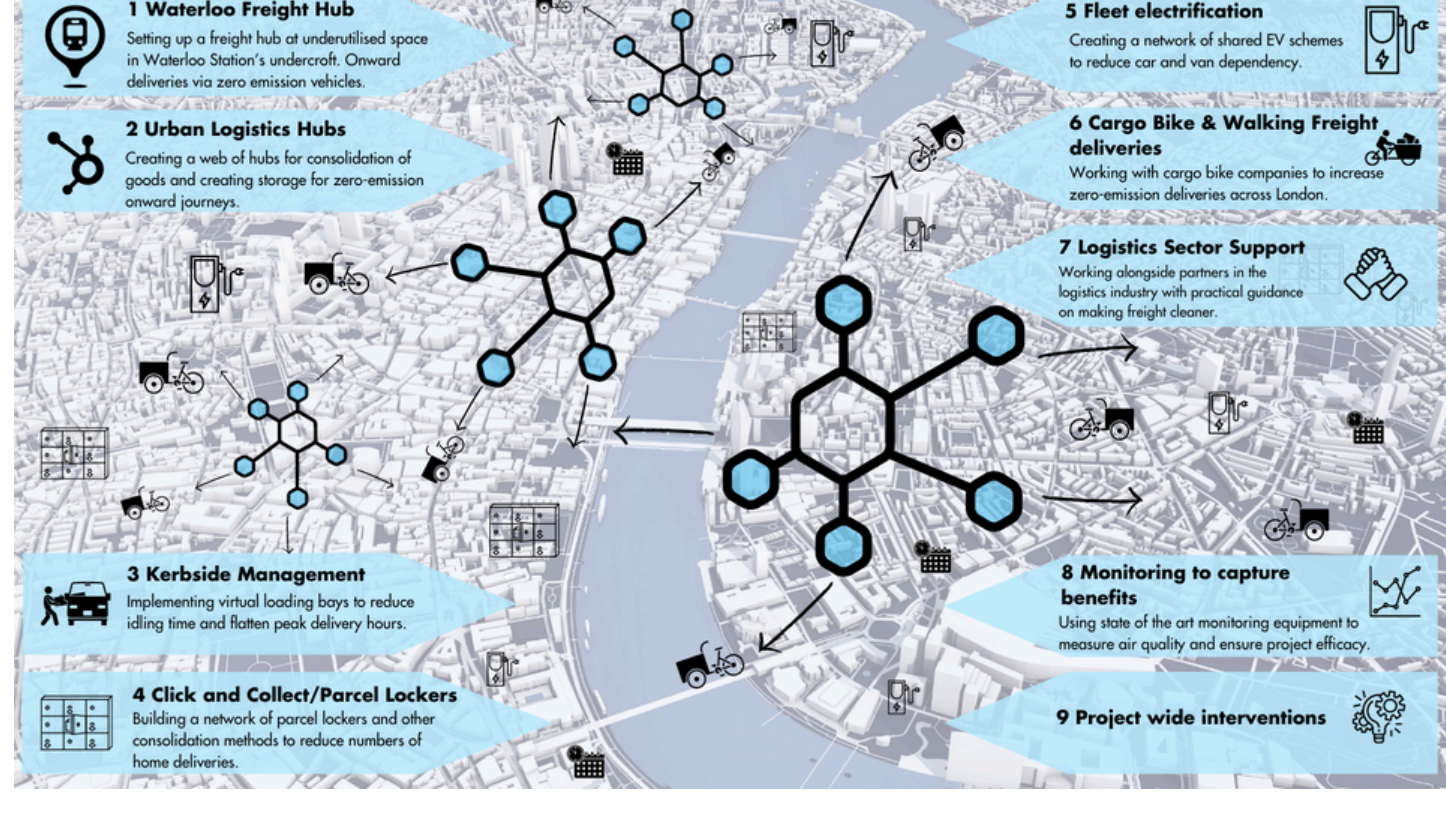
[4] Mayor of London, 'London Environment Strategy', 2018, P.279 <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_environment_strategy_0.pdf>.

What is Smarter Greener Logistics?

Smarter Greener Logistics (SGL) is a Defra-funded project led by Westminster City Council in collaboration with 26 project partners. The project aims to minimise the impact of freight on noise, air quality, traffic and pavement space in London by making improvements across 15 London boroughs and four London Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). SGL will build on the success of CRP's Clean Air Logistics for London (CALL).

SGL forms part of CRP's wider activities to encourage sustainable logistics across London. This includes the development of rail freight and walking freight initiatives, helping to improve London's air quality and supporting CRP's vision to make London a better place to live, work and visit.

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Project Partners

Cross River Partnership is proud to be working with the following Local Authorities and other partners.



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