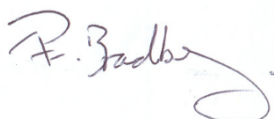


LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Themed Debate – Becoming a Circular Economy Borough	
REPORT OF Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Full Council	DATE 25 September 2025
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report provides background information on the circular economy to support the Full Council debate on becoming a circular economy borough, being held on 25 th September 2025. The report outlines the issues relating to material and product use with the more common linear economy (take, make, use, dispose), our action to date on tackling the linear economy, the national policy and Camden's approach to transition towards a circular economy. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in preparation of this report Contact Officer: Rachel Bailey, Head of Environment Services rachel.bailey@camden.gov.uk 020 7974 3791 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG	
RECOMMENDATIONS The Council is asked to consider the report and use it to help inform the debate at Full Council on 25 September 2025.	

Signed:



Richard Bradbury, Director of Environment and Sustainability
 Date: 16 September 2025

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

- 1.1 In 2019, Camden declared a climate and ecological emergency. This recognised the threat of climate change and the irreversible damage it may cause. A key We Make Camden ambition is that Camden should be a green, clean, vibrant, accessible, and sustainable place with everyone empowered to contribute to tackling the climate emergency.
- 1.2 [Camden's Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP) 2020-2025 was developed in response to the climate emergency and has been delivered alongside [Camden's Reduction and Recycling Plan](#) (RRP) 2023-26. Both outline actions and activity working together with communities, partners and businesses to help reduce emissions and support local transition towards a circular economy. As a result, Camden has made real progress with a 52% reduction in borough-wide emissions since 2005, a 64.5% reduction in the Council's carbon footprint since 2009 and the majority of CAP and RRP actions completed.
- 1.3 The climate crisis is however already affecting Camden and recent years have brought record-breaking heatwaves and local flooding. A new [draft Climate Action Plan \(2026-30\)](#) is currently being consulted on setting out how the Council, local organisations, and communities can work together to cut emissions further, prepare for climate risks, and protect those most vulnerable.
- 1.4 Consumption-based emissions - those associated with the production, transport, and disposal of the things citizen's buy and services they use - are a major contributor to Camden's overall carbon footprint. While these emissions often occur outside the borough, they are driven by local demand. A key priority within the new CAP therefore is to support transition to a local, zero waste, circular and sharing economy and reduce the borough's consumption emissions.
- 1.5 This report provides an overview of the circular economy, the local activity in Camden to date and looking ahead to how Camden can become a circular economy borough, which will help facilitate debate at Full Council on 25 September 2025. During the debate we will have the opportunity to hear the views of residents, community groups, partners and industry experts on what they think Camden should be doing to support transition to a circular economy.

2. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- 2.1. A circular economy is a system in which the energy and materials used to produce products deliver the highest value they can by keeping the product in use for as long as possible. This circular approach to using materials and resources is in contrast to the current majority linear economy of take, make, use and throw away, which creates excess waste and does not gain full value from resources.

- 2.2. A circular economy is more than just managing materials as sustainably as possible. By the time we focus on waste, we have missed so many opportunities to recirculate value in materials. In a circular economy, products are designed to last longer by being easier to repair or repurpose, or at the end of life recycle, and so creating opportunities to keep materials in use and actually eliminate waste.
- 2.3. It is also as much about social and economic benefits as environmental. There is huge potential to help increase social capital, support wellbeing, save money and create economic opportunities. Circular economy approaches have much to contribute to many of the challenges our communities face e.g. cost of living, employment, digital divide, access to food, housing, affordable transport.

Circular activity in Camden to date

- 2.4. Camden has already taken important steps towards building local circularity, working in partnership with residents, community groups and local businesses. This has empowered our communities to share, repair, reuse, and redistribute goods, which saves money and reduces waste. Examples include:
- *Library of Things*: Two Library of Things have been established in Camden, located in Kentish Town and Swiss Cottage libraries (previously at Kilburn library). This has enabled residents to borrow items like tools and appliances instead of buying new. Over 2,300 items were borrowed in 2024/25.
 - *Fixing Factory*: Located in Queen's Crescent, Fixing Factory tackles e-waste by providing community repair sessions and skill-building workshops. Events are also held across the Borough in Partnership with Veolia Camden and Think & Do
 - *Sharing Spaces*: Think & Do facilitate a number of sharing spaces across Camden, which are climate and social action community hubs where people can share items, skills, knowledge and experiences. These are often delivered alongside partners such as Veolia Camden.
 - *Lifeafterhummus community "waste" café*: In addition to establishing a social supermarket, reuse centre and food distribution network in Somers Town, Lifeafterhummus Community Benefit Society launched a community café at 5 Pancras Square in May 2025 offering affordable plant-based meals using surplus food.
 - *Somers Town Future Neighbourhood*: a range of circular economy themed projects including Your Bike cycle repair, themed circular economy market days on Chalton Street and Sharing Spaces in Tenants and Residents' Association halls.
 - *Raising awareness of refill opportunities*: Through delivery of the 2019 behaviour change project Refill Station Camden, Camden raised awareness of packaging waste reduction and supported the establishment of refill options in a number of locations across the Borough. Camden also works with partners such as the North London Waste Authority on communications campaigns to encourage reuse.

- **Circular retrofit:** Camden is applying circular economy to the retrofitting of 2 Prince of Wales Road, which will become Camden's first Neighbourhood Space and first development aligned with the UK Net Zero Carbon Building Standard. This involves a whole-life carbon approach to assessing the environmental impact of both the construction and future use of the building. An audit has determined 29 tonnes of material can be reused onsite as part of the retrofit, and a further 10 tonnes can be reused offsite which has potential to divert 95–98% of all materials, ensuring they are reused or recycled.
- **Camden Challenge Prize:** The Camden Challenge Prize, a recurring competition encouraging people to think of innovative ways of tackling our four Missions that are focused on food, young people, estates and neighbourhoods, and diversity, was launched in July 2025. The initial Prize invites individuals, startups, chefs, innovators, and organisations to submit their ideas to reduce food surplus, manage food waste, and influence workplace cultures and practices. Applications are being accepted up to 30 September 2025.



2.5. Camden also participates in local, regional and national communications campaigns and programmes to encourage residents to reduce, reuse and recycle, which include:

- Repair Week (March): Fix and Do events across the Borough
- Plastic Free July: 'Choose to reuse' social media campaign
- Reusable Nappy Week (May): Promoting real nappy vouchers/ events
- World Environment Day (June): Promotion of Veolia Sustainability Fund
- London Fashion Week (Sept): Reinvention workshop and clothes swap
- Recycle Week (Sept): 'rescue me' social media campaign

Further examples are provided in Appendix 2



- 2.6. In 2023 Camden's Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee established a [Circular Economy Panel](#) which explored the applicability of circular economy concepts within the work of the Council, focussing on food, repair, textiles, transport and buildings and developed a set of recommendations. Key workstreams across the Council that linked in with the recommendations include the [Food Mission](#), the refreshed [Local Plan](#), [Camden Climate Change Alliance](#), the [Future Neighbourhoods](#) programme. The council [responded](#) to the panel in 2024 and continues to pursue many of its recommendations.
- 2.7. The activity and partnerships established to date have been vital and positive steps towards local circularity. However, there is still a long way to go. In 2023/24, Camden households generated over 55,000 tonnes of waste—equivalent to the weight of 9,000 African elephants. This is a significant waste of resources and missed opportunity.
- 2.8. Globally, the challenge of transitioning to a more circular economy was further highlighted earlier this year with the United Nations' (UN) failure to reach agreement for a UN Plastics Treaty. This had sought to address worldwide plastic pollution by looking at the full life cycle of plastics, from design and production to disposal.

3. TRANSITION TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

National policy approach

- 3.1. In 2018, the Government launched the national [Resources and Waste Strategy \(RWS\)](#), which set out the long-term policy direction to preserve material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy. The Strategy outlined changes to legislation to enable this, which are summarised below.
- 3.1.1. Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR)
- Using the 'polluter pays' principle the pEPR launched in January 2025, requiring producers to pay the full costs of disposal for packaging they place on the market. From this, payments are made to local authorities towards managing their waste based on their modelled effectiveness and efficiency.
- 3.1.2. Simpler Recycling
- Simpler Recycling seeks to standardise recycling across England, ensuring the same materials – food waste, paper, card, glass, metal and plastic (bottles, tubs, pots & trays) can be recycled everywhere. This must be in place for all businesses/ non-domestic premises with 10 or more employees from 1 April 2025, for all households by 1 April 2026 and for all small businesses by 1 April 2027. Veolia Camden introduced a food waste caddy service for business customers earlier this year to ensure compliance. Camden will be trialling on-street communal food waste containers for households without a current service in Autumn this year. Councillor Joseph Ball has been appointed a cabinet adviser to make recommendations on increasing and improving food waste participation and collection.

3.1.3. Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)

The DRS, due to launch in October 2027, is being introduced to tackle the issue of single-use drinks bottles and cans which are often thrown away instead of recycled and also make up over 50% of litter in the UK. It is estimated the DRS should lead to 90% of the in-scope drinks containers being collected for recycling and an 85% reduction of them being littered. Consumers will pay a small deposit when purchasing a drink in a plastic or aluminium can, which will then be refunded when taken to a return point. Glass is not currently planned to be included.

However, the DRS may have positive impacts on Camden's street cleanliness, but it will significantly change the composition of residential recycling collected by Camden. The impact here is likely to be that most of the good quality materials will be redirected away from the Council's kerbside collections. This will likely reduce the amount of recycling passing through council services and could contribute to a fall in the recycling rate. In addition, the income received from the sale of these materials is used to offset reprocessing costs so could negatively impact the Council financially. However, if the scheme is successful in reducing the amount of these materials collected, there could be a reduction in the Council's collection requirements and the associated costs.

The Government also announced earlier this year a new Circular Economy Strategy is in development, which will support economic growth, create green jobs, promote efficient and productive use of resources and accelerate the transition to net zero emissions. The Strategy will focus on reducing waste and reusing materials across key priority sectors: textiles; transport; construction; agri-food; chemicals and plastics. A new Circular Economy Taskforce has been established to co-design the Strategy, which is estimated to be launched in Autumn 2025.

- 3.2. As all the above policies are being developed and implemented, it is vital that local authorities are involved at every level to support local communities in the transition to a circular economy as well as adapting local services to new material flows created by a changing economy.

Camden's approach

- 3.3. Camden's Reduction and Recycling Plan 2023-26 outlines the key actions and activity for reducing waste and increasing recycling across Camden. These include:

- Targeted and borough-wide communications/ engagement including:
 - EcoPoints rewards initiative (c.16k households subscribed)
 - Food waste reduction and recycling campaigns
 - School education events and supporting food growing initiatives
 - Promoting reusable nappy/ reusable period product discounts
- Delivery of projects to reduce single-use packaging including:
 - Removing single-use items from the majority of council buildings

- Trialling reusable bags and containers at Camden’s street markets
 - Promoting local refill opportunities
 - Trialling and implementing successful recycling projects including:
 - Improving estates recycling (using ReLondon toolkit recommendations)
 - Coffee cup recycling and On-the-Go street sweeper recycling
- 3.4. The full RRP and yearly progress updates can be viewed at [LondonDatastore](#). Camden’s Reduction and Recycling Plan is due for renewal in 2026 and will refresh actions which will align with the CAP to support circular economy transition.
- 3.5. Since development of the first RRP, Camden’s total annual household residual waste collected per household has been steadily decreasing, from 403 kg per household in 2021-22 to 344 kg per household in 2023-24, as highlighted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Camden’s annual household residual waste, collected per household (kgs)

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Kg per household	403	355.4	344.8

- 3.6. Indicative figures for 2024-25 show a continuation of this trend.
- 3.7. The ambitions of Camden’s Climate Action Plan, Reduction and Recycling Plan and We Make Camden align with those of the Resources and Waste Strategy. Building on the circular activity to date, Camden’s draft Climate Action Plan 2026-2030, which is currently being consulted on, has 5 outcomes for Priority 3 – Local Circular Economy, which are summarised below:
- Businesses in Camden minimise their waste, including food waste and use of single use packaging, and lower the environmental impact from their operations. Surplus resources are put to use wherever possible.
 - Businesses invest in and support local community sharing, repair, re-use and waste reduction initiatives
 - Residents are able to minimise and recycle their waste
 - Residents have access to healthy and sustainable local food options and can participate in community-led food related projects
 - Residents have access to re-use and repair services so that the consumption of new goods is reduced.
- 3.8. The full draft Priority 3 Local Circular Economy outcomes and actions are outlined in Appendix A:
- 3.9. Within Camden’s new Local Plan, which will cover the period of 2026-41, Policy CC3 seeks to ensure that development in Camden shifts towards a circular economy approach, which reduces waste and uses resources more efficiently. This includes a requirement that applications for new build major

development and major development which involves substantial demolition and rebuild to submit a Circular Economy Statement.

- 3.10. Members are invited to reflect on the local and national approaches outlined in Section 3 and make contributions during the debate on how Camden can become a circular economy borough.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on this report and has no comments to add to this report. Any recommendation from the debate would have to be legally compliant and within the council's constitution.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The 'polluter pays' principle launched in January 2025 has resulted in a payment to Camden through the Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (EPR). Whilst the Depot Return Scheme may have a positive impact in street cleanliness the full impact on Camden is unknown due to the complexities of waste modelling and behaviour change.
- 5.2. Most of the circular economy activities in Camden have been funded by Camden, except for the Somers Town Future Neighbourhoods Funding. More central government funding is required to support communities in the transition to a circular economy as well as adapting local service to new materials flows created by a changing economy.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The application of circular economy principles to Council services and the operation of the Council reduces resource use and material use, therefore, reducing the environmental impact of service delivery, which are in line with the Council's ambitions in We Make Camden.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Local Circular Economy outcomes (Camden draft CAP 2026-30):

Appendix B: Examples of communications campaigns and programmes

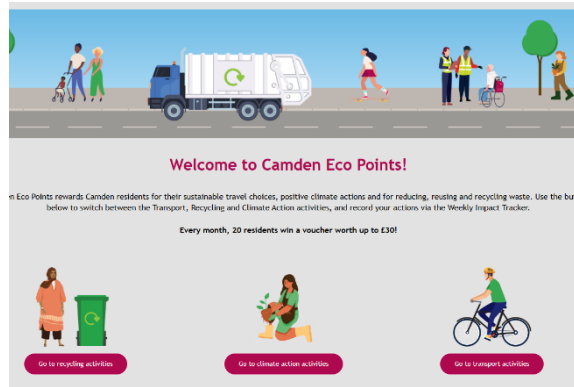
REPORT ENDS

Appendix A: Local Circular Economy Outcomes (Priority 3: Camden draft Climate Action Plan 2026-2030)

Outcome	Actions
1. Businesses in Camden minimise their waste, including food waste and use of single use packaging, and lower the environmental impact from their operations. Surplus resources are put to use wherever possible.	<p>1.1 We will encourage and support businesses to adopt circular economy principles in their operations by sharing best practice, training and information.</p> <p>1.2 We will support businesses to access opportunities to minimise their waste and use of single use packaging, increase their re-use and recycling of materials. In particular we will target food waste reduction.</p> <p>1.3 We will facilitate the sharing of surplus resources from businesses to local community partners</p>
2. Businesses invest in and support local community sharing, repair, re-use and waste reduction initiatives	<p>2.1 We will connect businesses to local opportunities to support community-led sharing, repair, re-use and waste reduction initiatives</p>
3. Residents are able to minimise and recycle their waste	<p>3.1 We will support and enable residents and community groups to deliver waste minimisation projects with funding such as Camden Climate Fund, Veolia's Sustainability Fund and NLWA's waste prevention Community Fund</p> <p>3.2 We will share information, deliver events and workshops and undertake targeted promotion to drive waste reduction across the borough</p> <p>3.3 We will increase participation in recycling by providing clear information on the services and options available, through communications and targeted campaigns</p>
4. Residents have access to healthy and sustainable local food options and can participate in community-led food related projects	<p>4.1 We will promote food sharing tools and apps, and will continue to support and enable the delivery of community-led food distribution programmes such as Waste Cafe, LifeafterHummus, Kentish Town Veg Box and community kitchens</p> <p>4.2 We will work with partners and the community to reduce the environmental impact of the local food system including through the Food Mission</p> <p>4.3 We will support the consumption of healthy sustainable food including through ensuring that Camden's school catering contracts offer low carbon food options.</p>
5. Residents have access to re-use and repair services so that the consumption of new goods is reduced.	<p>5.1 Working with partners and the community, we will support and enable the delivery of sharing economy projects, services and events across the borough such as Lifeafterhummus, Sharing Spaces, Fixing Factory and Library of Things</p> <p>5.2 We will support the provision of accessible "sharing economy" focused services such Library of Things and the Fixing Factory in Council buildings</p>

Appendix B: Examples of communications campaigns and programmes

Camden EcoPoints scheme



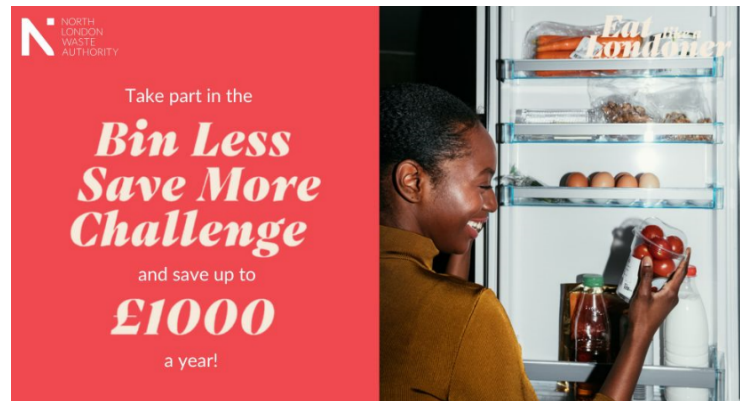
Together We Recycle 2025 (Camden/ NLWA)



Bring It 2025 (Camden/ NLWA)



Bin Less Save More 2025 (Camden/ NLWA)



Camden Fix and Do events



Repair Week 2025

