

FN2030 CASE STUDIES

Air Quality: Your Bike Project (Somers Town)

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MAYOR OF LONDON

An introduction to the Future Neighbourhoods 2030 programme

The Future Neighbourhoods 2030 (FN2030) initiative is a **transformative** programme aimed at making London greener, healthier, and more resilient by 2030. Funded by the Mayor of London's Green New Deal Fund, it focuses on **co-designed** solutions in 12 neighbourhoods.

Of these projects, Somers Town in Camden and Notting Dale in Kensington and Chelsea have been selected as exemplar neighbourhoods, receiving funding to both develop strategies and to deliver a wide range of **community-led**, innovative and pioneering projects.

Key to the success of FN 2030 is its appreciation of the value a place-based approach to decarbonisation can have. Evidence from the programme so far shows that this place-specific approach has been highly **cost-effective** with wide societal and economic benefits.

By promoting community ownership and co-design, FN2030 not only stimulates behavioural change but also ensures that projects are deeply rooted in local needs and aspirations. This **collaborative** framework is designed to be **replicable**, offering a blueprint for other areas to follow in creating sustainable urban environments.

The programme is a three-year initiative with a phased approach. Designed to adapt dynamically, it focuses on immediate impact and long-term planning through practical projects aligned with the Mayor's Green New Deal themes: Retrofitting buildings; Smart energy; Circular economy; Air quality; and Greening and climate adaptation.

Project introduction

Your Bike Project is a Community Interest Company that was started in 2009 and specialises in up-cycling and cycle maintenance.

The project:

- Obtains abandoned bicycles that are in need of repair from local partners including the waste contractor Veolia, local businesses such as bicycle shops, local organisations such as the Francis Crick Institute, and the Council;
- Invites young people from the Somers Town community to take part in workshops to learn how to repair and maintain these bikes;
- Gifts participants who attend three workshops their own bike.

The project is also offering local young people apprenticeships and training opportunities.

Based in Somers Town, the project received around £60,000 of funding as part of Phase 2 of the Future Neighbourhoods 2030 programme.



Description: a group of men in reflective vests standing next to bicycles

Objectives and how its tackling the Green New Deal aims

Your Bike Project aims to encourage and enable cycling amongst local residents, whilst reducing waste through the upcycling of abandoned bikes.

- **Air quality and decarbonisation:** by encouraging people to travel by bicycle rather than by vehicles that use fossil fuels, the project is improving local air quality and reducing carbon emissions.
- **Circular economy:** by diverting old bicycles from landfill and keeping them in use, the project is reducing waste whilst also educating residents on the importance of reuse and waste reduction
- **Co-benefits:** health & wellbeing, social cohesion and economic opportunity

Increasing the level of cycling supports the health and well-being of individuals by encouraging active lifestyles and saving people money on their travel.

The project is fostering a green economy by providing apprenticeships and work experience in the cycling sector. This includes offering opportunities to young people who are involved in violence, gangs, and NEETs (not in education, employment, or training) referred by departments in the council such as Youth Justice.

Partners and their roles

Being part of a neighbourhood-wide approach has been instrumental to the project's success. In particular, the involvement of some of the other Future Neighbourhood partners has supported project delivery in several ways. For example:

- Somers Town Community Association and Chalton Street Market provide space all year round for workshops including outside The Living Centre (which is privately owned land, thus not requiring the project to secure any licence/permission to operate there).
- Camden Council has been an active partner in a number of ways:
 - The council's Estate Services team supplies the project with over 60 bikes each year which have been abandoned on council estates.
 - The council's Youth Services team refers young people to take part in the project.
 - The council is also working with Your Bike Project to ensure adequate bike storage is provided on two council estates as a pilot in Somers Town, to reduce the number of bicycles being stolen. It is hoped that this model can be replicated on other estates.

What impact has it had?

Collectively, the project has saved participants approximately £30,000 through bike repairs and services, highlighting economic benefits.

The project's initial target for Somers Town was to maintain 120 bikes and upcycle a further 50, both of which have been exceeded. As of September 2024, the project has achieved the following:

- 284 bikes upcycled & donated
- 675 bicycles maintained
- Over 3.5 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill
- 384 advice & support appointments
- 22 teenage apprentices have been taken on from local secondary schools, youth clubs, community centres and Camden Council Youth Services.

The initiative has successfully engaged local schools, providing apprenticeships and practical skills training for students, leading to reported improvement in these pupils' behaviour and academic performance.

"Our apprentices come down one hour a week on the Friday and perform customer service, customer sales, making sure the bike mechanics are done correctly, working in a professional environment, learning the soft skills, understanding what it means to deliver a service. The teachers have said, after they finish with us, they notice their behaviour back in class is improved." Raqhib Islam, Managing Director, Your Bike Project

The project has successfully engaged around 1000 participants from Somers Town and neighbouring areas, showing strong community interest and involvement. Project partners report seeing more young people cycling in the area.

"I'm seeing a lot more families and kids on bikes in the area. That's the main thing for us." Raqhib Islam

"Local people are on bikes and families are on bikes – it's become a much safer place to cycle than anything else." (A FN2030 project partner)

What made it work?

The following factors have been critical to the project's success:

- **Partnerships:** The project has had a strong presence in the community since it was founded in 2009 and has invested substantial time in engaging and building rapport with local partners. This includes businesses, community centres and youth groups as well as partners such as Veolia waste services and the police, both of whom supply the project with most of their bicycles. In addition:
 - Local residents donate over 70 bikes a year.
 - Around 10 bicycles are provided each year via local businesses requesting that the project collect bikes that have been abandoned on their sites.
 - Partnerships with local schools enable the engagement of young people and the recruitment of apprentices.
- Securing temporary storage for the bicycles and equipment has been vital to the success of the project. The project has a meanwhile off-site storage unit elsewhere in the borough, provided by Camden Council, where over 300 bicycles can be stored. The project also rents its own garage locally in Somers Town, where around 20 bikes can be stored as well as bike parts, project equipment, a gazebo and a cargo bike.
- Your Bike Project conducts most of its workshops outdoors which increases visibility and engagement. The bike stall has become a community hub where residents will drop in to ask questions about other projects going on locally.
- Infrastructure projects being delivered as part of the wider Future Neighbourhoods programme in Somers Town have resulted in the creation of more cycle lanes and the closure of roads to cars at certain times of day around all five schools in Somers Town. This is making the area more appealing to cycle in, which in combination with Your Bike Project is resulting in an increase in cycling.

Being part of the Future Neighbourhoods Partnership is enabling productive partnerships working with other community groups in the area. Partners have been able to sit down together to discuss challenges with, for example, storage issues or the project's communication strategies, and collectively come up with solutions.

“For example, a climate ambassador provided by the FN2030 programme was able to support Your Bike Project by contacting local residents who won prizes through the Scone (behaviour change App) for their efforts in making environmentally friendly behavioural changes. These prizes (which include upcycled bicycles, bike locks, lights and high visibility jackets) have been provided by Your Bike Project.” Raqhib Islam

Your Bike Project stall has become a local information hub where people learn about all the other FN2030 projects as they have their bicycles looked at. In particular, young people involved in Your Bike Project are engaging more widely with the FN2030 programme through the use of a behaviour change app (Scone.ai), which encourages climate-friendly actions that are also good for residents' pockets. Over 330 Somers Town residents are currently using the app.



Description: a group of **men** in reflective vests standing next to bicycles

What resources were needed?

To be a success, the project required funding, a supply of bicycles, keen apprentices and willing volunteers. It also needs space and storage.

- **Funding:** the project received £60,000 of funding from FN2030 with an additional 40% match-funding provided through in-kind contributions from the organisation in the form of volunteers, bicycles and equipment.
- **Supply of bicycles:** at any one time, the project will have around 300 bicycles to work on to ensure a steady supply for the programme, emphasising the need for consistent resources
- **Apprentices:** the project is continually taking on new apprentices from the local school who typically work with the project for an hour a week.
- **Volunteers:** the project is referred around 3 volunteers each week from the council.
- **Complementary infrastructure:** measures that enable and support safe local cycling are being delivered through other FN2030 projects, as detailed above.

Lessons learned

The project faced issues with bike theft, with 50% of distributed bikes reported stolen, emphasising the importance of secure bike storage solutions. This is something the project is currently working on in collaboration with council officers, with two bespoke cycle storage cages going into two local estates as a pilot project, part of phase three of the FN2030. It is intended that these will have bike pumps and a multi-tool inside them to enable people to carry out quick fixes on their bikes as necessary donated by Your Bike Project.

Holding workshops out on the street has proved to be very effective in terms of encouraging involvement; it's less intimidating than going into an unfamiliar building and it's also an effective way of raising awareness of other projects delivered under the FN2030 programme. However, the lack of local storage required the project to invest 1.5 hours to set up and 1.5 hours to set down.

Logistics and storage for bikes and project materials were identified as significant challenges, highlighting the need for dedicated storage solutions.

Due to the lack of suitable local storage, the project had to store bicycles four miles away, adding around three hours to the set-up and take-down time for each bike storage.

"A project of this scale needs its own infrastructure as well as support from the council to identify local permanent storage space." Raqhib Islam

Going forward, there are plans to solve this with the creation of dedicated storage facilities within Somers Town.

"Through the Reimagining Chalton Street Project (another Somers Town FN2030 project), and in collaboration with local partners and residents, we were able to identify a suitable site where storage facilities are being built." Carlos Queremel, FN2030 project lead at Camden Council

For a project like this to thrive, there needs to be excellent communication between partners so there is a clear understanding of the issues and challenges confronted by specific projects to enable joint working to address them.

Further information

Your Bike Project website - <https://yourbikeproject.org/>

This case study is part of a set of tools produced about the FN2030 programme, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/funding-and-innovation/future-neighbourhoods-2030>



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