

## London Assembly Environment Committee – Monday 15 November 2021

### Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Circular Economy, Waste and Recycling

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Please can I welcome our guests here in the Chamber: Andrew Dunwoody, Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy [Greater London Authority (GLA)]; Ugo Vallauri, Co-Founder and Policy Lead, The Restart Project; Wayne Hubbard, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ReLondon; Rachel Ledwith, Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project; and Sarah O'Carroll, Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Thank you very much and you are all very welcome.

I am going to kick off with my first question. Perhaps if I could start with you, Andrew. The Mayor's ambition is that by 2026 no biodegradable or recyclable waste will be sent to landfill, and by 2030 65% of London's municipal waste will be recycled. Is London on track to become a truly circular and zero-waste city?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** I would say yes, it is. With regards to landfill, London is the region with the lowest landfill percentage in the United Kingdom (UK). The most recent figures show that we sent 2.8% of our waste to landfill. On recycling, we have shown year-on-year increase since 2016 and London is one of only two UK regions to do that. We are recycling at a rate of just under 34% at the moment and our recent Reduction and Recycling Plans (RRP) have shown that if they are implemented in full that will be increased to 40% by 2022.

We are also working on the circular economy. Regarding the recent circular economy statement that has been embedded into the London Plan, we are leading in terms of expecting the building industry to show how they are embracing the circular economy in the design, construction and operation of referable applications to the Mayor. We are also continuing to push on other fronts with regard to waste management: encouraging boroughs to provide consistent services and looking to Government to support us in terms of the increase in recycling infrastructure and improve our performance further.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you very much. Rachel, what do you think are the key challenges for London?

**Rachel Ledwith MBE (Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project):** Some of the challenges are around how we connect the various different aspects of the circular economy to ensure that it flows and it becomes part of the standard way of working, rather than where we are more at the moment where it is ad hoc and an innovation. We need to be able to embed that into everything that everyone is thinking about. Thinking about the circular economy needs to become a standard thought rather than, "Oh, how do we innovate and how do we make this work for us?".

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. Wayne, how does London compare to other European and world cities?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** London compares pretty well. We were one of the pioneer cities to start to develop theory and practice around circular economy with a handful of other cities. Over the last five or six years that kind of city practice has blossomed. Now there are loads of cities in the northern and southern hemispheres that have adopted that practice, and London is at the forefront. There is some really great practice coming up and we are constantly scanning the horizons looking for practices that we can incorporate.

Our business support programme is probably one of the world's best, if not the world's best. Some of the research that we are doing, particularly around food waste and material flows through the city, is definitely world-leading in terms of linking waste and consumption in particular. Therefore, from a circular economy perspective, I would hope colleagues around the table agree that London is one of the world's leading cities.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you very much. Ugo, what kind of solutions do you think are available to help London overcome some of these barriers?

**Ugo Vallauri (Co-Founder and Policy Lead, The Restart Project):** A lot of the policy solutions that we are advocating for do not apply just at the city level. When we are seeing the need for better design, for making products more repairable and less wasteful, certainly that cannot be tackled just at the city level. However, there are areas that we see can massively increase London performance on electrical specifically. When we talk about the circular economy around that, we do not see any real incentive for people to reuse, repair and recycle, only at the true end of a product lifetime. Therefore, we feel that, in a sense, electronic waste has been forgotten, and a lot more needs to happen given that it is a prominently growing stream of waste. We need to push reuse and push repair and create incentives for people to repair. We see interesting examples where even some cities in certain regions or cities outside of the UK are considered to boost the repair economy and to reduce waste cases when products cannot be repaired. There is a lot to learn from other parts of the world.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. Sarah, you are from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and were very present at the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). I am aware of a lot of the work you do, largely from Assembly Member [Léonie] Cooper's previous work as Environment Chair, in which the Committee did a lot of work on waste and the circular economy. What more do you think still needs to be done in 2021?

**Sarah O'Carroll (Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation):** Maybe the most important message that I could bring to this forum is that the circular economy is much bigger than just waste and recycling. The circular economy aims to eliminate waste and pollution, circulate products and materials, and regenerate natural systems. Therefore, my view would be that, at the moment, the circular economy targets for London are probably too narrow. They need to be much broader than recycling and waste reduction if we are aiming to eliminate waste and pollution, circulate products and materials, and regenerate natural systems.

Then the second thing is linking to Ugo's [Vallauri] policy answer and what other colleagues have said, it would be important now to start seeing circular economy embedded across London's policy framework. We are already seeing circular economy embedded in London's Environment Strategy, in the London Plan, in the Skills Strategy, but it is important now as well to start seeing the circular economy embedded in London's Economic Development Strategy, in the Transport Strategy, and even within the existing policy framework to expand that out of just the waste and recycling agenda into a much more holistic circular economy agenda.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you all very much. Assembly Member Devenish.

**Tony Devenish AM (Deputy Chairman):** Good morning panel. When I heard all your very positive answers, I was quite surprised, having read the paperwork, and having been on the [Confirmation Hearings] Committee that approved the Chair [of ReLondon] a few weeks ago. The figures are far more pessimistic as we currently only have a third of our local authority waste recycled. We are 10% behind the English average. Therefore, my question is can you ever see a day when London is not the worst region in the country for recycling?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** I acknowledge that London has lots of challenges that are unique to the city. It is a dense and transient population with lots of different languages spoken and lots of flatted properties. Therefore, it is challenging to hit a high recycling rate. Those are challenges that are inherent in the city and are not going to go anywhere anytime soon, but we are looking to address those head on. We are introducing consistent services across all boroughs and have asked all boroughs to offer recycling services of the six main dry recyclable items plus a separate food waste collection.

Also, we are tackling the issue of flats through ReLondon, it has done some fantastic work on how to increase recycling in flats. That project has rolled out a package of measures that makes it easier for people in flats to recycle and is going into the second phase now to look at how they can advance that further and increase the number of materials that it covers. The actions that have been set out in the RRP that the Mayor has asked the boroughs to draft and send in for approval have set out that recycling can be increased significantly over the next number of years. We will see that happen because the Mayor has set down the right environment for that to happen.

Then there are other measures coming forward as well from national Government regarding extended producer responsibility, deposit return schemes, and consistency of service. That will change the field in the waste industry in the UK in general, but in London specifically. We need further support from Government in order to hit really high recycling rates. We will need to see businesses recycling more, and more effectively. We need more support from Government in order to legislate for businesses, not only to report on the waste they produce, but also to mandate that they recycle more and reduce their waste wherever possible.

**Tony Devenish AM (Deputy Chairman):** Just to press you on that point then, do you have a percentage of London's overall waste that will be recycled by a date that will mean we will not be the lowest in the country at a given date, ie some specifics?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** I cannot say when we will increase past other regions, if they decrease and we continue to increase. We have created the environment for us to be able to improve. The Mayor has set the target for 50% of local authority collected waste to be recycled by 2025. That would obviously put us in very good stead compared to the rest of the UK regions --

**Tony Devenish AM (Deputy Chairman):** Are you confident you are going to meet that?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** Yes. We will see the boroughs perform well. There are lots of challenges around the recent pandemic and lockdown, and there have been changes to the waste composition that boroughs are having to manage, but we will see boroughs bring forward new measures. We are starting to see evidence of that in the recent reduction in recycling plants. Also, with the measures I have highlighted from national government, I think we will see continued improvement in performance. With the support of national government, in terms of the funding and the ability of local authorities and businesses to effectively reduce and to recycle their waste, we can hit that target.

**Tony Devenish AM (Deputy Chairman):** Can I ask Wayne the same question? Is he as optimistic?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** Yes. It is a challenge. It is worth putting in some context. London is a city and we are comparing London, in the figures that you are referring to, to other

regions. I do not think that is necessarily a good comparison. In relation to other cities in the UK, London is a mid-table performer. There are no equivalent cities in the UK to compare London to. If you look internationally and compare London to New York and some of the other megacities around the world, London performs pretty well. Therefore London does not do too bad given the scale of the problems that London faces in terms of collecting recycling.

As Andrew said, we need to do a lot better, and there are some structural areas in which we can improve over time. We can see contracts changing in East London. We know we need to introduce more food waste in flats. We have to get to grips with putting in recycling facilities that are people-friendly in new builds, given that they will all be flatted properties. We are working very hard on that and we have some good toolkits out there. We are working very closely with boroughs. If all of the RRP's added together are delivered, it equates to around about 40% of recycling. That is a pretty good start.

Therefore, yes, I am fairly optimistic that we can get to or near that figure. If we did, that would put London as the global leading city of its size as a recycler. I would also add that maybe we should not get too hung up about recycling. I know it is important and it is an important benchmark. But we really need to start thinking about how we reduce waste and how the circular economy can help us to really bear down on waste and make it a true residual. That is a really important thing that we should not lose sight of.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. Assembly Member Cooper.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Andrew, I have spoken to Deputy Mayor [for Environment and Energy, Shirley] Rodrigues and a lot of people in the Environment Team. One of the things that has been holding London back - there has been a bit of stalling in increasing the level of recycling at the moment - is the fact that a number of the waste authorities across London are tied into some very lengthy contracts. For example, the Shanks [waste management company] contract in East London does not terminate until 2027.

When we are looking at something like that, and I can see that the Mayor's ambition is no biodegradable or recyclable waste going to landfill by 2026, I can believe that might happen. However, if we are still seeing parts of London tied into contracts with incinerators to burn biodegradable or potentially recyclable waste, we can laud the fact we are not sending anything to landfill, but should we not be really bearing down on the amount of waste in London that is being burned as well?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** If I understand the question correctly, yes. Incineration of residual waste is preferable to landfill, particularly if we can capture heat and power from that and ensure that the best available techniques are applied to the emissions from the combustion of that waste. We need to be making sure that only truly non-recyclable waste is sent to incineration and doing whatever we can to facilitate and make sure that happens. The Mayor has repeatedly taken that line and that is why we are encouraging boroughs and supporting them to recycle as much as possible. But, as Wayne has set out, the RRP's, we want to see boroughs reduce their waste and then we want to see them recycle whatever waste that is created and not send that to incineration. Therefore only truly non-recyclable waste is incinerated.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Absolutely. But we have seen, for example, Barnet, who were doing food waste separation and sending it away from having it burned, pause that. They have been on a very long pause now. I do not know what happened to their RRP and whether they are ever going to recommence food waste separation and dealing with it properly. We have the situation where there are one or two anaerobic digestion plants in London, but we have not seen new ones being built. There is one in my constituency and they do a

lot of food waste collections from businesses. When are we really going to start moving forward on making anaerobic digestion of food waste something that literally every borough and every business that is in that area and produces food waste does, when are we going to be doing 100% of that?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** The Mayor is supporting the collection of food waste from all boroughs and has asked them all to provide a separate food waste collection. We now have 24 boroughs offering separate food waste collection and many more trialling and piloting schemes as well. Therefore we will see an increase in the collection of food waste. We have seen that already from the instigation of the [London] Environment Strategy. Then there are going to be requirements from national government as well. The Government has already consulted on a consistent approach across all of England and Wales. We will see a requirement for all properties to receive a separate food waste collection at some stage in the future. Therefore we will definitely see an increase in the collection of food waste from households. Then hopefully see that go into anaerobic digestion, which is the preferable mode of treatment for the generation of power and the production of a digestate, which is beneficial for agriculture.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Thank you. If I can just move on to Wayne. Just to mention, the trial in Wandsworth, which I have been pushing for, for about ten years, has started this month. It involves about 2,000 dwellings. Really we are moving at glacial speed. Anyone would think that there was no climate emergency, the reaction of some boroughs to some of these things. Wayne, I wanted to ask you, when it was the London Waste and Recycling Board (LWARB), quite near the beginning of the Mayor's previous term, LWARB came up with its roadmap, which included separating out the six dry recyclates. How many London boroughs are really doing that properly now?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** I am not sure. The majority of London boroughs have dry collection. Whether they are all separated out, I do not think that is the case. But London is a complex city, it has complex challenges, and in order to help address some of those we have produced something called the Flats Recycling Package, which sets out what we think is a good practice solution to recycling waste from residents' properties.

We found some interesting things there. There was a lot of contamination and some of the contaminants in the recycling were things like nappies, textiles, and food waste. Therefore, we are doing another project with flats in Lambeth where we are doing a variety of things to try to get that contamination out. Then you get this wonderful double dividend of increased recycling and reduced contamination. Reduced contamination means increased recycling.

This is hard work. We have to monitor; we have to evaluate. We did an ethnographic study of Londoners' behaviour when it came to flats to understand how we could intervene and what were the best interventions. It is really hard work to get the best results. It is expensive work and it takes time and dedication from all those concerned. Therefore, I do not underestimate it at all. We are getting there, and we certainly have some national best practice in London. I know that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) look to London to help disseminate some of this best practice to other cities who have similar problems.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** We have said on this Committee before, if we can get these things right, including the behaviour change element that you are talking about, in London, then we can probably solve most of this for the rest of the country. Thank you, Chair.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** I also agree that incineration is a huge issue and we are going to come to that later on in the meeting. I was really pleased when Dr Liz Goodwin [OBE, Chair of the London Waste and Recycling Board] came here for her confirmation hearing recently and she said that reducing waste is more important than recycling. With that being said, why is there not just one target to reduce waste in London overall?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** The waste industry and the waste we produce as a city is more complex than that. The way that waste is managed across different boroughs, the different governance strategies from households, from businesses, and then in the way it is collected and disposed of as well, necessitates more of a nuanced response than just a single target.

Also, we have to recognise where we are, we produce a lot of waste that is not recyclable at the moment, and therefore we want to see how we can manage that as effectively as possible. We also produce a lot of waste that is recyclable, therefore we want to make sure that is captured.

We also want to reduce our waste as well and that is the ultimate goal. We have these different elements of the materials that we dispose of and we need to try to manage each of those elements where they arise as best we can. But ultimately, yes, we do want to get to the point where we do have a zero-waste society and we become truly circular. We have to recognise that we are not there at the moment and the measures and targets that we have at the minute recognise that and start to take the steps towards our ultimate goal.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** I agree that it is complicated to get to a zero-waste society. That is exactly, I am sure we agree, where we need to be. There is nuance to it. By having a single target, you know where you are going as opposed to not setting a target?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** The interim targets or the range of targets give all those involved a clear ambition or a clear path to follow. If we had a single target it would be a risk of different organisations, different people, different levels of governance, plotting their own path of how to get there and it could divide effort and mean that we were on separate paths. If we have targets for different measures and different materials and different elements of the waste industry, then that gives us a clearer path and a clearer focus in terms of what we are trying to achieve in our interim steps to reduce waste.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. Assembly Member Best.

**Emma Best AM:** Assembly Member [Léonie] Cooper took the question out of my mouth, but there was a follow-up that I wanted to build on quickly: that point of incineration being better than landfill, especially because of the heat and the power concept. You may have seen that at COP26 the CEO of Acciona, who are the preferred bidder for the new Edmonton incinerator plant, said that by the very nature of that concept of the waste to heat, the proposal has been made much larger than it needed to be. In what you are saying, as to how we are going to encourage incineration over landfill, is there a consideration of how we stop this overuse of incineration? It seems at odds, if you need this to create district heating, to have a greater amount of incineration than perhaps is necessary. Is there a way to square that circle?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** It comes down to supporting boroughs, and businesses as well where we have the power, but particularly boroughs as far as the Mayor is concerned, to produce as little waste as possible and

then recycle as much of that waste as they can before it goes to landfill. That is what we mean when we say to send only truly non-recyclable waste to incineration. We want to see waste reduced first and foremost and then recycled thereafter. That is what we are doing with the support that we are giving to boroughs through ReLondon and through my team. Making sure that they have a consistent service to offer to their residents, making sure they are introducing services where they are, encouraging residents to reduce waste and adopt behaviour change that will result in more circular ways of living and waste reduction --

**Emma Best AM:** Sorry, that is not really about residents. It is more about the fact that, as the main tender for the new bidder for the new Edmonton incinerator said, if there is this new concept where we need greater incineration to power this district heating, how do we square that circle? How do we make sure that is not happening from the Mayor's perspective? Are there any new powers the Mayor needs? What can we do to stop that happening? That is not really at resident level. That is a decision of local authorities and councils.

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** If I understand the question correctly, it is maybe getting a bit beyond my area of expertise, but I do not think that there is any risk at all of the heat demand driving a need for waste generation to feed the incinerator, therefore fulfilling the need of that heat network. It is just that we are capturing the heat and power from that waste incineration as effectively as possible to make it as low in the carbon intensity of the energy we are capturing. Then once we start to decrease we will see a transition again to renewable sources of energy and therefore heat as well.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. Assembly Member McCartney.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** I am going to ask the same question but in a different way. Again, it is about new incineration coming online and we know that Edmonton is about to procure for their new incineration facility. If the aim is to first of all reduce waste to start with, if the second aim is to increase recycling, are we not in danger of having overcapacity in our incineration in London? Is that not a false economy?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** It is possible that we will end up with an overcapacity of incineration if the residual waste volumes decrease, but that is not within the power of the Mayor to determine. That is delivered by either the developers or waste authorities that are bringing forward those incinerators and then the decisions that are made at usually Secretary of State level in terms of providing planning permission for those facilities. That is something that is beyond the power of the Mayor. The Mayor has been clear that he does not want to see any further incineration capacity within London and has opposed recent applications for increased incineration capacity and continues to do so. He has also been clear that any incineration that is within London should burn only truly non-recyclable waste, capture heat and power, and operate to the best of global techniques for emissions as well.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** We do then have overcapacity and you have said that is a danger. Emma [Best AM] has talked about the need for district heat to still have waste coming in. Is it not the case that we will then be importing a lot of waste from outside our city limits? Is that not an issue as well that the GLA is concerned about?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** We have been tracking the recent incineration developments very closely. We have confirmed some of the detail that is available for the Edmonton incinerator which shows that it can operate effectively and efficiently at less than full capacity. Therefore, if there is less waste produced by that waste

disposal authority area it will be able to still operate efficiently at lower throughput. Therefore, if the waste decreases, which we anticipate it will, it will still be able to operate efficiently providing heat and power. We are aware of that and we are following it. Effectively, we think that the incinerators will be able to operate efficiently on a lower throughput. If those companies decide to import more waste, we will look at that at that stage, but again it is probably going to be something that is beyond the control of the Mayor because it is a commercial operation that is setting up contracts that he has no power to direct or control.

**Emma Best AM:** Can you provide an overview of the progress the Mayor has made with regard to the circular economy? Perhaps before beginning, if you could give a definition of how you define the circular economy? It is important to see how we define it here at the GLA.

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** For me, I see the circular economy as a transition away from our linear economy, which is extract, make, use, dispose, to one that is truly circular. We keep materials in use for as long as possible and extract as much value from them. It is much more than simply recycling. Recycling is an end-of-pipe solution. The waste has already arisen, and we are thinking of the best thing to do with it. A circular economy is looking at any system in the round and determining the best outcome from the start and designing that into it. It is one that then allows the decoupling of economic growth, resource use and environmental impact. It really does offer fantastic solutions in terms of our ability to continue to provide a good quality of living, reduce our environmental impact, and continue to make best use of our finite resources.

In terms of what the Mayor is doing in terms of promoting a circular economy, as I mentioned earlier, we have embedded the circular economy statement into the recently published London Plan, which is a world-leading requirement for all developers to set out how they are considering the circular economy in the developments that they are proposing. That is looking at the design, construction and operation of those developments and looking at how they can be materially efficient, reduce waste, and produce buildings that have great longevity and flexibility. Then the materials that are embedded in those are available for reuse at the end of their life as well.

Beyond that, the Mayor is leading by example in terms of his own procurement. We are embedding circular economy principles into the responsible procurement programme. We have seen some examples of that already in terms of circularity of uniforms for the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and the Police as well. We have seen some great examples there of how materials are being used after their first life and then innovating in terms of how those materials can be effectively used again. One thing that comes to mind is the reuse of Kevlar body protection from the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Once that has reached the end of its useful life in terms of body armour, that material is taken into the automotive industry and provided for parts for vehicles therefore making sure that different materials stay in use and value is extracted from those for as long as possible.

Then we are also supporting the circular economy through business support. We have lots of programmes that support businesses on two parts. We support businesses that have circular propositions and innovations through the Better Futures programme. Then through the Business Transformation programme at ReLondon, we are supporting circular businesses and making sure that they are getting off the ground with grants and business advice. We are also providing support to businesses that are not necessarily within the circular field but want to make their business models more circular. We are helping them capture the benefits of the circular economy by advising them how they can become more circular, and therefore become more resilient, more competitive, and be more attractive to their customers.



**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** There is an accepted definition of the circular economy. It is not particularly illuminating. It is around keeping materials in use and having a regenerative system. It is a system and it is a systemic change, which is important so that it is not piecemeal, it has to be part of what we do. The future economy will be circular and it will be embodied by certain archetypes. I come to five archetypes, which help me to think about whether something is circular or not: whether you use recycling as an input for something. Whether something is recyclable. I think of leasing as being a circular business model. I think of design for durability, which includes aspects of repair, modularity. I think of sharing, a library of things, that kind of stuff. Sharing, leasing, design for durability, recycling in and recycling out. Those five business models help me to determine whether something is part of the circular economy.

Increasingly, I would like to see that businesses in London have those aspects so that there is a green thread running through London's economy. That has global impact, as we have seen with our consumption emissions materials analysis and has been demonstrated through the work of Arup and the C40 [Cities Climate Leadership Group], the Ellen MacArthur Foundation linking climate change and how we can mitigate climate change with the circular economy. Have we made a big difference since we started down this path? We started down this path around about 2014. Over the last six years there has been an explosion of interest in this topic and an explosion of innovation and enterprise in London. It is probably one of the centres of circular economy and innovation enterprise in the world.

At ReLondon, through the Business Transformation programme, which used to be called Advance London, we have dealt with over 250 businesses. We have a thriving investment operation through the Greater London Investment Fund. We have a venture capital fund that operates. We have helped distribute some Green New Deal funding from the Mayor of London, and The Felix Project was one of the recipients of that funding. I see it as all part of the green recovery. I see it as part of the future of London's economy. We also have a London borough support system, which helps London boroughs to increase recycling. We deal with behaviour change. We are starting to try to integrate circular economy into waste management thinking, theory and practice.

Bringing these two sides together, the business and the municipal, we have developed and we are developing a directory of circular economy businesses so that we can provide citizens with tools and information to allow them to become more circular. I truly believe often those circular business models are better than the linear alternative. Quite often citizens are ahead of us, they are doing things without us having to push them, but we can do a lot more.

Then ultimately I would like to bring all of those together into a place-based solution, which we are calling - to steal from the Ultra Low Emission Zone - the Ultra Low Waste Neighbourhood, and try to really work on a finite number of places to bring waste down in those localities. There are something like 600 high streets in London and 90% of Londoners live within ten minutes of those high streets. That is a finite number. We can deal with that. If we work on all of those places to turn those places into Ultra Low Waste Neighbourhoods within the next five or ten years, we could really bear down on waste in London to a significant amount. That would include businesses and residents.

We have come a long way since we started and, to answer your question, we have a long way to go. But I can start to see a pathway to really reducing waste. For me, there is a lot of talk about how do you measure a circular economy, how do you decide how far you are, how circular you are? Waste arising is a pretty good indicator.

**Emma Best AM:** If you could provide a progress update, where do you think you are in regard to talking about the future, where do you think you are with the actions set out in London's circular economy route map?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** There are 100 actions in there for us and other stakeholders. Going down that list, we have crossed off quite a few of them. We split it into focus areas; a lot of route maps around the world seem to have this approach where they determine focus areas and they are specific to the locality. But they share a lot. For us it is the built environment, food, plastics, electronics and textiles. In most of those areas we have ticked off a lot of the actions that we set ourselves.

Around 2019 we had a realisation that we need to more closely link the development of a circular economy to how it relates to climate change. You will be aware that at COP26, they talked about territorial emissions, the emissions within your boundary. Whereas circular economy extends beyond the boundary of a city or a region. Therefore, we have done a lot of work trying to think about the carbon footprint of the stuff that we consume. It is that area that the circular economy has a real power. The work that the Ellen MacArthur Foundation did with material economics demonstrated that 45% of the world's carbon emissions are associated with stuff that is difficult to mitigate by making changes to the energy system, like food and buildings. Therefore these are areas where we think we can do a great deal more.

We have done a lot, I would suggest, in terms of hitting the actions that we set ourselves in the route map. In the middle of that we had a kind of pivot and have started to address ourselves how we can reduce stuff. We rebranded ourselves with the slogan, "Revolutionising our Relationship with Stuff." It is the reuse, making better use of things, making things last longer, making things of better quality, redistributing things. That is the world in which we are moving into and that is going to have the greatest effect. Therefore we are halfway there and I can start to see a pathway to a zero-waste economy with very low waste neighbourhoods, bringing together business and citizens, not in a hair shirt way, but in the way the 21st Century economic system is going and it is systemic change.

**Emma Best AM:** You say you are about halfway through those actions and you are happy with your progress?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** No. I would not say we are halfway through the actions. We have ticked off a lot of the actions. We are halfway through - it is difficult to say in time bands - but it feels to me that we can see a pathway to a circular economy. I would say we are halfway there. We need to do a lot more work and I can see how we can get to a truly zero-waste city. It is a finite way in which we can do it.

**Emma Best AM:** Wayne spoke a bit about how the Mayor is supporting businesses and I am aware of time but did you want to add anything to that, supporting businesses with the circular economy model?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** The Business Transformation programme is run by ReLondon but the Mayor is also delivering the Better Futures programme, which again was started before the pandemic and lockdown. Through the Green New Deal, we have extended that. The Mayor has given additional funds to support businesses. There are a whole range of businesses but, again, many of those are circular in nature. That is almost like a sister programme to the Business Transformation programme where the Mayor is directly supporting it and businesses as well to either promote circular products and services or to become more circular in their operations.

**Emma Best AM:** Sarah, just to ask, what lessons have we learned from the Food Flagship Initiative that has enabled changes in London's economy and behaviours to support the circular economy?

**Sarah O'Carroll (Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation):** Maybe before I get there, I think it is my place, and it is important for me to say, from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's perspective, London is a world-leading circular economy city. There is a reason that we chose London to be one of our three strategic partner cities, alongside New York City and São Paulo. We believe that London is one of the world's leading circular economy cities because it is a hub for hundreds of circular economy businesses. There is significant funding compared to other cities around the world attached to transforming businesses and expanding those businesses. There is lots of work happening with the boroughs as well. It is complex because of the number of boroughs and also because of the different levels of authority that the GLA and the boroughs have, and big business and small business and how you bring all of these actors together to make a change. Also, the GLA and the GLA group are starting to lead the way with changes in procurement through the Responsible Procurement Policy. The London Plan's Circular Economy Planning Statement is a world first and we do not see that in other cities around the world.

Yes, there is lots of progress still to be made, but there has been significant progress already and it is, indeed, world leading. Of course, it would be fantastic to see more funding available to transform business models, both at small and medium enterprise (SME) level as well as big business. Big business is absolutely vital to bring into this conversation as well, although that is not always easy for the Mayor to do based on where he has authority and where he does not. Also, the Mayor is now the Chair of C40 Cities. With London's 2030 goal to become a zero carbon city, I agree with Wayne [Hubbard] entirely. It is important to say that this target of a zero-carbon city cannot be met without embedding the circular economy fundamentally in the city's framework.

Then as a Food Flagship city and with the Food Flagship initiative: again, we chose London to be one of our three Food Flagship cities because we do believe that the work that the city is doing in food is also world leading. There is so much work happening across boroughs with SMEs and funding attached to that. What we have learnt is that it takes a long time to change a system, and COVID has made it even more difficult. It is easy to bring actors together and stakeholders together across a value chain to convene them around a topic, but it is difficult and takes time to foster collaboration and partnerships. What we are seeing with the pioneer projects, like The Felix Project, is that there are great examples in London already of businesses that are operating to make London's food system more circular. What we want to see is these successful business models replicated and these businesses expanded, but in order to do that there needs to be the capacity and resources to do that.

The other thing that is very important to say here is to talk about emission. Zooming out a little bit and going to a global perspective, because that is the data that I have at hand, only 10% of global emissions come from food waste; 30% comes from agriculture and food. When we talk about food in London and the Food Flagship initiative, it is also important to be thinking about what kind of growing is happening, where that food is coming from, if it can be locally sourced, and how it is grown. The three pillars that we talk about in the Food Initiative at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation are: source food that is grown regeneratively and locally where appropriate; and design and market healthy food products. When we talk about food, we should not just be talking about food waste. We need to be thinking about the bigger system and where and how that food is grown is also very important as part of that conversation.

**Emma Best AM:** Also go vegan, but I will pass back to the Chair.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** It is something I have endorsed as well. That is really good to hear that articulated in that way, Sarah. Something that really struck me at COP26 was the role that the Mayor now has as the Chair of C40; that we can lead or continue to lead the way on so many of these things around the world and that is really exciting. Assembly Member McCartney.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** I want to talk about reducing food waste and my questions are primarily directed at Rachel [Ledwith] and Sarah [O'Carroll] if I can. We have heard from the questions from Emma [Best AM] about London's Food Flagship Policy, but I note that the food waste hubs in Milan recently won the Earthshot Prize. What lessons can London learn from other cities? Perhaps I could start with Sarah. Can you tell me which are the two cities you are partnering with?

**Sarah O'Carroll (Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation):** We partner with a number of cities, but at our strategic partner level - so the highest level of relationship that we have - the other two cities are New York City and São Paulo.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Can I ask about learning from other cities that we could do better?

**Sarah O'Carroll (Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation):** Yes. We are very proud to also work with Milan, which is a partner city of ours. We are also proud to be an official nominator for innovators for the Earthshot Prize and the work that Milan is doing in the food space is fantastic. I would not say that it is necessarily any better than what London is doing. It has a different approach and there are still gaps in Milan's food policy and the work that it is doing.

There are lots of different initiatives that different cities are taking. Maybe two nice initiatives to share might be Plate up for Glasgow, where the city challenged restaurants and food producers in the city to design a menu that was climate friendly. We have also seen a partnership develop in Kyoto with a company called Mizkan [Group] and retailers in the city of Kyoto to work to do a consumer communications campaign around how to use as much of a food product as possible. For example, many consumers might cut off the bottom of a broccoli because the top of the broccoli is the nice looking bit; what you might do with the end of the broccoli or pickling solutions and things like that.

There are opportunities to continue to foster collaboration between retailers and food producers, including the fast-moving consumer goods industry in the city, to create food products that are eliminating food waste entirely just from the way that these products are created. Then it is also important to be supporting citizen behaviour change, supporting that menu planning and food planning for the week, to be reducing food waste. Again, I would like to go back and say I do not think we should just be focusing on food waste. We should be encouraging citizens to be diversifying their diets so we are not just eating five food staples throughout the week because all of that also enhances and supports biodiversity.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** There are some useful ideas there. Rachel, can I come to you because you are at the cutting edge of this and dealing with things on the ground? Can I ask you the same question but also ask you how London is doing at the moment and have you identified any gaps that we could improve?

**Rachel Ledwith MBE (Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project):** For us as The Felix Project and also the London Food Alliance, which includes FareShare and City Harvest, what we have learnt over the last few years is there is no one size fits all. It is important to have lots of different innovations and solutions that work in different environments in different ways, and if you become too focused on just one solution,

there will be gaps created. You can look at what is happening in London, whether it is through the work that The Felix Project does. We have innovated around creating a kitchen now, which will take surplus food that was found to be more difficult for some of our community organisations to use. We can now repurpose that food into meals, which makes it much more readily available. You have got opportunities through the diversion of food from the restaurant industry and retailers direct to community organisations, whether that is facilitated through FareShare Go, through OLIO or through Too Good To Go.

There are lots of different solutions happening and what is important, as Sarah [O'Carroll] and my other colleagues here have mentioned, is we need to be looking at it as a whole and encouraging people to think about how we can make 'best use of', rather than necessarily focusing on food waste all of the time. A big part of what we are trying to do when we are providing our community organisations with food is helping them to understand how they can make the best use of that food. The food might not be familiar to everyone in the London environment. We have one of the most diverse cities in the world in terms of the different ethnicities, and we have a very transient population. A big part of what we are trying to do is make sure that when the food gets sent out people are educated as to how to make best use of that. That may be through the community organisations using it themselves to provide meals or food parcels right to the end beneficiary who takes it home and hopefully cooks something with it in the kitchen. There was the example about the broccoli and we all throw away the stalk because we have done. Why do we do that when there is no reason for that to happen?

It is really important that we try to think of how we can have different solutions that work at different aspects of the supply chain. From The Felix Project perspective, we receive food from the major UK providers and that food is coming in from outside of London. It is not generally produced within London, but we are also working with small SME businesses, restaurants, pack houses, wholesalers and producers within London as well and we have different models, dependent on the nature and the type of food. If we think of the circular economy - and again trying to take a wider view of it - our view is quite a people-centric one because we have got this dual purpose of the organisation, which is to reduce food waste but also to feed people in need. Think of the circular economy and about the fact that there is all this food that is being produced already anyway and we have talked about incineration and anaerobic digestion already today. Those are great if it is not going to landfill, but if the food is perfectly fit for human consumption, the first place it should go is to people.

It would be wonderful to see that embedded into all of the operations that all of us work with, whether that is local authority contract provision, through procurement, through to how do we best educate the general public on how to eat seasonally, how to make the best use of food and how to be creative with what we are doing. It is all of these different aspects that need to come together that means that we could make best use of the surplus food that is available. By working with businesses and showing them the difference that their surplus food can make, it often makes them think about their food less as waste and more as a viable product, which in and of itself helps them to reduce and look at their supply chain. Ultimately, it is all costing them money; they have to buy that food in for it then to be given away.

Just being more conscious about where food is going and where it is ending will inherently bring about a change in the system but as Sarah [O'Carroll] said, it is going to take time. It is not something that can happen overnight, particularly when there are no incentives necessarily for organisations to adopt that. In France, for example, there are food businesses that are compelled to make sure that their surplus food goes to organisations. If you look at Canada, they have got a situation where they have tax incentives if their food waste is redistributed to people. It would be interesting to know whether the Mayor or anyone has the ability to make London in some way offer those levels of incentives. Unless we can switch some of that on, then at

the moment food predominantly will end up going to anaerobic digestion or incineration above and beyond feeding people because it is more difficult to keep it fit for human consumption.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you. My colleague Léonie Cooper [AM] will be asking about the Mayor's powers a little later, but I note what you say about enforcement and tax incentives. You have highlighted something I was going to ask you about the messaging behind this because we need to change behaviour. I visited a Felix Project up in Enfield School about 18 months ago. Again, that was about feeding low income people, particularly children, and it was done in such a way that there was no stigma attached to it. It struck me that with the pandemic as well, those big supermarkets or restaurants are probably a lot more aware now about the social implications of them being able to donate their surplus products to people like you. Have you seen a shift in those organisations over the last couple of years and do you think it will last?

**Rachel Ledwith MBE (Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project):** That is a good question and I wish I had that crystal ball. It is fair to say that whether as The Felix Project or FareShare or City Harvest, we know there are a huge number of food businesses out there that want their food to be made best use of. You will not find a farmer in the land who grows food just to have it ploughed back into the fields and it is soul destroying for them. Through the pandemic, we saw organisations really step up, they wanted to give us the food because they did not want it to go to waste and that has continued.

For us, the conversations that we have with our food partners are not generally around "Do you want to offer us the food?" It is "How do we make that viable?" There was a piece of work done and I am sorry I cannot remember who it was that did it – it could have been the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) – that said to keep a tonne of food fit for human consumption costs about £150. Now if you look at the fact that they could sell that tonne of food for anaerobic digestion or for incineration or stock feed, you have got this balance of food to be given away, to be sold for waste, generating a small income. There is not really that balance there in terms of how businesses make the decision, but huge numbers of businesses are making the decision to provide us with the food.

We have a mission or a vision within The Felix Project to be able to offer the equivalent of 100 million meals by 2024. In the height of the pandemic in 2020, we did 21 million meals equivalent and we have already surpassed that this year. This sense that the pandemic brought about a whole level of food insecurity that was not there before just is not true. What has happened in the pandemic is it has raised the lid on the level of food insecurity that exists in London and we want to be in the best place that we can be to try to facilitate the alleviation of the food insecurity. The key thing, again to bring in that circular economy, is to think about it in a way of if you feed someone, eight hours later they are going to be hungry again. Food poverty is not a thing of itself; it is part of a wider and more complex system. If you feed someone in an environment which allows them to access vital support services to address the underlying causes of why they are food insecure, the social impact of the food per kilo is exponentially increased because hopefully you are helping someone to move on from the situation that they are in. Whether through the process of doing that we can help to educate them about how to make best use of food at the same time. It is a win-win, but it is not an overnight win-win. All of these things take time.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you. How can London improve its reduction on food waste, what barriers still exist and what can we do about them?

**Sarah O'Carroll (Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation):** Generally, I think of it in three buckets of activities with requiring/enabling all building blocks to make it work. The first is what can be done in terms of the GLA and the GLA group in terms of its operations to reduce food waste? In terms of the private sector, big

business and small business need to be tackled separately; they are entirely different. What can be done in terms of their operations, both in terms of procurement and then also how they manage food within their businesses? The third is citizens, which is very closely linked to the boroughs and what the boroughs can do.

Then in terms of enablers, we have to look at how the policy framework either enables or provides a barrier to food reduction in the city. Is there capacity and resources to be able to implement that broad range of activities? It is definitely not a one size fits all and you cannot treat a citizen the same as a small business and the same as big business. They have to be convened and the activities have to be particularly tailored, based on the audience that we are talking about.

**Rachel Ledwith MBE (Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project):** I would say that for us as a surplus food redistributor, one of the biggest barriers that we have is the ability to get the food into the boroughs. We know we have access to the food and there is not an issue with that food supply coming in. It is good, wholesome fruit and veg as well as good protein that would significantly impact and improve the diets, the nutrition and the health and wellbeing of a lot of Londoners. The challenge that we have is that the ability for organisations to make best use of that food is not there right now. At the height of the pandemic, we had 54 local authority-supported hubs operating across London, which were set up very, very quickly, were super effective and really, really made a difference. Most of those have now gone because everyone has gone back to doing their day jobs in some shape or form and that is really hampering the ability of organisations like myself and the community organisations that we support to gain access to that food.

From our perspective, whether it is through the GLA or at the more local borough level we would really like to see people looking at the assets and resources that they have available to them, whether that is locations that can be used as food community hubs or whether it is resources such as vehicles to transport food around. We know we have the food and we know there is a need. It is how we bring those two things together that is the biggest barrier for us at the moment.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you. Can I ask Andrew [Dunwoody] if I may? I do not want to go into the Mayor's powers yet because my colleague will be asking about that, but that last point is interesting about the resilience of the food waste network. We saw some good local boroughs and organisations stepping up and creating new partnerships and it seems to me a lot of that was lost once the pandemic seemed to have subsided. Are you doing anything to see what you can do to learn the lessons from that and perhaps to replicate it on a more strategic level?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** Yes, that is something we are interested in. We supported the London Food Alliance and we are already in contact with Rachel [Ledwith] and her colleagues and the other organisations there. We are also learning from Hubbub and their Food Connect programme that runs redistribution hubs, and we are speaking to them about the pilots they run. They ran an incredibly successful pilot in Milton Keynes that redistributes edible food waste/surplus food and captured the crosscutting benefits of that for local communities. We are speaking to them to learn from them how that can be replicated in London and how we can help support that from the resources and the powers that the Mayor has within London.

What we would really like to see is greater support from the Government in terms of funding and compelling businesses to participate in these types of schemes. The Mayor has no power over businesses to compel them to comply or come in line with these strategies. We would look to Government to provide funding for schemes like this and then also ensure that businesses are acting responsibly with the surpluses that they are managing.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Are you learning the lessons from London as well over the last two years about those partnerships that were created that worked really well?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** Yes, we are.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. It would be remiss of me at this point to not say I visited City Harvest in March 2021. I was incredibly moved/depressed by the amount of need there is from foodbanks across the city but also so staggered by people's determination and hope in terms of how many volunteers are on the ground with both donating things and getting things around the city. I thank them for all the work that they do. Assembly Member Baker, welcome to the Committee and the floor is yours.

**Elly Baker AM:** The first question is: how can London become a place where repairing items instead of replacing is the norm?

**Ugo Vallauri (Co-Founder and Policy Lead, The Restart Project):** We need a complete change in the way people are told to recycle products when they could be repaired and reused. We see a massive problem with how the focus on increasing recycling rates and campaigns is going in that direction. They are potentially confusing people and preventing circular friendly practices from happening a lot more. In the last 18 months, there has been a decrease and a stop in a lot of community activities that we have been doing for the last nine years, our repair events and our Restart Parties. That does not mean that we should use this as an excuse not to repair and reuse more. What needs to happen, for example, is we need to see a change from recycling targets to reuse targets. Back in 2019, we authored a pretty extensive report for the LWARB, a look halfway through their then Circular Economy Action Plan for electronics. I do not know if the full report has been shared by LWARB with the London Assembly and the GLA, but if not it would be great if it is because it does spell out a range of things that could be still 100% valid now.

One of the things that people are experiencing is that repair is costly and in London we have not seen any major changes so far to help reduce and remove barriers around that. What we are seeing are good practices elsewhere where people are helped, for example, in the city of Vienna with the formation of Repair Network [Vienna] that helps people find the commercial repair option that would be more suitable for their need. This can be quite game changing because a lot of people, according to research we did a few years back, do not really have knowledge or a repair business that they can trust. At the same time, we are seeing the decline of the repair economy. Apart from businesses that repair smartphones and tablets and laptops, everything else is on the decline. We hear stories of businesses that are going out of business and so there is a true disconnect. We are talking about a green recovery and in places like Austria and now in Germany as well, approaches are starting to emerge where consumers receive a partial voucher to cover some of the repair costs associated with repairing the products that would otherwise go to waste.

If we do not have targets to monitor what products have been saved from waste, then it is hard to talk about impact more widely, which is why when we authored that report for LWARB we emphasised the need to create a reuse target. Now in London what is happening is that different metrics are in place across the city and we do not really have a full, comparable picture of how the different boroughs and how the different waste authorities are doing. Compare that with the kind of activities that we as a small charity have been carrying out over the last close-to-a-decade where we know exactly what people are bringing to our events. We collect data about that with the barriers that people are experiencing, whether it is lack of access to spare parts for products or lack of access to repair information or the cost of the parts being too high. We are seeing what



comes through and what does get repaired, which by the way tends to be 55% of products, with only 20% of these products actually being deemed for recycling.

We need to know exactly what products are ending in recycling centres that should not have been in recycling centres. Research from WRAP in this area dates back now a decade and we argue that a lot has changed in terms of the kind of products that people bring for recycling that could have been brought somewhere else for reuse. That research back then highlighted that approximately a quarter of all of the products that are brought to a recycling centre could have been reused and repaired in an economically viable way. When speaking to stakeholders, including charities that work on reuse, we learnt that they do not tend to have the capacity to take care of products that could have been repaired and then resold through their shops.

It sounds like while on food issues London certainly is looking at increasing the pace, we feel that the same clearly has not happened for electrical and electronics. Given the size of London, while we are proud of the community activity that is happening across London, if you compare it with the size of Belgium, which is roughly the same number of inhabitants as Greater London, all over there are 200 repair groups and here in London there are about ten. That is something that really needs to change and we cannot just expect community initiatives to repair everything that London needs repairing via community get togethers, repair cafés or Restart Parties once a month. We need to create the conditions for this to happen at scale and also look at the potential for repair jobs that can come out of that.

**Elly Baker AM:** That is really comprehensive, and you may have covered some of the follow-ups, but if there is anything else you want to add when I come to them, please indicate. Going to Wayne, what else is already happening in London in terms of repair?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** I would characterise it this way; that repair is a circular economy business model and that puts across quite a few of the material or the focus areas that we look at. We have worked with and supported, for example, textile repairer Birdsong recently, a wonderful, small company, black and minority ethnic (BME), female-led repairing company. They got some funding from us through the Mayor of London's a Green New Deal Fund that we distributed. We had an interview with Nudie Jeans [Co] on our website, which repairs jeans. My pledge was to have the oldest pair of Nudie Jeans I could possibly get and I have got one pair and I am going to try to keep them going forever. London Repair Week, which has been incredibly popular, took us by surprise and it really seems to have hit some kind of cord with Londoners. I do not know if it is to do with a culture of repair becoming more prevalent with shows like The Repair Shop and Salvage Hunters or whatever, but it seems to be an idea whose time is right. We spoke to Kyle [Wiens], one of the founders from iFixit, on our podcast as well as Nudie Jeans [Co]. All these people are part of a repair culture that is global and that is growing and there seems to be a lot of interest. We support lots of businesses. We want to promote skills, repair skills, and that would be something that would be quite useful with green academy skills and also school curricula. I would really like to learn how to darn and these are core skills that seem to have been lost somewhere in the last 20 or 30 years and I think they are starting to become quite interesting. It is not electronics; I take that. There is a range of areas which these cut across.

Ugo is right. Electricals and electronics is an area in our route map where we could do more if we had the funding to do it. We have not prioritised that area; we have prioritised built environment and food and probably plastics above electrical and electronics. If we had the funding, we would like to do more with that and I think that is true. We do a range of things. Repair Week will probably become something that we will continue to do now, which we do in October every year, and we have had some fantastic pick-up. We even had militant knitters who sat in a high street and just quietly got on with knitting as a form of protest with

repair as a revolutionary act. There is a quiet revolution, or maybe not so quiet revolution, that is a repair-led revolution happening right now.

**Elly Baker AM:** That is really interesting. Back to Ugo. You have already given us some examples from Austria, Germany and Belgium, but are there any other examples of initiatives elsewhere that are working that we can learn from?

**Ugo Vallauri (Co-Founder and Policy Lead, The Restart Project):** Definitely, I would look at what is happening even in the UK elsewhere. In Glasgow, there is a network that currently is trialling successfully preventing products from being recycled that could be reused and repaired. The link here is quite crucial if we want to move away from the make-take-and-dispose approach. I feel like the urgency is not clear, even in the discussions that we are having today. I have been working on this for close to a decade and I do not really see a change in the way even London communicates about these topics. One of the things that we asked when we came out with the report for the LWARB was strong communications helping people make the most of the repair options that exist.

Going back to the example of Vienna, this is an initiative where repair businesses are involved, and they become stakeholders because there is a recognition that we are in their hands when it comes to preventing waste from becoming such. If you involve them, we turn the table around and it is all about being proud of all the skills that already exist within our communities and within the whole of London. It is quite remarkable then to be proud of it and to help highlight how best each business can help residents and local businesses make a difference.

Other examples we have seen are again in parts of Austria where community repair initiatives can get a yearly grant for their operations. There is an understanding that even if they do not require that big cost, you recognise their importance and possibly help them get access to more visible signposting. You can boost an increase in volunteering in that area and we have extremely skilled people with repair skills across London, helping signpost them to opportunities and helping initiatives also be more directly visible on the ground. Everything helps.

Repair Week in 2019 was great and we celebrated it because it came as a culmination of organisations such as ourselves coming up with International Repair Day, which has been now running for five years. We indeed hope that Repair Week will come back next year, but it needs to be more than just a week to celebrate it. Of course, it is great to talk about repair, but if we then do not turn it into a real priority, then what is the point? Again, it is not about just expecting that community activities can fill all the gaps. It needs to be a lot more supported.

**Elly Baker AM:** Is there anything more you would like to say about the barriers and how Londoners could be supported to make more use of repair as an alternative?

**Ugo Vallauri (Co-Founder and Policy Lead, The Restart Project):** As part of our work, we started creating a London repair directory, which already lists approximately 200 businesses across London, helping Londoners see what options they have when it comes to repairing their products. We think that this is just the beginning of it and in 2022 we will be working across west London to expand it. If we want to make it a big, London-wide initiative, there is definitely the opportunity of doing so, but we do lack resources massively.

One other thing that we would love to see happen is London coming together to explore all the reuse options for products that could have gone otherwise to waste. We did submit already, twice, a bid to do this research

and it did not work in both cases. It is great to hear that London seems to have more resources in this area. Let us know if there is any way in which we can help London/the GLA make better use of products that would go otherwise to waste.

Another thing that we have been working on a lot particularly in the last year, sparked by the third lockdown, was all of a sudden an understanding that products - perhaps particularly laptops and tablets and the likes - that might still have a purpose but we no longer need could be used by children who cannot attend school. We have created an initial directory, not just for London. For London, it includes a dozen community groups that take donations of products, refurbish them and put them back into the community. Why cannot this become the norm? Why cannot we communicate as a city? London has a fantastic opportunity to be a leader and I would love to see billboards asking people to donate to community initiatives. By the way, it is not an initiative that we run, but we would love to see this thrive and flourish. That does require support, even if it is making it a strong point of the Mayor's relationship with electronics at a whole city level.

**Elly Baker AM:** Thank you. Wayne, have you got anything to add about the barriers?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** I kind of agree with Ugo really. Certainly, we would love to do more. We have supported repair businesses, but we would love to do more in that area and it requires funding. As I mentioned earlier, we are developing a circular economy directory because information is really important, providing information to Londoners about how they can access and where they can access circular economy services, including repair services. If you think about that, of course, repair services proliferate the city in terms of sewing or shoe repair or bike repair or whatever it is. It is actually a real, serious part of our economy. A piece of work that we are doing now is looking at jobs and skills within the circular economy and trying to think what it really, truly incorporates, not just repair but tech or teaching or logistics or whatever it is to get a true handle on the scale of the circular economy. Then we can contribute that to economic development in London and really think about how we mainstream some of these activities. It really does become, as Ugo says, more part of what we do rather than sometimes feeling like it is potentially a fringe aspect because we are buying new stuff all the time and discarding our old stuff when it is perfectly serviceable. I think that will become much more part of our culture and that requires a little bit of a mind shift and a refocus in the kind of businesses that we invest in.

**Elly Baker AM:** That is brilliant. Thanks so much, both of you.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you, you are fantastic advocates for electronics and repair. I certainly know my friends and colleagues who are involved with those sorts of projects say that the upskilling it gives them in learning how to repair things has also been a huge, unexpected benefit. Yesterday, I was forwarded a link from a place in Bath which is having an Elves Workshop for Christmas where they are encouraging young people to bring their electronic gifts and then upcycle them. I accept those one-off projects will not cut it, but it is good to see those things starting to happen for a complete transformation.

Andrew, coming to the London Environment Strategy, could I ask you how it is working, particularly in relation to the circular economy and with waste reduction, and perhaps if there are any key findings from the latest progress report?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** In the update report, I added the recycling groups that we have at the moment. We talked about those earlier, that we are just under a 34% recycling rate with a low landfill rate and we have talked about how that compares nationally and internationally. The update report also focused on our work on

drinking fountains and the Refill [London] Programme and that has continued to go very well. Obviously, there was interruption because of the pandemic and lockdown, but the drinking fountains are now all reopened and we have restarted the installation of drinking fountains across London. We now have 60 drinking fountains installed in our partnership with Thames Water to add to the 28 that we did with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and that number is increasing as we look to fulfil the objectives of that partnership. The refill scheme is also continuing to grow. Again, obviously during lockdown that was slowed down somewhat, but now it is growing again and we now have more than 4,300 refill locations across the city. That is up from 200 in 2018 and so a really significant increase in numbers where people can take their bottles in and have them refilled instead of having to buy water or other drinks in single-use plastic bottles.

We have RRP in place for all boroughs. This is the first time ever that all boroughs now do these plans on a standard template and set out how they are contributing to the Mayor's overall objectives for London with regards to not only recycling targets but also all the other elements of waste reduction and recycling, highlighting the activities they are undertaking and what initiatives they are bringing forward. That has allowed the GLA, supported by ReLondon as well, to highlight where there is good practice, to be able to share that among boroughs and then also to identify where support can be best targeted and to work with the boroughs to help deliver reduction and recycling initiatives. I should say as well that there were also energy circular economy initiatives introduced, so both waste reduction and circular economy.

We are continuing to review contracts. All waste contracts that are led by boroughs are brought to the GLA and to the Mayor prior to letting to ensure that they are in general conformity with the Mayor's Strategy. We have now reviewed 25 contracts since this Mayor first came into power in 2016 and we have achieved conformity across London, making sure that those contracts are delivering on the objectives of waste reduction, consistency of services for dry recyclables and for food, and going beyond that to make sure that other priorities for the Mayor are incorporated as well, things like making sure that vehicles are low or zero emission and that contractors are providing jobs with the London Living Wage.

Then, going beyond that, we have embedded the circular economy statement requirement into the London Plan that I have described earlier. Again, that is a ground-breaking requirement for all developers bringing forward proposals that are referable to the Mayor. We have had a lot of interest nationally and internationally about how we have done that, what we are learning from that and how other people can replicate that.

Then, in the update report, we refer to lots of the good work that ReLondon is doing and so we have the work on flats that was described before, learning from the support that was provided during the pandemic and lockdown, and then other targeted areas such as plastics contamination in segregated waste and other areas where it is supporting businesses and the promotion of the circular economy.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you very much, Andrew. Wayne, just before I come on to the same question, I saw you nod about London Repair Week coming back. It is just to check if there is a commitment on that.

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** Yes, it is in the business plan. Yes, we intend to do Repair Week and I would like to make it a fixture of things going forward. It just depends on funding.

I should just add we are not funded by anyone in particular and so we do not receive Government funding. We receive a bit of mayoral funding for specific projects and European funding for specific projects. Everything is dependent upon receiving funding.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. Then if you might pick up on the London Environment Strategy question, particularly how it is working and any reflections from the key progress report.

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** The thing that has really stood out for me is the RRP. Having that as a London-wide collection of plans gives us for the first time a bottom-up way of delivering improvements to waste and recycling and reduction initiatives in London. That is the first time we have had that more or less complete collection. That is, as much as anything that Andrew has just said, what sets this particular set of strategies regarding waste apart from previous strategies. That is working very well and we are happy to be part of providing support to boroughs and providing support to the Mayor to help that happen.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you very much. Assembly Member Bokhari.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** I have been fascinated by what everyone has been saying on the panel. Thank you so much for all your insights. You have spoken about some of the positive aspects of the London Environment Strategy, but there must be some areas of focus and improvement that are needed. What can the Mayor do to influence local authorities and businesses to implement the London Environment Strategy?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** In terms of focus going forward, historically, directly and through ReLondon we have provided very good support to boroughs, but that needs to continue to be a focus going forward. With the challenges that we face today, the climate emergency, the focus on plastic waste and the changes that national government is bringing forward within the waste industry as well, boroughs are going to have a difficult time in terms of maintaining and keeping up with the services that are required and improving their performance.

Support to boroughs is going to be absolutely key. That is going to be somewhere where we need to continue to focus. We are currently updating our RRP guidance and our RRPs will be renewed next year and so we are going to be ensuring that we get as best information as possible from boroughs to understand where we can best support them and how we can best represent them when we speak to central government. That needs to be a key focus because they are how we work across London, how we engage with Londoners and how we are going to see a shift in behaviour like we have heard that is required in terms of reducing waste and improving our recycling performance. For me, that is the key area of focus.

It is also key that we continue to engage with central government and that we make sure that London gets the support that is required, that is represented in the new regulations and legislation that is coming forward, and receives financial support, from central government to ensure that initiatives and programmes can be brought forward and that the Mayor has the authority and the autonomy to spend that money in the best way for London and for the performance of London in terms of waste reduction and the circular economy.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** What do you mean by government support exactly?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** One thing we have been lobbying for quite some time is to make sure that London gets its fair share of landfill tax receipts. We create much more tax income for the Exchequer than we actually receive in return and so we have been lobbying to have our fair share of those receipts so that we can bring forward additional recycling infrastructure within London. We can disperse those funds where they are best

needed to ensure that recycling rates are improved and that other initiatives are able to be delivered around reduction and the circular economy as well.

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** I would also say there is going to be extended producer responsibility (EPR) legislation and schemes developed by the Government. There should be a fund that will be created to help promote innovative activity in this area. We will be developing a case to present to the Government with our stakeholders to ask for a fair share of that funding to help deliver innovative projects around the circular economy in London.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** We are all agreed that we really need to make sure that we focus on plastic, which you have mentioned, and to make London plastic-free would be the aim for me and I am sure many people here. You have mentioned the Government, but we have more to do here in the GLA and I am sure the Mayor could be doing more within the GLA family, the fire service, the police, etc. What more could we be doing to make sure that those particular areas are going plastic-free? Do you think the Mayor is doing enough there?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** The Mayor has been very active in terms of leading by example in eradicating single-use plastics. Pre-lockdown and while we were still working in the office, single-use plastics were removed from all of the staff common areas, the canteen, the kitchens and the tea points, and had even gone so far as to add an additional charge for coffee cups that were used within the City Hall café. Now all functional bodies - the fire service, the police and the other members of the GLA family - have plastic reduction plans in place and so they are all individually looking at how they can reduce the use of plastic within their operations.

In some areas it has been identified that single-use plastic is still the best material for certain circumstances. One thing that comes to mind is, when dealing with people who are under remand and kept in cells for the night, sometimes single-use plastic is necessary because no alternative has been developed at this stage.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** There is monitoring.

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** Yes, and actions are being taken to look at how that can be reduced and taken out of use wherever possible.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** One of the things that I have been pushing the Mayor on is - and I know that you have mentioned this before - that water fountains are the key to make sure that people are buying fewer bottles of water from the shops. One of the places that I can think of, is when most people are running off to the trains and the buses. Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor of London could be doing more when they are putting water fountains next to stations. The argument that I have been getting back is that it is a health and safety concern because of spilt water. I am a bit concerned by that. We need to be doing more when it comes to water fountains and we cannot use those kinds of excuses.

I know it is coming up to winter now and people are probably less likely to want to have a drink of water at the moment, but now is the time to start planning ahead and making sure that we have more provision for water fountains, particularly at places like stations. Would you agree?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** Yes. As I mentioned earlier, we are still continuing to install water fountains in partnership with Thames Water. The installation has recommenced since we have come out of lockdown and

the total number of drinking fountains that the Mayor has installed across London is increasing again. We now have 60 in the ground with Thames Water and that is going to grow over the winter. Hopefully, we will have the target for that partnership in place by the summer of next year [2022].

Many of those locations are at or near stations and so we recognise that the footfall and the access to those locations is absolutely key. When we had our call for locations, we put out for call for all Londoners or landowners within London to apply to host the fountain. We set our criteria for our selection of those sites: footfall, ready access, high profile and visible locations. Those were the types of things we were looking at. We definitely want to be able to capture as much use from those fountains as possible and transport hubs, therefore, scored very highly because they have a lot of footfall and a lot of people passing through.

I cannot speak to the safety requirements of stations individually but there are definitely circumstances where we could not have fountains within stations because of the safety requirements, but we then looked at alternatives and to have fountains near entrances to stations and outside the stations where hopefully they are still highly visible with lots of footfall going past, very easy and accessible for people to use but not actually causing any concerns regarding blockages or slips and trips.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** Thank you. Can I bring in e-scooters here very quickly? Have you thought about batteries being reused and safely disposed of for e-scooters? Has that been part of any discussions for the Strategy at all?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** We are aware that electric batteries is an issue. It is something that I guess we need to do some thinking about and some work on. I do not recall us having anything in the pipeline at the moment but, again, we have talked to various stakeholders about this and we talked to Fairphone, actually. There was an interesting conversation we had on one of our podcasts about where these materials come from and how we need to safely dispose of them and recycle them. There is more work to be done, without a shadow of a doubt.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** I am sure it is something that local boroughs will be dealing with more and more and so it will be good to get some updates on that and what you will be doing next. Thank you.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Best.

**Emma Best AM:** I was just enjoying the smooth segue from water fountains to e-scooters. I wondered where that was going for a second.

I just wanted to bring in our partners that are here today for their view on the London Environment Strategy and to ask, firstly, what is the role of local authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and businesses in the London Environment Strategy? Do you feel there is enough support from the Mayor? Also, how best could the Mayor support you in what you are doing or better support you in what you are doing?

**Ugo Vallauri (Co-Founder and Policy Lead, The Restart Project):** When you look at the London Environment Strategy, there is a specific goal for 2026 but, for example, there is not any specific direction on the electrical waste and so it is not as clear or detailed. This leaves some great goals but not really a specific pathway towards improving recycling and improving performance in this area. This is an area where we do not feel we have been particularly involved or listened to as stakeholders.

In terms of how the Mayor of London can improve support towards organisations such as ours, definitely, we see opportunities - not only specifically for us as an organisation but for the sector at large - to create opportunities to go in the direction of finding some of the solutions that could, at scale, make London a leading city when it comes to the way we deal with prevention of electrical waste, for example.

Something interesting that has happened at the level of the London Environment Strategy is a bit more of a focus on procurement when it comes potentially to electrical and electronic products. We think that a perspective where repair is taken into consideration at the time of procuring is important as well as extending the cycles for which procurement is mandated. For example, make sure that products that are procured across the whole GLA family of organisations are procured for a longer first cycle of use. Then, their use can be extended further via repair and reuse and recycled only at a later stage.

**Rachel Ledwith MBE (Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project):** For me, what is interesting from today is hearing about the RRP.

One of the challenges that we find is that we are having to communicate with all 32 boroughs separately. Whilst there is the London Boroughs Food Group and I sit on the London Food Board and there are lots of conversations that are had, actually it is very difficult to try to create a uniform approach across London. It feels a little bit like we are reinventing the wheel each time we go into those conversations. It would be good to understand whether there is a way in which, through the influence of either the Mayor or the GLA, more consistency and approach is shared across each of the local authorities. We know who we should go and talk to, whether it is about food insecurity or food waste.

An interesting point as well is that most of the conversations that we tend to be involved in at the moment are focused around food insecurity and how we move through the recovery phase of the pandemic, but we are starting to see some boroughs now coming to us and talking to us from a climate perspective.

It is about getting that level of consistency and understanding over what the boroughs are trying to achieve and how they are achieving it and working together to do that. I know London is a huge city and we have a huge number of people and a huge number of challenges, but it does not seem to make sense to reinvent that in each of the boroughs. There should be more London-wide initiatives. If we could make that happen, that would be ideal.

**Sarah O'Carroll (Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation):** It is quite difficult for me to answer about the roles of different actors in terms of the London Environment Strategy. What I would say is that it is very important for everyone to understand their role. We see the GLA has clearly identified its role in the implementation plan. ReLondon has identified its plan. Projects like Felix have self-identified their roles in the bigger scheme. It could be helpful to clearly identify the role of different actors.

At the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, we see five broad goals that all stakeholders and actors can be working in parallel towards. The first is to stimulate design for a circular economy. The second is to manage resources to preserve value. The third is making the economics work for the circular economy. The fourth is investing in innovation infrastructure and skills. The fifth is collaborating for system change. The role of different actors is different in each of those goals, but what is important is that each of these actors can identify and understand what their role is in making the London Environment Strategy work and in accelerating efforts towards a circular economy.



It also may be useful to say that London's Future Neighbourhoods project and the ultra-low waste zones that Wayne [Hubbard] has spoken about are perhaps places where efforts could be concentrated so that the GLA group, local councils, NGOs, businesses and citizens concentrate efforts into a fewer number of places. Everyone can start to figure out how we collaborate together in these spaces and, once we get success there, how we can replicate it out to get London-wide efforts and strategies.

In terms of local authorities, NGOs and businesses being supported enough by the Mayor, of course there is always more that any Mayor can do. It may be useful to say that we see the same local authorities entering into these discussions. There are a number of local authorities that are often missing from the discussions and it's the same local authorities on a regular basis. The One World Living work that is being led by Harrow and London Councils is also another really important platform that could be leveraged.

Going back to something that Ugo [Vallauri] and Wayne have said, the circular economy in London seems to be led by NGOs, citizens and small businesses. How can the GLA group catch up to what is already happening in this space? ReLondon's business transformation programme is absolutely fantastic and the role that it is playing to support SMEs but, again, the question that I sit with is where big business is and how big business is being convened around this conversation.

The other thing I would say, which we have not spoken about today, is the large concentration of universities and higher education institutions that are based in London and those campuses act like mini cities. Transforming these campuses, where you can embed the circular economy into the curriculum and campus activities and you can support student-led activities, is also perhaps a powerful lever in the city of London that is unique to London, with the number of higher education institutions that are based here.

Thinking about the work that we do at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, our role is really to up the level of ambition, which is what I have been trying to do here today to keep the circular economy vision high, and then to steer and to support external facilitation. Most of the work in London is not going to happen through the work that we do at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Ultimately it would be great if we no longer have jobs in London because London is a circular city but, yes, going back to the things that I have said earlier, it is about leading the way, procurement operations, embedding into the policy framework and making sure that capacity and resources are there to do the work.

**Emma Best AM:** Sarah, just briefly, in some of the other cities where the Foundation operates, are there any specific examples of best practice or things that the mayors or the authority bodies have done there that you think could be replicated and helpful?

**Sarah O'Carroll (Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation):** Maybe the most useful thing is to have a clear route map. We have said before that the route map is a little outdated. ReLondon has already shifted focus areas. The London Plan has been updated. The London Environment Strategy has been updated. Maybe this is an opportune time to revisit the route map and to set a clear target. Amsterdam and Glasgow, for example, have set circular economy targets. Amsterdam aims to be a circular city by 2050. Glasgow aims to be a circular city by 2045. That is the target. That is the goal. Perhaps it is an exercise in revisiting the route map and the priority areas and setting a clear target for a circular economy for the city.

**Emma Best AM:** Thanks, Sarah. That was really helpful.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Bokhari.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** Sarah, you were saying that some local authorities are better than others maybe in prioritising.

**Sarah O'Carroll (Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation):** I would say that some boroughs are -- maybe the word that I would say is better equipped based on the funding that they have, the capacity that they have and their understanding and knowledge of the circular economy.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** Would you say that is what the issue is, there are boroughs that are better resourced than others and that is where we need to have some regulation coming across where, maybe coming nationally to local authorities, there is sufficient funding and resourcing to support these kinds of projects?

**Sarah O'Carroll (Cities Lead, Ellen MacArthur Foundation):** The boroughs would love me to say that there should be financial support for their work and, indeed, if this is what London wants to do, then the funding and the resources need to be there. Perhaps as well, there is no point in having the funding and resources there if the awareness and the understanding of the circular economy and how it can act as a solutions framework for challenges in the city are not there at the same time. Capacity building and awareness raising for the circular economy, I would say, have to go hand in hand.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** The Felix Project and The Restart Project, do you agree with that? Do you think that is an issue for both of your projects as well?

**Rachel Ledwith MBE (Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project):** Yes, I would say that we have conversations with the same boroughs all the time. It might be different to the conversations you are having, but there are certainly some boroughs that either are adequately funded or have a stronger impetus to be innovative to make best use of the limited resources and funding that they have but from a wider context. They embed more into what they are doing and the circular economy becomes more embedded into what they are doing and what they are trying to achieve because they see the downstream benefits of that. Yes, I would agree.

**Ugo Vallauri (Co-Founder and Policy Lead, The Restart Project):** I would broadly agree and say that definitely some boroughs keep coming back with interest. However, when it comes to electrical waste prevention, most of the boroughs are underequipped financially, and otherwise, to actually look at the bigger picture and change the future plans around reuse and repair more at scale. Possibly it is because some of the issues specifically related to electricals are more complicated and they cannot really be solved just at borough level. While there are some encouraging projects and initiatives on consumption and emissions - and the One World [Living], that we have been consulted on recently, is going in the right direction, looking at how collaboration between different boroughs is important - at the same time we are seeing a limit to what amount of funding any borough could commit to that could actually make a big impact if other boroughs are not able to join in and make some of these processes work at scale. That is where probably the balance between what level of more central London-wide funding could help achieve at scale and what individual boroughs can do themselves could be revised helpfully.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** You were mentioning with The Felix Project that the pandemic did not raise a new issue with food, but it actually just highlighted the issue that was already there. Has the pandemic changed approaches, do you think, in local authorities and the way they are working with you and the other projects?

**Rachel Ledwith MBE (Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project):** Yes. If there is a positive legacy that has come from the pandemic, it is the creation of the 54 hubs. Those hubs really brought together

the local authorities and the voluntary sector and then we are just one part of that in terms of the food coming in.

What is really interesting is, again, there are certain boroughs that have really seen the value in working closely with the voluntary sector and the understanding of exactly who needs to be supported in their boroughs that they may not have had full visibility of before. For some of those boroughs that we are still engaged with and still having conversations with, we are all looking at how we create and build resilient communities that means, when the next crisis happens, because there will be another one of some description, the communities have the infrastructure and the ability to support themselves and find their own solutions. A big part of what we are doing now is making sure that we can bring in all the organisations that we know we support to the local authority, make sure they are all aware of each other and then think about how we build solutions now and best support the community, very much from a prevention point of view rather than crisis. If we can move more of the work that we do into the prevention arena, then we get more bang for your buck when we are spending that money because crisis is often a lot more costly to help someone move forward from.

There has been an incredibly positive legacy and we would like to see more of those hubs change and evolve but continue to exist in a community hub, food distribution, health and wellbeing --

**Hina Bokhari AM:** It is a lot more powerful, then, is it not, and permanent?

**Rachel Ledwith MBE (Head of Community Engagement, The Felix Project):** Yes, absolutely.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** Is there anything else that you two would like to add on the way the pandemic has impacted the way things have changed?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** From a personal perspective, it seems to me that people are much more interested in sharing and exchanging stuff. That is a change that I would like to see if we could encourage and cultivate. It is one of the reasons we are so interested in working at a place-based level and trying to equip communities with the tools and assets that they need to maintain that level of interest in sharing, exchanging, reducing the consumption of new stuff and keeping things moving locally. I was quite interested in that.

If we take anything from COVID, we can take those examples of local WhatsApp groups and stuff that sprang up and people putting stuff outside their houses for exchange. If we can keep that and formalise that and make that part of the way we live, that would be really useful. That is not wishful thinking. If you distil it down to a place base and then multiply that by all of the neighbourhoods in London, you will have made a significant, measurable difference. That is our next challenge.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** I am going to end on a question that has been coming up while we were talking. You have done some amazing work with getting people to reuse and fix things and not throw away. This also goes into the area of furniture. I am a local councillor and I am constantly having to raise issues of fly-tipping of furniture that is chucked away, pushchairs, things that could be reused all the time but are just dumped. Part of the reason is local authorities are charging over £30 or more - even more for bulky waste - to be removed. Most people do not have the skills to fix these kinds of things, furniture, pushchairs, etc.

What more could we be doing to help councils, local authorities, refuse centres, charities and voluntary groups to try to upskill people to learn how to fix these types of furniture and things that people are just throwing away now?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** I will come in on that first. It seems to me there is a spend-to-save issue here, potentially. If we can demonstrate that by keeping the stuff out of landfill, keeping it circulating, keeping it out of incineration and not having to spend costs on recycling, there is a spend-to-save issue for local authorities to get involved.

The One World Living project that we have talked about a couple of times is really quite interesting because, for the first time, London's local authorities are saying, "We are going to sign up to reducing London's consumption-based emissions by a third by 2030", which is quite significant. In order to do that, we are going to have to reduce the amount of waste because we are going to have to reduce the amount of stuff. We are doing a trial with OLIO and Kitche in Bexley, where they are seeing if they can invest in these companies to reduce the amount of food waste that ends up going to disposal. They can see on their bottom line how much that is saved and, therefore, that gives them the case to invest in those businesses.

There is an opportunity for us to do more formal stuff around supporting local neighbourhoods and supporting SMEs and other community groups in a more formal way to keep this stuff out of landfill. We have to develop that case, no doubt, but that is part of the work that we are quite interested in doing. We have some resources that we are going to put into this because, for me, it is the future of the circular economy in London. We have done lots of stuff from the top down and now we need to build it from the bottom up.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** Brilliant. Thank you.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. Assembly Member Cooper.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** There is a whole chapter in the London Environment Strategy that deals with waste and it sets out a lot of the mayoral aims that we were talking about earlier relating to recycling, waste, the circular economy, reducing plastics, reducing use of landfill and reducing everything that goes to incineration. What is also obvious, it seems to me, is that the Mayor's powers are quite limited in this area. Collection is not a responsibility of the Mayor. There are some regulatory powers over disposal.

I would like to start with you, Andrew. Do you think the Mayor, City Hall and the GLA require more powers to improve waste management across the whole of London? I was really listening to what Rachel [Ledwith] was saying about having the same conversation over and over again. I know that we all sometimes feel like this. In an area like this, is this not something where we need to be a bit more joined up and could that sit at City Hall with those additional powers?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** In terms of being joined up, the suggestion of a single waste authority was looked at some time ago and it was rejected by the Government. In some of the further following negotiations that followed, we ended up with the LWARB. We have come into a unique position where we have a body like that that we are able to rely on and bring a consistency of approach across London. We are very fortunate to have that.

Then the Mayor uses his powers where they exist for consistency as much as possible. We have the RRP's and every single borough has one of those. They follow a template and they are all setting out how they are going to contribute towards targets and how they are going to bring forward different innovations. We have the Mayor's consistency across the recycling and food waste collections that all boroughs are now delivering and then we have that consistency of approach through the review and feedback on waste management contracts

as well. We are checking they are in general conformity and making sure that we really have the consistency of approach and all the principles embedded in those contracts that we would want to see there, like a proximity principle or reducing waste and then focusing on recycling ahead of any other disposal. We have a very solid approach to consistency across London across the boroughs with the powers that the Mayor has.

What we need from the Government is, as I mentioned earlier, greater support and almost recognition of the challenges that London faces. When I say support, I have mentioned earlier that we need greater funding - and one mechanism would be fair receipt of London's landfill tax receipts - to make sure that we can deliver the infrastructure and the initiatives that are required to significantly reduce waste and increase recycling.

Then, when I speak about the recognition of London's challenges, we have been engaging and lobbying the Government a lot around the proposals that are coming out of the Resources and Waste Strategy [for England]. We have seen consultations on a plastic tax, EPR, deposit return schemes, and a national approach to consistency of service. We have been lobbying the Government around all of those points and making sure that London's challenges are recognised and are considered in those, recognising the role of the Mayor in setting new contracts and the role of the Mayor in setting targets for all of London, making sure that we have London's challenges considered with regards to the density of our population, the number of people who live in flats and the diverse nature of the people who live in London as well, and making sure that we are able to use those mechanisms that the national government is bringing on board and fitting them to the London scenario whereby they have the best impact.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** You seem to be saying more that having some more money and recognising that we are not getting our fair share of landfill tax and that that could be a source of that money is more important than extra powers, but I am still not sure that extra money would solve the situation that we find ourselves in with Barnet, which was doing separate food waste collections and now is not.

I do come back to you again to say, if more powers were offered, would that not put us into a better situation?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** Specifically with regards to Barnet, they decided to postpone the food waste service --

**Léonie Cooper AM:** "Suspend," I believe, is how they have described it, allegedly. It has been in suspension for some time. I feel sorry for them. It must be quite unpleasant now.

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** Yes, it is a shame that it has lasted so long, absolutely, and we have been engaging with them on that to see how quickly they can bring it back.

The Mayor has the power of direction for boroughs to implement the Environment Strategy and has the power to direct them to do so if they refuse. However, there are caveats on that about incurring excessive additional costs or breaking with an existing contract. To me, that seems appropriate. If it is going to incur significant additional costs that could jeopardise other borough services, we need to be mindful of those. If we were to be in a position where we were mandating certain environmental services, whatever those may be, at the expense of social care for people at risk or other priorities for the borough, that is something for the borough to consider on its own merits.

Where we are is in a strong position to be able to have the boroughs provide consistent services all across London. We have made very good progress on that. The other boroughs are on a pathway to do that. We are

looking to the Government to support us to do that. It is clear that the Environment Strategy sets a consistency of service ahead of national government and now it is catching up. We are lobbying the Government to make sure that it delivers those requirements and the funding for them as quickly as possible.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** I am going to turn to Wayne. I do not know if you are familiar with the report that this Committee produced in 2018, three years ago, which was called *Wasting London's Future*. That was mainly because there was such a high level of material that was going to incineration. We have just been exploring in a lot of detail the need to reduce and also to reuse, but the fact of the matter is we still see an awful lot of material going into incineration, particularly food waste and also other items that could clearly be reused.

Do you think City Hall and the Mayor have done enough to respond to the recommendations in that report and to actually start to reduce the level of incineration that we see is so high in London?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** The levers that are available not just to City Hall but to local authorities in terms of reducing waste, what you can actually do, are in my view substantial but relatively minor when you consider the volume of material there is out there.

The solution is a solution that has to be arrived at in collaboration with government - local, regional and national - and civil society at large as well as citizens. That means that we have to provide support for local authorities to do their job as best they can through the municipal waste collection services and the communication services and all that that entails.

Also - and this is really important - we have to do much more to develop that network of civil society and business organisations that provide circular economy solutions to citizens. I really cannot emphasise that enough. Take a circular economy drill. Nobody, in my view, who is not a tradesperson really needs a drill. It is just a piece of stuff that you have to carry around. I have one. I use it only once a year. It would be better if I borrowed it and I would be free from the burden of having to store the damn thing. The proliferation of services that offer lending, sharing, leasing or whatever is what we need more of. That comes from a systemic change and we are embarking upon that right now.

City Hall is saying the right things. I certainly believe that right now we have the best partnership arrangement that I have known in my history of working in London between the Mayor of London and London's boroughs, partly because of the recovery mission and all of the work that has come out from that. We have a very close and effective working relationship.

The One World Living programme is a really interesting experiment in informal and formal working together between ReLondon, the Mayor of London and London's boroughs to look at particular focus areas and think about how we can drive down waste in those areas. It will involve working with businesses in civil society. It is not just about having the powers.

The beauty of being a city is we can do that. We can move really quickly. We have seen that nations find it difficult to make big commitments. Cities can turn on a sixpence and work really quickly, I would submit. Having the Mayor as Chair of the C40 is a really good opportunity for us to promote the role of cities in partnership and collaboration and show the governments of the world just how far and fast we can move.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Yes, you are right to introduce the concept of sharing again, which you mentioned earlier, although I noticed in your list of all the people who need to join together to make these things change that business actually was last on your list. Personally, I used the bus and the Tube to get here today. I did

not feel the need that I had to own my own bus or Tube and yet lots of people still feel in London, despite the fact we have a pretty effective mass transit system, that they have to own their own car. Car clubs are becoming more common but there is still a mindset shift that needs to happen there. That is a journey that we all need to go on. There are clearly some things that we are never going to share, for obvious reasons.

There is also the issue about packaging. The Government is coming onto the page with its Resources [and Waste] Strategy and EPR - moving far too slowly, in my opinion, on these things - but what can we do in London to encourage businesses to really start to take control of the excessive amount of packaging, particularly as people have moved, particularly during the pandemic, towards having everything delivered at home? Some of it comes in so many layers of packaging. What do people do with the cardboard boxes on the outside and then lots of bubble wrap on the inside and then - I do not even know what they are called - those little white pellets?

When are we going to move away from all of that excessive packaging? Is there anything that we can do as a city to encourage businesses? The programme of water fountains, which came out of a report from this Committee in 2017, has been fantastic and it is great to push for more, but what are we actually doing effectively to stop all this proliferation of packaging? Is there something that we can do from ReLondon?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** What we do is we support a range of SMEs that offer either no packaging or reusable packaging solutions. I do not know how many it is but it is a significant amount. Companies like Unpackaged and CupClub, which is now called something else, have a trial with Just Eat in Camden to trial returnable packaging as part of their takeaway delivery service. We supported that.

Again, if I mentioned businesses last, it was not because I put them last in priority. To my mind, they are an equal partner in this triumvirate of civil society, business and government, which all have to do their bit. What we can do is we can help promote those kinds of services and then promote them to citizens so that they can use them. There are so many really interesting, innovative solutions out there that are provided by businesses that are just better than the linear alternatives. If we gave people the information that would allow them to access that, it would be a great start.

In terms of working with bigger business, I agree with your comments. EPR will do a great deal to bear down on packaging waste.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Do you think there is something more that we could be doing to promote the work of Unpackaged so that we are not just talking about Unpackaged working with Just Eat in Camden but Unpackaged working with more companies across the whole of London, Andrew?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** Yes. We have heard a lot about supporting SMEs and Wayne has talked about the Business Transformation Programme and I have spoken about the Better Futures Programme as well. Like the Business Transformation Programme, Better Futures is supporting companies like Homethings, which will send your cleaning products as tablets to be dissolved in water rather than you buying whole new sprays with excessive packaging every time you run out. There are lots of things like that.

At a bigger business level, the Mayor is active and is also committing to do more as well. We have had the London Business Climate Leaders group, which brought together 11 of the largest businesses that are present in London and got commitments from them to take actions across a range of policy areas. Some of those were on waste and circular economy as well. All of those 11 very large businesses have committed to increase their

recycling to 75% by 2025 and to cut their waste by 50% by 2030. There are significant examples from very large businesses that have a foothold in London.

Then the Mayor has recently announced that he will use his convening power to convene a roundtable of major businesses within the food supply chain to look at how food loss and waste and consumption-based emissions can be addressed in London's food supply. That is on the basis of the evidence that was provided from the ReLondon material flow analysis report that was launched at COP26 last week. Although the Mayor does not have power to direct businesses, he is using his convening power and influencing businesses where possible to have a positive impact.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** I really hope we can do that. Finally, I want to ask a question about the domestic setting. Anyone who has spent any time talking to local authorities about their business of trying to collect waste in the first place, trying to keep it separate and trying to recycle it uncontaminated, knows that probably the most difficult environment for waste collection is the flatted block. There were a few people from local authorities who came in when we were looking at waste before.

Can I make the terrible joke about rubbish, if you do not mind, Chair? I joined this Committee in 2016, and have been on it since then, and I have been talking rubbish for five and a half years now, which will make none of my colleagues laugh, I am quite sure.

We had people coming from Hackney and they were talking about introducing specific arrangements to try to test how they could improve the collection and recycling from flatted blocks. Somebody from Ealing came in and talked about some of the changes they were making. They were exemplars to try to improve the level of recycling that is collected from blocks.

Are we making any progress on this area? As I look around me and I look at building projects around London, I mostly see new blocks of flats being built. Is there any progress? What are we doing? Are there going to be separate rubbish chutes for general rubbish and recycling insisted upon in building regulations? Where are we going with this?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** We recognise that the majority of new homes in London are likely to be flats and so we have reflected that within the London Plan. I have already described the circular economy statement that is required now from referable applications. The London Plan also requires that new dwellings take into consideration how they will be operated and, for residential properties, how people will be able to live in those properties and effectively manage their waste. There will be space set aside within kitchens for segregated bins. There will be recognition of how that waste is then transported from individual residences to the communal areas and then collected and taken away, with sufficient space for all the different segregated streams in a secure and pleasant way that people are willing and happy and is convenient for them to use.

Then, through ReLondon, we are working on the Flats Recycling Package (FRP) as well. That has been fantastic. Wayne [Hubbard] may be in a better position to describe it than I. Phase one produced the FRP, which gives very clear guidance and toolkits for boroughs to be able to implement and to improve the performance at flats, and simple measures that they can undertake that have been proven to have significant improvements.

Now phase two of that is being rolled out, and that is looking at increasing performance but then also increasing the number and types of materials that are included and starting to look at other materials beyond



common household waste. We are looking at textiles, electricals and things like that. That is underway at the moment. We are all looking forward to the outputs from that because the first phase was so successful.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** The FRP sounds like something to do with flatpack furniture but I am hoping it is not. Are we actually going to be able to improve recycling rates in these flatted blocks? Then you look at that combined with some of these very lengthy contracts like the Shanks contract in east London. That is what leaves us at the bottom of the league table in many boroughs. We are dragged down because we have boroughs in the bottom ten nationally of local authorities. I regret to say that Wandsworth, which is one of the two boroughs I represent, is 341 out of 346. We are not exactly a shining example of anything apart from foot dragging over food waste activity.

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** The first thing to say is that for the first time we have a document and a toolkit that sets out - working with London Councils and the GLA and so we all agreed on this - a consistent way to approach recycling waste from flats, a good way and an evidence-based way of doing that, which showed modest improvement but improvement nevertheless. It also told us that there were high levels of food waste, textile waste and electrical items that were contaminating the waste stream and that were not recycled, and traditionally are not recycled from housing estates and flattened properties.

Our next move is working with a group of estates in Lambeth with some funding from Ecosurety to see how we can introduce good, reliable food waste, textiles recycling and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) collection services. That gives us this double dividend of not just increasing recycling in the locality but also removing contamination from the waste stream, which again increases recycling because you avoid contaminated loads that have been rejected and saves money for the local authority because you are not putting stuff through twice. This is a win-win situation.

In my view, there is a lot of work to be done in rolling this out to local authorities, but we are there to offer support to any local authority that wants to ask us for that support. We have probably the country's leading experts on this. That is the point of ReLondon. We have this centralised expertise that we can disseminate around London. There is hope.

We are also working with Tower Hamlets on planning guidance for new builds. There is a piece of work that hopefully will be a template for other boroughs to use on how to implement planning guidance for new builds to increase and build in recycling and waste services into new developments because pretty much every new household in London from now on is going to be a flatted property and so we have to crack this nut.

In the international context London does not perform too badly. It really does not. There are cities around the world that you think are environmental leaders that have pretty poor recycling rates.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Yes. A lot of cities in Europe, which we are told are ahead of us, are much smaller. Amsterdam is about the size of Croydon plus Wandsworth. It is very tiny and so is Milan. They are small. If you go to Copenhagen, you can go and visit The [Little] Mermaid but you will have to go past the very large city incinerator as part of your trip around the harbour. A lot of them are very heavily reliant on incineration, which is promoted very heavily by the Green Party in Europe because incineration is seen as a very strong green theme for some reason by the Green Party all over various countries in Europe.

We have all taken a different approach. Having the innovation that we are talking about - but, for me, scaling it up to the 32 boroughs and the City of London - is where we need to be. Particularly with the Mayor now as

Chair of the C40 Cities [Climate Leadership] Group, hopefully the learning will come in from abroad and perhaps some of our learning can also be exported. Thank you.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you very much, Assembly Member Cooper. I do not think anyone on the Committee would ever dare say that you were talking rubbish. Just for clarity, the Green Party of England and Wales is very much against incineration.

Andrew, you have talked around plastic water bottles and you have talked about the Mayor's convening power. Also, I have met with a fantastic organisation, #OneLess, with the ZSL, which has 80-plus organisations signed up to say no more plastic water bottles. Of course, at COP26 in Glasgow, they have now banned single-use plastics from 1 June 2022.

What specific work is the Mayor doing to lobby the Government and is there any way that we as Assembly Members or even as individual citizens can support that fight? Anyone who saw that Greenpeace video of the plastic raining down on Downing Street will have watched that and got angry and will want the Mayor to do stuff. I accept that there is this block. What is the Mayor doing to get over that block?

**Andrew Dunwoody (Policy and Programmes Manager, Waste and the Green Economy, Greater London Authority):** Specifically on plastics, the Mayor has a long history of supporting plastics action from the national government going back to when the Government introduced the ban on stirrers, straws and cotton buds. We very strongly supported that and urged the Government to go further. Again, on the plastics tax that was scheduled to be introduced at the end of this financial year, the Mayor supported the Government's work on that but urged it to go further and make sure that that was as strong as it could be and to eradicate unnecessary plastic. The main vehicles at the moment now are the EPR consultation and the deposit return scheme. Again, the Mayor has been responding to those and urging the Government to go as far as possible and, specifically with regard to the deposit return scheme, very much encouraging the Government to go as far as possible and to have an all-in scheme where as many containers are returnable as possible, and then going so far as to offer London as a test bed for any of the trials or measures that it wants to introduce and so making London available and saying, "We stand ready to support and help work on those", making London ready to play its full part and trying to bring that forward as quickly as possible.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. I have Assembly Member Bokhari and then Assembly Member Best.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** I am glad you asked that question. I am really pleased because the Committee does need to have some hard evidence of the lobbying that you are doing towards the Government. I will leave it there.

**Emma Best AM:** My experience around the issue of powers is mainly around the North London Waste Authority. Assembly Member Cooper, for example, has talked at length about Barnet and its food waste management. I believe that dispute arose because Barnet was saying that the North London Waste Authority was not disposing of the food and was just burning the food anyway. That is where the whole dispute arose from in the first place. The North London Waste Authority has gone and proposed an incinerator three times the size of the one now whilst waste is falling. It also has practices like Barnet driving refuse vehicles to Wembley, parking overnight and then driving back across London.

All these practices ReLondon can advise on but there is no power to stop that and I do not understand. Surely those powers are key. Taking the power away from the boroughs is not right but surely there should be some oversight or call-in power that we should be lobbying for. From a question I had asked the Mayor, I believed

that was your position as well at ReLondon and you were working with the Mayor to make that case for having more powers. Is that correct?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** No, we are not making that case.

**Emma Best AM:** It is just for money?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** Yes, we need more funding to deliver the help and support to promote the circular economy. In terms of offering help and support and advice to local authorities, that is what we see our role as and we do that at a borough level.

In terms of the more structural stuff, those very specific cases are something we have not been asked for - our advice on by waste disposal authorities in general. We are here to do that if requested but I am not sure that we would be able to add much to those debates between the Mayor and local authorities at the disposal level. They are quite detailed and these are long-term infrastructure projects.

Our contribution to infrastructure has been historically to provide funding for things like anaerobic digestion plants - like the one in east London and the one in west London - and also for plastic infrastructure reprocessing facilities but not to big thermal treatment plants.

**Emma Best AM:** I am a bit disappointed because I feel like, without the powers, it is all a bit futile. There is more money but, if people are not listening and going ahead with these big projects, it makes a lot of the Mayor's work futile, as good as a lot of the intention may be. I am a bit disappointed to hear that you are not supportive, perhaps. There is a role to play in really getting to grips with where the delivery of local boroughs is just so at odds with London. Thank you.

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** As I understand it, the Mayor has the power of direction and so there are powers there through the London Environment Strategy.

**Emma Best AM:** The Mayor does not have enough power to stop those things that I have just spoken to you about. That is what I mean.

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** Yes, I take the point.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Just to clarify, because I am trying to catch up with Assembly Member Best's point as well, you can have more cash or more money, or you could have more powers to generate your own money, but is it your position that there would be no need for more powers to generate our own income to be able to deal with this?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** We can generate our own income and so there is nothing to stop us from doing that. That is one of our aspirations. We are doing that through commercial services and so we can do that. We do make investments in circular economy businesses that are financial market investments.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** The differentiation is between powers that are not necessarily income-related but having direction to do other things?

**Wayne Hubbard (Chief Executive Officer, ReLondon):** Yes.

**Zack Polanski AM (Chair):** Thank you. Would anyone else like to come in? In that case, thank you very much for being fantastic guests, especially first thing on a Monday morning. Thank you very much for your time.