

CROSS RIVER PARTNERSHIP



ENABLING ZERO-EMISSION FREIGHT BELOW WATERLOO STATION

Reimagining underused rail infrastructure to cut delivery emissions, improve air quality, and create safer streets across South Bank, Waterloo, and beyond.

Introduction

The Waterloo Freight Hub is a pioneering pilot project led by Cross River Partnership that transformed unused space beneath Waterloo Station into a freight and logistics hub for zero emission deliveries. Working with local, regional and national partners, the project demonstrated how existing infrastructure can support cleaner, more efficient deliveries in one of London's busiest neighbourhoods.



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The challenge

London's delivery demand is rising rapidly. By 2030, up to one billion parcels are expected to be delivered across the city each year, driven by online shopping and changing consumer behaviour. Freight and deliveries already account for around a quarter of London's transport emissions and contribute significantly to harmful air pollution.

In areas like South Bank and Waterloo that are dense with limited street space, freight activity is particularly challenging with major transport hubs and high volumes of people moving through the area each day. Deliveries are often made by multiple operators using separate vehicles, each completing a small number of drop-offs. This fragmented approach increases congestion and emissions, worsens air quality and creates unsafe conditions for people walking and cycling. Poor air quality is closely linked to negative health outcomes, making action on reducing freight impacts critical to making our neighbourhood fairer and greener.



The approach

Beneath Waterloo Station there is a vast undercroft that has been largely unused since the Eurostar service relocated in 2007. Once a hub for rail logistics, the space presented a rare opportunity to rethink how goods move through central London.

Following a series of feasibility studies identifying Waterloo as an optimal location for rail-connected logistics, Cross River Partnership worked with key partners Network Rail, the Great British Railways Transition Team, the Department for Transport, and London and Continental Railways to explore the potential of a freight hub. The result was a six-month pilot designed to test how underused rail infrastructure could support low-emission last-mile deliveries.

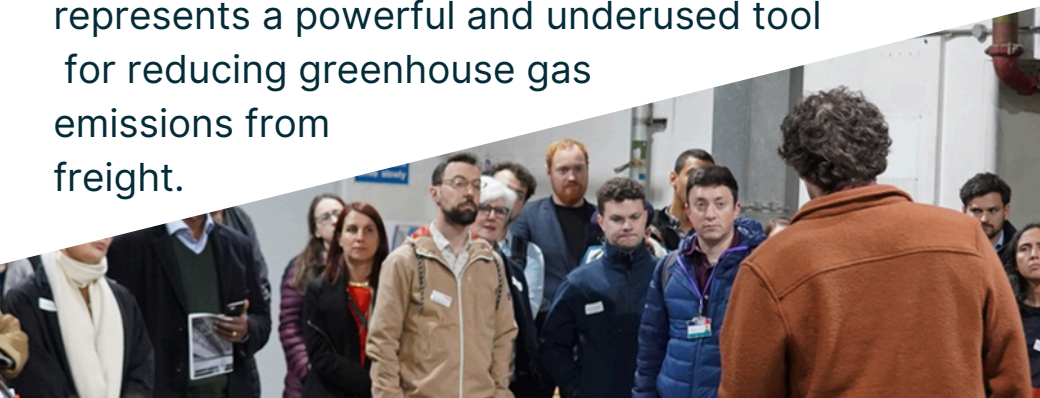
Delivery Mates was appointed as the hub operator, bringing local knowledge, experience operating within and around major stations, and a proven track record in zero-emission logistics. During the trial, parcels were transported into the undercroft by van, consolidated on site, and delivered across London using electrically assisted cargo bikes.

This approach reduced the number of delivery vehicles on local streets, replacing diesel vans with non-polluting vehicles, and demonstrates how coordination and consolidation can improve efficiency.

The approach (cont.)

Impact on South Bank and Waterloo. The Waterloo Freight Hub trial demonstrates how local freight innovation can support not just wider net zero goals for London, but also South Bank and Waterloo's ambition for a fairer and greener neighbourhood. By shifting last-mile deliveries to electrically assisted cargo bikes, the trial reduced harmful emissions and people's exposure to air pollutants. Fewer delivery vehicles on local streets also mean less congestion, quieter roads and safer conditions for walking and cycling, while delivery consolidation also improves efficiency and productivity for local businesses. The project also highlights the economic potential of low-carbon freight, supporting green jobs and positioning South Bank and Waterloo as a leader in sustainable urban logistics.

Looking Ahead. Learnings from the trial will inform the potential development of a much larger, multi-modal Waterloo Freight Hub. In the future, goods could arrive at the station by rail, road and river, with zero-emission vehicles completing the final mile. With major stations embedded in the heart of cities, the rail network represents a powerful and underused tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from freight.



Results

During the six-month trial, the Waterloo Freight Hub consolidated thousands of parcels beneath Waterloo Station, with more than 20,000 parcels delivered by up to 10 electrically assisted cargo bikes. By shifting last-mile deliveries away from diesel vans, the trial supported local jobs and reduced the number of delivery vehicles operating on local streets. This cut 2.5 tonnes of tailpipe greenhouse gas (CO₂e) emissions which is equivalent to about 11 London to Edinburgh round petrol car trips. It also improved air quality across South Bank and Waterloo, reducing nitrogen oxides and particulate matter.

Key learnings

The Waterloo Freight Hub shows what is possible when partners across sectors work together around a shared goal. Complex challenges like freight decarbonisation require coordination between infrastructure owners, government, local delivery operators and communities.

The trial highlights the importance of a strong coordinating body like Cross River Partnership, with the local knowledge and technical expertise needed to navigate complex infrastructure, permissions and delivery processes. Crucially, the project demonstrates that innovation does not always require new buildings or large-scale investment. By making better use of existing, underutilised space, the trial delivered meaningful reductions in emissions, congestion and air pollution.

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In recognition of these successes the project has been awarded the CiTTi 2025 'Last Mile Logistics Award' in 2025 and 'Best Freight & Logistics Decarbonisation Award' at the 2026 Decarbonising Transport Awards.

Find out more

Visit the [Waterloo Freight Hub](#) page on the Cross River Partnership website to learn more about the project and its progress, or subscribe to the [Cross River Partnership newsletter](#) for updates.

Read more [here](#) about South Bank and Waterloo's action plan for a fairer, greener neighbourhood.

