

2025 Programme Evaluation Report

South Ken ZEN+

February 2026



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

1 INTRODUCTION 6

2 SOUTH KEN ZEN+ IMPACT: THE MOMENTUM MODEL 12

3 WHAT'S NEXT 28

ANNEX 32

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The South Kensington Zero Emissions (ZE) Nature Positive (N+) (“South Ken ZEN+”), is a programme designed by the Exhibition Road Cultural Group (“ERCG”), and funded by the Royal Commission of the Exhibition of 1851, to marshal a neighbourhood-wide response to the climate and biodiversity crisis. The ERCG’s members are 22 world leading arts and science organisations based in South Kensington in London, who are committed to identifying, understanding, and achieving significant carbon reductions within their own operations, while also recognising the power of collective action to drive wider emissions reductions and environmental benefits across the neighbourhood.

The programme priorities were established collaboratively by partners in 2022 to guide collective action and focus resources where they can have the greatest impact. They are:

- **Zero Emissions** – driving carbon reduction across all participating organisations and operations.
- **Nature Positive** – enhancing biodiversity, ecological resilience, and access to nature across the neighbourhood.
- **Circular Economy** – minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency, and embedding circular practices in all activities.
- **Sustainable Transport** – supporting low-carbon, active, and accessible modes of travel for all who live, work, and visit the district

THIS REPORT

March 2026 marks the conclusion of Phase One of the South Ken ZEN+ Programme and is a key point of reflection and evaluation for the ERCG. Members have expressed a clear appetite to see the work of South Ken ZEN+ continue and for sustainability support and convening to be embedded into ERCG’s business-as-usual operations.

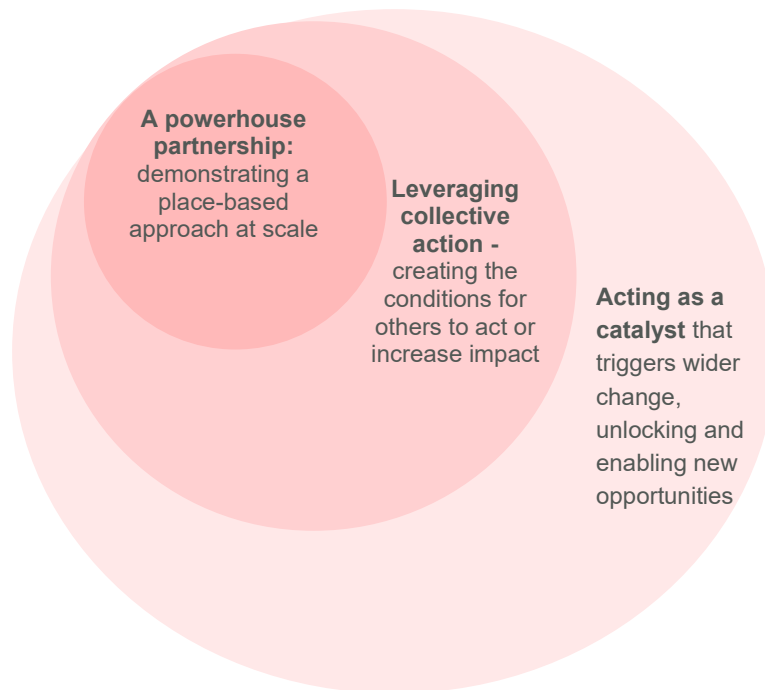
This report presents the story of the South Ken ZEN+ Programme since its inception in 2022 the impacts achieved in the last three years and illustrating how it has grown to deliver substantial outputs and outcomes. Using desk-based analysis, this report tells the impact story of South Ken ZEN+ using qualitative evidence to develop a coherent story of incremental progress. This showcases achievements across the three thematic areas: Zero Emissions, Nature Positive, and Capacity-building, Engagement and Advocacy, and highlights intangible outcomes and added value, illustrating the Programme’s cumulative impact to date.

The report also highlights the importance of South Ken ZEN+’s function as a convenor and catalyst, enabling members to lead coordinated decarbonisation efforts across their supply chains and within the wider South Kensington neighbourhood. By working collectively, members are empowered to amplify their impact, share best practices and resources, and accelerate their journey toward net zero, making meaningful progress that individual institutions would struggle to achieve alone.

Finally, this report makes an assessment of the progress and lessons learnt so far, offering an indicative direction and evolution, ensuring that the achievements and learning from Phase One can inform and strengthen future delivery as the Programme evolves.

SOUTH KEN ZEN+ MOMENTUM MODEL

The South Ken ZEN+ programme has established a lasting culture of collaboration, learning and innovation among its members and the wider community. This can be understood through the Momentum Model, which identifies three complementary roles that South Ken ZEN+ plays in driving change:



Phase One of the South Ken ZEN+ Programme has made significant inroads to achieving the Programme aims. It has increased capacity and knowledge within member organisations, engaged external stakeholders to help shape a shared vision for a greener, more climate-resilient South Kensington, and initiated collaborations which benefit a broad range of neighbourhood stakeholders.

Headline Achievements of the South Ken ZEN+ Programme

Member Activities and Capacity-building

- 200+ people from 22 organisations regularly engaged in South Ken ZEN+ activities and initiatives.
- 60+ people trained in Carbon Literacy (CLT) from 18 organisations.
- 40+ workshops delivered since 2023.
- Regular newsletter established for members, with 400+ subscribers.
- 45+ local case studies of climate-focused actions undertaken by member organisations published on the South Ken ZEN+ website.

Emissions Monitoring and Reporting

- Two years' worth of emissions data collected and collated onto the South Ken ZEN+ Emissions Dashboard; this is the first-time emissions data has been gathered on a neighbourhood level.
- 9 members developed their first-ever carbon footprints in 2024.
- 75% of organisations are consistently using the South Ken ZEN+ Emissions Dashboard to report on their Greenhouse Gas emissions.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- 100+ local employers, charities, educational organisations and community groups reached through engagement activities.
- c. 20,000 people engaged locally in climate change issues.
- Delivered 40+ walking tours to 500+ people including local staff, students, residents and visitors in 2024 and 2025.

Funding and Resources Mobilisation

- 4,800 hours of time contributed since 2022 (equivalent to ±£250,000).
- Secured around £370K in additional grants for joint projects so far including:
 - £50,000 from the Future Observatory in 2023 to commission the underpinning research for the development of the South Ken ZEN+ Emissions Reporting Framework.
 - £210,000 through two grants from the GLA Heat Network Accelerator fund in 2023 to explore the feasibility of establishing a heat network in South Kensington.
 - £48,000 contributed by members in cash and VAT contributions towards the above feasibility study
 - £70,000 of additional project funding from the Royal Commission for the Great Exhibition of 1851 to expand the Heat & Energy feasibility work.

Recognition and Awards

- Winner of the 2025 Sustainability Impact Award from the Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster Chamber of Commerce.

VALUE FOR MONEY

The South Ken ZEN+ Programme has also demonstrated clear value creation.

For every £1 of grant funding invested, it has generated approximately £1.20 in additional value through in-kind and other leveraged contributions.

Across this period, members provided 690 days of in-kind support through 80+ workshops, roundtables, meetings, and events designed to share knowledge, build capacity, and strengthen collaboration, commitment, and action.

In-kind contributions between 2022 and 2025 totalled around £250,000¹, with the rate and scale of contributions doubling in the last year

Sustained and increasing in-kind support for the programme is a clear indication that ERCG members find the South Ken ZEN+ Programme to be valuable and worth their time commitment.

Additionally, the programme has generated further social value through training and cultural events delivered across the neighbourhood.

c.£110K of Social Value generated through training and events since 2022.

ENABLING LONG TERM CHANGE

The summaries above demonstrate how South Ken ZEN+ has successfully kick-started collective progress towards zero emissions and a nature positive future by combining organisational commitment, neighbourhood-scale collaboration and practical delivery. Its distinctive place-based approach, anchored by world-leading cultural, educational and research institutions, has legitimised sustainability as a strategic priority and sustained momentum through consistent senior-level endorsement. Through shared initiatives, professional networks and joint tools such as the **Sustainable Supply Chain Charter** and **Greenwashing Guide**, South Ken ZEN+ has strengthened delivery at pace and demonstrated the value of coordinated action over isolated efforts.

Robust benchmarking and evidence-building are enabled through shared tools such as the **Emissions Dashboard**, supporting transparency and data-led decision-making. Capacity-building is embedded as a core pillar of the programme, with training, skills development and knowledge-sharing supporting long-term organisational change.

Phase One has laid strong foundations, benefiting both large institutions with established expertise and smaller organisations through access to shared capacity and best practice. It has helped South Ken ZEN+ position itself as an exemplar for innovation and rigour, enabling experimentation at neighbourhood scale, reducing risk for individual organisations and building a shared evidence base to accelerate progress towards 2030 goals.

LOOKING FORWARD

Building on Phase One, the South Ken ZEN+ programme will continue to support South Kensington's journey towards becoming a zero-emissions, nature-positive and climate-resilient neighbourhood, enabled by the collective commitment of its member organisations. Progress to date has been driven by sustained collaboration, shared priorities and a growing evidence base that supports emissions reduction, innovation and wider community engagement.

¹ Total in-kind contributions from members up to the financial year end 2025 amount to £236,384. For reporting and forecasting purposes, this figure has been rounded and presented as approximately £250,000 for the full year.

As the programme enters its next phase (2026–2030), there is a significant opportunity to build on this momentum by sharpening focus on areas where collective action delivers the greatest value. Strengthening Programme goals through clearer, more measurable – and tangibly deliverable – outcomes, underpinned by a well-defined Theory of Change, will help align activities with neighbourhood priorities and clarify South Ken ZEN+'s unique contribution. Going forward, the Programme will also need to further strengthen monitoring, evidence-building and social value measurement, to showcase progress in a more strategic and coordinated way and communicate its impact more widely.

Overall, the South Ken ZEN+ Programme is well-placed to build on early progress, maintain momentum and support South Kensington in realising its long-term sustainability ambitions

To sustain the impact, expanding the current programme offer, particularly in training, capacity-building and knowledge exchange will need to remain a key priority. Carbon Literacy Training and similar training offers, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities offer strong potential to embed long-term cultural change and collaboration across organisations.

More widely, sustained senior leadership support, more targeted engagement with member organisations and strengthened, tactical communications will also be critical to maintaining momentum and securing continued buy-in across diverse member organisations. Continued public engagement and advocacy will enhance South Ken ZEN+ visibility, build community ownership and encourage behavioural change.

At the same time, addressing capacity and funding constraints – including the need for longer-term funding certainty – will be essential to secure programme stability, ambition and delivery at scale. By sharing learning, amplifying success and positioning itself as a replicable model, the South Ken ZEN+ Programme can extend its influence beyond South Kensington and demonstrate the power of place-based collaboration in addressing global sustainability challenges.

1 INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The South Kensington Zero Emissions (ZE) Nature Positive (N+) (“South Ken ZEN+”) is an innovative and collaborative response in the Exhibition Road and Kensington neighbourhood to the climate and biodiversity crises.

Launched in 2022 and funded by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 (“RCE 1851”), the initiative is led by the Exhibition Road Cultural Group (“ERCG”), which brings together 22 leading arts and science organisations in London’s original cultural district. The shared aim of the Programme is to provide a unified voice for ERCG’s members and the wider area, using collective strength to address shared challenges and drive meaningful change. This emerged from a shared recognition of the need for a coordinated approach to accelerate sustainability progress, built on active collaboration between diverse partners working across science, art, and culture.

All participating organisations have committed to identifying, understanding, and achieving significant carbon reductions within their own operations, while also recognising the power of collective action to drive wider emissions reductions and environmental benefits across the neighbourhood.

South Ken ZEN+ represents a unique opportunity to deliver a place-based sustainability initiative anchored in one of the UK’s most high-profile cultural, educational, and scientific districts. Collectively, the member organisations attract millions of visitors, students, and staff each year from across the globe, giving the programme exceptional visibility, credibility, and reach.

The members of the programme include:

Members of the South Ken ZEN+ Programme:

Design Museum	Royal Brompton Hospital Trust
Goethe-Institut	Royal College of Art
Kensington Palace	Royal College of Music
Imperial College	Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851
Institut Français	Royal Geographical Society
Ismaili Centre	Royal Society of Sculptors
Japan House London	Science Museum
Natural History Museum	Serpentine
Royal Albert Hall	South Kensington Estates
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)	The Royal Parks
Westminster City Council (WCC)	V&A South Kensington

PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND GOALS

The South Ken ZEN+ Programme was conceived around four core priorities, established collaboratively by partners to guide collective action and focus resources where they can have the greatest impact. These are:

- **Zero Emissions** – driving carbon reduction across all participating organisations and operations.
- **Nature Positive** – enhancing biodiversity, ecological resilience, and access to nature across the neighbourhood.

- **Circular Economy** – minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency, and embedding circular practices in all activities.
- **Sustainable Transport** – supporting low-carbon, active, and accessible modes of travel for all who live, work, and visit the district.

Building on these priorities, South Ken ZEN+ seeks to:

- **Amplify** the world-leading sustainability progress already taking place across the network.
- **Accelerate** collective action through deeper collaboration and shared learning.
- **Exemplify** what can be achieved when organisations work together towards a common environmental vision.
- **Inspire** transformational change within and beyond South Kensington’s cultural community.

In line with these ambitions, seven primary goals were defined as follows:

1. Achieve net-zero emissions across the neighbourhood before **2040**.
2. Reduce operational emissions by **50%** by **2030**.
3. Increase urban green space by **20%** by **2030**.
4. Deliver a net gain in biodiversity and ecological connectivity.
5. Reduce waste and recycle at least **75%** of business waste by **2030**.
6. Promote sustainable and active travel among staff, students, residents, and the 20 million+ annual visitors to the area.
7. Demonstrate measurable impact through transparent monitoring and shared reporting across all partners.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Rising greenhouse-gas emissions and unsustainable consumption patterns are driving more extreme weather, accelerating biodiversity loss, and posing long-term risks to health and wellbeing. It is essential that organisations and institutions take a stronger role in addressing these challenges and reduce their emissions and impact by systematically tracking their emissions and resource use, understanding their impacts, and demonstrating clear progress. This approach also helps build trust with stakeholders, supports compliance with evolving regulatory frameworks, raises awareness, and often sparks new opportunities for innovation.

The Mayor of London has set ambitious net zero goals for London to mitigate the impact of climate crisis. Key 2030 targets will have a significant impact on businesses:

- Reduce heat demand from buildings by 40%
- Retrofit 250,000 commercial buildings
- Increase commercial recycling rates to 65%
- Reduce vehicle kms by 27%.

Whilst top-down policies set the strategic mandate, South Ken ZEN+ acts as a vital locally-driven model, demonstrating that effective, ground-up action can be highly successful in driving change. A clear alignment with local policy across the two local authorities who are both members of the ERCG, Westminster City

Council (“WCC”) and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (“RBKC”), is important to the success of the programme.

South Ken ZEN+ is an important convenor and catalyst for this work. It encourages members to drive coordinated decarbonisation efforts across shared areas of priority, such as energy and supply chains. By working as a collective, the members are able to share best practices and resources, and accelerate their journey toward net zero, amplifying their impact and making meaningful progress that individual institutions might not be able to achieve alone.

The programme has been designed to reflect and reinforce sustainability activities developed by individual members – and integrated into initiatives for the wider collective. It enables South Kensington as a world-famous cultural district, to act as leading example in the proactive, collaborative tackling of the climate and biodiversity crisis.

A number of relevant Policy Frameworks and Initiatives are outlined below:

- The Greater London Authority (GLA’s), **London Environment Strategy (2017)**², is managed by the Mayor of London and the GLA in collaboration with 32 boroughs, focusing on the largest sources of the city’s carbon emissions.
- **London Net Zero 2030: An Updated Pathway (2022)**³, is the GLA’s response and plan to achieving net zero, after reviewing the feasibility of carbon neutral, accelerating the city-wide goal from 2050 to 2030.
- **The London Climate Resilience Review (2024)**⁴ explains the city’s preparedness for climate impacts and outlines what central, regional and national government and the private sector must do to address future climate-induced disruptions and threats.
- Historic England’s updated **Climate Change Strategy (2022)**⁵ is focussing its energies on supporting the sector through Mitigation (reducing carbon through guidance like Advice Note 18 on retrofitting historic buildings) and Adaptation (enhancing resilience of historic sites against climate risks like flooding and coastal erosion).
- **The City of London Public Realm Toolkit (2024)**⁶, incorporates the sustainability principles and mandates discussed in the original cultural districts report from 2023, which highlighted ten global cultural districts, embedding sustainability into their fabric.¹
- **DCMS** requires its major funded organisations (including arms-length bodies and cultural organisations in receipt of public funds through Arts Council) to align their operations with the government’s wider net zero targets.
- The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) declared a climate emergency in 2019, setting two carbon neutral targets: net-zero emissions for the Council’s own operations by 2030 and for the wider borough to be carbon neutral by 2040. The resulting **Climate Emergency Action Plan (2022–2027)**⁷ is structured around six core action categories, including Buildings and Energy, Sustainable Transport and Travel, and Waste and Circular Economy.

² Greater London Authority. *London Environment Strategy*. London: Greater London Authority, 2018.

³ Greater London Authority. *London Net Zero 2030: An Updated Pathway*. London: Greater London Authority, January 2022.

⁴ Greater London Authority. *The London Climate Resilience Review*. London: Greater London Authority, July 2024.

⁵ Historic England. *Our Strategy: Climate Change*. Historic England, 2022.

⁶ City of London Corporation. *City Public Realm Toolkit 2024*, London: City of London Corporation, February 2024.

⁷ Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. *Climate Change Strategies and Action Plans*. London: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, 2025

- Westminster City Council's **Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025 (CEAP)**⁸, establishes the ambitious mandates of achieving a net-zero council by 2030 and a net-zero city by 2040, outlining a comprehensive framework across five key priority themes: Efficient Buildings, Clean and Affordable Energy, Sustainable Travel and Transport, Reduced Consumption and Waste, and fostering a Green and Resilient City.¹
- **The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan** is now part of the statutory development plan for Westminster and will be used alongside the council's own planning documents and the Mayor's London Plan in determining planning applications in the Knightsbridge neighbourhood area.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This retrospective evaluation reviews the South Ken ZEN+ Phase One of the Programme (2023-2025), assessing its collective impact on the neighbourhood and demonstrating its ongoing importance. The aim is to define, evidence, and enhance the programme's impact narrative, while informing its future direction.

This report captures both qualitative and quantitative outcomes and seeks to strengthen internal learning and strategy. It is also intended as a tool to foster engagement with external stakeholders, including potential funders, unlocking new opportunities for the South Ken ZEN+ Programme.

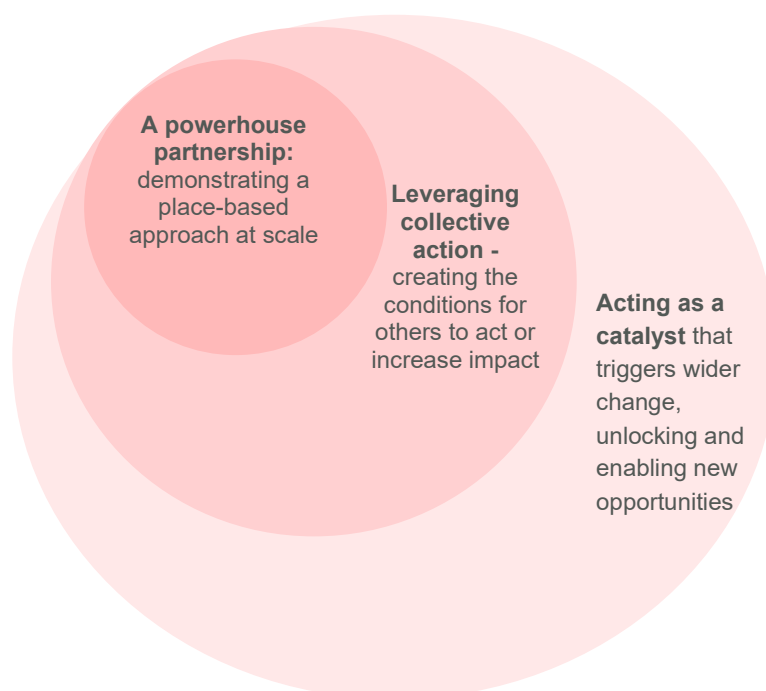
This evaluation draws on data provided by the South Ken ZEN+ Programme Manager and reviewed by PRD through a desk-based analysis. The evidence was shaped and curated into a compelling narrative that:

- Develops the indicative themes identified through engagement into a coherent story that resonates with diverse audiences.
- Showcases achievements across three thematic areas: Zero Emissions, Nature Positive, and Capacity-Building, Engagement and Advocacy
- Highlights examples of initiatives that demonstrate added value and tangible outcomes through feedback from engagement activities.
- Integrates these elements into a cohesive narrative illustrating the cumulative impact of the programme.

⁸ Westminster City Council. *Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025*. London: Westminster City Council, 202

2 SOUTH KEN ZEN+ IMPACT: THE MOMENTUM MODEL

The South Ken ZEN+ programme has delivered a lasting culture of collaboration, learning and innovation among its members and the wider community that can be understood through the momentum model, which identifies three complementary roles the programme plays in driving change.



- 1. South Ken ZEN+ is a powerhouse partnership for change, demonstrating a place-based approach at scale:** The programme is rooted in a unique context, bringing together world-leading institutions along Exhibition Road and spearheading a place-based approach for the South Kensington neighbourhood. This fosters richer opportunities for collaboration and enables solutions that can scale, lending weight and gravitas to the initiative. Its place-based focus is a key unique selling point of the programme.

Key outcomes include:

- Collectively developed a Biodiversity Baseline & Action Plan for the neighbourhood
- Collaborative projects for collective benefit developed and run with a range of members: e.g. Planting Decision Tree and Planter Litter Project
- South Ken ZEN+ website and monthly newsletters with around 400+ subscribers providing continued information, sign-posting and learning opportunities on carbon and biodiversity.
- 40+ walking tours delivered with over 500 people engaged since 2024
- c. 20,000 people engaged locally in climate change issues.
- Winner in the Sustainability Impact category at the Kensington & Chelsea & Westminster City Councils' Chamber of Commerce Business Awards, October 2025

- 2. South Ken ZEN+ leverages collective action, creating the conditions for others to act or increase impact:** The programme delivers evidence-based, measurable impact that demonstrates

meaningful change, alongside public engagement activities that foster a greener, climate-resilient neighbourhood through advocacy and behaviour change. Collective action is key, as individual organisations often lack the bandwidth or capacity to deliver these initiatives independently. The programme supports a range of activities designed to create long-term impact, including:

- For members: Training and capacity-building, peer-to-peer learning, and use of the South Ken ZEN+ Emissions Dashboard
- For the wider public: Public-facing engagement to raise awareness, complemented by local projects and initiatives
- Media & Recognition: Marketing and communications support for member initiatives, award opportunities, and a platform to amplify visibility and influence

Key Outcomes include:

- 200+ people from 22 organisations regularly involved in programme activities
- 100+ local employers, charities, educational organisations & community groups reached so far.
- 40+ workshops delivered since 2023.
- 4 knowledge-sharing groups established, meeting regularly.
- ±4,800 hours of time contributed since 2022 (equivalent to ±£250,000).
- Circular Economy Reuse Hub launched in 2024.

- 3. South Ken ZEN+ acts as a catalyst that triggers wider change, unlocking and enabling new opportunities:** The programme focuses on developing strategic partnerships that unlock additional funding, drive innovation, and influence systems beyond South Kensington (e.g., through supply chain shifts). This demonstrates strong value for money, given both the depth and breadth of impact that the programme enables

Key Outcomes include:

- Emissions Baseline established for 2023, and 2024, with 88% of baseline contributing organisations providing year 2 data. 15 organisations continue to participate in collective Emissions reporting
- 9 members developed their first-ever carbon footprints in 2024.
- Collectively developed and drafted the South Ken ZEN+ Supply Chain Charter
- 9 members have ratified the South Ken ZEN+ Supply Chain Charter so far
- Greenwashing Guide and Training collectively developed
- 60+ people newly trained as Carbon Literate

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

South Ken ZEN+ has focused activity around four priority areas leading to a wide range of outward- and inward-facing initiatives. The aim has been to build knowledge and skills within organisations and enable collective action which can, in turn, lead to neighbourhood-wide change. This has been recognised by members, who have highlighted that providing proof-of-concept with neighbourhood-wide initiatives has made a difference to their internal sustainability efforts over the last 30 months.

The progress made in South Ken ZEN+ Phase One, (including raising awareness of climate adaptation and biodiversity), has had a significant impact for the member organisations, with all participating organisations who consistently state that the programme is helpful and relevant.

Zero Emissions

One of the key goals of the South Ken ZEN+ Programme is to support organisation to respond effectively to the climate and biodiversity crisis by pooling resources and creating economies of scale. The role of the Zero Emissions work provides member organisations with clear pathways to emissions reductions and supports the development of long-term actionable outputs.

South Ken ZEN+ has strengthened collaboration among participating members, built a connected neighbourhood network, and increased awareness of local sustainability initiatives more widely. The programme has brought sustainability to the forefront of organisational priorities, driving collective action across the area.

Participating organisations have committed to identifying, understanding, and achieving significant carbon reductions within their own operations, while also recognising the power of collective action to drive wider emissions reductions and environmental benefits across the neighbourhood. The development of tools such as the Emissions Reporting Framework and the presentation of members' data in the Emissions Dashboards enable organisations to benchmark progress, share insights, and accelerate efficiency and impact. Below we highlight specific outputs and outcomes achieved within this priority.

Sustainability Pledge and MDCs

Much like the annual International Conference of the Parties (COP) 17 of the 22 South Ken ZEN+ members (73%) formalised sustainability pledges through Member Declared Contributions (MDCs), setting out how they will actively contribute to the Programme's shared goals and embed sustainability actions. This demonstrated clear individual and collective commitment and the continued expectation that organisations hold themselves accountable has generated positive feedback regarding the strong momentum achieved toward the zero emissions goals.

"Now is the time to redefine our collective goals. Decarb is one – for example the V&A are working on a new Climate Action Plan, redefining targets and building clarity on what net zero means based on what we've learned in the last few years."

Director of Sustainability – V&A

Emissions Dashboard

In 2023, the South Ken ZEN+ Programme secured £50,000 from the Future Observatory at the Design Museum to develop a methodological framework for calculating the emissions of a range of geographically co-located, but very diverse organisations. This was completed by sustainability consultants, 3ADAPT, who then developed it into the South Ken ZEN+ Emissions Reporting Framework. The framework was the basis

for the collection of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from all participating organisation, with the goal of developing a Carbon Footprint for the neighbourhood.

In 2024, 3ADAPT used the Framework to develop the first South Ken ZEN+ Emissions Dashboard, with 17(organisations feeding into the initial baseline in year one. During this process, 3ADAPT provided intensive 1:1 support and assistance to all member organisations to enable them to identify, record and calculate their respective emissions data. For some members, this was the first time they had gotten to grips with gathering emissions data; for others, working with 3ADAPT helped them to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the nuances of their emissions data and fill data gaps they didn't even know they had. As a result of this work, 9 ERCG members were able to establish their first, ever Carbon footprint.

Alongside the second year of emissions reporting, 3ADAPT delivered six bespoke workshops aimed to increase shared knowledge and collaboration around areas of specific interest for organisations, including:

- Mapping Decarbonisation Pathways (using the Y1 data),
- Exploring organisational climate risks
- Calculating Staff/Student Travel Emissions,
- Collective Approaches to Residual Emissions (Offsetting), and
- Emissions from Pensions & Investments.

In year two, 15 organisations participated in of the emissions reporting exercise. The second year of emission data has demonstrated that the 1:1 coaching, workshops and training offered by 3ADAPT has led to better understanding and knowledge – a more sophisticated understanding of how to report on emissions data and better-quality data reporting.

From the baseline year in 2023, the second year of emissions data showed an 8% increase in overall emissions. Whilst this appears alarming, the increase can be attributable to a continuing improvement in data quality and collection, and to the fact that a number of participating organisations are still expanding in size. Also, whilst operations may be increasing, the actual intensity of emissions (when compared to income, floorspace, headcounts and visitors) is decreasing over time. This indicates that emissions are not increasing proportionately and will eventually start a downward trajectory.

The Emissions Dashboards are a positive start in laying strong foundations to support individual organisations to monitor and evaluate their progress and accountability towards the shared neighbourhood goals. Members reported that benchmarking emissions and their progress year-on-year has made a significant difference to their organisations' sustainability efforts over the last 18 months.

Finally, 3ADAPT used data from the emissions dashboard to model a net zero neighbourhood and found that there is a potential for 86% reduction in carbon by 2040, highlighting the Dashboard's function as a critical tool for quantifying and targeting high-impact interventions.

For the first time ever as a neighbourhood, participating organisations have measured their emissions baseline, enabling them to benchmark their Greenhouse Gas Emissions and track performance against set goals.

Overall, the work around capturing emissions data demonstrates clear and measurable capacity-building across the programme, with a marked shift towards more sophisticated, informed and confident conversations about emissions reporting and decarbonisation. What began as a foundational exercise in data collection has evolved into a shared analytical framework that enables organisations to understand, interrogate and track their emissions. The improved data quality and sustained participation have also

supported a collective, neighbourhood-scale understanding of emissions trends and reduction pathways to achieve the shared net zero ambitions.

Heat and Energy Project

In late 2024, South Ken ZEN+ secured £70,000 of project funds from the Royal Commission for 1851 for the development of feasibility work on coordinated heat and energy systems across the district. The study is exploring opportunities for system replacement, decarbonisation, alignment and funding options for the development of low-carbon heating, cooling and resilience across multiple institutions. This joined-up approach will enable members to think beyond the boundaries and limitations of their own estates and take a more holistic approach to the management of the district, which may, in turn lead to greater economies of scale, collective buying/bargaining, shared risk mitigation and increased resilience.

South Ken ZEN+ Charter for a Sustainable Supply Chain

In 2024, South Ken ZEN+ convened a working group of Heads of Procurement to collectively draft a Charter for a Sustainable Supply Chain and shared procurement principles. This document, which was published in December 2024, sets clear expectations around emissions reduction, biodiversity recovery, and circular practices, enabling organisations to extend their influence beyond their own operations and contribute to shifting behaviours and industry standards. This is part of the South Ken ZEN+ Programme's continued actions to respond to the collective priorities around decarbonising the supply chain and thinking about the circular economy.

So far, nine ERCG members (40%) have fully ratified the South Ken ZEN+ Supply Chain Charter, with some even adopting and re-skinning it as their own Supplier Code of Conduct.

Through the Supply Chain Charter, the members of South Ken ZEN+ are directly influencing how their suppliers, partners, and contractors operate. The programme is currently exploring opportunities to engage suppliers more proactively and secure broader support to formally commit to the Charter.

The Charter exemplifies the added value of a collective approach, demonstrating how members can pool capacity, expertise and resources to produce a shared tool that benefits all of the member organisations. By combining the knowledge of larger organisations with more established procurement and sustainability functions, members have enhanced their expertise. Less mature organisations, with perhaps limited in-house capacity to be proactive in sustainable procurement, have been empowered to raise their ambitions and capabilities.

This shared approach reduces duplication, accelerates progress and ensures consistency in expectations across the neighbourhood, allowing organisations to mutually benefit. Crucially, the Charter has the potential to create a significant ripple effect beyond participating organisations. The Emissions Dashboard clearly shows that purchased goods and services account for more than 60% of neighbourhood emissions, meaning that aligned procurement practices have real potential to drive meaningful emissions reductions both upstream and downstream, amplifying the programme's impact across supply chains and contributing to wider market transformation.

Greenwashing Guide

Through South Ken ZEN+, a working group has been established, led by the Royal College of Art (RCA) to develop a Greenwashing Guide for Purchasers. The forthcoming Guide will complement the Supply Chain Charter and support more informed, ethical procurement decisions.

The development of the Greenwashing Guide further reinforces the programme's role in creating practical, shared tools that can be used by all members, regardless of organisational size or internal expertise, and with relevance beyond the immediate partnership. By embedding best practice, raising awareness of sustainability risks and standards, and translating complex issues into accessible guidance, these tools help to build confidence, consistency and leadership across the neighbourhood. As with the Supply Chain Charter, the Guide has the potential to generate a wider ripple effect, influencing supplier behaviour and procurement norms beyond participating organisations.

The enabling power of this collective approach is illustrated through practical examples, such as the Greenwashing Guide, which demonstrates sector leadership, sets shared standards and reassures members that collaboration leads to real progress rather than duplication or inefficiency. Similarly, collaborative research commissioned through the programme has accelerated decision-making and saved organisational time. For example, an early, programme-funded audit of leading global carbon reporting platforms enabled members to align around a consistent Power BI approach while retaining organisational flexibility and comparability. In procurement, research undertaken by SKZ+ into supplier sustainability platforms supported evidence-based decision-making, recommending a phased approach to the adoption and use of shared platforms that balanced functionality, cost and scalability.

Taken together, these examples clearly illustrate the strength of the South Ken ZEN+ collective approach. By pooling expertise, capacity and resources, members have co-developed a suite of practical tools that accelerate action, reduce duplication and enable both large and small organisations to raise their sustainability ambitions. Collectively, these interventions extend the Programme's influence beyond organisational boundaries, creating the conditions for sustained behaviour change, emissions reduction and impact across the neighbourhood.

Nature Positive

A key element of the South Ken ZEN+ programme is to find ways to enhance nature and biodiversity in the cultural district. There is little value to aiming for zero emissions if this is not complemented by nature positive activities. Tapping into the world-class expertise of organisations such as the Natural History Museum and The Royal Parks, the ambition is for the neighbourhood to act as an exemplar for the re-integration of nature into the urban context. More importantly, nature-based solutions are a critical part of ensuring resilience in a city under increasing pressure from a changing climate.

This work relies heavily on the appetite and inclinations of both RBKC and WCC to act, or sanction nature-positive actions in the public realm, and most importantly on building local support for any initiatives or changes proposed. South Ken ZEN+ is in the unique position of being able to provide a platform for testing, learning, and demonstrating what effective community-based climate action looks like in practice.

Engagement with the wider neighbourhood has been key in establishing buy-in, consensus and priorities.

Engaging with the Wider South Kensington Community

In 2024, South Ken ZEN+ commissioned Allies & Morrison to conduct an extensive engagement exercise with local stakeholders, including residents, local organisations, staff, community groups, schools and visitors. The purpose of the project was to gauge the levels of interest and concern about the climate and biodiversity crisis and establish who local stakeholders ought to be taking action.

Over the course of summer 2024, the Stakeholder Engagement Project engaged over 20,000 people through consultation activities, newsletters, market stalls, workshops, talks, walks and other communications. 350 responses were received to an online survey about climate change with 88% of respondents identifying as locals, not visitors.

The results showed a clear concern about the impact that climate change is set to have on South Kensington and an appetite for ERCG member organisation to play a

When all the data was collated, six emerging priority themes emerged, including defined project ideas, focused on encouraging walking and cycling by improving movement corridors, prioritising sustainable movement making the neighbourhood a more pleasant area to navigate, reflecting the heritage and character of South Kensington, providing more learning opportunities, increasing biodiversity and resilience, and supporting health and wellbeing.



Projects that were suggested by stakeholder included public realm improvements such wayfinding, narrowing side road junctions, pedestrianising streets, reducing speed limits on Exhibition Road, more controlled crossing points and public realm enhancements.

Biodiversity Baseline Map for South Kensington with the Greater London Authority's GiGL

As part of the South Ken ZEN+ Green Vision, a Biodiversity Working Group was established to collectively developing a Biodiversity Baseline for South Kensington. As a starting point, South Ken ZEN+ commissioned Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) to collate all biodiversity and green infrastructure information held by ERCG members, alongside up-to-date data from WCC, RBKC, and GiGL itself. The result is a series of biodiversity and habitat maps for South Kensington, which the Biodiversity Working Group is quality-assuring and using to identify gaps and priorities.

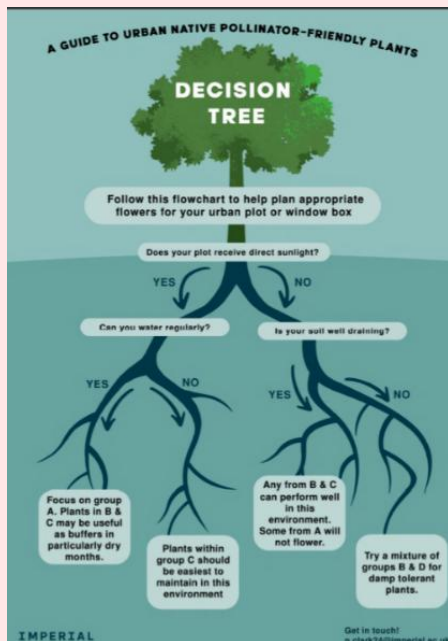
The aim is for this data to inform future activities and feed into a comprehensive Green Infrastructure and Climate Adaptation Audit for South Kensington. Commitment to this baseline by the Working Group highlights the strength of collective action and will enable more intentional design and clearer definition of specific, tangible projects that respond to local needs. It will also act as a starting point for further local engagement activities and citizen science.

Green Infrastructure and Climate Adaptation Audit

As part of the overarching Green Vision for South Kensington, the Programme Manager is eager to commission a comprehensive Green Infrastructure & Climate Adaptation Audit of Exhibition Road and environs. This project would explore all the threats, opportunities and constraints facing the cultural district in a changing climate, and scope ways to enhance the public realm to make it more welcoming, safe, functional and climate resilient. The Audit would identify sites where green infrastructure can have the biggest impact in the neighbourhood: boosting biodiversity, improving the quality and public amenity of spaces, or mitigating the impacts of climate change. It would also be a critical vehicle for building local engagement and buy-in to adapting the neighbourhood for the 21st Century.

To realise this ambition, three separate funding applications were prepared and submitted to WCC, RBKC and the GLA in 2025, but none was successful. Going forward, the South Ken ZEN+ Programme will need to secure funding for priorities identified in Phase One to be fully implemented into tangible projects, contributing to the creation of long-lasting, world-class examples of climate adaptation in this well-known and highly-regarded cultural district.

Citizen Science Projects



Planting for Pollinators – Imperial’s Decision Tree

Each year, Imperial brings together Challenge Teams – groups of graduate students who collaborate on projects that address contemporary issues and translate complex research into real-world solutions. In 2025, South Ken ZEN+ brought a Challenge Teams together with a local resident’s association on a project to help support pollinators.

With input and user-testing from the resident’s association, the Challenge team developed an easy-to-use Decision Tree that helps residents choose the right plants to encourage bees, butterflies, and other pollinators to thrive in their homes, balconies, and gardens.

The resulting Tree has been widely shared and taken up by both the RBKC and WCC as a practical tool for greener, more nature-positive living.

This project is an excellent example of how research, creativity, and collaboration can be brought together to create a shared tool, which is making a tangible difference in South Kensington, raising awareness and encouraging incremental activity to support biodiversity across the city. It also highlights the impact that ERCC member institutions can have on ground-up change and local activism.

The Planters Project

In 2024, South Ken ZEN+ secured Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding to install 10 new planters on top of existing Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) blocks on Exhibition Road. This was the first step in greening Exhibition Road, as part of a larger and ambition to soften the hard landscape, increase biodiversity and encourage stepping stones for pollinators in the urban area in collaboration with volunteers from the Imperial College Environmental Society. Following this, a volunteer project has been developed to explore whether different messages on signage can influence littering behaviour.

Capacity-building, Engagement and Advocacy

Carbon Literacy Training

Through its Carbon Literacy Training and Peer Learning Network, South Ken ZEN+ is facilitating continuous upskilling, knowledge retention, and the ability to train future staff internally. This collaborative skills model has strengthened organisational resilience and embedded sustainability as a shared professional practice across member organisations.

The Carbon Literacy Training provided informal upskilling to enhance the internal capabilities of ERCG member staff, empowering them to drive individual action from their respective functions within each organisation. The first session ran in Spring 2025, supported by the Design Museum and saw 12 attendees from 7 different member organisations attending. Participants most appreciated the opportunity to learn in a mixed cohort and felt the training gave them agency to make change in their own contexts.

In Spring 2025, SKZ+ began delivering free Carbon Literacy Training Courses for members' staff. In six months, 60+ people from 18 organisations have been trained (81% participation rate). A supportive peer learning network has also been created, with 9 individuals from 7 organisations trained as CLT trainers (delivering approx. £5000 of in-kind training so far).

Round-tables and Collective Actions

In terms of time-efficient knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer learning, the round-tables have emerged as a highly effective mechanism for fostering collaboration and action across the member organisations. By bringing together diverse members, these forums have enabled the exchange of practical solutions, brought forward shared challenges and identified opportunities for collective action. Several direct actions have flowed from these sessions, including collaborative approaches to procurement, shared research commissions and the development of common tools and guidance, generating efficiencies and economies of scale that would not have been achievable by organisations working independently.

While establishing and sustaining engagement through the round tables requires time, careful facilitation and trust-building, once this trust is established, participation deepens and organisations become more inclined to commit meaningful time, resource and expertise. This is particularly reflected in the significant in-kind contributions to the programme to far (see section below).

"One of the great things about South Ken ZEN+ is the opportunity to bring people together. Sustainability teams are potentially quite small a lot of the time, possibly even a single person - so that that kind of ability to build a network outside of your organisation, is really critical both your own wellbeing, but also the ability to move your programme forward within your organisation."

Head of Sustainability - Historic Royal Palaces

Ongoing learning about optimal formats, including the value of catered, morning sessions and behind-the-scenes work to secure senior mandate, has helped to build momentum and attendance. Participation so far suggests that this momentum is durable, with round tables providing a platform that has the potential to scale and endure. Members have also become more proactive about leading some of these round-tables for themselves, enabling SKZ+ to relinquish the driving seat and adopt more of a Secretariat function. A good example of this is the Catering Forum, which is now chaired by the V&A's Head of Operations and hosted by a rotating group of committed members.

The collaborative foundations laid in Phase One have acted as catalyst for trust, efficiency and the making of informed decisions which has accelerated impact across South Ken ZEN+ programme members.

In-kind Contributions to the Programme (2022–2025)

Member organisations have made significant in-kind contributions to the programme through the provision of staff time, technical expertise, and leadership across governance, delivery, and workshops. This has included sustained involvement in strategic and operational structures such as the Steering Group and Plenary sessions alongside targeted delivery through working groups and projects including the Heat Network Project, Biodiversity Working Group, GiGL Working Group, and the Planters Project.

Further in-kind support has been provided through specialist delivery and sector round tables (Estates, Catering, and Retail), procurement activity via the Procurement Delivery and Drafting Groups, Emissions Dashboard development and participation, intern recruitment and supervision, skills development through workshops, and capacity-building through CLT training and CPD.

Between 2022 and 2024, member organisations contributed a total of 4,800 hours of in-kind time, equivalent to £236,384 (till end of financial year 2025) of in-kind contributions⁹, or 689.5 working days.

In addition to member time contributions, other in-kind and programme-related contributions have supported delivery. Expenditure by ERCG to date on the programme totals £165,993, alongside £74,943 of in-kind support provided as additional, in-kind support from 3ADAPT.

Taken together, total in-kind and associated contributions to the programme between 2022 and 2025 amount to **£477,320** (end of financial year 2025), demonstrating a substantial level of partner commitment and resourcing beyond direct cash funding. This is slightly more than the total amount of funding secured from RC1851 for the delivery of Phase 1 alone.

In addition, the Programme has engaged with the wider local community, from youth groups, community groups, residents, students and visitors, all of whom are a crucial part of ensuring neighbourhood-level change is achieved. By increasing capacity at an individual level, it's possible to lead to collective change.

The Programme also has the potential to extend beyond South Kensington and inspire and inform the wider public. This is particularly relevant given that over 24 million people pass through the neighbourhood each year. An example of the potential ripple-effect of the Programme is the fact that South Ken ZEN+ received the Sustainability Impact Award at the Kensington & Chelsea & Westminster Chamber of Commerce Awards in October 2025. ERCG was also invited to lead a workshop on collective sustainability initiatives at the 2025 conference of the Global Cultural Districts Network.

⁹ The in-kind contributions are calculated using The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) standard rates which is £50 per hour for Professional Volunteer, £20 per hour for Skilled Volunteer, and £10 per hour for Volunteer

ADDED VALUE OF THE PROGRAMME

Beyond the delivery of the core objectives, the programme has generated substantial added value and return on investment. This includes significant in-kind contributions from member organisations and ERCG, and additional funding leveraged. In parallel, the programme delivered a wide range of knowledge-sharing and engagement activities designed to build awareness, strengthen local understanding of climate and biodiversity challenges, resulting in additional social value.

In-kind Contributions

The in-kind contribution of member organisations has remained consistently strong across the programme period, demonstrating sustained commitment and engagement. This has almost doubled over the last year suggesting that members think the programme is worth participating in, and reflecting a strong collective investment of time, expertise, and resources.

Estimated In-kind Contribution of member organisations

	2022 - 2024	2025	TOTAL
Total Hours	2530.5	2295	4825.5
Total Days	361.5	328	689.5
Indicative Value to Dec 2025 ¹⁰	£126,525	£109,859	£236,384

(These calculations are based in-kind professional volunteer time being valued at £50 per hour, as per the National Lottery Heritage Fund's in-kind standard rates)

Programme Value against Investment

Investment in South Ken ZEN+ is already delivering significant and multiplying benefits, including reduced carbon emissions, greater organisational resilience, enhanced staff capability, strengthened public engagement, and sector-leading sustainability leadership.

The programme has secured approximately **~£470,000** in grant funding from 1851, alongside a further **~£165,000** generated through additional grants, contributions, and in-kind support from partners.

The programme demonstrates strong value for money, with the initial grant investment enabling substantial additional contributions and leveraged resources from programme members and partners.

- **Total grant received: £473,755**
- **Total value generated through in-kind and leveraged contributions: £568,320**
 - Total in-kind contributions from programme members: £236,384.29
 - Additional funding leveraged by South Ken ZEN+: £165,943.00
 - Further in-kind support contributed to ERCG: £165,993.00
- **Total programme value: 1.04 million**

The total programme value (grant amount and leveraged otherwise through additional funding and in-kind contributions) is 1.04 million, almost double the initial grant invested. This shows the programme has created an additional value that is almost 2.19 times the original investment.

¹⁰ Total in-kind contributions from members up to the financial year end 2025 amount to £236,384. For reporting and forecasting purposes, this figure has been rounded and presented as approximately £250,000 for the full year in the headline figures.

Specifically, the programme has secured £568,320 in value through in-kind and leveraged contributions alone, equivalent to 1.20 times the initial grant.

For every £1 of grant funding invested, the programme has generated an additional £1.20 through leveraged contributions, resulting in a total value of approximately £2.20 per £1 invested

The calculations above exclude the Heat & Energy Project grant and associated in-kind contributions, as these were delivered as additional, standalone projects. However, when the Heat & Energy Project funding is taken into account, comprising £70,000 from the 1851 Heat & Energy Project Grant from RC1851 and a further £257,000 in related GLA heat network grants, and cash contributions (totalling £327,000), the overall programme value increases to **£1.37 million**. On this basis, the programme has generated additional value equivalent to **2.88** times the original investment.

Social Value of South Ken ZEN+

The South Ken ZEN+ programme also delivered social value through its activities and engagement. While the previous sections provide an overview of the full suite of programme activities, the calculation of monetised social value has been limited to directly attributable initiatives. These include Carbon Literacy Training, internships supported, and the cultural events and activities (i.e. festival and walking tours) organised under the programme.

It is important to note that this monetised figure does not capture the full breadth of the programme's social impact. Many contributions, such as the significant time and resources allocated by the programme manager to facilitate collaboration, raise awareness, build networks, and provide other intangible support, are not reflected in the financial calculations. These non-monetisable efforts have been essential in fostering institutional engagement, strengthening partnerships, and creating a lasting culture of sustainability, representing a wider social value that extends beyond what is included below.

Over the past year, a number of training opportunities have been provided, including supporting individuals with Carbon Literacy Training courses and certification, and the creation of a paid internship. Together these are estimated to have generated social value of c.£31,000.

Participation in cultural events has further generated social value, with over 1,000 individuals participating in the Great Exhibition Road festival engaging in activities such as festival stalls, public events and walking tours, generating estimated social value of £70,000.

Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate the programme's broader impact beyond environmental outcomes, with a total monetised social value generated of c.£110K on top of the figures outlined in the section above, highlighting the wider benefits to individuals and the community.

Approximately £110K generated in social value through training, internship and cultural activities

Method note: The calculations of social value and the methodology used are based on the **Measure Up** framework. Measure Up's methodology is built on a evidence-based approach that uses economic, social, fiscal and environmental proxies to assess social value and wellbeing. This approach is informed first and foremost by the UK Government Treasury **Green Book**, the authoritative guidance for undertaking monitoring and evaluation before, during and after the implementation of policies, programmes and projects. Measure Up also draws on the **Supplementary Guidance on Wellbeing** to inform wellbeing valuation using WELLBYs (Wellbeing Adjusted Life Years).

PRD has applied proxy values for monetised social value based on the above-mentioned framework for selected outcomes, including: training (e.g. part-time courses undertaken over the past year by one person) and participation in cultural events (e.g. one person attending cultural activities once/twice per year). These proxy values are then adjusted for additionality, i.e. outcomes that would have occurred regardless of the intervention, using government guidelines on additionality as set out in the **Additionality Guide (fourth edition, 2014)** published by the Homes and Communities Agency. Adjustments are made based on relevant assumptions in line with standard practice.

Value of the Programme Manager

A key source of added value within the programme has been the strength and effectiveness of its staffing model, particularly the dedicated role of the Programme Manager. Having a single, dedicated point of coordination has been critical in maintaining momentum, cultivating collaboration and ensuring high-quality delivery across all workstreams. Acting as a central hub, the Programme Manager has coordinated complex activities, supported partner engagement and translated the programme's strategic ambitions into tangible outcomes. This role has been fundamental in building trust, creating consistency and enabling collective action across a diverse partnership.

Feedback from participants further reinforces the importance of this role. Members have expressed strong support for the programme and appreciation for the leadership provided, with one noting, *"I fully back the scheme and we are proud members"*. The energy and leadership brought by individuals like Tiva Montalbano were also specifically praised, with one respondent stating, *"Tiva is great and brings brilliant energy and focus"* and another highlighting that *"Tiva should receive significant praise for the energy and skills she has brought to this programme."*

At the same time, participants have acknowledged the scale of ambition, observing that *"the job is too big for one person, and additional resources are needed to achieve SKZ+ aims quickly and sustainably."* Continued investment in this role will provide the leadership, continuity, and operational capacity required to sustain progress and support the programme's future growth.

The Programme Manager has developed a comprehensive, programme-wide understanding of member priorities, capabilities and challenges which provides continuity and stability across the programme. For example, through direct involvement in the round tables and the delivery of training, she has been able to connect people, insights and activities across workstreams, enabling members to undertake coordinated actions they could not achieve independently.

The value of this approach is evidenced through practical outcomes, such as innovative collaborative projects including the Dye Garden initiative, a collaboration between the Design Museum and the Royal College of Art. These demonstrate how shared leadership and facilitation can unlock ideas, innovation and delivery on the ground. This model has increasingly been recognised by ERCG as a proof-of-concept for how place-based programmes can be effectively convened and delivered in practice.

ENABLING CHANGE ACROSS SOUTH KENSINGTON

This section draws on the successes of collaborative activities, capacity-building initiatives, and engagement efforts that have effectively supported members in working collectively towards zero emissions, nature positive future. Some of the key successes of the programme for its members include:

1. Place-Based Sustainability Approach, Backed by World Leading Institutions

A key success of the programme has been its distinctive place-based approach to sustainability, underpinned by the active involvement of world-leading cultural, educational and research institutions. From the outset, South Ken ZEN+ has been recognised as a novel and ambitious model for supporting the net zero transition at neighbourhood scale. The programme has benefited from consistent endorsement and engagement at the highest levels since its inception. Initial discussions in 2021, a formal pitch in 2022, and the establishment of South Ken ZEN+ in 2023 mark a clear trajectory of growing institutional commitment. The annual leadership dinner held in November 2025 provided an important point of reflection, reinforcing shared ownership and ambition across the partnership and strengthening buy-in from key stakeholders.

"It has brought it right up the board agenda and is now seen as an important priority."

Member of SKZ+ Programme
[Quote from 2024 Evaluation Report]

This sustained senior-level backing has been critical in legitimising the programme, enabling collaboration across complex organisations and maintaining momentum over time. As the programme moves into its next phase, there is a clear opportunity both to sustain this high-level support and to more fully leverage the depth of subject-matter expertise within member institutions. A more strategic approach to communications will be essential to increase visibility, articulate impact and position South Ken ZEN+ as a leading example of how place-based collaboration can accelerate climate action. To date, communications have largely been delivered on an ad-hoc basis, shaped by delivery capacity and the frequent transition in the ERCG Chief Executive role (five CEOs in three years). Future phases should prioritise targeted engagement with senior leaders, clear advocacy expectations, and regular check-in points to ensure continued ownership and leadership support (see recommendations in the next chapter).

Looking ahead, South Ken ZEN+ is well placed to move beyond delivery alone and to actively share its learning with the wider sector. As a globally recognised location, the partnership has a responsibility to lead by example, demonstrating what is possible through collective action and supporting the replication of this approach in other places.

2. A Platform for Collaboration, Knowledge Exchange and Collective Action

The South Ken ZEN+ programme is unique and successful because it combines measurable impact with collaborative momentum, creating tangible benefits for member organisations and for the South Kensington neighbourhood.

The programme has built a strong professional network, linking some of the world's leading institutions, fostering peer learning, and facilitating joint initiatives such as aligned greening efforts, economies of scale, citizen science projects, and collaborative funding applications.

The co-creation of the South Ken ZEN+ Charter for a Sustainable Supply Chain demonstrates the impact of collective action, and the recognition that a joined-up approach can lead to more impact and reduce the burden of time and repeated actions undertaken by each organisation.

In addition, South Ken ZEN+ functions as a central connector, enabling the sharing of knowledge, capacity and resources for collective benefit. By convening organisations around shared challenges and priorities, the programme creates the conditions to do more and to do it more quickly, than what would be possible through individual action alone. This collaborative platform reduces duplication, accelerates learning and unlocks efficiencies, allowing members to focus their efforts where they can have the greatest impact. In doing so, South Ken ZEN+ supports a shift from isolated activity to coordinated action, strengthening delivery at pace while reinforcing the value of collaboration as a core principle of the programme.

“The great thing about the collective approach to sustainability is the fact that it's all of our problems, and we all have very similar issues to tackle. So it's really great to have the support network of colleagues and peers to really learn from them and provide that support”

Head of Sustainability - Historic Royal Palaces

Members feedback repeatedly highlights that South Ken ZEN+, has supported internal staff engagement and sustainability initiatives; it has built a network of professionals working towards shared sustainability goals and helped with data capture, benchmarking, and reporting.

Raising awareness internally and ensuring sustainability is a priority for senior leadership and staff was also highlighted, as were the benefits of networking opportunities, space to collaborate and access to expertise.

Phase One of South Ken ZEN+ has successfully laid the foundational building blocks necessary to achieve the priorities agreed on by members. Large institutions often have their own sustainability goals and priorities, which allowed for projects, such as the Biodiversity Baseline, to rely on (and enhance) preexisting expertise and data. Additionally, smaller organisations have acknowledged the benefits of being in a collective, specifically citing the value of having access to sustainability experts who allow them to learn from established practices and readily leverage the expertise available within the group. Where typically, sustainability initiatives often struggle to scale, in South Kensington, collaboration at neighbourhood level provides a platform to push sustainability up the agenda and demonstrate what a place-based transition looks like in practice.

“Building connections with colleagues at other institutions, working together on shared goals, sharing knowledge and learnings - collaborative approach to sustainability throughout the neighbourhood.”

Member of SKZ+ Programme
[Quote from 2024 Evaluation Report]

3. A Way to Benchmarking Progress Effectively

The Emissions Dashboard has been praised by members for proving a platform to lean on carbon experts in the neighbourhood, to raise sustainability up the agenda internally and provides healthy competition as to carbon reduction between neighbours. The Dashboard now contains two years' worth of emissions data, which has been collected from 15 organisations. While this is a good baseline, to really see change, further projects will be needed to continue tracking and identifying where and when carbon reductions are happening.

The Emissions Dashboard is a perfect example of where data-led priorities could be established and monitored. This, combined with qualitative methods, such as case studies, helps to capture the progress being made and allows for reflection on the meaningful changes taking place.

“What’s wonderful about South Ken ZEN+ is now I have all the heads of sustainability at major London museums basically on speed dial.”

Head of Exhibitions & Environmental Impact Lead – Design Museum

4. Enabling Training, Capacity-building and Skills Development for Long-Term Impact

Capacity-building and training are embedded as a core pillar of South Ken ZEN+. This ensures that sustainability is a strategic aspiration and supports skills development within the employees of the member organisations to support better decision making around sustainability.

The South Ken ZEN+ newsletter, established early in Phase one, provides a platform for subscribers to find useful sustainability resources and events for CPD, and to encourage continued personal and organisational development. The impact of this approach is also seen in Carbon Literacy Training undertaken by South Ken ZEN+, with over 60 individuals having attended training in the first six months of roll-out, and nine empowered to lead training themselves. The ripple-effect of this growing movement will ensure that more and more people across the neighbourhood are engaged and empowered to take both individual and collective climate actions.

“We need to build a new best practice. We can’t do that by ourselves. We have to do it in collaboration with others and by forging pathways together.”

Head of Exhibitions & Environmental Impact Lead – Design Museum

In order to see collective action, a range of Phase One activities were designed to create long-term impact for members. Key project streams such as the Knowledge Network have created a community of experts who can respond to queries/consultations. In addition, they can advise on South Ken ZEN+ initiatives, disseminate knowledge (both internal and external) about sustainability and decarbonisation and share capacity, ensuring everyone is advancing towards 2030 net zero goal together.

Through the sharing of best practice, tools, and lessons-learned, the Programme empowers organisations to be bolder and motivated in their sustainability programming and, in turn, engage their audiences in climate action. Having programme outputs that allow for collaborative input ultimately reduces the time and capacity spent if organisations were individually achieving these. This also has the benefit of providing time for additional work to be done such as knowledge-sharing and up-skilling.

“Saving emissions and doing business more sustainably has been a permanent goal since South Ken ZEN+ started. Knowing that other organisations are also feeling challenges, yet together we can come up with solutions, helps to get through the process.”

Member of SKZ+ Programme
[Quote from 2024 Evaluation Report]

5. Using Public Engagement as a Tool for Advocacy and Behaviour Change

Public engagement has played an important role in sustaining momentum, strengthening advocacy and supporting behaviour change across the programme. South Ken ZEN+ has engaged the wider public through a range of activities, including events, walking tours and public-facing initiatives, helping to raise awareness of the programme and its ambitions among local communities and visitors. These interventions have supported visibility, encouraged dialogue and positioned sustainability as a shared, place-based endeavour rather than an institution-only agenda.

By leveraging the unique cultural and scientific identity of South Kensington, the programme embeds sustainability within the everyday experience of learning, discovery and creativity. This approach contributes to a broader cultural shift, where climate action and nature recovery become integral to how people understand and interact with the neighbourhood. While the full impact of this engagement is difficult to quantify, evidence from other place-based regeneration in comparable sectors suggests that sustained place-based outcomes can generate significant ripple effects over time. For example, Gateshead’s Baltic Quarter¹¹ has developed into a thriving low-carbon, high-tech business district anchored by cultural institutions such as The Glasshouse and Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. It hosts over 40 tech and creative companies, benefits from world-class low-carbon energy infrastructure including an award-winning District Energy Centre, and contributes to urban regeneration by combining innovation, sustainability and economic opportunity. These include increased awareness, shifts in attitudes and norms, and greater readiness for behaviour change.

In this context, South Ken ZEN+’s public engagement work is likely to extend its influence well beyond direct participants, amplifying impact across audiences, institutions and future initiatives.

“If we talk together and think together and plan together, we could make an extraordinary rich slice of biodiversity here in the core of London. We’ve got to take the opportunities we’ve got in front of us to continue to collectively invest in making, meaningful change happen in this incredibly charismatic context.”

Director – Royal Geographical Society

¹¹ Low Carbon, High Tech: Gateshead’s Baltic Quarter, September 2025, <https://investnewcastle.com/news/industry-news/low-carbon-high-tech-gatesheads-baltic-quarter/>

6. An Exemplar for Innovation, Best Practice and Rigour

South Ken ZEN+ provides a valuable platform for innovation, experimentation and the piloting of new approaches, enabling members to test ideas, share risks and learn collectively. By operating at neighbourhood scale, the programme can trial initiatives on behalf of member organisations that may otherwise be constrained by capacity, budgets or day-to-day operational pressures. This ability to innovate, experiment and absorb lessons learned represents a significant value-add, reducing risk for individual organisations while accelerating the adoption of effective solutions.

In parallel, South Ken ZEN+ facilitates the development of a robust evidence base to support concrete, data-informed action. By bringing together learning, best practice and insights from across the partnership and from external experts where appropriate, the programme harnesses collective intelligence to improve decision-making and prioritisation. This shared rigour supports better outcomes, strengthens accountability and increases the likelihood of accelerated progress towards the programme's environmental and social objectives.

“We are already very motivated to catalyse action.”

Member of SKZ+ Programme
[Quote from 2024 Evaluation Report]

3 WHAT'S NEXT

Looking ahead, South Ken ZEN+ will continue to play a pivotal role in addressing the climate emergency and its impacts on the South Kensington neighbourhood. Phase One of the South Ken ZEN+ programme represents an important milestone, placing South Kensington on a solid pathway towards becoming a zero-emissions, nature-positive and climate-resilient neighbourhood.

This progress has been made possible through the commitment and collaboration of member organisations brought together through the programme, aligned around shared priorities and collective action. By addressing emissions and fostering innovation across institutional sustainability initiatives and supply chains, the programme has generated significant momentum. This has enabled members to better understand, monitor and begin to reduce their environmental footprints, while also inspiring wider engagement and support with the South Kensington community.

As the programme enters its next phase (2026–2030), there is a clear opportunity to build on this strong foundation, further strengthening member collaboration, community engagement and neighbourhood-wide impact. South Ken ZEN+ also has the potential to act as an exemplar, acting as an inspiration for other place-based partnerships and providing a model that can be replicated elsewhere.

Through Phase One, the programme has begun to build a clearer understanding of what works well, where its strengths lie, and where collective action adds the greatest value. South Ken ZEN+, with support from ERCG and its diverse cohort of members, is particularly well placed to convene, coordinate and accelerate action where individual organisations cannot act alone. Going forward, the programme's focus should increasingly be on those areas where collective action is both justified and necessary, while enabling members to take ownership of actions they are able to deliver independently.

The following recommendations are proposed for consideration as the programme moves into its next phase.

1. Strengthen Programme Goals to Align with Tangible Outcomes

Several of the current goals, including achieving net zero emissions before 2040, reducing emissions by 50% by 2030, expanding urban green space by 20%, achieving net biodiversity gain, reducing waste and increasing sustainable travel, are not yet fully measurable or directly attributable to the South Ken ZEN+ programme. South Ken ZEN+ alone cannot deliver these outcomes – this relies on the collective effort of participating members. To strengthen delivery, the next phase will require goals that are more specific, tangibly deliverable and clearly linked to programme activities.

The development of a clear Theory of Change will support this by clarifying the programme's unique contribution, aligning activities with wider neighbourhood priorities and ensuring relevance to the local context. Linking the South Ken ZEN+ Theory of Change with the broader ERCG Theory of Change will further strengthen alignment and coherence across the overall programme.

2. Build on the Current Offer

Training and capacity-building have been central to the success of South Ken ZEN+ Phase One. Expanding this offer through additional training, roundtables, workshops and knowledge-sharing opportunities will help maintain momentum and build a groundswell of support for the work. As the programme matures, continuing workshops on emerging areas of interest - as delivered in 2025 – will be an effective approach to supporting best practice and innovation.

Community engagement, advocacy and awareness-raising activities, including walking tours and festivals, should also continue to form part of the programme offer. Feedback indicates strong community appetite for tangible action, suggesting opportunities to build local momentum around proposed greening and resilience projects such as expanded tree planting, greening of Exhibition Road and increased climate resilience measures.

Carbon Literacy Training (CLT) represents a significant opportunity to build shared expertise across the partnership. With a further 12 CLT sessions scheduled for 2026, the programme is on track to train over 100 individuals, creating a critical mass of carbon-literate practitioners and decision-makers. This has strong potential for a ripple effect, as participants embed learning within their organisations and influence wider teams, policies and practices. There is also a clear opportunity to partner with the Carbon Literacy Trust to develop South Kensington as a Carbon Literate Locality, positioning the district as a recognised hub of carbon literacy and leadership. Feedback consistently highlights the effectiveness of the in-person, cross-institutional delivery model, particularly the value of participant diversity, shared learning and the professional and personal development benefits. Bringing together senior leaders and operational staff creates a rich learning environment that encourages peer exchange and shared problem-solving. This collective approach has proven more impactful than organisation-specific training.

Building on the success of CLT, the programme should continue with additional forms of collective training, such as Biodiversity Literacy, Water Literacy or Greenwashing (already in the pipeline). Developing practical resources, including carbon literacy for new starters and greenwashing online learning, would further support long-term cultural change. Enabling delivery by trained members and external partners will help distribute capacity, reduce reliance on the Programme Manager and ensure scalability.

3. Continue and Sustain More Targeted Engagement

Limited participation from member organisation at the outset is understandable, as sufficient time is needed to build trust. However, sustained engagement and perseverance to develop confidence over time can lead to meaningful outcomes. Expanding on the engagement with local residents, visitors, schools and community partners will remain critical to sustaining momentum and embedding climate action across the neighbourhood. While buy-in from larger member organisations has been strong, smaller organisations continue to face capacity constraints that limit active participation. Addressing this through more tailored approaches, such as one-to-one support for smaller members and peer-to-peer support from larger organisations, could help broaden and deepen engagement.

4. Prioritise Senior Leadership Support and Visibility

Sustaining high-level support and visibility among senior leaders, alongside strong subject matter expertise, remains critical. This requires more targeted and continuous engagement with senior leadership, with clear responsibility for the ERCG Executive to actively advocate for the programme. High turnover in ERCG Chief Executives in recent years has introduced instability and challenged programme continuity; This has further highlighted the value of the Programme Manager role as a stabilising presence in uncertain times. Consistency of leadership is a key factor in building trust.

Future engagement should be more tailored, combining one-to-one conversations, briefings with senior leadership and regular structured check-ins to maintain senior-level interest and commitment. A more tactical approach to engagement will help ensure communications are relevant, timely and aligned with member priorities.

Member engagement more broadly should also be streamlined and tailored, moving beyond plenary sessions to include structured briefings held approximately every six months. Engagement fatigue remains an ongoing challenge, particularly due to high volumes of communication and overlapping initiatives. A more selective and considered approach to communications, focused on the right people at the right time, will support deeper engagement while respecting organisational capacity. Improved onboarding processes could further help to bring in additional technical expertise as required.

5. Look for Opportunities to Enhance Capacity and Funding

Additional capacity remains a key requirement for maintaining the momentum. The provision of 0.2 FTE administrative support for the Programme in 2025 has been transformative and should be maintained, enabling the Programme Manager to focus on delivery rather than administration. Over time, incremental increases in capacity will be needed to deliver more transformative projects and avoid missed opportunities for visibility, influence and funding. Communications, fundraising and technical support should be delivered in ways that add capacity, including onboarding additional support as needed. Strengthening strategic communications and tactical support, alongside greater engagement with the wider sector and a network of similar accelerators, will help maintain momentum and better showcase achievements.

Finally, funding for South Ken ZEN+ remains agreed on a year-by-year basis, creating a start-stop risk that threatens continuity and momentum. Longer-term funding would support stability, member confidence and ambition. The programme should continue to explore additional funding opportunities to support major initiatives, including the continued exploration of a Green Vision for the neighbourhood and shared opportunities around heat and energy decarbonisation. To date, the programme has been viewed as an add-on to ERCG's core activities, despite its long-term aspirations and members' clear appetite for this to become BAU. Addressing this financial challenge will enable sustainable delivery, growth and lasting impact.

6. Continue to Think around Monitoring and Collective Action

To maintain progress on emissions monitoring, additional resources will be required to sustain and enhance the collective reporting process. Long-term carbon tracking is essential for understanding progress, ensuring accountability and delivering the neighbourhood's net zero ambitions. At the same time, there is a need to reflect on whether, after nearly three years of tailored support, select members are now able undertake emissions reporting independently. Alternative models, such as buddying schemes between more advanced and less experienced organisations, could reduce reliance on consultants and free up programme resources. Overall, the programme should continue to focus its efforts on those activities that can only be achieved collectively, where joint action delivers clear added value.

Additionally, a robust approach to tracking and measuring social value should be embedded within the monitoring framework. This is important to ensure that the programme's wider social, economic and environmental benefits are clearly evidenced and understood, beyond core delivery outputs. Effective measurement will support accountability, demonstrate value to members and funders, inform continuous improvement, and strengthen the case for long-term investment by clearly articulating the programme's impact over time.

7. Showcase Progress and Share Success more Widely

The South Ken ZEN+ website now hosts a growing collection of case studies capturing the progress made by individual member organisations. These will continue to expand as the programme advances towards its 2030 milestones. To maximise the impact of this growing evidence base, there is a clear need for a more strategic and coordinated communications approach that moves beyond passive reporting to proactive storytelling, targeted engagement and consistent messaging across platforms.

Looking ahead, there is increasing interest in hosting a South Ken ZEN+ Procurement Symposium in 2026, providing an opportunity to showcase innovation, share learning and strengthen cross-sector collaboration. A strengthened communications strategy would help ensure such initiatives reach the right audiences, including policymakers, funders and potential partner organisations, and position South Ken ZEN+ as a credible, replicable model. There is further scope to raise the profile of South Ken ZEN+ as a methodology that could be applied in other neighbourhoods. In the context of global sustainability challenges, this collective action demonstrates how cultural, educational and scientific institutions can lead by example, deliver measurable impact, influence policy and inspire wider societal change.

Ultimately, what comes next is centred on ensuring that all partners recognise that the foundations for long-term transformation are now firmly in place. The journey towards zero emissions, climate-resilient South Kensington is well underway, and it is vital that momentum is maintained so that the neighbourhood can realise its full potential in the years ahead.

ANNEX

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

	2021–2022: Foundation and Strategic Development	2023: Consolidation and Capacity-building	2024: Implementation and Visibility	2025: Expansion and Recognition
Zero Emissions	<p>Established a Steering Group and created the Zero Emissions and Circular Economy Working Group to drive carbon reduction initiatives across ERCG members and Sustainable Travel Working Group to promote low-carbon mobility and active travel options within the neighbourhood</p> <p>Produced a report outlining organisations' net zero commitments and progress.</p> <p>Conducted baseline research to inform emissions reduction strategies.</p>	<p>Launched the ZEN+ Toolkit, a scalable emissions reporting and comparison system.</p> <p>Developed a reporting framework methodology to ensure consistent emissions data tracking.</p> <p>Secured GLA funding for a feasibility study on a low-carbon heat network for estates along Exhibition Road.</p> <p>Commissioned Arup, via the V&A and GLA, to deliver the Heat Network Feasibility Study.</p> <p>Introduced the Charter for Sustainable Procurement, establishing shared principles for ethical and resource-efficient purchasing.</p> <p>Secured Member Declared Contributions (MDCs), committing 90% of ERCG members to embed sustainability in operations and procurement.</p>	<p>Established a baseline emissions dashboard, developed by 3ADAPT.</p> <p>Published the first South Ken ZEN+ Sustainability Report, with baseline data and infographics for all members.</p> <p>Hosted workshops with members to review emissions data and discuss reduction strategies.</p> <p>Advanced heat network discussions between member organisations, with additional support from the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 leads to an additional £70,000 Grant from GCE 1851</p> <p>Convened the first Estates and Facilities Managers roundtable (hosted by Imperial College London) to share best practice on sustainable transport and estate operations.</p>	<p>Recorded and reported the second year of emissions data via the dashboard.</p> <p>Continued developing the South Ken Heat Network concept, building on earlier feasibility findings.</p> <p>Won first prize in the Sustainability Impact category at the Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Business Awards (October 2025).</p>

Nature Positive	Created the Nature Positive Working Group to lead biodiversity and greening initiatives.	Secured £40,000 of NCIL funding from RBKC for a pilot planting scheme along Exhibition Road.	Conducted stakeholder engagement (Allies and Morrison) through surveys, workshops, and guided walks to inform local greening priorities.	Implemented the Exhibition Road planting pilot in collaboration with Imperial College London.
	Conducted baseline research to identify opportunities for increasing urban green space.	Incorporated nature-positive objectives into the Planning for a Greener Neighbourhood workstream.		Commissioned a Biodiversity Baseline Map for South Kensington with the Greater London Authority's GiGL.
Capacity-building, Engagement and Advocacy	<p>22 organisations regularly engaged in South Ken ZEN+ activities and initiatives.</p> <p>Delivering training: Carbon literacy, biodiversity literacy, greenwashing, sustainable procurement etc.</p> <p>Arranging round-tables & specialist networking/ knowledge-sharing: Estates, catering, events, retail, education, procurement, biodiversity and more</p>	<p>Nine ERCG members (40%) Sustainable Supply Chain Charter with some formally adapting it as their own Supplier Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Established a regular internal newsletter.</p>	<p>Delivered three walking tours on climate resilience and urban greening during the London Festival of Architecture and Great Exhibition Road Festival.</p> <p>Delivered walking tours highlighting sustainable travel routes and climate-resilient infrastructure.</p> <p>9 members developed their first-ever carbon footprints in 2024.</p> <p>Published the first Declaration of Shared Procurement Principles, marking a collective commitment to circular practices.</p> <p>Circular Economy Reuse Hub launched in 2024</p>	<p>Collaboratively developed a Greenwashing Guide to support transparent and responsible communications and purchasing.</p> <p>Delivered carbon literacy training to 60+ participants.</p> <p>Hosting a South Ken ZEN+ Procurement Symposium in 2026, providing an opportunity to showcase innovation, share learning and strengthen cross-sector collaboration.</p>



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