

DRAFT

182-202 Walworth Rd

Opportunity

**Embedding Neighbourhood Food
on the High Street**



Fabrix



1 | Executive Summary

A Community-led High-street Food Hub

Walworth is a culturally diverse area with a vibrant community, showcasing a wide range of culinary traditions. We have a unique opportunity to develop a transformative, high-street food space that celebrates this diversity while offering a platform for local residents to engage in cultural exchange, entrepreneurship, and education through food.

The site's location on Walworth Road maximises visibility and accessibility, bringing an opportunity to leverage high foot traffic, increase engagement with diverse groups and ultimately, foster a stronger local food system.

Key Objectives for the Community Food Space

- Establish a model that connects student residents with the local area and encourages active participation and contribution
- Create a multi-generational food space for social connections that celebrates the cultural diversity of the community and tackles loneliness.
- Provide a platform for local food businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive
- Improve access to nutritious meals for community members with less resource
- Promote sustainable food practices



Timeline Overview

2025-2028 Testing & capacity building, establishing community operating model and financing

2028-2053 Operating as successful community business

2 | Background and Opportunity

Pembroke House is working with development and investment partner Fabrix to design a high-street community food space, sitting below student residential units on Walworth Road. The site is due to be completed in 2028.

Building on existing community work and precedent models, Pembroke House is collaborating with local and national partners to co-design a space that offers local residents, including students, a platform to engage in cultural exchange, entrepreneurship and education.

This transformative space will be a central hub for the Walworth Neighbourhood Food Model, a long-term vision for the neighbourhood's food system, rooted in community engagement, economic empowerment and cultural preservation.

We will establish a model that connects student residents with the local area and encourages active participation and contribution to the local food system.

Cross-sector strategy

This initiative aims to bring together the often siloed strategy agendas of public health, local economy and the environment.

From 2025-2028 we have a valuable three-year window to build a programme of partnerships through which we can test local food-system projects and interventions, ensuring that we have a resilient and sustainable business model in place for full-scale delivery from 2028.



Fig 104 Ground Floor diagram showing the activity of the ground floor



3 | Context and Introductions

Existing economic challenges and social dynamics in Walworth

Walworth is close to a number of major regeneration projects including the Old Kent Road, Aylesbury Estate, and Elephant and Castle, which are adding around 30,000 new homes. This growth raises concerns among residents about service shortages, rising inequality, and a weakening sense of community. As more affluent residents move in, there are worries that newcomers may not stay long-term, and young people feel excluded from the benefits of regeneration. Despite efforts to improve social cohesion, there are fears that services for vulnerable groups could be lost.

Barriers facing food organizations, entrepreneurs, and residents include:

- High costs associated with starting a food business
- Limited access to suitable physical spaces, markets, and procurement opportunities
- Specialist bid writers used by larger catering companies, making it harder for SMEs to compete.
New community spaces are often rented at near-market rates, and/or require ongoing revenue funding to cover operational costs.
- Local businesses, such as cafes and shops, are under pressure to adapt to shifting community needs
- The food sector is seen as low-wage and demanding, making it challenging to attract and retain staff.



Fabrix is a multi-award winning development and investment company, specialising in breathing life and bringing value to underutilised and overlooked urban spaces. They deliver placemaking through applying the highest standards of design and environmental performance, underpinned by a commitment to shaping a more sustainable and equitable world.

Pembroke House has worked within the community for over 130 years. In 2020 we began running an emergency food distribution hub to tackle local food insecurity. We know that free food is not tackling the root causes of food insecurity and created the Walworth Neighbourhood Food Model to deliver a community and partnership-led, long-term approach to local food system transformation.

4 | Walworth Rd Food Space

Our Mission

To use food as a tool for social connection, economic empowerment and a stronger community in the heart of Walworth.

Goals



Create a high-street food space for social connections that celebrates the cultural diversity of the community



Community wealth building - support local food businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive



Improve access to nutritious meals for community members with less resource



Promote sustainable food practices



Establish a model of community-driven development that is replicable in other wards.



Encourage and empower students to be active, positive and engaging community members

Key Actors

This will be a multi-actor, cross-sectoral programme. We are engaging both supply-side and demand-side actors including producers, processors, distributors and suppliers as well as councils, policymakers and local residents.

Pembroke House will facilitate the programme and convene the partnership with leading community organisations, local government, design and infrastructure organisations many of whom we already have a working relationship with (p12).

Community Wealth Creation

The site is an opportunity to build a high-street site that creates and retains wealth inside the area by supporting community-led enterprises, building capacity through skills training and increasing local employment.

Scaling our Location

We will use our current assets for testing before moving to the Chatelain House site on Walworth Road. The current assets are not on the high street and this will be taken into account when measuring the impact and footfall of tests.

2025-2028:

Walworth Living Room: kitchen, large Hall, meeting space and courtyard.

Pembroke House: kitchen: meeting Space, garden & office space

Partner spaces: community spaces with kitchens, TRA Halls

Pop-up: catering, community events & markets

2029 Onwards:

182-202 Walworth Rd Site, network of local businesses, catering, community events

5 | Funding Model

Our aim is a sustainable blended, model that capitalises on the opportunity that the high st location provides for revenue generation.

Realistically, some grant Funding will be necessary in the set-up phases. Funding will be required for building capacity for the community business, testing our operational model, training and skills development establishing the community business customer base, and supporting community governance.

We will also look at funding opportunities that include, but are not limited to: community share funding, corporate funding, and social investment.

This is matched by a very substantial contribution from the developer Fabix for both fit-out costs and a long (25yr) lease at peppercorn rent, and current Pembroke House assets, knowledge base, and networks, put at the disposal of this initiative. See following page for details

Phase 1: 2025-2028 Testing, Capacity Building, Fundraise & Launch



Phase 2: 2028-2031 Start-up finance secured & site operational



Phase 3: 2032-2053 Operating as successful community business



Indicative chart showing a transition from grant funding towards a sustainable model with a year-on-year decrease in grant funding, and growth in income from sales.

7 | Set-up Phase: Testing Our Model

A Portfolio Approach to Testing

We have selected a varied set of initial projects based on their potential impact and mission alignment as well as their ability to generate new knowledge.

Social systems (including food) are complex and dynamic. What and how people eat is shaped by social factors but also by price, availability, placement and marketing which in turn is shaped by policies across the food system. By designing tests that act on multiple levels of the system, we can work with, rather than against this dynamism.

Creating a Local Innovation Ecosystem

Tests are run in parallel to identify the types of interdependencies and synergies needed for a sustainable programme. Each test is:

- Mission-oriented
- Demand-led
- Place-based
- Iterative
- Holistic
- Grounded in citizen perspective

We have used the [Nordic Cookbook for Systems Change](#) as a framework for our model.

Guiding insights

1. **Food as culture, community and inclusion:** Food is part of, and a way to express one's identity.
2. **Engagement through co-creation:** Being part of the creative process is exciting, whether it's in the kitchen or in the room.
3. **Food as a market:** Public procurement of food, if streamlined, constitutes a large and attractive market that can influence how and where food is produced
4. **The value of a face behind food:** There is an independent value in interacting with the people who produce and prepare the food that you eat
5. **Building food literacy:** In general people (including procurement officers) don't have the capacity (knowledge, time and money) to provide healthy and sustainable food.
6. **Empowering all actors in the value chain:** It matters where the food is produced and by whom. Sustainable producers should be rewarded.
7. **Food as education:** People can learn about health, sustainability, culture, science, maths and other subjects through food.
8. **Say No to Surplus:** Redistribution of supermarket surplus fails to address the root causes of food waste in the supermarket supply chains. Redistribution is an inconsistent and unethical way to address food insecurity, and creates a further drain on the resources of communities.

8 | Impact and Intelligence

Impact Assessment and Testing Metrics

The impact assessment will focus on the environment, social value, local economy (community wealth retention) and public health. It will sit within a guiding framework of Pembroke House's organisational principles:

1. **Connect** - building relationships
2. **Grow** - learn skills
3. **Act** - take collective action
4. **Share** - provide a platform to share learnings
5. **Organisational sustainability and financial health**

Scaling impact

Impact assessment will develop over the different phases of work, supported by expert partners.

Each project will have bespoke impact metrics including some longitudinal studies, for example:

- Overall participation numbers
- # of new connections generated.
- Demographic diversity of participants
- # reporting stronger sense of community
- # of food businesses or individuals reporting an increase in income within the first year
- # of students using the space



Innovation Model - Testing, Feedback and Iteration

Each project is currently a minimum viable product and needs to be tested, iterated, adapted with and ultimately, handed over to, the community.

The purpose of testing is to understand the resource allocation, financial models and community participation required to make the Walworth Road community space self-sustaining.

The large-scale tests will occur in existing sites (Walworth Living Room and Pembroke House). For each test, we will collaborate with multiple community stakeholders/actors

9 | A Portfolio of Targeted Projects

Our pilots have emerged from four years of insights and work with the Neighbourhood Food model. They are selected based on their potential impact and mission alignment as well as their ability to generate new knowledge. This is not an exhaustive list and will be iterated. We have broken our projects into five places in the food system:

- The Garden - where food is grown
- The Market - where transactions are made
- The Kitchen - where food is prepared
- The Table - where food is shared
- The Contract - where agreements between parties are made

We have mapped our goals onto the prospective tests to ensure they are aligned.

Goals	
	Create a high-street food space for social connections that celebrates the cultural diversity of the community
	Community wealth building - support local food businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive
	Improve access to nutritious meals for community members with less resource
	Promote sustainable food practices
	Establish a model of community-driven development that is replicable in other wards.
	Encourage and empower students to be active, positive and engaging community members

THE KITCHEN

The Kitchen is the place for projects connected to how food is made and those who make it. It also includes how we think and teach about food.

A Community Kitchen with a Purpose

- Partner with business incubators e.g. [Trampoline](#) CIC by providing a commercial kitchen for food businesses to test. 40-70% of the businesses that go through Trampoline are food businesses but they currently don't have access to a kitchen to test their businesses or an easy-access marketplace to sell.



Action Learning Group for Local Food Businesses

- Create a space for local businesses to a) come together to find space for collaboration, resource sharing and problem solving and b) share their food through a community potluck. c) work together to build a wider local customer base



Walworth Dining Club

- The dining club will feature cooks and chefs from diverse backgrounds and cross-cultural collaboration. Fixed price set menus will be enjoyed at circular tables and will be a celebration of local food and an opportunity for local chefs to showcase their food.



THE MARKET

The Market is the place in the system where specific food purchases can be made and where sustainable food becomes the default option

Local Catering Network

- Formalise catering offer through use of kitchens at
- Pembroke House and WLR to include local cooks and produce. Offer this to room hire at the WLR and to local organisations, including procurement teams, as community-led catering.



The REKO Model - food system reconnection

- The [REKO model](#) (short for Fair consumption in Finnish) offers space an independent marketplace between local people and local food producers, which aims to subvert supermarkets and unsustainable supply chains. It is a pre-sale model, usually using facebook, where the produce is delivered in person by farmers/growers.

Community Cafe

- A neighbourhood space that offers homemade bites, fosters connection among residents, and prioritises sustainability and local partnerships. We will purposefully engage students who are working on social value projects to work in and with the space. The cafe will provide basic hot food and where possible, support local producers as a marketplace.



THE TABLE

The table describes how the act of eating is much more than just the food. The experiments here describe how food can be a strategy to achieve other goals, such as inclusion, community and different learning outcomes.

Community Lunch Club

- A community lunch that offers a space for social interaction, cultural connection, and nourishing. Lunch clubs usually cater to older members of the community but all, especially students, are welcome. It will strengthen social ties and foster a sense of belonging among Walworth residents. Although Pembroke House already hosts a community lunch, we have learnt a lot from the frequency and diversity of the [Hackney Lunch Club Network](#).



THE GARDEN

The Garden is the place for projects connected to where food is grown and how people interact with that land.

Growing in the kitchen

- Partner with [Greens Made Easy](#) to incorporate growing into the Walworth Living Room. Incorporating the greens grown into menus at the lunch club and cafe. Use it as an educational opportunity for a) visitors to the Walworth Living Room through community sessions and b) local food businesses who have space on site to grow microgreens.



Community Garden / Chef exchange

- Connect community gardens with chefs/food businesses to coordinate growing high value ingredients that often have long supply chains. Through our neighbourhood food model we have already created a connection between a chef and a grower of achocha who exchange produce for meals. Walworth has incredible culinary diversity and presents an opportunity to plan growing in community gardens.



THE CONTRACT

Pilots in the Contract operate behind the scenes, in the municipality. They facilitate connections between institutions, suppliers and citizens to better serve the community.

Neighbourhood Sustainability Certification

- Create a Good Food Neighbourhood Standard for practical actions local businesses can take, providing clear direction, support and ultimately a certificate. This would cover sourcing, society (from staff and customers to community), and the environment (reducing carbon footprint, waste and circular economies).

Our conversations with local businesses tell us they would like to do more for the environment but don't know where to start. The smallest fee for [Sustainable F&B Certification](#) is £1,000.



Uniting independent businesses and chains

- Forge partnerships between chain restaurants in the borough whose staff have charity/community days and local restaurants/chefs who have skills gaps. Facilitate training for the local restaurants/chefs from the suitable restaurant personnel whether it's on cost-effective menu design, marketing or work experience.



11 | Building a Neighbourhood Alliance

This opportunity builds on Pembroke House's experience as convener of collaborations and alliances in the neighbourhood.

2019-2021 [Walworth Group](#)

22 local organisations brought together to work collaboratively on community development inc. building a Social Regeneration Charter for Walworth.

2020-2021 [Walworth Emergency Food Hub](#)

Set-up of referrals, hub operations and full delivery system, working with 40 local referral partners including schools, hostels, housing officers, mutual aid groups, faith groups and Tenants and Residents Associations, coordinating 400 local cycle volunteers to deliver over 340,000 food parcels over 18 months..

2021-2023 [We Walworth](#)

Co-lead with Southwark Council, hosting Neighbourhood Welcome events and on street engagements. Holding equitable spaces in Working Groups for local residents to work together side-by-side with representatives from central gov, local gov and local organisations, tackling local food-related challenges at East St Market, and Burgess Park.

2021- [Neighbourhood Food Model](#)

Taking a systemic approach to food at a local level. inc. an Action Learning Group for local orgs working with surplus food, bringing together local food growers sharing challenges and opportunities, running food tours, a community chef pilot, and building connections between food growers, business owners and food lovers through food mapping and food sharing events.

A selection of our network that we will be approaching for partnership, support and building the sustainability of the programme:

Fabrix

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LONDON
DOUGHNUT
ECONOMICS
COALITION



NEW
ECONOMICS
FOUNDATION



sustain

SOUTHWARK
2030

Working together for a brighter future

ual: london college
of communication

Southwark
Council



Impact
on **Urban**
Health

*Note: Logos indicate our existing network only and does not indicate that partnership agreements are in place for this new opportunity.

Walworth Food Mapping 2024

Our recent food mapping project for which we developed a methodology for engaging and bringing together food growers, businesses owners, chefs and food enthusiasts in the area.



Local food

Growers, Business Owners, Cooks and Food Lovers



8 | Site of Research & Innovation

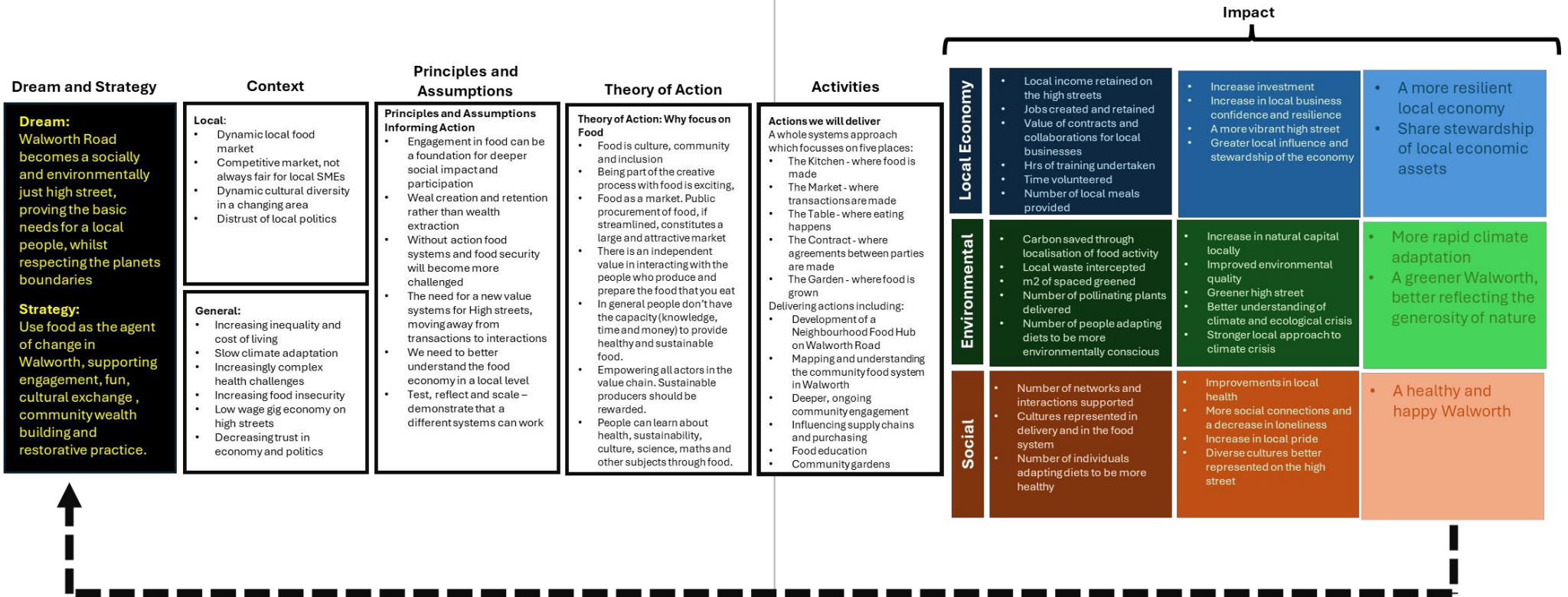
We are seeking collaboration and partnerships with groups, organisations and academic institutions who would be interested in supporting the initiative and using the site for innovation and learning. The 25 year lease gives a particular opportunity for tracking the long-term impacts through longitudinal studies.

Partnership Example - London Doughnut Economics Coalition (LDEC)

London Doughnut Economics Coalition (LDEC) is currently developing a range of workstreams with support from Impact on Urban Health. The aim of these workstreams is to explore where Doughnut Economic can have the biggest impact in London. They include a focus on neighbourhoods, high streets and food systems.

LDEC has agreed to work in partnership with Pembroke House to use the ideas of Doughnut Economic to build a framework for measuring impact and thinking differently about value on the high street.

The LDEC High Streets group will develop a new value framework and theory of change for the Walworth Rd site. This will use Doughnut Economics to challenge traditional notions of value on the high street, elevating social and ecological considerations and focussing on the role that food and new food systems can play in supporting community cohesion, better health and local wealth retention whilst reducing the environmental impact of local food.



12 | Call out for Partners and Collaborators

1. Researchers or research institutions

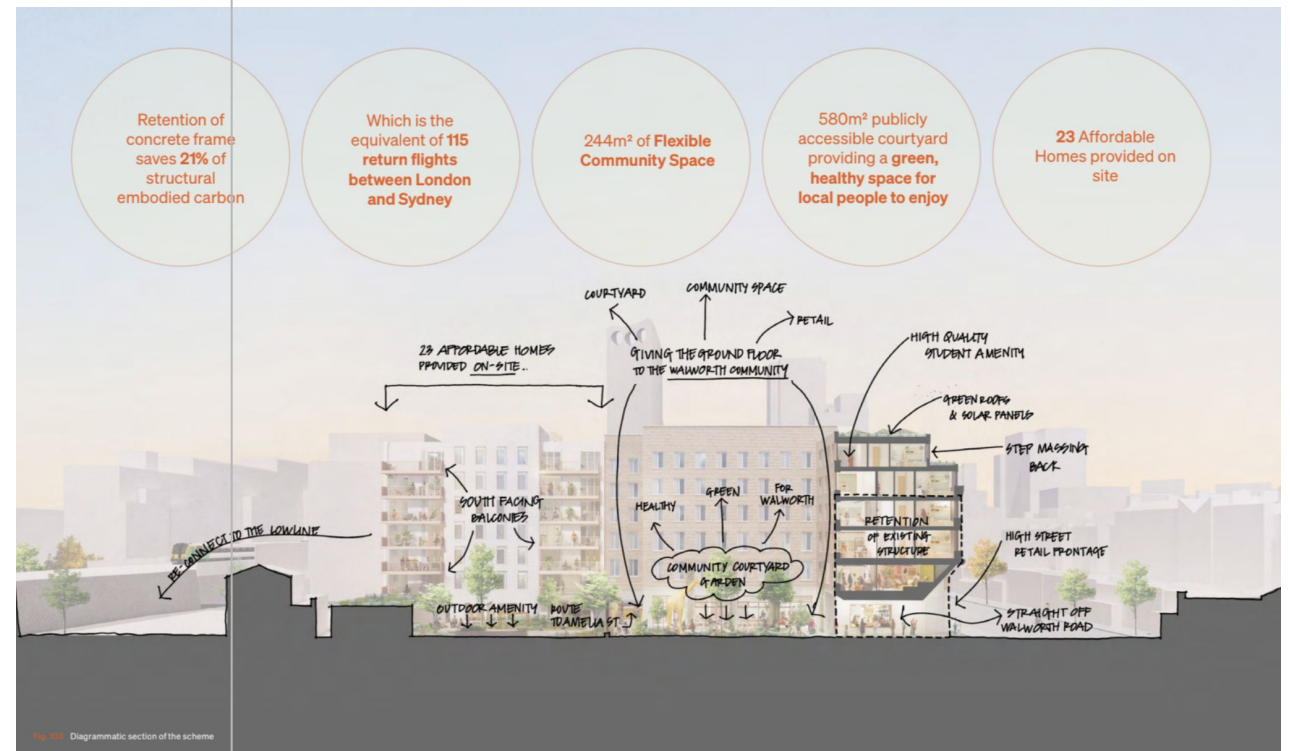
We are specifically looking for research partners in:

- Economic modelling (community wealth building)
- Environmental impact of local food systems and short supply chains
- Social impact
- Community-owned data collection

2. Community Organisations

If you are a community organisation interested in collaborating or becoming a project partner, please email: neighbourhood@pembrokehouse.org.uk with:

- Your organisation name
- The work you do or aim to do in the local food system



3. Local businesses/traders

If you are a local trader/business interested in collaborating or becoming a project partner, please email:

isabela.astorquiza@pembrokehouse.org.uk with:

- Your name / business name
- The work you do or aim to do in the local food system