

Freegle Media & Reuse Impact Annual Report (September 2025–August 2026)

To: Freegle Board of Trustees & Volunteer Community

From: Media Director - Cat Fletcher*

Date: September 2026

Subject: Annual Media, External Relations & Free Shop Operations Review

1. Executive Summary

Over the past year, Freegle's media, communications, and national reach have scaled significantly. Our digital engagement strategies have expanded, reaching new and younger audiences while securing major broadcast media coverage. It is not possible to do a lot of extra strategic PR work on such a limited budget, but I always put in extra time (for free) if needed to take advantage of opportunities when they arise (like BBC TV and Radio4)

Concurrently, our physical community project—the Brighton Freegle Free Shop—demonstrated exceptional environmental, social, and economic impact, diverting tens of tonnes of usable goods from waste streams. I volunteer 30+ hours a week to manage this Freegle enterprise.

Despite operational hurdles—such as substantial venue rent hikes, space restrictions, and funding uncertainties—we have achieved major policy connections with Defra, secured competitive national awards recognition, and mentored new community reuse initiatives across the UK.

2. Media Strategy, Social Media Performance & Upskilling

Digital & Social Media Overview

- **Resource Allocation:** One day per week was consistently dedicated to planning, creating, and publishing social media content.
- **Campaign Themes Supported:** Key campaigns throughout the year included *Buy Nothing New Month*, *Plastic Free July*, *No Mow May*, *National Hoarding Awareness Week*, *Earth Day*, *Great Big Green Week*, *European Week for Waste Prevention*, and seasonal/topical call-outs.
- **Audience Growth & Demographics:**
 - **Facebook:** Maintained a stable primary reach averaging between 35,000 to 50,000+ monthly views. The core Facebook demographic remains solid in the 45+ age bracket (over 50% of the audience).
 - **Instagram:** Growth was particularly notable on Instagram, with content successfully shifting the core demographic toward younger age groups (over

50% under 45). High-performing video reels (such as Free Shop time-lapses and upcycling tips) regularly drove strong engagement from non-followers.

Professional Development & Digital Skills

To continuously elevate Freegle's content production and digital reach, several government-funded digital skills courses were completed this year:

1. Completed **Level 2 Diploma in Skills for Working in Digital Technology Industries** (via *Creative Process Digital*), where the final presentation on "How I Made The Free Shop Website" was voted best in class.
2. About to start courses in **Digital Marketing, Video Editing/Edits, and Social Media Management and Strategy**.

3. High-Impact PR, Broadcast & Government Advocacy

National & Regional Broadcast Media

- **BBC1 *Morning Live* (April 2026)**: After 10+ hours of production work, background checks, and filming, a featured segment on Free Shops aired on Earth Day (April 22) to a daily audience averaging 1.2 to 1.6 million viewers, leading to a noticeable site traffic spike on iLoveFreegle.
- **BBC Radio 4 (*The Patch*)**: Contributed to a dedicated episode focusing on an Oxford reuse champion and hairdresser, highlighting local Freegle efforts and commemorating long-term Oxford volunteer Andy.
- **BBC Radio Sussex**: Featured in news commentary slots discussing regional food waste regulations, household recycling, and municipal waste changes.

Government Policy & Defra Collaboration

- **Defra Immersive Learning & Development Day (June 17, 2026)**: Hosted 8 Defra Circular Economy Policy Officers (including Mavis McKenzie-Cecil, Head of Circular Economy Strategy), local council climate officers, and Freegle Chair Neil Morris. The day combined policy presentations, on-site volunteering, and circular economy networking.
- **Defra Feedback**: Defra leadership commended the day as highly inspiring, establishing a foundation to influence future national reuse targets, social impact metrics, and local authority support.

Industry Awards Recognition

- **National Recycling & Waste Awards (*Awards for Excellence 2026*)**: The Brighton Freegle Free Shop was shortlisted for "**Reuse Initiative of the Year**". Attended the London ceremony on May 13 alongside industry leaders.

4. Brighton Free Shop & Re-use Model Expansion

Annual Environmental & Financial Metrics (2025 Full Year Overview)

During 2025, the physical Free Shop operated 151 days across 50 weeks:

- **Total Reuse Weight Collected:** 38,854.6 kg (~38.8 tonnes)
- **Customer Visits:** 52,140 visits (averaging ~1,042 visitors per week)
- **Estimated Carbon Savings:** 19,427.3 kg CO₂e
- **Volunteer Input:** 2,240 total volunteer hours (valued at £31,024 under living wage rates)
- **Direct Economic Value Reused:** £77,709.20
- **Social Impact Value:** £130,937.98 (calculated via baseline waste-reduction metrics)

Brighton Freegle FREE SHOP data 2025			
	Annual Tally	Daily average	Weekly Average
Weight donations (Kgs) received	38,854.60	257.32	777.09
Customers	52,140	345	1042.80
Money donations (cash)	£3,129.45	£20.72	£62.59
Cat (manager) volunteer hours	1677	11.11	33.54
Other volunteer hours	563	3.73	11.26
Total volunteer hours	2240	15	44.80
Days open	151		3.02
Weeks	50		
Carbon Savings (Kgs)	19427.3	128.66	388.55
Weight donations given away -actually reused* (Kgs)	38,354.60	254.00	767.092
Cat (Manager) Volunteer Hours Value	£23,226.45	£153.82	£464.53
Total Volunteer Hours Value	£31,024.00	£205.46	£620.48
Economic value goods reused	£76,709.20	£508.01	£1,534.18
Social Value goods reused	£143,062.66	£947.43	£2,861.25

Brighton Freegle FREE SHOP 2026			
January to August Data	Annual Tally	Daily average	Weekly Average
Weight donations (Kgs)	24257.5	266.6	782.5
Customers	32099.0	353	1035
Money donations (cash)	£1,483.34	£16.30	£47.85
Money donations (card)	£308.38	£3.39	£9.95
Total Money donations	£1,791.72	£19.69	£57.80
Cat volunteer hours	1134.0	12.5	36.6
Other volunteer hours	427.5	4.7	13.8
Total volunteer hours	1561.5	17.2	50.4
Days open	91		3
Weeks	31		
Carbon Savings (Kgs)	11669.1	133.28	376.42
Cat Volunteer Hours Value	£15,705.90	£172.59	£506.64
Total Volunteer Hours Value	£21,626.78	£237.66	£697.64
Economic value goods reused	£48,515.00	£533.13	£1,565.00
Social Value	£90,480.48	£994.29	£2,918.73

2026 Operational Challenges & Strategic Shifts

- **Space Restrictions & Donation Overload:** In early 2026, new market management prohibited the use of adjacent overflow space. Combined with receiving upwards of 3 to 4 tonnes of incoming items per month, a temporary pause on accepting new donations was instituted in mid-2026 to clear a 5+ tonne stockpile.
- **Rent & Service Charge Pressures:** Venue rent rose by 42% over an 18-month period, with an additional doubling of the service charge scheduled for October 1, 2026 (pushing monthly costs over £1,037/pcm, up from £600 in late 2024).

Digital Infrastructure & National Mentoring

- **Free Shop Website Launch:** Designed and built a dedicated portal (BrightonFreeShop.co.uk) to host guides on setting up free shops, local repair resources, and press history. This will go live in October 2026.
- **Replicating the Model:** Mentored and supported grass-roots pop-up Free Shops in Lewisham/New Cross Gate (South London) and Hartlepool, and am currently supporting volunteers to do Free Shop pop-ups in 3 different locations in Brighton & Hove later this year - expanding the Freegle ethos to physical high-street spaces.

5. Strategic Outlook & Recommendations

1. **Funding & Financial Sustainability:**

- We will be doing **National Lottery Awards for All** grant submission (~£20,000) to secure organizational running costs, volunteer expenses, and potential management capacity
 - Secure short-term grant avenues (e.g., Chalk Cliff Trust application for £5k) to bridge immediate operational gaps.
2. **Premises & Relocation Contingency:**
 - If current venue costs at The Open Market become unsustainable due to rent hikes, explore lower-cost venue alternatives in neighboring areas (e.g., Newhaven) or transition to pop-up models.
 3. **Advanced Impact Measurement:**
 - Transition from basic WRAP tools (£3.73/kg baseline) to the **HACT Social Value Framework** to capture the true community, financial, and well-being value of Freegle's reuse activities.
 4. **Media Strategy Execution:**
 - Leverage new digital media skills to launch dedicated assets for **National Reuse Day** (Friday, October 23, 2026) and expand short-form video presence across Instagram and hopefully TikTok (with new volunteer help!) to further engage younger demographics. Develop a more harmonious and memorable branding across our social media content in the coming year (replacing much of our existing assets).

*Please note that Gemini (AI) was used to help create this document. Gemini used the information in the last 12 monthly Media reports to do so.