

BioRegional Report Copenhagen 2009

In December 2009, a small team from BioRegional (appendix A) travelled to the global Copenhagen Climate Conference to participate in a series of exhibitions, presentations and workshops, where we presented our sustainable solutions for One Planet living. The team went on to attend the United Nations fifteenth Conference of Parties (COP15)¹ where we met with high level policy makers and negotiators from different countries, introducing them to our real-life case studies that demonstrate a low carbon future is achievable, attractive and affordable. This report highlights our experiences, insights and outcomes from Copenhagen.

Introduction

Representatives from 192 countries came together in Copenhagen to agree the conditions for an ambitious global climate deal. Negotiating teams, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and activists attended in their thousands for two weeks that many hoped would shape the future of our planet - this was to be the gathering where commitments were made to stop global temperature rise and the survival of future generations assured. Expectations were high and a global climate deal seemed within reach, and yet a fair, ambitious and legally binding climate agreement still remains to be seen with many reporting COP15 as a failure.



BioRegional's primary objective in Copenhagen was to demonstrate that a low carbon future is achievable, attractive and affordable. By show casing our real-life projects with partners across the world, we aimed to help inspire and motivate world leaders to take

¹ The overall goal for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Denmark was to establish an ambitious global climate agreement for the period from 2012 when the first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol expires. Parties to the convention have met annually from 1995 in Conferences of the Parties (COP) to assess progress in dealing with climate change.

action, and further witness how the One Planet Living framework can be applied successfully and cost effectively in different countries. To this end we produced a booklet, 'Sustainable Solutions' that provides case studies from around the world demonstrating that a sustainable low carbon future is a reality.

The team met with high level policy makers representing many countries, though we particularly focussed on networking with representatives from the US, China, UK and South Africa where BioRegional programmes are located. We also explored opportunities to collaborate with partners in different countries.

A further objective of our presence in Copenhagen was to engage with the visiting public. We wanted to help people understand their own carbon footprints and encourage them to commit to low-carbon lifestyle changes.

What we did

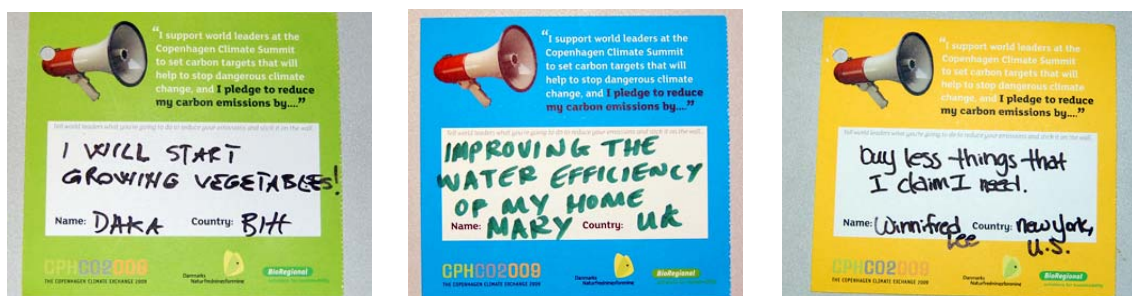
BioRegional's Copenhagen journey began well over a year ago. Jurgen le Fevre, member of the EU climate negotiating team, spoke in October 2008 at an event coordinated by Al Gore's The Climate Project on the latest Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change's scientific findings. Le Fevre said that he needed some compelling materials that would show what our low carbon future will look like. This information would, he stated, help him to convince the politicians and then enable the politicians to convince the voters. Creating real-life examples of low carbon, sustainable solutions is what we do at BioRegional so we decided to go Copenhagen. Our presence was funded with support from the Skoll Foundation, who presented BioRegional with an award for social entrepreneurship in 2009.

Over a three week period we participated in a series of exhibitions, workshops, events and a public demonstration:

Week 1: Copenhagen Climate Exchange 09 3-6 December

The Danish Society for Nature Conservation invited BioRegional to exhibit at this green solutions expo and to co-facilitate daily workshops for visitors to establish Calls for Climate Action (appendix C). The Calls developed in the workshops were to be handed to world leaders attending COP15. In addition, the team asked visitors to calculate their carbon impact and then complete pledges to reduce it which would also be presented to world leaders in support of them agreeing a good climate deal. On the final day BioRegional's Director, Sue Riddlestone, made a presentation on sustainable solutions for low carbon living - showcasing the [international partnership network of One Planet projects](#).

Over 5,000 people visited the event and 196 pledges were made.



Weeks 2 and 3: Klimaforum 09 **7-18 December**

BioRegional exhibited at the Klimaforum - the 'people's summit' - which ran parallel to the COP15. This forum aimed to engage civil society with the climate negotiations by offering workshops, presentations and exhibitions. Highly respected climate change activists, including Bill McKibben and George Monbiot participated in panel discussions and presentations. Sue Riddlestone also presented BioRegional's sustainable solutions for low carbon living.

We collected a further 400 pledges, and negotiators, NGOs and activists from countries including Bosnia Herzegovina, Taiwan, Zimbabwe and Papua New Guinea were just some of the people that we met at our stand.

Weeks 2 and 3: United Nations Conference of Parties 15 (COP15) **7-18 December**

BioRegional was accredited with official observer status to the COP15, which took place at the Bella Centre in Copenhagen. The team spent almost two weeks at COP15 attending plenary sessions, meeting with high level policy makers and existing partners, and establishing new contacts. We focussed on networking with representatives from China, USA, UK and South Africa, show casing our projects with partners in these countries and our solutions for sustainable living.

Our key outcomes and achievements

- **Encourage world leaders and key policy makers to set ambitious targets for global carbon reductions**

The Calls for Climate Action (appendix B), developed at the Copenhagen Climate Exchange, were publicly handed to **Connie Hedegaard**, President of the COP15 and former Danish Minister for the UNFCCC, to be considered by world leaders attending COP15.



632 people from 52 countries (appendix C) gave their support for world leaders to set ambitious carbon targets by pledging to reduce their own carbon emissions. After COP15 we sent the pledges to world leaders, demonstrating the great public support for a good climate deal.

The BioRegional team produced a short booklet, ['Sustainable solutions for a low carbon future'](#), which provided case studies from around the world demonstrating

that a sustainable low carbon future is achievable, attractive and affordable. Prior to the team's Copenhagen departure, copies were posted to all of the 193 country negotiating teams. At COP15 these booklets were handed to policy makers and NGO representatives, which included **Al Gore**, **John Pershing**- the US Special Envoy on Climate Change, and the **Mayors of Denmark** and **Mexico**.



The team met with Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) President, **David Cadman**, on several occasions, and presented the Call for Climate Action to him alongside **Connie Hedegaard**. BioRegional's often localised approach to project development and planning could link effectively with this network.

Korean Minister, **Maanee Lee**, spoke with Pooran about BioRegional's One Planet partnerships and expressed interest in finding out more about sustainable solutions that might be applied in Korea.

We participated in the climate march from central Copenhagen to the COP15 with over 100,000 people – again demonstrating the strong public will for an ambitious climate deal.

- **Strengthen existing international organisational partnerships and networks**

The BioRegional team met with many existing partners and supporters, including **Achim Steiner**, Director of UNEP, who has met with BioRegional representatives on several occasions and is very much aware of our work - he requested a follow up meeting later this year so we can update him on our progress; **Prince Charles** at a Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership event, the Prince is a long time supporter of BioRegional's work and was interested to learn about our latest projects; **Andy Atkins**, Director of Friends of the Earth in the United Kingdom; long time friend and partner **Mathis Wackernagel**, President of the Global Footprint Network and fellow Skoll awardee; **Sunand Prasad**, co-founder of the architect firm Penoyre and Prasad and former president of RIBA (2007-9).

BioRegional also met with several government representatives. Greg Searle, Executive Director of BioRegional North America, welcomed **Valerie Brown**,



District Supervisor of Sonoma County and president-elect of the National Association of Counties, to COP15 at City Hall – an important ally for Coddling’s Sonoma One Planet Community project.

- **Establish new international organisational partnerships and networks**

Sue Riddlestone, Executive Director, briefly met with **Lord Nicholas Stern** at COP15 and gave him a copy of our latest report [Capital Consumption](#), written with London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC), which shows how London can reduce its carbon emissions by 90% by 2050. We have arranged to further discuss developing a sustainable green economy for London with Lord Stern and to engage him in the work of the LSDC where Sue is a Commissioner.

The team spoke with **William Becker**, Executive Director of the Presidential Climate Action Project about One Planet Communities and sustainable solutions - he has requested that we make contact with him to discuss BioRegional’s work and partnerships further.

Greg Searle met with the Director of Friends of the Earth Middle East, **Youval Arbel**, who expressed an interest in introducing the One Planet concept to Middle East programmes.

Felix Dodds, Executive Director of the United Nations Stakeholder Forum, visited the BioRegional stand at the Klimaforum. We discussed ways that our organisation could use the forum to promote the One Planet initiative.

- **Showcase BioRegional initiatives and partnerships to a global, public audience and strengthen the One Planet brand**

BioRegional exhibition stands show-cased information that demonstrated to the public how it is possible to live sustainably and reduce carbon consumption through One Planet solutions. We estimate that over three weeks, 55,000 people visited the exhibition stands.



BioRegional’s Copenhagen blog was published daily on our own web pages, with an average readership of 56 views per day and on the 16th December after a blog about meeting Prince Charles, 207 readers logged on. The blogs were also featured on the Inside Housing web site, with an average of 150 views per day and were also promoted on the Skoll Foundation and The United Nations Youth Delegation web site.

Between us we gave out more than 4,000 information cards to the public and policy makers over three weeks in Copenhagen.

The BioRegional team met with actress and climate activist **Daryl Hannah** who is keen to make a video blog about BioRegional and the One Planet Communities, in particular the Sonoma Mountain Village development. Chinese actress **Li Bing Bing** was also interested to hear more about BioRegional's work when we met her at the launch of The CUBE, an art installation made out of recycled shipping containers representing a tonne of CO₂. Li is already an ambassador for WWF and we intend to provide her with further information regarding BioRegional's work in Jinshan.

Our reflections post-Copenhagen

Since returning to the UK, many people have asked us how we felt about the negotiations that took place in Copenhagen. Whereas many have labelled the outcomes a failure, falling far short of an ambitious and equitable outcome that many had hoped for, we believe that the presence of more 120 world leaders including Barack Obama and Wen Jiabao demonstrates they are taking this issue seriously, which is important to recognise. Disagreement was centred primarily on what a complete, and legally binding climate agreement would look like and largely not based on a misunderstanding of the science or the urgency. Ultimately we felt that world leaders do want to get an agreement which will keep global temperature rise below 2C but they were all coming from completely different perspectives and national situations. Extensive procedural delays meant that detailed and vitally important discussions took place at too late a stage in negotiations to reach consensus or an effective global deal in Copenhagen.

The BioRegional team went to Copenhagen to tell delegates that our practical experience demonstrates we can create low carbon, sustainable communities and production systems and that it can be done cost effectively. During the three weeks, our work was received with great enthusiasm and we have made some extremely useful and important contacts which we will follow up on in the coming months. Our experiences and insights at the Copenhagen Climate Conference have ultimately reinforced the significance of our work with all our partners, but particularly BioRegional's projects in China and the USA – the two highest country green house gas emitters in the world.

Ultimately we must all ensure that the great momentum which developed in the lead up to Copenhagen must be retained in 2010, as world leaders can and must still reach a deal which the world needs to prevent dangerous climate change².

² Keep track of developments post Copenhagen when world leaders come together to lodge their commitments in the Appendix of the Copenhagen Accord on 31st January.

Appendix A: BioRegional team in Copenhagen



Sue Riddlestone, Executive Director and Co-founder of BioRegional



One Planet Communities Director and Co-founder of BioRegional



Executive Director, BioRegional North America
(week 3)



Jennie Organ, Communications Manager



Freya Seath, Researcher to the Director



Hayley Bell, Sustainable Business Manager
(week 1)



Sam Smith, Sustainability Consultant (volunteer)
(volunteer)



Stephen Ivings, Finance Manager (volunteer)
(volunteer)

Appendix B: Copenhagen Climate Exchange workshop summary

The Copenhagen Climate Exchange workshops focussed on different sectors each day: Individuals and Communities, Businesses and Organisations, Cities and Regions and Nation States. Participants were requested to discuss a series of pre-formulated statements, which they also could modify, and then prioritise them according to how they felt world leaders should support the sector to reduce carbon emissions and lower its climate change impacts. The final Calls were presented at The Exchange's closing ceremony to Connie Hedegaard, former President of the COP15 and Danish Minister for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

The Call To Action is shown below:

To support the actions of individuals and communities we ask that you *introduce 'carbon pricing' for transport*. Public transport services must be more affordable and convenient and the cost of *flying* should reflect the high carbon impacts of this mode of travel.

To support the actions of business and organisations we ask that you impose a *cap on the extraction of fossil fuels* and set targets for energy companies to *increase renewable energy supply* from direct investment in renewable energy projects and energy efficiency.

To support the actions of cities and regions we ask that nations introduce legislation that requires regions to *map their local resources and plan for greater resource efficiency*. To support this we suggest provide a methodology, education and funding mechanisms. In particular, support local, seasonal and low impact *food production*. Fair trade can meet residual needs, always taking into account minimisation of overall environmental impacts.

To support the actions of nations/states we ask that you *include nature as part of the solution* because it provides carbon sequestration and strengthens nature's ability to protect against the effects of climate change. Please ensure an end to the destruction of the natural environment, in particular virgin forest and only allow sustainable forestry which is planned with the local population and includes replanting of native and bio-diverse species.

We ask that you require all nations/states to develop an *action plan* within one year detailing how they will meet the targets that they have signed up to at Copenhagen. There must be rigorous and regular monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure targets are met.

Appendix C: Country index of pledges

Pledges were made by people from 52 countries:

Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Cameroon, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Holland, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Philippians, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tanzania, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela and Vietnam.