

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town wins climate change award

The Cape Town Pavilion won the best outdoor and best green stand in the Climate Change Response Expo at COP17. It was constructed out of 1,884 plastic milk crates and over 22,000 plastic milk bottles. Inside the Pavilion there were materials to highlight how the 28 Climate Smart Cape Town Coalition partners are finding ways to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change. The stand was an initiative of the Climate Smart Cape Town Campaign (CSCT), which aimed to take advantage of South Africa's hosting of COP17 to encourage Cape Town's residents to reduce their carbon footprint.

INTERNATIONAL

ICLEI launches web-based emissions tool

ICLEI's latest software tool HEAT+ (Harmonized Emissions Analysis Tool) launched at COP17 in Durban, is designed to help local governments reap the benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and common air pollutants. For the first time, cities using HEAT+ can benchmark emissions levels against local, state, national, provincial, and international standards. HEAT+ is the only web-based product of its kind, offering secure data storage, a global data bank, comprehensive technical support, and 24/7 accessibility.

UNITED KINGDOM

New measures for cleaner air in London 2012

A package of measures to improve air quality in London has been launched to cut harmful pollution coming from road transport, to benefit Londoners' health and to clean up the city ahead of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The package includes changes to London's Low Emission Zone rules, a vehicle age limit for licensed black cabs and minicabs, and a new campaign to curb engine idling across the capital. Research suggested that poor air quality contributes to an equivalent of around 4,300 premature deaths in London annually.

JAPAN

Going green with a swipe of a card

Residents of Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan, will soon be paying their bills through the use of e-money called Kanagawa Green Eco WAON. The cards are currently used in Aeon shops and other shops in partnership with the system of WAON. Every time a customer uses the Kanagawa Green Eco WAON cards, part of the purchase proceeds will be donated to the Kanagawa Prefecture and used for activities of environmental education.



One bottle can provide up to 50 watts of light, cutting unnecessary CO₂ emissions

PHILIPPINES

Plastic bottles light up homes in Manila

A new form of solar lighting is bringing hope to the small, crowded and dark rooms of the shantytowns of the Filipino capital. An environmentally friendly and low-cost solution, the 'Litre of Light' initiative has reached almost 15,000 households in Manila.

Under the scheme, recycled plastic bottles filled with water and a splash of bleach are inserted into the roofs of the houses and enclosed with a protective sealant to hold the rains at bay. The bottles provide instant light of up to 50 watts throughout the daylight hours.

"The idea almost came around by accident," said Illac Diaz, Executive Director at MyShelter Foundation. "After a devastating storm hit the country in 2009, a school rebuilding effort began to use plastic bottles. It became evident that when the bottles were filled with water, an abundance of refracted light would flood in. The parents started asking us to install it in their houses, and that's when the dream was to come up with a social enterprise to make this available to the whole town of San Pedro, Laguna with the Mayor Norvic Solidum."

In less than five months—beginning with one carpenter, Demi Bukas, one house and one local government partner—the programme has today spread to 15,000 homes around the Northern Luzon area alone and is expanding to Peru, Colombia, South Africa, India and Indonesia.

The reason for its rapid spread has been the simplicity of its installation and the low-cost which comes in about US\$1. The cost of electricity in the Philippines is one of the highest in Asia. Many people do not have, or simply cannot afford to use electric light during daylight hours, restricting their quality of life and micro economic activity.

"While waiting for green technologies to be cheap enough for the world's poorest, our only option is to import expensive, high interest or aided, or subsidised technology," added Diaz. "But basically, by using open source technologies, built by materials easily found in the poorest communities, and with simple carpentry skills, we are not only helping the environment but helping to create grassroots entrepreneurs and jobs."

UNITED KINGDOM

London mayor announces winner of low carbon prize

Jonathan Pye-Finch from Kingston University has been awarded first prize in the inaugural London Mayor's Low Carbon Prize.

The US\$30,000 award, sponsored by Berkeley Group, was launched to inspire the next generation of students to come up with innovative ideas for cutting carbon emissions in the city.

Over 100 entries were whittled down to a shortlist of 10 that was judged by a panel including leading architect Sir Terry Farrell and Zac Goldsmith MP. Pye-Finch from Kingston University was awarded first prize for his invention of a 'green key'. Every year in London around 250,000 household moves are made and thousands of new businesses start up. The logic behind the 'green key' is that when every move occurs the new residents or owner is supplied with an electronic key containing up-to-date information on local services and ideas to help them live more sustainably.

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Three more students were also awarded prizes. Between them they came up with plans for a portable pyrolysis unit on a river barge which would turn waste into energy; a plan to convert waste coffee grounds drunk in London into biofuel; and a process for manufacturing ultra thin photovoltaic cells which could be attached to materials such as glass to generate electricity. This material could help reduce the carbon footprint of creating solar panels.

In his speech, Mayor Boris Johnson set out how his environmental retrofit programmes are aiming to create an energy efficient city, stimulating jobs and reducing Londoners' fuel bills. He described how up to US\$1.5 billion could be saved on energy bills by Londoners and businesses in the UK capital over the next four years.



Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, awarding the first Mayor's Low Carbon Prize to Jonathan Pye-Finch from Kingston University

INTERNATIONAL

Future City Leaders Initiative launched

ICLEI announced the mentorship of councillor Simone Ariane Pflaum, from Freiburg in Germany, by councillor Dr Cathy Oke from Melbourne, Australia as one of the first participants in the Future City Leaders Initiative. ICLEI's Secretary General, Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, hosted the first webinar (web-based seminar) for future city trends and the role and importance of future city leaders in driving change for a sustainable future.

EUROPE

EU neighbours to benefit from green approach

Between 50,000 and 150,000 lives could be saved due to reduced air pollution if the countries of the European neighbourhood adopted EU environment legislation, with added benefits worth up to €21 billion (US\$27 billion) a year. The figures come as a result of an international study carried out by the European Commission, which examined the socio-economic benefits of enhanced environmental protection in the European Neighbourhood partner countries and Russia. The effects would also have a positive impact on the water sector, and decrease morbidity and mortality rates.

TANZANIA

Dar es Salaam proposes ambitious solid waste management programme

Dar es Salaam has proposed to implement a 21-year solid waste management programme in response to several studies that show the generation of municipal waste is increasing rapidly and that the current system of collection and disposal is insufficient.