

## THE YPN INTERVIEW:

**NAME:** Andrew Collinson

**PLACE OF WORK:** London Development Agency

**YPN MEMBER SINCE:** 2009



### It must be hard to juggle your work and voluntary commitments – what drives you?

I want to practice what I preach. You can't go around trying to get others to change their lifestyles without rolling up your sleeves and getting involved yourself. That is why I continue to volunteer. I feel honoured to be involved with the coalition, which is in my opinion at the forefront of the most pressing debate of our generation, in this country and indeed the world.

### UNA-UK is part of SCC and many of our members participated in The Wave. Do you think mass civil society action makes a difference?

Absolutely. The sheer number and diversity of those who participated in 'The Wave' – politicians, activists, young and old – means that people take notice, even if it is just to criticise. It raises awareness of how far we've come in the fight for action. I realise I might sound idealistic but so many times in the climate debate you hear people say 'what can I, just one person, do?'. By standing together, others can no longer make that statement – that in itself is the success of mass action. The challenge, of course, is to keep up the momentum afterwards.

### What is your view on the outcome of the Copenhagen climate conference?

While I appreciate the complexity of such negotiations, I must confess I'm disappointed. The 'political accord' appears to be a long way off the robust plan and fair deal that we need, but it is hopefully a first step in the right direction. Another important step would be to convince more private-sector firms to see action on climate change as a long-term opportunity rather than a short-term 'nuisance'.

### The LDA works for both economic growth and sustainability – do you ever feel that your job conflicts with your environmental activism?

I think when you are passionate about any issue, you are bound to run into conflicting views, including where you work. At the most basic level, I have countless arguments with colleagues simply trying to get them to turn off their computer screens! Most organisations still don't have 'green' strategies so I'm pleased that LDA itself has a number of initiatives in place, and is working closely with the Mayor of London to help London achieve its 'green' targets and reduce its carbon footprint. But if these initiatives don't filter down to employees, then the battle is already half lost. Implementing a robust environmental strategy is about changing our disposable culture, and it should be at the top of any organisation's agenda, just like health and safety or equality and diversity. Hopefully by contributing in-house I am helping to instigate a change in that culture.

### What advice would you give someone looking to get a foot on the NGO ladder?

To remain determined and use your friends and contacts to full effect. It sounds clichéd but it really does work – it was a friend who stumbled on the SCC internship and suggested I go for it. I worked longer hours at my paid job and did the internship on other days. It was tough but having the internship on my CV enabled me to get work at other organisations, which in turn resulted in being recommended for other projects. Finally I ended up at LDA. It is easy to look back now and see it as a clear path, but it didn't feel like it at the time! I would also recommend trying to get experience outside London, where the competition is less fierce and the opportunities no less interesting. Above all, persevere! You never know what those two months of work experience may develop into.

### What do you do?

Presently I am on secondment from the London Development Agency (LDA), which promotes sustainable economic growth for London, to the Olympic Park Legacy Company. I head up their online presence and manage various aspects of their digital projects, from websites and intranets to the roll-out of a new stakeholder database.

### In addition to your day job, you also do a lot of campaigning for action on climate change – tell us more about that.

I first got involved with Stop Climate Chaos (SCC) by undertaking a web and media internship – a perfect fit for my work experience and passion for environmental issues. Since then, my growing desire to 'do my bit' has kept me involved with SCC. Most recently I worked as Artist Liaison during The Wave march in December 2009, which was an incredible experience. Afterwards I attended a conference with Ed Miliband, who answered the delegates' questions post-march. It has also been rewarding to use my web skills at other organisations, on their climate change campaigns in particular, helping them to reach their audiences across a variety of online channels.