



**walk it back**<sup>®</sup>  
with  
**RE-EARTH INITIATIVE**

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## **Global student activist movement calls for world cities to remove carbon**

**In response to latest IPCC report, students from around the world team up with global entrepreneur and city networks in campaign for a [new global dialogue](#) on carbon removal**

Youth climate network and 2022 Billion Acts Awardee [Re-Earth Initiative](#), responding to tension points around the issue at UNCOP27, has today issued an urgent call for cities to step up in leading ‘the crucial carbon removals agenda’, publishing a paper that hones in on the missed opportunity for removing historic carbon.

The paper is the first output of a new and unusual alliance, [walkitback.org](#), which sees the youth activists unite with a global entrepreneur, city networks, corporates and civil society to campaign for a step-change in the governance and speed and scale of carbon removal.

‘It is abundantly clear that existing Net Zero plans alone are not enough for us to have any hope of inheriting a liveable planet,’ states Joseph Wilkanowski, co-founder of Re-Earth Initiative and one of the authors of the new dialogue paper, *Getting to Net Negative: best practices for city-led carbon removal?* ‘Before the fault-lines that are emerging around removals rupture, we urgently need decision-makers to step up and address the evidence gaps and governance questions that are holding this critical agenda back.’

The dialogue paper cites IPCC figures that suggest we’ll need to remove 10 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually by 2050 – whereas only 95MtCO<sub>2</sub> of durable carbon is being removed (and sold as such), the equivalent of just 0.2% of greenhouse gas emissions. Discussions on the scale up of carbon removal at UNCOP27, meanwhile, under Article 6, were met with a backlash from NGOs over lack of governance and insufficient safeguards for ecosystems and human rights.

Cities, say Re-Earth Initiative in the report, have a pivotal role to play in driving the successful, safe and fair scale-up of removals and highlights ‘glimpses of leadership’ globally. But the report finds critical gaps: in consultation, research, investment and governance.

The walk it back collective’s founder members include key city leadership network [United Cities and Local Governments](#) which is supporting the campaign’s call to launch ‘largest and most inclusive dialogue on carbon removals to date.’

‘Removal is neither a quick fix nor a simple remedy,’ the report states. ‘Critical questions remain as to how much carbon can be stored, and for how long, which technologies are appropriate and affordable for different contexts, and how new solutions can scale safely and fairly. More research, innovation and development is desperately needed to fill some of these evidence gaps and we urgently need cities to step in to lead this crucial agenda.’

The paper urges city leaders to share their plans, expertise and challenges with the campaign and contribute to an ongoing dialogue around carbon removal options that will run in parallel to a 4,000km carbon removal outreach and fact-finding walk that walk it back co-founder Craig Cohon begins on 3 January 2023.

Cohon, who is the first private citizen to calculate and commit to reversing his entire lifetime emissions, will walk 25km a day from London to Istanbul, visiting 82 towns and cities across Europe in order to catalyse a broader debate on removals. As he walks, Cohon will be joined by well-known global activists, politicians, artists and environmentalists to raise awareness of his 'guilt trip,' and the campaign will meet decision-makers in 10 key European cities.

The report urges city decision makers to commit to transparent and inclusive consultation processes to assess possible removal strategies, including: building defined carbon removal commitments in their Net Zero city strategies; allocating over 30% of city surface areas to green and blue infrastructure; catalysing investment and driving innovation and establishing transparent and inclusive governance processes over the sector.

### **Additional Quotes:**

*"We need urgently to take action on the carbon that is already up there to give current and future generations a true chance in making the world a liveable place." Theresa Rose Sebastian, Re-Earth Initiative*

*"We have no time to waste. We have to figure out how to get the more than two trillion tons of carbon we've put up into our atmosphere back down again: walk it back is hoping to speed this urgent work up and get conversations about it out into the open." Craig Cohon, founder, walk it back*

*'Without wider buy-in from diverse constituencies, and greater transparency as to the status, risks and opportunities of the different technologies, the carbon removal agenda is likely to become heavily politicised or struggle to take hold. We need to build much better governance and a much broader consensus about this critical area of climate action, and it is crucial that NGOs, young people, civil society and indigenous communities are part of this conversation.' Emily Benson, Policy Lead, walk it back*

### **Notes to editors:**

\*\*\*Spokespeople, photos and B-roll all available on request \*\*\*

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Re-Earth Initiative's Theresa Rose Sebastian and walk it back founder Craig Cohon will be hosting an Instagram Live - [@reearthinitiative](https://www.instagram.com/reearthinitiative) [@2023walkitback](https://www.instagram.com/@2023walkitback) - to launch the report on Monday 21 November 2022 at 18:30 GMT; 19:30 CET; 13:30 EST

### **Calls to action:**

Follow the campaigns and have your say on removals:

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