General and Devolved Elections and Assemblies

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Influencing Political Elections

We know that politics is broken and that many rebels refuse to engage in elections, but during high pressured times such as when there are **national, devolved and local elections**, we can use the opportunity to pick up public interest in the climate and nature emergency and show them a new way of doing politics through community and citizens' assemblies.

Engaging in traditional approaches such as letter writing, signing petitions, door knocking etc are not always effective and so not necessarily a good use of rebels' time and energy. Targeting marginal seats is a good way to really get candidates to listen, however. For example, during the 2024 General Election, XR designed a **Map of XR Local Groups within marginal Westminster seats**



Elections Landscape of Opportunity

- Candidates will focus on what they believe to be important to their voters, so it is up to us to turn up in numbers on common issues of concern, visiting candidates, calling their offices and writing via platforms, such as Write To Them, or by setting up petitions.
- We can use community assemblies, hustings and surveys to tell candidates what truly matters to people locally if we understand the political process.
- **National Elections** take place for:
  - local and district councils,
  - mayors in England,
  - police and crime commissioners in England and Wales and

    - the London Assembly.
- There were no elections in Scotland or Northern Ireland for 2024. **2026 sees elections in the Welsh Senedd**. It is worth building into your activist calendar those significant times for building campaings for influencing your politicians.
- The 'sweet spot' for action and local community assemblies is 4-6 weeks before the election, for **peak public, media and political attention**.
- However, there may not always be a good lead in time, if assembly organiser capacity is low in your region during that time. We don't want to risk burn-out and loss of momentum/enthusiasm by pushing too fast and not leaving enough time to offer a positive experience of an assembly. However what we can do is begin to **set the agenda in interim periods between elections**, by really building connections with our allies and allowing for stronger collaboration during organising, so that your assembly recommendations are stronger and volunteer energies more effectively channeled.
- A **'General Election Pivot'** can be planned for, during which time:
    - Local and general elections may provide an effective context to encourage you to redouble efforts around assemblies to highlight local issues of concern.
    - A series of targeted, impactful actions can be undertaken, designed to maximise media coverage and to demonstrate that the current system isn't working.
    - This will also link with a **Political Influencing** campaign encouraging political parties to include support for a UK-wide Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice in their manifestos.
    - XRUK, alongside other organisations in the democracy space is actively encouraging and supporting Local Groups to run assemblies because it's the right way to do politics.

Why Local Issues Matter

Local elections provide opportunities to:

- Mobilise local communities by focusing on local issues through assemblies.
- Cement the alliances that have already been built with like-minded organisations and groups.
- Build coalitions by meeting people where they’re at and find common causes with a broad range of groups.
- Keep up the pressure on local candidates by inviting them to respond!

'Persuade Elections' Candidates Commit to:

- **Declaring a climate and nature emergency**.
- **Involving communities via deliberative assemblies in local and national decision-making** about issues that matter most to them.
- **Being led by the recommendations of assemblies**.

Three Questions to Get Started With

1. Is there an election in your area? Use the VoteClimate Local Elections Finder or view them on a map.
2. What is your council's performance on the climate emergency scorecard? Use My Society and the Climate Action score rating websites to find out.
3. Have your constituency boundaries changed? They will be of particular interest to the media as they could indicate the outcome of the next General Election. Look for the key battleground seats analysis on the VoteClimate website.

What Can We Do?

- Use the demands / requests listed above.
- Run Community Assemblies on local concerns in-person or online, or ask for support to run hybrid assemblies.
- Run combined Hustings and Community Assemblies. Invite expert speakers, then break-out groups to discuss and decide on questions to ask candidates.
- Record candidates' responses and post them on your social media accounts - hold them to account if they later break commitments.

Guides to Running Hustings In-Person or Online:

- Electoral Commission Guidance
- In-person - Friends of the Earth Climate Hustings and Quakers Hustings
- Online - Joint Public Issues Team [faith-based groups] Online Version of Traditional Hustings
- If you need a paid-for Zoom account, contact your Region or Nation
- Zoom Guides:
  - hosting large online meetings (any sized meeting)
  - Zoom meetings advice
  - Outreach polling board example questions / survey questions:
    - How broken is our political system? **[Totally | A little | It's OK]**
    - Are politicians working for your interests? **[Yes | Somewhat | No]**
    - Have you heard of deliberative decision making/assemblies? **[Yes | No]**
    - What's of local concern to you? **[Write on a Post-it note]**
- Use template Elections Flyer Front & Back [A5]

Escalatory Potential in a Run Up to Elections

The Bigger Picture

Community Assemblies are part of a bigger plan for Extinction Rebellion and these are also to some degree, driven by significant times in the electoral calendar, such as general, devolved, or local elections. Community Assemblies could be a useful route to **escalate issues raised at local assemblies**, all the way up to Westminster.

During key points in our election cycles, highlighting XR's 3rd Demand to local politicians - or even local officers and councillors in your local authority - gets the idea of real democracy and participation on the radar of those in power, opening conversations on upgrading our democratic systems.

By building understanding of deliberative democracy in relation to a key area of policy, which has been poorly enacted, namely our climate and ecological crisis, we can advocate for **our 3rd demand to demonstrate that there are options to upgrade our democracy generally**, beginning with a citizens' assembly on climate and ecological justice.

In The Climate Concerned Mix

Politicians and Officers of Authorities

Remember, that each local area will have different political backdrops. **Some local authorities may have** declared a climate emergency, while others may still be resisting change. Even where a climate emergency is publicly announced, this may yet not be turning into **adaptation and mitigation** measures where you are.

Your local group or grassroots campaign may or may not have established links with local candidates, politicians, local officers of the council, or may be aware of whom among your politicians is supporting the Climate and Ecology Bill.

Community Groups

There are so many urgent issues facing communities around the UK, whatever the focus for your community assembly, it's all of value in building **active engagement in citizenship**, which can only **strengthen democratic principles and practices**, as face down the risks of societal breakdown through climate catastrophes we are yet to face.

You may be working alongside allied organisations, who share these concerns, or your groups still may be in the process of building connections and relationships, e.g. through climate centres. More resources will be added to over time on our **Resources** page to help you map your local community and identify whom you can benefit from working with, but we also recommend talking to umbrella organisations for signposting such as the **Council for Voluntary Organisations / Associations** where you are.

Local community organisers may wish to hold an assembly on a topic important to local people. This may or may not have the aim of making **assembly recommendations to take to your local or regional authority**. We strongly recommend that your organising group decide in advance of your assembly which outcomes you all want to achieve when deciding your topic for deliberation. What happens afterwards? Might you want to **escalate action** if local authorities are not responsive to recommendations you share with them (more on this later)?

Seize The Moment!

In the lead up to a **General Election, local election, or during the company reporting season** (at the end of Q4 / 4th Quarter i.e. March annually) **we all have greater influence on power brokers than at any other time**.

In particular, where politicians are in deadlock over issues around our climate and ecological emergency, we can open up conversations around community assemblies and a Citizen's Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice. We can also help to amplify complementary aims of for instance the Sortition Foundation, Humanity Project, Assemble, or others in the democracy building space. Reach out to anyone who share your values and aspirations, because we have strength in numbers.

The principle of "Here Comes Everyone" still applies in relation to XR's movement building strategy.

If your local authorities are obstructive or dragging their feet on issues of concern to you and others, then alongside your community allies, that is the perfect time to share the ideas arising from local Community Assemblies on those issues and think about how you can best get other groups on board to push for change at a time when party candidates are jockeying for position in elections!

Tips on How To Engage Your Local or Unitary Authority

1. Be aware that **Council elections usually have low turnout and that this helps you!** Local politicians are sensitive to changes in community opinions, particularly those of **influential groups**. Identifying such groups and finding common ground with them will help strengthen your campaign and reach more people.

Map out your key organisations via this **Power Map** tool

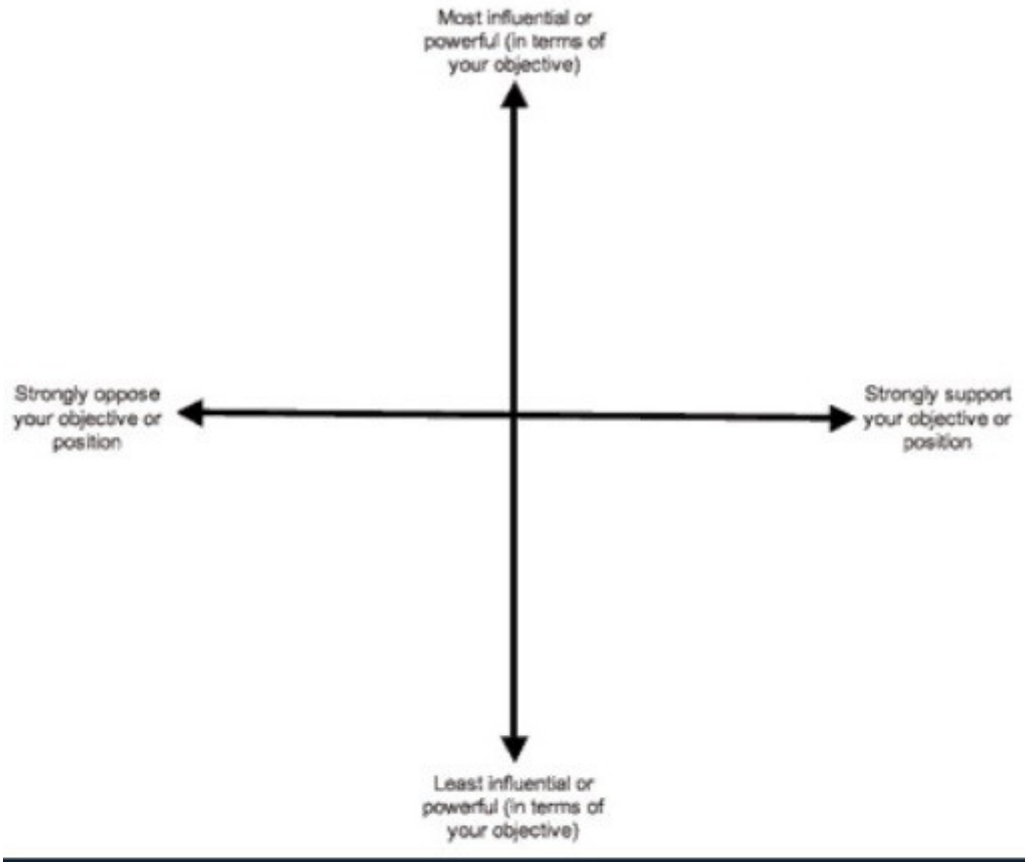


Diagram of a power map.

2. Local politicians are likely to be quite scared of dealing with XR, so start gently. To begin, **contact them by email, attend a surgery, or phone them**. Invite them to **attend your local assembly** or ask for their **support for a campaign**. Think about whatever could work locally.
3. Try to make an appointment to meet with the relevant **Chair of Committee** or **Portfolio Holder** responsible for the issue you're raising, to discuss an assembly or particular campaign ideas. If you can, offer your local XR group's support for a policy that politician is involved with; it will be appreciated and helps to build trust. Talk to XR UK's Political Circle / Political Engagement Cymru for help.

4. In advance of your assembly, give the impression of having lots of **local support** for the issue you're raising (which of course may be the case, such as water pollution). Build your credibility by raising a petition; focus this on local people, they probably won't be interested in the views of others! Alternatively, set up a gathering, run a survey, use social media, take photographs, etc. Contact Councillors to alert them to what you're doing and talk about support gained.

5. Follow up what you do by **submitting Questions to Full Council**, which will make the Council's response public, may be reported in the media, and with prior permission you can film the response and use in social media, to grow interest.

Tipping Point of Community Power!

Extinction Rebellion's strategic aim is to achieve a tipping point of local support that pushes the conversation about a Citizen's Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice.

Ultimately, we want to reach Westminster ears, plus our devolved and regional authorities. **This can only come from grassroots in numbers**, i.e. us, the people, alongside our allies in the deliberative democracy sphere and elsewhere.

We know our **political systems are broken**. Imagine a proven and more inclusive method of decision making that ensures the interests of people and nature are taken into careful consideration, in all decisions. Imagine decision making where no one is left behind and we transition together, collaboratively to a healthier, fairer society. Mobilising and empowering local people at the grassroots is the starting point...

XR's approach is that over those months leading up to elections, local groups could be taking up nonviolent direct action around their local authorities who refuse to engage with the people.

Of course, your devolved local or regional authority might already be in agreement to implement recommendations from local assemblies... It's already starting to happen. (See Case Studies).

But What if Your Powers that Be Are Not Listening?

If your local authority, a company, or whomever you need to listen doesn't want to take those recommendations on board, or engage with improving community participation in democratic decisions and citizenship, this is the time to **consider escalation**.

So for instance, if your local authority will not support your community in the following ways, you may consider **occupying uncollaborative local or unitary authorities, or corporate offices**.

XR Local Groups have had great success with getting support from allies in some of the following situations where authorities are not collaborating or engaging:

- Your relevant authority refuses to take on board **recommendations arising from well-organised local community assemblies**.
- Your local authority (LA) **refuses to declare a climate and ecological emergency**.
- Your Local Authority scores low on the National Score Card. This Score Card shows progress made by your local council towards achieving net zero across a range of business areas, e.g. buildings, finance, biodiversity, transport, collaboration and engagement, waste and more. Performance in each area of work is scored as a percentage. This is useful information to use in discussions with politicians.
- Your LA refuses to join the UN 'Race To Zero' initiative.

What Does Escalation Mean?

An Assembly Escalation Plan begins with organising your local Community Assembly and collating recommendations for sharing with the decision maker. This could be a local council, regional authority, or even a company such as your local water services provider. In election run-ups, assemblies can have real impact, as candidates want to be seen to be listening to their constituents.

When you share those requests and recommendations with that authority's officers, or local parliamentary / constituency candidates, they may or may not engage. That gives your group the opportunity to build on the original purpose of your assembly with escalatory measures to influence processes. The 'escalatory' approach means applying pressure on local/regional politicians or company board members, to bring about meaningful change, based on the aspirations coming out of your local deliberations.

Find out more on how your campaigning group could follow a set of simple steps to be heard here: 5 Step Escalation Plan .

Need More Pointers?

- If you are not sure about where the decision making powers lie where you are, have a look at the Combined Authorities map to find out who to target.
- View the Introduction to the Community Assembly Escalation Plan Open Call.
- Check out the slideshow used in the call.

If you have any questions on any of the choices of direction you face, or just need to bounce ideas around join our Assemblies Sharing Chat.

Whatever your concerns, take from this guidance what is relevant to your local situation.

Banking, Finance and Divestment

Resources collated from work by XR, Tipping Point and other organisations to help you access the information you need to plan your actions and choose your targets.

Getting organisations to move away from fossil banks

Focus on campaigning for organisations to switch their banking from the worst banks.

Bank Better Campaign Handbook by Tipping Point

This excellent handbook gives the comprehensive info you need to run an effective campaign against an organisation who still use problematic banks.

Full Colour version (Canva) / Text only version (Google doc)

Tailored support

For XR Local Groups can be accessed by contacting bankbetter@tippingpointuk.org.

This support consists of:

- campaign planning
- researching the current banking of the target organisation
- suggestions of what banks they could move to
- connecting them up with similar orgs that are also considering bank switching
- training for LGs in how to run presentations about banks and how to negotiate with decision-makers
- campaign planning (actions/petitions etc)

WhatsApp community

The Umbrella Community on WhatsApp is for people interested in getting organisations to switch banks, with sub-group chats for specific types of campaigns: Bank & Local Government, Banks & Universities, etc.

Tipping Point's How To Bankrupt A Fossil Bank

Recording of this training delivered in January 2024, in collaboration with Switch It Green:

- Access the webinar video here
- Passcode: Jte9Zr$1

Report on Barclays

Details of what's wrong with the new Barclays energy policy (why not to trust them when they say they're not funding fossil fuels any more!)

Elections Action Pack

Upgrade Democracy Time

It’s time to harness the despair and feelings of betrayal, to re-establish democracy and give power and influence back to people.

This pack gives you everything you need in one place to take action to build connections with local people and groups on local issues.

Educate, inform and engage them in Community Assemblies and deliberative democracy.

Imagine we’re like a Wood Wide Web

A social ecosystem connected through common needs, shared resources and a desire to flourish.



The Myceleia Network is a shared biome, where ecosystems flourish without greed, sharing resources where needed. The mycelium underfoot ensures close-by neighbouring trees and plants have the resources (nutrients, water, etc.) they need to flourish. They also have evolved ways to distribute nutrients across an entire network.

This short video shows how Community Assemblies connect us.



The Communities Assemblies Escalation Plan was part of the 2024 XRUK Action's Strategy to upgrade democracy. The current 2025 Movement Strategy also refers to how community assemblies fit into our overall movement building aims and our 2025 Actions Strategy will be out imminently.

Local Authority Performance Intel

Go to My Society to find out where your local authority is at in relation to declarations on the climate emergency and decarbonisation planning. Also, the Climate Action score rating website may help you to find out more detail.

Survey Boards Work

- How to make and use Survey Boards.
- Have a leaflet/flyer to hand out with general information, contact details and your next event.

Why Community Assemblies Matter

- Understand the difference between Community Assemblies, People's Assemblies and Citizens' Assemblies
- Politics is broken, and traditional lobbying techniques of NGO's have little effect when up against think-tank lobbyists.
- Community Assemblies offer part of the solution, giving an experience of how decision making could be.
- Community assemblies can involve people in their local area on local concerns, or happen at a regional level.
- Connect with communities you haven't yet engaged with
- Involve marginalised and disengaged groups
- Engaging local communities with assemblies increases awareness of the potential power of national citizen's assemblies
- More about Why Run Community Assemblies?

How a Community Assembly Might Apply Well-Timed Pressure

- Visit our campaign page on the XRUK website with relevant and useful resources Community Assemblies Escalation Plan.
- Check out our range of guides about how to use the Press to get your messages reaching more people.

What Next?

- Keep this page bookmarked for when elections are on the horizon.
- Look out for Digital Rebellion's 'Do It At Home' actions on Telegram.
- Running Community Assemblies helps political candidates to be more aware of local demands.

Assets

- Create posters /flyers /stickers /QR codes on Aktivisda
- How to set up and run a Community Assembly: 1hr 22mins YouTube video
- Suggested Themes for Actions
- Outreach Methods and Materials
- Social Media How To

Resources and Support

- How to build Community Alliances
- Community Assemblies Manual - Download this for everything you need to know on how to set up and run one.
- Community Assemblies Sharing Telegram chat
- Email: communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk

Example Questions for Candidates

Example Questions for Party Candidates in Local or National Elections

- How have you voted on environmentally related legislative proposals, such as the Climate and Nature Bill, Clive Lewis's private members bill on Water?
- Do you support the idea of a citizen's assembly on intractable environmental issues, such as water management and regulation? What about on Climate and Ecological Justice?
- A local environmental problem?

Questions for Police and Crime Commissioner Candidates

- Subject to the requirements of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, will you, in your role as Police and Crime Commissioner:
    - Use every means possible to preserve the right of UK citizens to demonstrate and protest non-violently without the risk of arrest?
    - The breakdown of our climate is increasing the frequency and severity of flooding. In anticipation of more extreme weather, with harmful impacts upon communities and infrastructure, given the central role of the police and fire services in responding to these crises, what resources and emergency plans are you proposing and implementing to manage such risks?
    - Will you use your influence to ensure that your organisation declares a climate emergency and that it commits to net zero carbon emissions and if so, when by?

Resources From Non-XR Organisations

The links below give you an idea of other political campaigns and organisations that may be informative about the political landscape in your area. Also there are some good resources that you could use in your own campaigns, assemblies or actions.

- MP Watch: Do you have a current or prospective MP who has climate denial view? If so you may want to look at the work of MP Watch. Also they now have a really useful tool to look up your MP to see what donations they've received and from who.
- Zero Hour - The Climate and Nature Bill: More progressive thinking politicians may already be involved with the Zero Hour project to support a Climate and Nature Bill.
- Vote Climate website: Resource to help you understand more about the views of politicians.
- Planning Hustings - Friends of the Earth: If you’re thinking about holding a hustings for an upcoming election, Friends of the Earth have produced some extensive guidance. Including tips on how to organise and structure a hustings, as well as important guidance on how to remain politically impartial.
- Project Vote Climate - Greenpeace campaign: There could be an active Greenpeace group in your area focusing on this. It might be possible to connect with them on actions or assemblies.