

# Community Assemblies

In a community assembly, members of the community and other interested parties such as business people and local councillors in a town or neighbourhood discuss a locally important issue. If the issue is water pollution, there are likely to be speakers from the water company, an environmental group and people affected. During an afternoon or evening, participants discuss and make recommendations which inform and put pressure on local politicians and create community connections. People and the media begin to understand deliberative processes, and that helps support our campaign for a UK wide citizens' assembly.

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# Why Use Community Assemblies?

[https://www.youtube.com/embed/K\\_NbHQL3T1g](https://www.youtube.com/embed/K_NbHQL3T1g)

## It's time to decide for ourselves, together!

The current political system is failing to take the actions we need. Let's bring deliberative democracy into our communities to show them the power of deciding together!

### By organising local Community Assemblies, we can:

- open conversations about **XR's 3rd demand** for a **Citizen's Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice**.
- **grow our local networks** by continuing to build local alliances around issues we are all concerned about, perhaps even starting a local campaign or project in collaboration with other groups.
- **provide people with a forum** where they can hear about, deliberate and decide on local issues that affect community lives everyday.
- **invite local politicians and candidates** to build positive relationships and ask if they support the CE Bill to further climate and ecological protections.
- **keep pressure** on local authorities to recognise the climate emergency.
- **spread the word about deliberative democracy** to empower people by showing what outcomes could be achieved.

Ready to co-create a beautiful bonding experience in your community alongside your local allies? Continue reading through this book for resources to help with running a Community Assembly.

# Resources to Run an Assembly

## COMMUNITY ASSEMBLIES



### Local Group Pack

- Why run an assembly
- What to think about before launching your assembly
- What training and support is available

### Support

We'd love to know if you are planning a Community Assembly in your local area so that we can support you with any questions you have, help obtain expert advice and possibly help provide facilitation. Please:

- Get in touch via our **Assembly Sharing** Telegram channel to let us know about your assembly!
- Join our **Community Assembly Sharing Telegram group** to ask questions, meet other Extinction Rebellion local groups organising assemblies and share your experiences.
- The Assembly Escalation Campaign Group is offering **weekly online drop-in session** on **Fridays, at 3 pm** for people planning community assemblies who want to share ideas

and ask questions. Please join us on the **Zoom link dropped in the Telegram Chat.**

- Email us at: **Assemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk**

## Community Assembly Manual

- How to plan and organise your assembly
- How to decide on an assembly question
- How to facilitate and moderate an assembly
- How to follow up an assembly

## Community Assembly Facilitation Guide

- A summary of facilitating a community assembly

## Community Assembly Trainings & Open Calls

- How to set up and run a Community Assembly. YouTube October 2023: **Running an Assembly video training**
- Facilitation Training for Community Assemblies. YouTube November 2023: **Facilitation training video**
- Introductory Open Call on Community Assemblies YouTube Open Call June 2023: **Introduction to Assemblies**
- Introduction to the Community Assembly Escalation Plan. YouTube October 2023: **Open Call - Escalation from Assemblies**

## Communications

There's lots to do in advance and afterwards (especially to support any funding bid). We've got your back... If you need support on organising press releases, getting your assembly on XR's Events Map, or getting broadcasts out, if you can get your support request in as early as possible, you have the best chance of getting support. [Go here to request Comms Support.](#)

## Working with the Press

An important part of your communications plan for the assembly will be sharing your event with the press. This will include writing one or more press releases, and identifying the press contacts to share those with. To help with this please see the following resources:

- Press Release Workshop, [recording of the workshop on XR tube](#)
- [Press release PowerPoint used in the workshop](#)

- [Workshop notes](#)

## Funding

For assemblies that happened before 17th January guidance is available [on this page](#).

For assemblies happening in the future, or which have happened since 17th January, check out the [General Fundraising Guidance](#).

## Local / Combined Authorities Map

If considering involving politicians and officers in your community assembly or escalation plans check out the [Local & Regional Authorities Map](#)

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If you have any questions on any of the above, please:

- contact your regional/national Gardener, who supports local groups in your nation or region; they may suggest whom to contact as potential co-creators. Alternatively:
- email [communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk](mailto:communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk)
- Check the [Assemblies Chat](#) for the latest Zoom Link

# 5 Step Escalation Plan

## The Vision

Imagine a plan to make sure the interests of **people and nature are taken into careful consideration in all decisions**. How might our society look if none were left behind, as we transition together to a healthier, fairer society?

We have seen corporate offices and government buildings occupied all over the country in recent years, including those with the simple demand to follow the recommendations of a local community assembly on issues that are important to those campaigners.

Community assemblies are one tool in the toolbox of activists; they are a great way to bring people together, bridging divides and laying out practical steps towards fair and inclusive transformation and green transition. They can be one part of making our communities more resilient and bringing us closer to community influencers.

**Without effective community decision-making, there can be no just transition; assemblies for the people, by the people help shifts in power.**

We know the voices of local communities are systematically ignored or purposefully polarised and that things are getting worse. That's why we need stronger, engaged communities and regular assemblies everywhere to ensure we are all heard in respectful, inclusive and effective ways.

To apply people powered pressure, you need to be clear who your target(s) is or are, e.g.

- **Relevant authority:** Depending upon the local issue that you have identified and the structure of government in your area, the authority that has relevant powers may be your county or borough council, your metropolitan authority (e.g. in London that is the Great London Authority or the London Assembly), your devolved authority (e.g. Welsh Assembly), or Westminster.
- **Relevant decision-makers:** These are the people with the power to make decisions about your issues of concern. They could be councillors sitting on your county or borough council, the metropolitan authorities, members of the devolved authority, your local MP, or executives of corporations (the company board members, CEO or other key staff).

Do invite these key decision makers to your assembly, either as expert speakers (with speech parameters set by the organising group), or as general participants, like other members of the public. We want **radical inclusivity**, so get them onboard. If they say no, at least you know where you stand!

The XR **Community Assemblies Campaign** group believe that:

**DEMOCRATIC ASSEMBLIES + DIRECT ACTION = FAIRER SOLUTIONS EVERYWHERE**

and that there is another way to bring about change via a 5 step process...

## A Simple 5 Step Plan

### 1. **Research:**

- Gather organising group.
- Look outside your bubble and make local alliances.
- Choose a local issue together.
- Get out on the street doing outreach.
- Ask your community what they care about and tell them what you are doing.
- Find out which relevant authority/ies\* has/have power over that issue.

### 2. **Prepare:**

- Find your accessible assembly venue. HINT: Ideally outside or near your relevant authority.
- Plan an event
- Publicise and promote everywhere.
- Get people signed up for it.
- Encourage as many local people as possible to train to be a facilitator or notetaker. Point them to:
  - **XR's Community Assembly training video**
  - **Trust The People's regular Community Assembly training course**
- Invite relevant decision-makers\*\*.
- Bring food
- Think about how to make it a great event for everyone.

### 3. **Act:**

- Run your assembly.
- Publish the results and take them to your relevant authority. Demand a response within a reasonable time frame
- Demand assemblies and galvanise others who could benefit from increasing democratic decision making to join in.

### 4. **Occupy:**

- If your target says "Yes", celebrate!
- If they say no:
  - invite everyone involved to occupy the authority or company building on a given date. Invite your local media,
  - Invite your nan and neighbours!
  - Rebel!
  - Repeat!

## 5. Escalate:

- Take your assembly results to your MP.
- Show them what your community is doing and what it wants.
- Tell your MP that their constituents want this form of democracy in Westminster
- Explain that you want a Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice now as a first step towards a better form of democracy.
- Tell them that there will be no fair solutions to our crises without fixing our broken politics everywhere.

## More Info & Support

At the end of 2023, into early 2024, over twenty local XR groups had run community assemblies, badged and unbadged. When XR funding ran out, Humanity Project took up the mantle and continued supporting what they called 'POPS' (now 'Popular assemblies'). Since then, assemblies, peoples' assemblies, peoples' juries, etc. are happening regularly around the UK.

There are other organisations joining the push for upgrading our democracy, whom you can read about elsewhere in this book. That said, our focus in XR is our Third Demand for a Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice. The role of the Community Assemblies Campaign crew is in helping people understand the 3rd demand, through experiencing deliberative democracy where they are and seeing how this might work at a national level.

The **assembly escalation plan** has been based on a successful action by the **Cornwall Climate Coalition**, who consistently show what is possible with collaboration with local and district authorities. With some tailoring to the realities of specific authorities, there is no reason why their example can't work elsewhere.

Assembly Escalation is a direct action campaign to build community resilience and elevate our Third Demand to encourage UK-wide conversations, starting at the grassroots and taking it to the pillars of power. Organising an assembly is sowing the seed at the local level for democratic change and **opening conversations on a Citizens Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice**.

Community assemblies provide an opportunity to reach out to and build alliances with local community organisations, aligning with XR UK's values as far as possible. They offer one way to give local groups a more powerful voice and help to include a more diverse range of people and viewpoints.

We are stronger together, but **unity does not mean uniformity**. It is vital that **local groups are prepared to stretch their comfort zones**. We are all learning together through practising. We need to listen to the voices of other community groups and ensure that projects worked on together are done in the spirit of cooperation, mutual aid and common good.

**Let's adapt, unite, build together with this proven tool in our community building toolbox.**



- Learn from the [Cornwall successes](#)
- Watch this [Video about community assemblies](#)
- Learn about Citizens Assemblies [here on the Rebel Toolkit](#)
- Tell the movement about [your assembly!](#)
- Local [Alliance Building Guidance](#)

Join the Assemblies Escalation group; the Community Assemblies team is here to help every step of our journey into upgrading our democracy together.

- Email: **[communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk](mailto:communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk)**
- Join us on the [Assemblies Sharing Chat](#)

# Case Studies

## Community Assembly Case Studies

[https://www.youtube.com/embed/LzaTx3AJuvo?si=hiTPjjGJta\\_omROn](https://www.youtube.com/embed/LzaTx3AJuvo?si=hiTPjjGJta_omROn)

**Haringey Community Assembly on Climate (2min video above)**

**Cornwall County Hall Assembly** demonstrated how initial NVDA has successfully become a partnership with the District Council. Members of the initial community assembly now have representation on key decisions at a much wider level and this has created progressive participation in what was previously deemed 'Council business'. This uniquely inspirational model for other groups to follow.

**S. Yorkshire Climate Assemblies** was a council enabled Assembly that made recommendations on the route forward for South Yorkshire. NB the Mayor backs the popularisation of assemblies.

**Walshaw Wind Farm Community Assembly**, near Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire.

**Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly**, this was the first climate assembly in Wales.

**Blackburn People's Jury on Climate Change Crisis - September 2022**, a group organised by the council and the **Sortition Foundation**; they came up with 15 recommendations to tackle local issues related to climate change.

**Cheshire East People's Panel**- video on the cost of living with **Positive Money**.

**Los Indignados Assemblies**, a Spanish ad hoc citizen coalitions to challenge specific government actions.

**COP26 Global Assembly** produced a report answering the question 'How can humanity address the climate and ecological crisis in a fair and effective way?' Findings in their report came from both a **Global Citizens' Assembly**, and self-organised Community Assemblies around the world.

**Grassroots To Global** - Scotland.

## Co-operation Hull

### Eastbourn Citizens and Local Authorities Partnership

#### Cornwall County Hall Assembly - [read more here](#)

Cornwall local XR group were the first to really get success in using NVDA as a tactic, running alongside community assemblies to achieve support from the local authority, initially, then later representation on the District Council.

What follows is the background for everyone to delve into and follow the example of to empower your local community to be heard by local government decision makers and be invited to participate in the statutory decision making process.

## How Escalation From Assembly to NVDA and Council Decision Making Inclusion Began

In this video, Myghal Rual, an assembly organiser, talks about [Cornwall's Community Assembly here](#)

Prior to the Festival of Resistance in 2022, in his own words, Myghal wrote the following summary of how their escalation process from assembly to NVDA began:

"Just a quick background story to how we held a People's Assembly about the climate and nature crisis. Bringing together Climate Activists and Cornwall Councillors .

We occupied Cornwall County Hall. The seat of power in Cornwall. We were asked to leave by the police and council officials, we held our ground and had our first Peoples Assembly inside county hall. We went on to have many PAs inside county hall.

We have built up constructive dialogue with Cornwall Council. We now have a 4 person team who meet leaders of the council. Ensuring transparency and accountability on a regular basis.

We also occupied Truro Cathedral and asked for a PA in the Cathedral. That PA happened inside the Cathedral on April 6th 2024 with nearly 100 people present."

He goes into more detail on the Assembly escalation process as follows:

"In September 2021 we held a large protest of community coalition groups including Greenpeace, Green Party and XR, outside of our Cornwall County Council building. We decided to go inside the building to hold a People's Assembly on a climate related theme.

We then established contact with the Leader of the Council and other leading Council officials, with the aim of creating constructive dialogue with them.

We now have regular meetings with these council officials and present the feedback from our regular People's Assemblies at County Hall to council officials.

Some councillors have also joined us at our Peoples Assemblies inside the building, in recognition of the spirit of deliberative democracy.

We have also have a working group who engage with the council's carbon neutral team.

In June 2022 we set up a Marquee on Council grounds for a two week occupation. During these two weeks we camped in the County Council grounds and offered an extensive programme of educational events made available to the public and councillors. Initially we were asked to leave. We held firm and eventually Cornwall Council accepted our decision to stay.

These two weeks were an outstanding success, the Leader of the Council even gave a speech as did the Director of Public Health Cornwall, in the marquee. Extensive publicity was generated, largely positive.

Cornwall Council have an aim of Cornwall as a whole reaching net zero by 2030. We aim to ensure that by action, accountability and transparency this target is met."

## People's Assembly Held on 29th November 2022 - Summary

PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY AT COUNTY HALL, TRURO ON TUESDAY NOVEMBER 29th 2022 Attending: 48

- **QUESTION 1: Where do we go from here?**
- **QUESTION 2: How can we work effectively with other groups?**

Six breakout groups selected their top priorities.

### QUESTION 1

- Make People's Assemblies more accessible and get the Coalition out into communities
- Work better with the media, get regular coverage
- Complete the survey on the Council's 2023-24 draft budget here: Cornwall Council Draft Budget 2023/24 |
- Let's Talk Cornwall Closing date Sunday January 8th
- Also complete the survey on shopping, energy use and attitude towards climate change here: Council launches survey to understand residents' travel, energy use and shopping choices - Cornwall Council
- Investigate alternative funding methods for community energy schemes
- Support regenerative farming and more self-sufficient food production
- Establish an open access register of habitat/greenspace loss
- Transfer financial support from Newquay Airport to local bus/train transport system

- Individual actions count and the Council need to be shown what action is needed; we lead, they follow
- Divestment of any Council assets which are not environmentally friendly
- Local campaigns for local solar/wind energy projects
- Develop more active relationship with the Carbon Neutral Team
- Scrutinise and challenge “green washing” by the Council
- Form groups to monitor key indicators and publicise the results
- Have an “Insulatometer” with a St Piran’s flag, showing progress on home insulations
- Do more visual imaging to get the message out to the public

## QUESTION 2

- Climate centres to be facilitated by the Council; could Warm Hubs be used for this?
- Work with Acorn Community Group on unfair evictions and other housing issues
- Build links with other groups such as Wildlife Trusts and Trades Unions

Following this initial assembly, more organisations came on board via an online assembly, as can be seen the following month...

## Assembly Held on 15th December 2022

**Cornwall Council and Members of Cornwall Climate Action Coalition** Summary points  
**Topic: Climate Commission Model** - continuation

**Attendees:** Cornwall Council (CC) Cllr Martyn Alvey: Portfolio holder for Environment and Climate Change Mark Holmes: Manager, Carbon Neutral Cornwall Cllr Linda Taylor: Leader Cornwall Council Cllr Louis Gardener: Portfolio holder for Economy, good growth fund, SPF, LUF, energy policy parts of NQ airport & spaceport and councillor for NQ & Pentire Cornwall Climate Action Coalition (CCAC) Karen Jeffereys John Carley Helen Angel Tom Pine Andrew Stott

**QUESTION 1: The Climate Commission** What has the Council found out about the climate commission model from their contact with ‘Place based Climate Action Network (PCAN)?

- CC had met with Andrew Goldstein members of PCAN\* (one of the research fellows and professor of economy at Leeds University, and the independent chair of Leeds Climate Commission). PCAN is a 5 year funded programme which has supported the development of 20 commissions across the UK.
- The different models were discussed.
- LA’s generally do not lead on commissions but have a seat on them. A number of commissions are funded by universities.
- Commissions are not for lobbying or campaigning.
- It was evident that each commission varied in size depending on the area that it represented so some had as few as 10 members and the largest one (Yorkshire and Humber) ran with 40 members plus a series of sub boards.
- CC subsequently attended a meeting of the Yorkshire and Humber Commission and also attended the extended network that they call PCAN plus. This is a networking

opportunity for the different chairs and leads of the commissions around the UK to come together to share good practice. CC had found this meeting really interesting, it was well resourced and led by a university who had secured additional funding. There were also LA attendees present.

- CC likened the structure to Cornwall's Sectors and Partner Group explaining there were key representatives from sectors to industry as well as community representatives.
- Because their university had secured additional funding the Yorkshire & Humberside Commission was running sub and working groups that focused on industry, transport and land Cornwall Council and Members of Cornwall Climate Action Coalition use resilience.
- Their progress updates are loaded onto a website similar to CC's: "The Hive". They run a series of consultations through their website and have links to their action plan.
- CC noted that the first 3 commission meetings were independently chaired by someone outside of the region. This led to a sharing of Terms of Reference, ownership mapping and to who and how people could be involved.
- CC and Carbon Neutral team are writing up the findings and terms of reference and doing a bit more digging around on the other models.
- Questions that arise for CC are:
  - What does it mean to other groups that are in operation?
  - What would be the implications in terms of the budget?
  - Where do LAs have a role?
- CCAC mentioned that commission members would be volunteers and that as existing commissions all have academic input Cornwall's could be Exeter/Falmouth University. CC confirmed that the Tremough campus would probably have an interest, Exeter Uni is an obvious choice.
- Commissions have representation of maybe 1 or 2 from community organisations, industry, academia, and infrastructure organisations (water board, electric, gas). CC feel that the current Sectors and Partners Group mirrors this. It covers transport, housing, academia, visitor economy, construction, communities and those with lived experiences, international perspective, farming and agriculture.
- CC will be looking into another aspect: "The Climate Readiness Assessment" that PCAN offers. This reviews the sectors' readiness to respond to climate change in areas such as funding, policy, skills and public buy in. CC feels that much of it will align with the LAEP starting next year.
- CC: Cornwall is the only LA to have a rural climate and emergency planning document. The approach the commissions were using were much the same as the way Cornwall developed their DPD.
- CCAC: invited CC to look at what Essex have done in that they have produced a document based on the recommendations of their commission and it appears more robust in how it expects things to go forward. Essex is pursuing about 65 actions by comparison; CCAC have only found about 18 in the Cornwall 2030 plan.
- CC are developing a review of the options and in the process drawing in views from the IoS Leadership and those involved in climate commissions. It will be made public and this is expected by the end of January. Cornwall Council and Members of Cornwall

Climate Action Coalition Summary points - online meeting 15th December 2022

- CC noted that costs as indicated by PCAN, were not what had been expected. CC would need to establish what might/might not be available from PCAN and any implication that might flow from that.

## QUESTION 2: Timeline and budget

Please outline what is the timeline and process for adding an item to the annual budget?

- CC indicated it would likely be a diversion of existing funding within the carbon neutral budget. CC added that they would want to consult with the partner groups that might be affected and may fold if the commission route is followed.
- CC thought the CIC route is particularly attractive for partnership working. It was confirmed that there is currently no specific budget line for a commission model.
- CC thought that having a commission with a degree of independence would allow the work they are doing to be more visible. But some of the groups they already meet with and work with are worried that they will lose their chance to speak directly to CC.
- CCAC suggested smaller sub-groups from the main commission with working groups involving other people feeding into those small groups
- CCAC asked for detail on where we are against each of the set objectives and CC answered that the quarterly performance report \*\* should have that detail. **Update on Shared Prosperity Fund SPF** (There was reference made in these notes to previous notes of meetings for 1st Sept and 20th, which we do not have, but there is a contact referred to at the end of the Assembly notes for this session).
- CC gave an update on the scope of some of the projects to be funded by the SPF.
- Applications from right across the board were coming with green initiatives incorporated. CC have allocated £1m of SPF directly into boosting the insulation programme. Other bids have come in for new builds and community hubs with carbon neutrality and energy issues right at the height of their design.
- At a larger scale there are bids connected to the burgeoning floating offshore energy industry which includes supportive engineering companies all aligned to solving the UKs future energy needs. Those organisations that are demonstrating a clear commitment to carbon neutrality are scoring much higher in the bid assessment process than those that do not. CC are extremely pleased with applications. Cornwall Council and Members of Cornwall Climate Action Coalition Summary points - online meeting 15th December 2022
- A version of the Decision-Making Wheel is being used against the bids. The same questions are being asked through the triage process including whether a bidder is paying the real living wage.
- Cabinet has just agreed the framework for the Rural Prosperity Fund. This is an additional £5.6m on top of SPF (total £137.6m).
- CCAC: hitherto funding streams had been very centralised, but it is hoped they would become more decentralised so as decisions could be more locally focussed. It is thought a commission model could provide a helpful steer to bring this about.
- CC asked CCAC to look and participate in the devolution consultation and a Cllr specifically said they would be happy to answer any questions or queries and to

please email them. CCAC post meeting reflection The issue of a Climate Commission Model has recently been raised with CC from a number of routes: Public question to full CC; question to CC from within CC i.e. an elected councillor and via CCAC meetings. As a result of this multi levelled approach CC have listened, taken this topic forward and are now exploring the options.

**\*\* Useful background reading\*\*** - (Link to PCAN): What is a local climate commission? | Place Based Climate Action Network ([pcancities.org.uk](http://pcancities.org.uk)) **\*\*** For reference CC shared a link to the [new reports page on the Hive](#) (This brings together key Cornish reports, including links to the action plan, inventories and performance reports. This was something promised at a previous meeting and the Climate Change pages on the CC website are also under review). In depth notes of the meeting are available via: [Karenjeffereys@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:Karenjeffereys@tiscali.co.uk)



# Additional Learning

## More Resources

If you are seeking one to one advice on how to organise or run your assembly, one of the Assemblies Escalation Working Group holds an 'ask anything and share experiences' drop in every Friday afternoon at 3pm. [Drop in link](#) for this.

## Training and Support

- **Trust the People**: THE expert trainers inspiring and empowering people everywhere to really bring democracy home. Enjoy 8 weeks worth of fun, in-depth training to equip your local community in how to organise and run an effective magical experience in deliberative democracy. And it's totally **free**, twice per year from the experts in building deliberative democracy.
- **Involve**: public participation charity, on a mission to put people at the heart of decision-making.
- **Humanity Project**: an NGO offering practical support to local groups wanting to set up what they call a 'Pop', i.e. a popular assembly. NB their immediate goals of popularising assemblies is shared with XR, but they do not share XR's Third Demand. At the time of this update (August 2024), their volunteers may recommend organisers not refer to XR support in organising.
- **Assemble Video Course** NB This is geared towards upcoming elections and influencing Parliamentary or other regional government candidates
- 2025-2027 Strategic Plan - **Hope For The Future**
- **People Powered Democracy Accelerator** 6 month training course.
- **Egin**- unlocking "...the collective power of communities in **Wales** to take their first steps towards tackling climate change and living more sustainably..."

## Additional Guides to Deliberative Democracy

- [XR's Citizen's Assembly Rebel Toolkit guidance](#)
- [Power With Assemblies Handbook \(Google doc\)](#)
- Community At Work: [Deliberative Democracy manual](#)
- Open Space Technology: [Alternative models of deliberation](#)
- Better Evaluation: [Goldfish Bowl Meetings](#)

- Skill yourself up and boost your confidence in talking to politicians, be they local, regional or national: [Hope For The Future](#)

## Books

- 'From What If to What Is' - Rob Hopkins
- 'DIY Community Action: Neighbourhood Problems and Community Self-Help' - Liz Richardson
- [We Need to Talk About Climate: How Citizens' Assemblies Can Help Us Solve the Climate Crisis](#) - Graham Smith

## Other Resources

- [Power of Community Imagination](#) Podcast
- [Participedia](#): Website tracking deliberative processes
- [Decidim](#): A digital platform for citizen participation. Free, open and safe technology.
- The [Innovation in Politics Institute](#) identifies, develops and applies innovations in politics, to strengthen democracy in Europe and beyond. Their mission is "to recognise and support those political professionals who have the courage to break new ground, are creative and achieve better results – across party lines and across borders – to make democratic politics more successful".  
They also: "co-create long-term programmes with a positive impact on politics and society, like awards for state-of-the-art political work, training and networking opportunities for political professionals, and platforms for democratic practice exchange."
- People Powered [Impact Report](#).
  - This international NGO trains and wants government and civil society leaders to form a cohort of innovators interested in launching participatory programs to shape climate policy on topics such as regenerative agriculture, renewable energy, just transitions, clean transportation, decarbonization, and more.
  - To be selected for this program, applicants must be from governmental institutions, civil society organizations, or non-governmental organizations. The program is open to applicants from all over the world, with 15 spots per cohort. This NGO also convenes international organizations and leaders to connect global work on climate engagement and participation.

## Citizens' Assemblies

See [Citizens' Assemblies information](#) on the toolkit.

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## Need More Help?

Join the Community Assemblies Telegram [chat channel](#). Ask anything, share your positive stories.

Email the **Assemblies Escalation Campaign** with your questions at  
[communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk](mailto:communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk)

# General and Devolved Elections and Assemblies

# 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 campaigns 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.**

# 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.

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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](mailto: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.

# Massembly 2024



Over 450 people took part in our incredible Massembly at Upgrade Democracy, to discuss the question: "How can we take meaningful steps to Upgrade Democracy?"

The 'Massembly' took place in-person at Windsor and also online and a second online 'massembly' took place in Oct 2024.

## The input and questions for discussion

### Massembly Information Cards

## Summary of Results

### Sat 31st August 2024 In person and online

Over 450 people took part in our incredible Massembly at Upgrade Democracy, to discuss the question: "How can we take meaningful steps to Upgrade Democracy?"

#### 1. Citizens' Assemblies and Participatory Democracy

- Advocacy for the widespread use of citizens' assemblies at local, regional, and national levels (e.g., replacing the House of Lords, setting up assemblies for long-term issues, starting at the local level to build trust).
- Emphasis on participatory budgeting and decision-making processes that involve ordinary citizens.

- Support for creating spaces and opportunities for grassroots democratic participation, including community assemblies and participatory budgeting.

## **2. Civic and Political Education**

- The need for better and earlier civic education, starting from primary school, to empower young people and encourage political engagement.
- Incorporation of political and ecological education, including rights of nature, to create a culture of informed and active citizenship.
- Promoting a culture of democracy through experiential learning in schools and community involvement.

## **3. Accountability and Transparency in Politics**

- Calls for effective mechanisms to hold elected representatives accountable, ensuring transparency in decision-making and reducing the influence of lobbyists and vested interests.
- Proposals for job descriptions for MPs, declarations of outside employment, and transparency in funding and lobbying.
- Introduction of independent bodies for fact-checking and monitoring disinformation.

## **4. Political Reform and Representation**

- Criticism of the current political system as serving a minority elite, with proposals for reforms to make it more representative and fair (e.g., replacing the House of Lords, limiting political donations).
- Support for fair and transparent government funding of political parties to reduce the influence of private and corporate interests.
- Encouraging inclusivity and diversity in political processes, ensuring that all voices, including marginalized groups, are heard and represented.

## **5. Environmental Protection and Rights of Nature**

- Advocacy for legal rights for nature and the criminalization of ecocide.
- Proposals to integrate environmental considerations into all aspects of policy-making, including the appointment of commissioners or legal guardians to protect future generations and ecosystems.
- Calls for a nature-based curriculum in schools and the protection of the interests of future generations.

## **6. Building Trust and Confidence in Democracy**

- Emphasis on rebuilding public trust in the political system through inclusive, transparent, and participatory processes.
- Encouragement of civic engagement and community involvement as a means to foster trust and counter populist movements.

- The role of local projects and assemblies in building understanding and confidence in democracy.

## **7. Long-term and Future-focused Governance**

- Proposals for creating positions like a Commissioner for Future Generations to ensure policies are assessed for their long-term impacts.
- Calls for policies and governance structures that consider the well-being of future generations and the planet.
- Use of frameworks like doughnut economics to assess policy decisions and their impact on planetary boundaries.

## **Sun 13th October 2024 Online**

447 participants voted, 43,153 votes were cast, 96.54 votes per participant on average, 137 commented, 453 comments submitted.

### **1. Citizens' Assemblies and Participatory Democracy**

- Citizens' Assemblies offer inclusive platforms for deliberation on important issues, involving diverse voices and opinions.
- Citizens' Assemblies should be used at local, regional, and national levels, with legally binding decisions and integration into parliamentary processes.
- These assemblies are tools for rebuilding trust in democracy by involving ordinary citizens in decision-making.

### **2. Education for Democratic Participation**

- Civic and political education should begin early to develop responsible, engaged citizens who understand democracy and governance.
- Schools and educational institutions should implement assemblies and participatory budgeting to foster democratic practices.
- Media literacy and experiential learning are key to preparing future generations to resist misinformation and participate effectively.

### **3. Reducing Corporate and Private Influence**

- Corporate lobbyists, political donors, and mainstream media often wield disproportionate power, distorting democracy.
- Regulations are needed to limit donations, increase transparency in lobbying, and prevent private interests from influencing public policy.
- Fair media regulation, including accountability and fact-checking mechanisms, is crucial to protect the integrity of democracy.

### **4. Long-term Thinking and Future Generations**

- Decision-making should prioritise long-term impacts, taking into account the well-being of future generations and environmental sustainability.
- Legal frameworks should recognize the rights of nature, criminalise ecocide, and integrate environmental protection into democratic processes.
- A Future Generations Commission or Commissioner should assess policies for their impact on the unborn and natural ecosystems.

## **5. Transparency and Accountability in Governance**

- Transparent decision-making processes and public accountability are essential for restoring trust in politics.
- Governments should publicly record expert advice and decisions, ensuring that citizens understand the reasoning behind policies.
- Transparency in political funding and lobbying is necessary to reduce undue influence and promote fair, evidence-based decisions.

## **6. Inclusivity and Diversity in Decision-Making**

- Democracy should be inclusive, promoting representation of marginalised groups and fostering gender equality and diverse community participation.
- Grassroots initiatives, such as participatory budgeting and local assemblies, help empower underrepresented voices in the political process.
- Special provisions should be made to include non-voters (e.g., children and future generations) in decision-making.

## **7. Reforming Democratic Structures**

- The structure of political institutions, such as the House of Lords and electoral processes, needs reform to better represent citizens.
- Deliberative and participatory processes, such as Citizens' Assemblies, should replace outdated and hierarchical systems.
- Introducing non-oppositional, collaborative decision-making spaces could enhance democratic functionality and reduce polarisation.