

Community Assemblies

Community Assemblies provide a way for people to organise locally and to experience the power of deliberative democracy to make progress on the issues that are most important to a community. To choose our future, mitigate power and empower our communities, Community Assemblies are a powerful tool. This book gives you all you need to get the best from your experience. Your Community Assembly can also demonstrate how XR's third demand for a Citizen's Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice could work. Locally organised assemblies empower ordinary people to open conversations with allies about our Third Demand, and to talk to their politicians and local or unitary authorities on the opportunity for creating change via a Citizen's Assembly at a national level. Community Assemblies can:

- Show what more inclusive democracy looks like
- Strengthen local alliances by collaborating with other organisations
- Keep up the pressure on politicians by inviting them along!

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What Are Community Assemblies?

https://www.youtube.com/embed/K_NbHQI3T1g

A community assembly is local people hearing, deliberating & deciding about local issues that affect community lives everyday.

The current political system is failing to take the actions we need.

It's time to decide for ourselves, together!

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;
- **Do outreach;**
- **Keep up the pressure** on local politicians, local and unitary authorities;
- **Spread the word about deliberative democracy** to empower people by showing what outcomes could be achieved;
- **Start a local campaign or project** in collaboration with other groups sharing a common concern;
- **Invite local politicians and candidates** to build positive relationships and ask if they support the **CE Bill** to further climate and ecological protections;
- Depending upon local relationships with political decision makers, if authorities ignore our climate and ecological emergency, we can **escalate pressure via NVDA**. (Check out the [Escalation Plan](#) for more on this)

Ready to co-create a beautiful bonding experience in your community alongside your local allies?

Then check out our [Community Assembly Resources](#).

Citizens' Assemblies, People's Assemblies and Community Assemblies

XR uses three different kind of assemblies, which have some similarities and some differences:

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY	PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY	COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY
Deliberative democracy	Deliberative democracy	Deliberative democracy
Group deliberation	Group deliberation	Group deliberation
Informed by experts, stakeholders and people with lived experiences	No external speakers necessary	Informed by experts, stakeholders and people with lived experiences
Random selection called "sortition"	Self-selected	Self-selected
10 - 30 days	Can be as little as 45 minutes	If possible, several hours, but not necessary. 90 minutes to a day.
Inform policy	Inform activists decisions	Inform policy

You can [find out more about the differences between the three possible models here](#) Bear in mind too, that different organisations have different names for assemblies and there are a wide variety of structures and processes across the deliberative democracy spectrum. It's a rewarding learning curve!

How to Organise and Run Assemblies in Your Community

This manual outlines the various steps that you can take to run a community assembly in your local community. It has been created by people in XR's Future Democracy Hub and Trust The People. This manual collates best practice from people throughout history and from all over the globe, who have used Community Assemblies to come together and achieve great things.

The Three Pillars of Community Assemblies

The three pillars of Community Assemblies which support supportive and empathetic interactions are radical inclusivity, active listening and trust.

A Community Assembly differs from a debate where one person is 'right' and the other is 'wrong', or from a typical discussion or conversation where people have a tendency to dominate with questions and interjections. Community Assemblies create an inclusive space in which each participant is respected and listened to without judgement, whilst sharing from the heart. Facilitated by a trained person, each participant listens to the ideas of others.

Radical Inclusivity

Effective assemblies achieve radical inclusivity, where the emphasis on all being heard and valued equally means no voices dominate and the collective wisdom of the assembly is harnessed. People can participate safely and openly without fear of judgement or ridicule. Radical inclusivity, therefore, also means being aware of potential barriers to engagement and working with those affected to enable their participation.

"Diversity in opinion will pay you back in the long run socially... if we don't fix this problem to start with we are simply going to replicate existing power structures."

- Eleanor Saitta, hacker and designer

Active Listening

Active listening is focusing on hearing someone all the way through before responding and overcoming the urge to start figuring out your response in your mind whilst someone is still talking. Assemblies recognise that no one person or group holds all the answers. It is through the collective wisdom of the crowd that we gain powerful intelligence about the issues being discussed. Active listening is also vital to enhance our capacity to empathise.

"It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it."
- Aristotle

Trust

Once the system and process for assemblies has been agreed on, it is essential that all participants trust the process, trust the facilitators and trust the various working groups involved. Facilitators and assembly team enable this trust through sticking to the agreed process and ensuring that everyone follows the facilitators.

"I see the 15M assemblies and neighbourhood organising in retrospective and I'm amazed how it could work and most importantly all the trust that it meant."
- Carolina, a founder of 15M and takethesquare.net

Creating a Team

"I can't change the world on my own, it'll take at least three of us."
- Bill Mollison

Below, we have listed a few working groups that may help you get a community assembly off the ground. They constitute best practice, not a minimum requirement. Your local group may feel that so many working groups are well beyond your capacity so don't let this guidance discourage you! It doesn't take an army of volunteers to put on an assembly!

Alliance Building

Importance: Essential

Timing: From project start

This is the role that you need to establish very early on in your project. At least one person in your local group should lead communications with other organisations. While it will be helpful to brainstorm in your local group around potential assembly topics and locations, you will need to discuss all of these things early on with other organisations and be open to their suggestions if you want to collaborate with them. Unless you have a political or lobbying team, this will also be the role that contacts local politicians and invites them to the assembly. On Rebel Toolkit, you can find [resources for local alliance building](#) to inform this work.

Fundraising

Importance: Nice to have

Timing: From project start

You can request financial support with your assembly by filling in this financial support form. However, it is always appreciated if your local group can try to raise as many funds as possible themselves to finance your projects. If you end up working together with other organisations, you can explore sharing certain costs.

Outreach and Integration

Importance: Essential

Timing: From middle of project

Just like you would do outreach to promote a Heading for Extinction talk, we will do outreach to spread the word about our assemblies. At the end of your assembly, you can invite attendants to join your local group or get involved in a local campaign in which case this team will have to prepare how people can join and what tasks they can take on. You will need an outreach and integration crew later in the project once you are clear on assembly time, location, topic, etc.

More information about [Outreach and Integration](#).

Media and Messaging Crew

Importance: Nice to have

Timing: Middle to end of project

The role of this group is to promote the assembly through the media. That could involve your local group's own online channels and newsletter, but you could also try local press outlets or ask allied organisations to promote the event in their newsletters and social media. On top of that, this team will coordinate taking pictures of the assembly and capturing them on your social media.

If you would appreciate any support with your local media work, feel free to contact

media@rebellion.earth and they can put you in touch with your regional/national Media & Messaging rep.

Facilitators

Importance: Super essential

Timing: End of project

For each Community Assembly, you will need **at least one facilitator, ideally two**. Facilitators maintain **radical inclusivity, active listening**, and **trust** so that all voices are heard and valued equally. They keep the discussion focused and structured and prevent it from becoming unwieldy which is absolutely crucial for a successful assembly.

~~Trust The People provides training on how to become a Community Assembly facilitator. While it is ideal to have a local facilitator, facilitation takes a bit of experience and if you've never facilitated a meeting or event before, facilitating a whole assembly throws you in at the deep end. You could watch another facilitator first before giving it a go yourself and invite a facilitator from another LG to facilitate your assembly.~~

Recommendations:

- Make sure that your facilitators don't have entrenched political bias or other strong prejudice, in accordance with inclusion principles. Party-political neutrality in facilitators ensures more effective assemblies.
- Ideally, a female facilitator is one of the assembly leads. It has been shown that this will greatly increase the level of engagement of female participants and the uptake of

facilitation roles of women in general. The rate of engagement and uptake for males isn't affected in the same way.

Connecting with the Community and Allies

Relevant teams: [Alliance Building](#), [Outreach and Integration](#)

Before you attempt to bring a community together in Assembly, you need to actually familiarise yourself with that community. This will help you to select an assembly question that matters to the people around you, and to design an assembly event that is appealing to your local community.

Think: Who makes up the community in question? Where are they? Who are the obvious future participants? Who are the less obvious ones? Which communities are hidden from you? Where are the community connections that already exist happening? Are those connections deliberate or organic/cultural? Who are the influencers, the stakeholders, or the 'Elders' within this community?

Whilst we are connecting with the community, we need to connect with ourselves as well. We need to ask ourselves what assumptions we carry about the community we are trying to reach. We must challenge our own blind spots and prejudices at every opportunity, and continue to do so throughout the process.

It is also vital to develop active listening skills, so that when you are engaging with others in your community, you are taking time to understand them, their needs and their wants, rather than trying to push your own agenda.

To help you better connect with your community, take a look at the following modules in the [Trust The People](#) programme:

- [Personal Processing](#) - This module encourages you to think about your identity, your biases, and your relationship to society.
 - [Deep Reflection: Understanding Ourselves and Understanding Others](#)
- [Engaging Communities](#) - This module supports you in reaching out to others and forming relationships founded on trust.
 - [Deep Hanging Out Guide](#)
 - [Active Listening Guide](#)

◦ Door to Door Listening Guide

To help boost your ability to connect with those in your community, consider the following:

- Hold meetings in open and oft-frequented places (i.e. a local pub or cafe), so that many can easily participate.
- Be visible and open to conversations – find ways to bring those around you in.
- Attend existing community events – if relevant, you might run a stall.
- Contact existing community groups and connect to their issues and experiences.
- Organise events such as seed swaps, ‘free’ markets, community meals, music evenings, Empathy Circles or Cafes.

In the same phase of your assembly planning process, you want to put your feelers out to local organisations and see if any of them are up for organising an assembly together with you. Working together with other organisations will not only increase the diversity of your audience but will also bring new ideas to the event organising process that you might never have thought of on your own.

Dare yourself to reach out to a group that you have never been in touch with before. XR groups are most commonly in touch with unions, environmental and faith groups or unions. How about getting in touch with a local racial justice or LGBTIQ+ group?

Assembly Framing, Scope and Topic

Relevant teams: Your local group and ally organisations

The exact framing and scope for the assembly need to be agreed upon before any promotional work can occur. The destination and legitimacy of the results of the assembly should be discussed and decided upon prior to convening the assembly, and it is important that all assembly participants are made aware of this information before the assembly begins.

An Assembly for Sharing and Community Building

If, for example, you are planning to host an assembly designed to bring community members together to discuss issues that are important to them in the spirit of creating community bonds and finding common ground, then the framing and scope are as follows:

Framing: The event is open to all members of the community to provide space for discussion around local issues.

Scope: No decisions are being made, so the scope is limited and does not extend beyond the sharing of ideas and feelings. The ideas and issues generated in the assembly should be fed back to the community through social media and serve as a starting point for future conversations.

An Assembly for Discussing a Specific Topic and Generating Ideas

If you are convening an assembly which focuses on specific issues and where what is discussed will be shared beyond the local community with an external body, such as a council, then the scope would be broader. Say, for example, a local sustainability group advertises an open assembly on their social media channels to discuss how the local council can act after declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency, then the framing and scope would be as follows:

Framing: The event is open to anyone who chooses to participate to share their ideas on what the council can do.

Scope: The ideas and issues generated in the assembly could be published on the local group's communication channels (i.e. their Facebook page or their newsletter), and also be emailed to the local Councillors asking them to take the suggestions to the next Council meeting.

An Assembly for Making Decisions and Proposals

Assemblies can also be convened to ask for the opinions of members of a group and to make decisions. Say, for example, a local group calls an assembly to discuss whether they join with a larger group for a day of action or create their own one locally, and they advertise it to all members through every channel of communication, then the framing and scope are as follows:

Framing: The event is open to the members of the group so they can share their ideas on what they would like their group to do in the action.

Scope: The assembly has the legitimacy to make the decision on behalf of that group, and the decision made during that assembly will be reported to the group and acted upon. The assembly, however, would not have the scope to make decisions beyond their own group. If, for example, that same group holds an assembly to decide if they, as a region, should combine with another region in the same manner, then the results of that assembly would be fed into a larger decision-making process that would affect other groups within the region as well.

Once you have decided on your assembly question or topic, make sure to display it clearly on your promotions materials and the assembly itself for all to see.

A good question is worded such that it is:

- In everyday language
- Not too long
- Broad enough to allow for free discussion, but not so broad that a structured conversation around it is difficult.

Assembly Planning

Choose the venue

- Assemblies are usually held in public spaces like town squares or outside prominent places like a city or town hall. They are designed to be as open as possible so that members of the public can easily join in. They are also held in community centres or other public buildings, particularly during the winter.
- Assemblies can be located outside (or inside) somewhere that may link to the issue being addressed by the assembly. For example, if the assembly is looking at the effects of climate and biodiversity breakdown on the agricultural industry, an assembly outside the local National Farmers Union, for which the process working group has invited the key members, is a way of forcing a response.
- All assemblies should be held in venues that are fully wheelchair accessible.

Online Assemblies

Holding your Community Assembly Online is potentially a good way to be more inclusive especially in rural areas where face to face assemblies could potentially mean long commuting to the assembly or it might be easier to attend an online assembly for parents.

In recent years [Zoom](#) has become the most common software in usage for meetings and assemblies. Here is some guidance for holding Community Assemblies via Zoom:

Advance Preparation

In the spirit of 'radical inclusivity' pillar of Community Assemblies and in accordance with Extinction Rebellion Principles and Values, check the Extinction Rebellion [Principles of Inclusivity](#) to ensure the Assembly is optimising access across diverse needs.

Zoom Settings Management

To create a Zoom link and publicise it everywhere, check Extinction Rebellion guidance for [Zoom set up and promotion](#).

In your Zoom account '**Settings**' on the left, under '**My Meetings**', click on the meeting you are facilitating. Make sure the following settings apply:

- **Waiting Room**, if set up so that participants are not automatically admitted.
 - Once you have opened the session, pop up messages at the top of your screen will tell you that participants are in the Waiting Room. Just click on 'Admit'.
 - Once you have started the session, you can allow late arrivals to jump straight in, rather than going to the Waiting Room. To allow immediate entry for late-comers, click on 'Participants', then select the 3 dots, bottom right, then select 'Enable Waiting Room'. This will (counter-intuitively) disable the waiting room, allowing people to join without you having to Admit them. NOTE: this option will only work if you have created a Zoom registration link and selected both Passcode and Waiting Room when you created the Zoom meeting.
- **Meeting Entry without waiting.** Start meetings with participant video off, as they may be eating, or not be ready to join fully for whatever reason; this respects participant privacy. Participants can change this during the meeting.
- **Mute participants upon entry.** Automatically mute all participants when they join the meeting. The host may control whether participants can unmute themselves.
- **Chat.** Allow meeting participants to send a message visible to all participants
- **Auto saving chats.** If you wish to capture the chat, maybe as a way to get people to leave their emails for follow up, etc, you can automatically save all in-meeting chats, so that hosts do not need to manually save the text of the chat after the meeting starts.
- **Co-host.** Allow the host to add co-hosts. Co-hosts have the same in-meeting controls as the host. A technical facilitator managing breakout rooms will need to make the other facilitator(s) co-host.
- **Non-verbal feedback.**
 - Participants in a meeting can provide nonverbal feedback and express opinions by clicking on icons in the Zoom 'Participants Panel' or typing 'Stack' in the Chat. The Tech Facilitator can explain that process.
 - Facilitators should also explain the rationale for and use of hand signals.
- **Breakout room.**
 - Allow host to split meeting participants into separate, smaller rooms
 - The Tech Facilitator can manage timings here
 - Click on the 'Breakout Rooms' icon on the bottom bar of your Zoom
 - Choose how many people can go into each room [3 or 4 is a good number; maximum 8 people] For randomised room entrants, select 'automatically' to let Zoom select participants at random to go into different rooms.
 - Select a time; e.g. 5 mins.
- **Share screen.**
 - In the host controls, click the arrow next to '**Share Screen**' and click '**Advanced Sharing Options**'. Under '**Who can share**'; choose '**Only Host.**' If needed, this can be changed back to allowing others to screen share. Select your booked **Meeting.**
- Access details are the same as booking the meeting. REMEMBER to check if you're already logged into another Zoom account. If so, you need to log out of that one to log into the Zoom account where the Community Assembly is booked. Go to the avatar top right, sign out and then sign into the correct account.
- **Closed captions options.**

- Anyone that's D/deaf or partially deaf will need these running from the start of the meeting. At the bottom of your screen, select closed 'CC/Live Transcript'. You or others can always 'Hide Subtitles' if you don't want to see them,
- OR ask once everyone's arrived, if anyone wants them running. If no one says yes, they can be turned off. You need to be a Host to turn CC/Live Transcript on/off.
- Computers or Laptops are best for online Zoom meetings, but participation can happen on smartphones too.
- **Tech Facilitators** need to be on Computers or Laptops, as you can't always create Breakout Rooms on phones. You should be aware of the different options participants are viewing from, as the layout may differ depending on what device they are using.

Ask people in advance via promotions who have used Zoom before to sign in 5 minutes before the start time, and those who have not used Zoom before to sign in 10 minutes early; this allows time to work out how to use the buttons on their screen.

Penn State has an [excellent guide on using Zoom for circulation to facilitators and / or participants in advance](#), in order to familiarise teams with options available.

Zoom Facilitator Roles

Ideally for an online Community Assembly, have facilitators with different roles, e.g.:

- **Group Facilitators** who ensure inclusion of participants
- Assembly **Note-takers**
- **Technical Facilitator(s)** to manage the breakout rooms, muting people, monitoring chat questions. While it isn't essential, this role helps the group facilitator focus on discussion and deliberation. They may also manage tools, such as Slido, or other digital support platforms.

How to run a Zoom Assembly

The process of running an Online Community Assembly is pretty much the same as one that you would use for an in person Assembly. Break out rooms will be used for the deliberation phase.

Please find more information in the [Quick Start Guide](#) section of this manual.

In-depth Plan with Timings

One Month To Go:

- Agree time, date and venue.
- Book venue and any necessary equipment such as a PA system or kitchen equipment.
- Think about back-up venues in case of any issues nearer the day, especially if it is being hosted outdoors.

- Create an event page, e.g. on Eventbrite, so you get an idea of what attendance to expect. Ideally, it would allow people to express if they need British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation or childcare so you know if it's worth investing in those things.
- Organise hosts and facilitators, along with others to take appropriate roles such as:
 - Organising play area
 - Refreshments
 - Meet and greet team
 - Media and messaging (to document and share during and after the event)
 - BSL interpreter (if needed)
- Identify and invite stakeholders and influencers in the community.
- Invite your MP and local councillors.
- Print posters, leaflets, etc.
- Think about advertising:
 - Make a list ahead of time of all those relevant to your area and decide which are worth pursuing.
 - Ask people where they look for events.
 - Try a few places and get feedback on where people see the information.
 - Many people read their community newsletter or free paper but not the local paper.
 - Find out where the important information such as local bin days and recycling is routinely published and try those first!

Two Weeks to Go:

- Re-share on all social media platforms, and be prepared to check for questions and comments. Be responsive.
- Put up posters. Think about points of contact such as libraries, cafes, noticeboards, supermarkets etc. Think of the less obvious places such as Youth Centres, Homeless Shelters, Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Door knocking and flyering.
- Hand out flyers in prominent places such as high streets or any other community events.
- Follow up with local councillors or your MP if they haven't got back to you yet.
- Check there are no issues with the venue that might affect the event such as road works etc.

One Week to Go:

- Check in with all crew - Make sure you know who is responsible for:
 - Bringing equipment for the play area
 - Refreshments supplies
 - Ways to capture contact details for future events
 - PA equipment etc
- Check all roles are still covered.

- Agree a running order with the host and facilitation team, and circulate it to all crew.
- Reshare on social media.
- Ask interested parties to share within their own networks, perhaps challenge everyone already wanting to attend to bring one or two people along with them on the day.
- Ask people to share with those they think should be involved.
- Ask people to identify places where the information should be shared to reach those less likely to see it.
- Re-check there are no issues with the venue that might affect the event such as road works etc.

One Day to Go:

Last shout-out reminder on social media.

Send reminder emails or messages to anyone who registered on your event page.

Re-check there are no issues with the venue that might affect the event such as road works etc.

Check in with anyone holding a role that they are all good to go and agree to meet an hour before the start time to set up.

Send a reminder email to your local councillors and MP.

One Hour to Go:

All crew meet at the venue at least one hour before the advertised start time.

Host, facilitators and the media and messaging crew run through the assembly plan together.

Set up and test any PA equipment being used.

Set up food and hot drinks, and any information that is being displayed.

Ideally all the crew should wear something to identify them as being part of the organising team- this will make it easier for people to ask questions about the event or the process.

Set up the children's area.

Circulate pictures of the assembly being set up through social media channels to generate interest.

During the Assembly:

Be available to greet anyone coming in and make them feel welcome/explain the process to them.

Be aware of tensions and needs.

Be available to support anyone. Many people may find themselves moved by the experience of listening to others or having their own voices heard, and some may need space or support.

After the Assembly:

Be available to answer people's immediate questions about the assembly process or what happens next.

Collect emails and contact details to ensure that people can be kept in touch with, making sure that your process for doing this is GDPR compliant.

Pack away all the equipment and tidy up the venue.

Plan for a feedback and reflection meeting with facilitators and crew, ideally following the assembly. This can be scheduled for another day, but don't leave it too long.

Have a party with everyone remaining!

How to Organise and Run Assemblies in Your Community

Community Assemblies - a Quick Start guide!

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:

- Fill in the **Community Assembly Form** 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: **CommunityAssemblies@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: [recording of the training](#)
- Facilitation Training for Community Assemblies. YouTube November 2023: [recording of the training](#)
- Introductory Open Call on Community Assemblies YouTube June 2023: [recording of Open Call](#)
- Introduction to the Community Assembly Escalation Plan. YouTube October 2023: [recording of the Open Call](#)

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](#)

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**
- Fill in a request for help via this [Community Assembly Form](#)
- Drop ins happen every Friday noon at 3pm; 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**
- Join us on the [Assemblies Sharing Chat](#)

Masassembly Resources

Massembly Links

Thank you for taking part in the
Massembly

Please follow the links below to the following resources:

Massembly Information Cards

[Click here to access Pol.is](#) - Pol.is sometimes closed between assemblies or for an update

[See a summary of the Massembly results from 31st August](#)

[See a summary of the Massembly results from 13th October](#)

[Find out what happens next](#)



What happens next?

We hope that you have enjoyed taking part in the online assembly, and experiencing first-hand what it feels like to participate in deliberative democracy! Hopefully you should now have a clearer idea about how democracy could be upgraded and what XR is doing about it. So what happens next?

See the results from the original Massembly on 31st August in the [summary report](#)

Results from the 13th October online assembly will be incorporated once available

Encourage others to join the conversation

- We plan to run further assemblies using the same process, so that as many people as possible can take part.
- This may include inviting local groups to run their own assemblies, running a further online assembly, and using Pol.is directly to widen participation.

Join XR!

- [Sign up to find out more about how you can help](#)

Other ways to learn more and get involved:

- [For individuals] Learn more about [Citizens' Assemblies and XR's Third Demand](#)
- [For XR groups] [Take action on Citizens' Assemblies](#)
- [For individuals and XR groups] [Learn more about our campaign to promote Community Assemblies](#)
- [For individuals] [Support Zero Hour's campaign for the Climate and Nature Bill](#)

Summary of Masassembly

Results: 31st August 2024

Here are the results from Saturday 31st August's in-person and online Massemblies.

Over 450 people took part in our incredible Masassembly 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.

Summary of Masassembly Results: 15th October 2024

Here are the results from Tuesday 15 October online Masassembly.

We discussed the question: "How can we take meaningful steps to Upgrade Democracy?"

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.

Massembly Resources

Have your say via Pol.is

Pol.is voting is currently closed.

Extinction Rebellion UK is developing our own Pol.is platform. Check back here for the link to XRUK's Pol.is - coming soon!

Online Assembly

As a continuation of the Massembly in August, we are organising a further online assembly on **Sunday 13th October, 18:30-21:00** to once again consider the question:

“How might we take meaningful steps to upgrade democracy?”

Bring your ideas and imagination, discuss these with others and decide together. This is deliberative democracy in action!

Register for the **online assembly here**

Note: We recommend joining on a laptop. Tech support will be available.

- Increase awareness of the need to upgrade democracy
- Understand the opportunities and possibilities
- Demonstrate the value of the processes and build greater support for XR's Third Demand - a Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice.

Be prepared!

- Reading the **Information Cards** which will be used in the assembly really helps. Or just turn up and join in!
- Watch the **Assemblies Facilitator training video** if you would like to take the role of assembly facilitator in your small break-out group.
- View the **Summary of Results** from our last Massembly on Saturday 31st Aug.

What happens next

A summary of the results will be made available after the assembly, together with suggestions of steps to take forward.

More information on deliberative democracy:

- XR's Third Demand: **A Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice**
- Read more about **Community Assemblies**
- Join the **Community Assemblies** Telegram chat.

Funding

Watch This Space! Meantime keep in touch with your Gardener, if you have one in your region or nation, they will be among the first to hear of any new funding support for your assemblies!

We recommend that local groups wanting to run a community assembly check out Rebel Toolkit [General Fundraising Guidance](#).

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDS

There are now a number of players in the deliberative democracy space, some of which are either planning to access funding, or can help your organising group raise funds or match fund. Check out:

- ISWE
- Humanity Project
- Your local council for voluntary organisations

If you come across a funder of community assemblies, please tell us about your successes in what you asked for, from whom and how. Share a weblink if you have one via our [Telegram Chat](#)

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.](#)

Training and Support

- **Trust the People:** THE expert trainers inspiring and empowering people everywhere to really bring democracy home. Enjoy 8 weeks worth of in-depth and fun training to equip your local community 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.

Community Assembly Case Studies

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

Additional Guides to Deliberative Democracy

- **XR's Citizen's Assembly Rebel Toolkit** guidance
- **Power With Assemblies Handbook**
- Community At Work: **Deliberative Democracy manual**
- Open Space Technology: **Alternative models of deliberation**
- Better Evaluation: **Goldfish Bowl Meetings**
- **Hope For The Future**- Skill yourself up and boost your confidence in talking to politicians, be they local, regional or national.

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

- Community Assemblies Telegram **chat channel** Ask anything. Share your positive stories.
- **Power of Community Imagination** Podcast
- **Pol.is**- Opinion collation software platform for voting on ideas shared by participants in a deliberation process. This software was used during the People's Assemblies at The Big One (April 2023) for crowdsourcing opinions.
- **Participedia** Website tracking deliberative processes
- **Decidim**: A digital platform for citizen participation. Free, open and safe technology.
- **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."]

Citizens' Assemblies

See [Citizens' Assemblies information on the Toolkit here](#)

Need More Help?

Join the Community Assemblies Telegram [chat channel](Invite link for this chat: https://t.me/+ESA_GQHHFBQxZmY0) Ask anything. Share your positive stories.

Email the **Assemblies Escalation Campaign** with your questions at communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk