Community Assemblies

Community Assemblies are a structured way for a group of people to discuss issues or make decisions collectively.

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What are Community Assemblies?



Community Assemblies (also known by other names) are a structured way for a group of people to discuss issues or make decisions collectively. All voices are heard and valued equally; in the spirit of inclusion, no one person or group dominates the discussion. This is what makes Community Assemblies so powerful; **they show us what a society could look like where the people impacted most are involved in decisions affecting them**.

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.

Community Assemblies involve:

- Relatively short sessions, usually lasting around a few hours.
- They can be joined by anyone who chooses to turn up.

- Expert speakers on topics may or may not be invited, informing participants of relevant facts.

Community Assemblies are not to be mixed up with Citizens’ Assemblies or People's Assemblies



Why run Community Assemblies?

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.

> We must end all fossil fuels and transition towards a society shaped by ordinary peoples’ recommendations for social and ecological justice that arise out of deliberative democracy processes.

XR believes that we need **citizens’ assemblies** to allow ordinary people to come up with fair, long-term solutions for the most pressing issues of our times.

The reason for XR’s third demand for a citizens assembly on climate and ecological justice isn’t well understood, but experiencing community assemblies in our local communities can open the conversation about how deliberative democracy can work at a national level.

When we organise Community Assemblies in our local areas around the UK, people experience a new and empowering way of improving their quality of life. This can be done in ways that require more or less work, depending on what your Local Group objectives are.

Community Assemblies will be:

	**Locally embedded**: How Community Assemblies are run is completely up to your organising group. You can follow the guidance here, or try out a local variation. Every community is different, so you need to do this in a way that has meaning for those taking part.
	**Collaborative**: Community Assemblies are most interesting and enriching when they are attended by people from all kinds of backgrounds. You are more likely to achieve diverse participation if you work with a range of organisations and community groups and plan your Community Assembly collaboratively.
	**Goal-oriented** - Although taking part in a Community Assembly is an empowering experience, it's not an end in itself. So when you co-design your local Community Assembly, an important part of your plan should include what you want to do with the outcomes.

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.



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. Let's bring deliberative democracy into our communities to show them the power of deciding together!

How to organise a Community Assembly

This manual outlines the various steps that you can take to run an assembly in your local community.

- How to plan and organise your assembly
- What to think about before launching your assembly
- How to decide on an assembly question
- What training and support is available
- How to follow up an assembly

What key decisions does your community need to make?

Before kicking off your Community Assembly, consider what you want to achieve.



Wondering Whether to Run a Community Assembly With Your Local Extinction Rebellion Group, or to Collaborate with Others?

Running an assembly as a Local Group is easier and faster to organise, but it means that the question you will be discussing will only be relevant to your XR members; there will not necessarily be community support for your recommendations and decisions.

If you invite potential ally organisations and reach out to new ones to **co-create your question** for deliberation, you will get wider participation and better representation of the wider community, which is the best possible outcome.

An added benefit of co-creation is that other groups can share the workload involved, helping organise.

Also promoting your assembly to their member meetings and followers of their newsletters and social media gives you wider **reach**.

Remember that choosing to be collaborative from the outset means you're likely to attract a more diverse audience and participant numbers can give greater weight to decisions made when bringing recommendations to eg your local authority, etc.

The most powerful outcome of an assembly is that **people with opposite opinions can come together, have a reasonable conversation together and enjoy the magic of the process**.

By reaching out to the wider community you are working on two levels; firstly, you are building a consensus on issues that matter to local people and secondly you are giving them a feeling of how a different kind of democracy can work for them.



Do We Run a Community Assembly on a Local Question, or a Wider Issue?

Here are some example questions below. Any variation of these will open up the discussion, because it invites all voices with an open question:

- How can we do something about climate change together in our community?
- How might we reduce our energy bills collectively?
- How can we nurture nature in (community / village / town, etc.)?
- How can (name of locality / town / county) make sure that everyone in our community can access healthy, affordable food for the long term?
- How might we rely less on fossil fuels in (named local area)?
- How might we as a local community respond to our colonial past?
- How can we make sure that our community is represented well by our politicians?

Trust the People recommend you begin your question for discussion with, e.g. “How can we…”

You might find that it is easier to get community members or local organisations excited about discussing a topics that matter to them; this also helps maximise your numbers taking part. This doesn’t have to be a local issue, but could be, e.g. sewage pollution, locally and in general. If your organising group is committed to running an assembly follow-up, you should consider that a strong question will make follow up easier.

The benefit of these questions is that they draw local communities closer to action. They can also lead to discussion around XR’s third demand, in particular, why a citizens assembly on climate and ecological justice could provide a template for wider democratic involvement of the people in decision making processes.

Assemblies can also attract the attention of local politicians; some organisers make a point of inviting local politicians to participate on an equal footing with their constituents. Building those relationships can help open wider conversations too, including the concept of citizens assemblies.



Will The Assembly Be A One-Off Or The Start Of A Campaign?

Many organising groups can be quite small, so organisers might feel like setting up and promoting a one-off Community Assembly is a pretty big challenge, let alone running a series of follow-ons. This is why it is important to think about your goals from your assembly, such as recruiting for the next one!

It is completely fine to organise one Community Assembly, then take a regenerative break to think about your next steps. Do try to share the outputs from your assembly with those who took part, however. This should be a giving back to the community, keeping them in the loop and incentivised to support the next assembly.

Alternatively, a Community Assembly can be a great way of kicking off a local campaign, or building networks. You can collate all suggestions and ideas from participants in your assembly, then commit to following them up with those present and anyone else interested. For instance:

- if local flooding is a concern, an action the community can take, without relying on the council to work on mitigation, is to organise a tree planting afternoon;
- if food poverty is an issue, set up a community fridge;
- if you are unhappy about services offered by your local authority, run a small rally outside your local council offices that engage officers and the public.

Follow on actions will take more consistent effort, but:

- will strengthen your networks;
- make your assemblies feel much more meaningful and effective to the whole community;'.
- show people what democracy can achieve.



Do You Want To Facilitate Local Action Or Influence Local Politicians?

If you want to follow up your Community Assembly with a **campaign**, there are three possible approaches.

Some believe that the whole point of Community Assemblies is to **take power into our own hands**. Acting locally to address local problems helps build resilience in our communities; this equips us to deal with what lies ahead. As all of our local authorities and councillors are failing us, strengthening our community will be needed more than ever in the future.

Others say that in a climate and ecological emergency, it is most important to **pressurise politicians to resource large-scale positive action**. Seeing that their community is ready to take bold and urgent action will spur others and our politicians on. This is potentially powerful, given politicians' power to enact legislative change; they can take recommendations from your assembly to your local council or unitary authority to implement them.

If MPs (English Parliament) / AMs (in the Senedd) / MSPs (Scottish MPs) attend your assembly, it will be easier to pressurise your local representative to back certain legislation in your nation's legislative chamber. For instance, you can engage them in discussions around the Climate and Nature Bill, a Citizen's Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice, or a House of Citizens.

The third option combines both approaches and will take more effort to organise. It would engage people in follow up activities and future assemblies if you add refreshments and a get together at the end.

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

If you end up 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.

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. Lead Facilitators would benefit from completing facilitation training. See our Community Assembly Facilitation Guide for more information.

Budget & Funding

Example Budget

Below is an example of a budget to help your planning. This is only a simple guideline, e.g. you might not have to book a venue for an outdoors assembly, translation, or other resources.

Category	Unit Price	Notes
Venue Hire	£300	Book your venue for at least four hours to allow for set up, the process, socialising and clearing up.
Food	£200	Invest in anything else that will make your event more appealing and fun.
Outreach Materials	£100	Leaflets and posters are essential. There are templates for leaflets on the Rebel Toolkit, or find inspiration for other outreach methods.
Flip Charts, Stationery	£25	Taking notes during the Assembly that can be seen and read by everyone is essential to highlight the outcomes of the discussion. Markers, biros, post-it notes, egg timers all help to have ready.
BSL Interpretation / Language Translation	£160	You may want to create a registration page for your Assembly, where people can flag their accessibility needs. There's no point in paying for an interpreter if no one will need them, but radical inclusivity is a pillar of assembly success in being representative.
Hearing Loops	£80	Consider creating a registration page for your Assembly, where people can flag accessibility needs. There's no point in paying for a hearing loop if no one will need this.
Creche Provision	£250	Your volunteers may be able to provide this, without paying for professionals. However, you should consider safeguarding protections. Arts materials for kids, while their parents participate in the Assembly

Arts / Entertainment	£350	Supporting local arts projects brings a different dimension to deliberation and makes people feel part of something fun.

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 to raise funds or match fund. Check out:

- People Powered Democracy Project Funding, as they "Provide spaces and support for joint fundraising. Coordinate paid technical assistance services."
- ISWE Foundation
- Your local council for voluntary organisations (check name for your location, e.g. WCVO, GAVO, WCVA)
- Your group can also fundraise and collaborate alongside other organisations to cover the costs.

We recommend that local groups wanting to raise funds check out the Rebel Toolkit's general fundraising guidance.

What did we miss?

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 link if you can via our Telegram Chat.

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 (downloadable as Google docs) 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 (e.g. 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?

Framing & Scope

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 (e.g. 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.

Lead with the Topic

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.

Planning & Promotion

Advance Preparation

Choose the venue

- Assemblies are usually held in public spaces, like community hubs, town squares, outside prominent places like a city or town hall. They need to be as open and accessible as possible, so that as many members of the public can easily join in.
- Assemblies can be located 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 pushing for a response.
- All assemblies should be held in venues that are fully wheelchair accessible - including toilets - and ideally have hearing loops installed. If there is budget available, ideally, a professional signer should support accessibility for people with hearing difficulties.

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 tricky travel to an assembly venue, or it might be easier to attend an online assembly for carers and parents.

The process of running an online Community Assembly is pretty much the same as one that you would use for an in-person assembly. Breakout rooms can be used for the deliberation phase.

Please find more information in the Structure section of this manual. We also have a page about Using Zoom for Community Assemblies, the popular video meeting tool.

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

Inclusion

In the spirit of ‘radical inclusivity’ pillar of 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.

Planning and Scheduled Tasks

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!

Structure of a Community Assembly

There are three main phases of a community assembly, these are the input phase, the deliberation phase, and the integration/feedback phase.

Input Phase

This phase can be broken down further into the introduction and input, the latter of which can be of varying lengths according to the purpose of the Assembly.

Ideally, the input phase should be around 30 mins in total. However, if a speaker is attending or it is important for those present to learn about a subject, then the input phase may take longer.

Introduction

1. Start on time.
2. Lead facilitators introduce and explain the hand signals, so that they can be used throughout all parts of the assembly.
3. They then introduce the assembly agenda, including where the results of this assembly will go.
4. They then talk through the three pillars (radical inclusivity, active listening and trust) and ask for help from the crowd to remove any barriers to engagement that may be identified, before reading out the Inclusivity Statement:

> “We value all voices equally in the assembly, as the aim is to hear the wisdom of the crowd gathered here and not to have the assembly dominated by individual voices or groups. We recognise that confident speakers are not always right and that those who are not confident speakers will often have the most useful ideas or opinions to put into the discussion. This is why we value all voices equally and we ask you to do the same. We do not tolerate any calling out, abuse or shaming and should conflicts arise in this way. We welcome all people but not all behaviours.”

Input

This can be as simple as the lead facilitators framing the question for discussion and explaining why the assembly has been convened.

Or it can involve a longer and more in-depth input section such as a live panel of experts, or a video input.

The Input should be balanced and factual – if research is being done to provide context, consider how you will keep it impartial.

A badly planned input can skew a deliberation and deliver unwise answers.

Testify

Invite people to take the microphone for two minutes maximum and share their feelings about what has brought them to join the assembly or action that day.

In an open public assembly, this section can be drawn out as long as people volunteer to speak.

It opens the space for people to connect emotionally, but be carful to ensure it is not used as a ‘soap box’ on the issues about to be discussed.

Ideally ask for a woman to speak on the microphone first (It has been shown that this will greatly increase the level of engagement of female participants. The rate of engagement and uptake for males isn’t affected in the same way), and allow as much dead air as is necessary for people to build up the courage to come and talk.

Be strict with timing but ensure that the people speaking are supported and made completely safe in their sharing.

Ideally work with two facilitators so that one facilitator ‘guards’ mic and keeps stack, whilst one sits in front of the speaker with timer and gives ‘round up’ hand signal as they approach 2 mins.

Deliberation Phase

Main Deliberation

- Before people go into groups a lead facilitator clarifies the discussion topic or question, including making clear how many points are to be fed back from each ‘breakout group’ (usually 3-5 points depending on the size of the assembly – the larger the assembly, the fewer the points).
- Lead Facilitators then divide the assembly into ‘breakout groups’, ideally of eight. Facilitators need to try and ensure this is roughly the size of each group and encourage people to sit in groups with people they don’t already know.
- Each breakout group has one facilitator and one notetaker as explained above.
- Clarify the duration of the deliberation (discussion in breakout groups) phase, and stick to timings throughout the assembly as many people who are attending have work or family

responsibilities that have to be respected.
- A deliberation phase should last around 30 minutes (5 minutes can be allocated to introducing the phase, and groups should have 25 minutes to discuss their ideas).
- Recap the hand signals before putting groups in breakout groups.

Breakout Groups

In the breakout groups, it is good practice for the facilitator to restate the discussion topic or question and for the note taker to write it down. This enables people in the group to refer back to the original point for discussion to make sure the group stays focused and on subject.

It is also good to start by going around the group and stating names, and making space for anyone to highlight any barriers to engagement that they may have that the small group can work together to try to work around.

The breakout groups will have a set amount of time to discuss the topic, as outlined by the lead assembly facilitators beforehand – a good amount of time is 25 mins.

10 minutes before the end of the deliberation phase, the lead facilitators should notify the breakout groups that they have ten minutes left, and should request that the breakout group note takers feed back their summary of the discussion to their groups, so that they can identify which key points they will be feeding back to the main discussion. It is also a good idea for the lead facilitators to remind the breakout groups how many points they will be feeding back.

Integration Phase

Feeding Back

- The lead facilitator calls the breakout group note takers to the front of the assembly (they should ask the name of each note taker before they feedback so that they can thank them at the end).
- The lead facilitator should request that as the note takers feedback their key points, the crowds use wavy hands to signal their support for the points raised.
- Each note taker then feeds back the key points as the main assembly note taker records the points as they are fed back, noting down which ones get the most approval from the entire assembly. It’s nice to do this on a whiteboard or a large piece of paper so that the assembly participants can see it.
- The assembly note taker then feeds results of the assembly to wherever they are destined to go (e.g. sending them to the local council to demand action, or posting them on a community online organising platform etc.). This destination is determined prior to the assembly and will have formed part of the framing of the process in the Input phase.

Finishing Up

- The lead facilitators express gratitude for the breakout group facilitators and note-takers, and for everyone who participated.

- If there is a need to vote on the results of the assembly, you can do a ‘Temperature Check’. The lead facilitators read out the different options to be voted on and the members of the assembly cast their ‘vote’ using ‘wavy hands’ for the option they like the best. The assembly note taker and lead facilitators watch for the most wavy hands and that gets taken forward.
- ‘Shout Outs’ are an invitation for those gathered to call out brief notifications such as upcoming actions or events. These should be short and arranged with the facilitators beforehand if possible. This should take no more than 10 minutes.
- The lead facilitator summarises the results of the assembly if necessary, and thanks everyone for participating.

Training & Support

We highly recommend that in the run up to your assembly, you pull together volunteers who want to help facilitate and/or note-take and run practice sessions face-to-face, or even online. Offer practice sessions in the run up to the community assembly to help your facilitation and note-taker team feel confident.

Recorded Trainings & Open Calls

- How to set up and run a Community Assembly. YouTube October 2023: Running an Assembly training
- Assemblies Facilitation Training. YouTube November 2023: Community Assemblies Facilitation Training
- 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

Trust the People

THE expert trainers inspiring and empowering people everywhere to really bring democracy home, Trust the People run excellent training sessions to give people the knowledge and resources, try out new skills, and feel confident in their ability to organise and run an effective Community Assembly. We highly recommend their training.

- The Course: 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.

Talking To Local Politicians

If considering involving politicians and officers in your community assembly or escalation plans check out the Local & Regional Authorities Map.

Also, check out Hope For the Future's website. They run regular trainings, which are very informative.

If you are contacting a Member of UK Parliament (MP), XRUK's Political Advisor can provide general guidance to help you find out the most effective approach. Contact political@extinctionrebellion.uk.

Let Us Know

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 UK Asssembly Telegram chat,
- email us at assemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk, or
- message us via the UK Assemblies Reception Mattermost channel

Further Training and Support

- **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..."

More and more trainings are popping up regularly. If we are missing some great training resources, please message us to request adding links here.

Just Go For It!

While we hope that everything you need to know is here, it is worthwhile remembering that every assembly is different because it reflects your community's particular needs.

Deliberative democracy is a learning curve for all of us. Don't let perfection be the enemy of progress. Just give it a go, do your best, then enjoy the process. Your effort will really be appreciated by participants who are not used to being listened to and who enjoy getting to meet like minds in their community.

You may find that there is demand for more assemblies. Trust the process and go for it!

Community Assembly Facilitation Guide

How to facilitate and moderate a Community Assembly. This is a summary of facilitating an assembly and a guide for assembly facilitators. It offers a flexible running order of the Community Assembly for the main facilitator to schedule the different elements of the three stages of the process and help breakout group facilitators to see where their support fits into that process.

Roles

Each assembly needs:

Main Facilitator (Ideally two with a gender balance)

- Sometimes called Lead Facilitator.
- They are responsible for the overall running of assembly, timekeeping, and the delivery of all relevant information.
- They facilitate the discussion using hand signals, ensure no one dominates, keep an eye on the time, maintain radical inclusivity and active listening, and adhere to the ‘Inclusivity Statement’.

Assembly Notetaker
They are responsible for recording the results of the feedback/integration phase of the assembly and for feeding the assembly results into wherever they are destined to go. They might, for example, need to send them to the local Council to demand action, or feed them into an online organising platform. The destination of what is generated in assembly needs to be clearly defined before the start.

Each breakout group needs:

Facilitator
They facilitate the discussion using hand signals, ensure no one dominates, keep an eye on the time, maintain radical inclusivity and active listening and adhere to the ‘Inclusivity Statement’.

Notetaker
They summarise the most popular points, ideally as bullet points, aiming to boil them down to 2-5 key points or ideas from the discussion. They look for wavy hands to record agreement.

Online Roles

Ideally for an online Community Assembly, some of the facilitation team would focus on the technical side. **Technical Facilitator(s)** are responsible for managing breakout rooms, muting people, monitoring chat questions, etc. They may also manage tools, such as Slido, or other digital support platforms. While it isn't essential, this role helps the group facilitator focus on discussion and deliberation.

Hand Signals

Assemblies maintain inclusivity and ensure all voices are heard equally by using hand signals to facilitate the discussion.

Point (or ‘I would like to speak’)



When someone in the group wants to say something, they should point their index finger up and wait for the facilitator to let them have their turn in speaking. It is vital that people do not talk over anyone else and wait for their turn. If someone, who has not yet said anything, puts their finger up to speak, whilst others have spoken a lot, then the facilitator should give that person priority over the ‘stack’ (the queue or order of speakers based on the order they raised their finger to speak).

Online consideration: If people do not have their video turned on, they can type STACK in the chat or use the raised hand in the participants’ panel, or say ‘stack’ for their name to be stacked.

Wavy Hands (I Agree)



The ‘wavy hands’ signal of approval is used to show agreement or support for something someone has said. If everybody erupts into a forest of waving hands during a breakout session, for example, the note-taker can see that this is one of the more popular points made and it will become one of the key bullet points fed back to the main meeting room.

Online consideration: If people do not have their video turned on, they can use the ‘clapping hands’ icon under ‘more’ in the participants’ panel, or write ‘AGREE’ in the chat.

Clarification



If someone says something that is unclear, people can hold their hand in a ‘C’ shape as the ‘clarification’ signal. The facilitator will then pause the discussion giving the person who made the signal the opportunity to ask a question to clear up any confusion.

Online consideration: If people do not have their video turned on, they can write ‘Clarify’ in the chat, or unmute and say ‘Clarify' and their name.

Speak up



If someone is speaking too quietly or they cannot be heard, others can ask them to raise their voice by raising and lowering their hands with palms open and facing up.

Online consideration: If people do not have their video turned on, they can write ‘Speak Up’ in the chat, or unmute and say ‘speak up’ or use the ‘thumbs up’ icon in the participants panel. If using this second option you will need to explain to the whole assembly what the thumbs up icon means so they know to increase their volume if speaking.

Direct Point



If someone has directly relevant information to what is being said, then they can make the ‘direct point’ hand signal and the facilitator will let them provide that information immediately after the person speaking has finished. The direct point signal is not an excuse to jump the queue just to make a point. It is important that people do not abuse this signal as otherwise it can make all

present lose trust in the process.

Online consideration: If people do not have their video turned on, they can write Direct Point or DP in the chat, or unmute and say ‘Direct Point’ and their name.

Technical point



If someone has information that is immediately relevant to the running of the meeting, they make a ‘technical point’ signal by making a ‘T’ shape with their hands. This is only to be used for concerns external to the discussion that need to be addressed immediately e.g. “We only have ten minutes left” or “I am the note taker and I need the loo so can someone else take over?” The facilitator should stop the discussion to address the technical point.

Online consideration: If people do not have their video turned on, they can write Technical Point or TP in the chat, or unmute and say ‘Technical Point’ and their name.

Round Up



Facilitators need to ensure that no one speaks for more than necessary (two minutes is a suggested maximum amount of time as it encourages people to be concise). If someone has been speaking for two minutes (or whatever the set amount of time is), the facilitator makes the ‘round up’ hand signal by repeatedly making a circular motion with their hands (as if they are tracing a ball). This must be done sensitively, but firmly as it ensures that no one person dominates the meeting.

Online consideration: If people do not have their video turned on, they can use the ‘time’ icon under ‘more’ in the participants panel.

Temperature check

Jiggle the fingers on the palms of both hands at a level that corresponds with feelings. If hands are pointed upwards and jiggled, this suggests support. If they are held horizontally, this suggests people are ambivalent, and if they are pointed downwards, then this suggests that people do not support something. A temperature check can be used to quickly check the feelings of the group.

Main Facilitator

Input Phase

What do you need to mention as the Main Facilitator in the Input Phase?

- Welcome everyone. Introduce yourself with a sentence or two.
- Tell participants what this event is, i.e. a Community Assembly to “hear your voice on the question of …. ?”
- Ask if anyone has any accessibility needs that can be met now or throughout the assembly process and tell people that if they would rather share these privately, they can speak to any of the volunteers. Ask all the volunteers to raise their hands.
- Housekeeping:
  - Toilets and fire exits
  - hearing loop or other accessibility issues
  - check if objections to photos or video
- Speak about the Agenda of the day including timings; ideally have this visible to participants either via material on the tables, or on flip chart sheet somewhere easily seen. Check if planned breaks might not work for any participants and offer chance to share needs privately
- Introduce the assembly team and in a sentence describe their roles.
- If you do not have enough note-takers, prepare the attendees for stepping forward or using post it notes. Inform tables that they will be asked to find a volunteer to take notes for their break out groups and the group facilitators will support that process, or that people will be limited in terms of the number of sticky note ideas they can offer, so that no voice dominates.
- Go through hand signals
  - Want to speak
  - Temperature check
  - Speak up
  - Round up
- Explain the three pillars:

> **Active Listening**
>
> Active listening is focusing on hearing someone all the way through to when they finish, before responding. It is also about overcoming our urge to start

> figuring out our response in our own mind whilst someone is still talking. Sometimes listening actively leads to shifts in our own focus. 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.

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

> **Radical inclusivity**
>
> Effective assemblies achieve radical inclusivity, where the emphasis is explicitly put on all being heard and valued equally. Explain that this means no voices dominate, so 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. For instance, those not comfortable speaking in groups may wish to make a note on a sticky note / piece of paper / draw their thoughts. Dominant voices will have the same time limits on sharing as those who are quieter. Sometimes the quieter voices have more valuable inputs.

- Read **Inclusivity Statement**:

> “We value all voices equally in the assembly, as our aim is to hear the wisdom of the crowd gathered here and not to have the assembly dominated by individual voices or groups. We recognise that confident speakers are not always right and that those who are not confident speakers will often have the most useful ideas or opinions to put into the discussion. This is why we value all voices equally and we ask you to do the same. We do not tolerate any calling out, abuse or shaming. We welcome all people but not all behaviours.”

- Get the participants to agree with this set of guidelines with show of wavy hands
- Tell participants where the results of this assembly will be going, or if there is going to be a follow up event/working group / assembly
- Ask if there are any open questions so far
- Let experts speak and hear testimonials

Deliberation Phase

What do you need to do as the Main Facilitator in Deliberation Phase?

- Set up the groups – 8-10 (max) people in each group
- Repeat the assembly question to every one. Ideally, have it visible on a flip chart or screen for everyone or on paper at each table; point this out
- Make sure every break out group has a facilitator and note taker
- Keep an eye on the time or designate someone to time-keep
- Tell the break out groups ten minutes before when it is time to wrap up and decide on (eg three) key points to feed back to the whole assembly in the integration phase

Integration Phase

What to do as the Main Facilitator in the Integration Phase?

- Ask a presenter from each group to read out their 3 statements / recommendations / asks. The main Note-taker / Facilitator will write on a flip chart visible to everyone
- Check for **clarifications** needed from participants. NB NOT comments. If there is a need to vote on results of the assembly, Lead Facilitator takes a ‘Temperature Check’; they read out the different options to be voted on so the assembly can cast their ‘vote’ using ‘wavy hands’ for the option they like the best. The assembly note taker and lead facilitators watch for the most wavy hands; that point gets taken forward. Each person has three votes
- The lead facilitator summarises the main results of the assembly. They then remind people of next steps again, e.g. results be sent out via email, to whom, any next assembly plans, creation of working groups. If flip chart papers have been used to gather ideas on each table, photograph these and inform participants they will be shared on social channels.
- Express gratitude for the breakout group facilitators and note-takers, and for everyone who participated.
- ‘Shout Outs’ are an open invitation for all gathered to call out brief notifications, such as upcoming actions or events. These should be short and arranged with the facilitators beforehand if possible. Allow no more than 10 minutes.

Breakout Group Facilitators

Breakout Group Facilitators are mainly needed in the deliberation phase of a Community Assembly, with at least one facilitator per group.

If you prefer to watch a training video, this is the XR's Community Assemblies Facilitation training on YouTube.

What do you need to do as a breakout group facilitator during the deliberation phase?

- Introduce yourself briefly. Say this whichever way works for you, in your own words.

> “I am volunteering today as a facilitator. Our group is a safe place for us all to share our experience, understanding of the topic and to work together. Please keep confidential what people say in our group today; do not name people and ensure people cannot be identified when discussing today with others.
>
> Remember: no one person has all the answers. Please respect other people's right to hold opinions that you disagree with. We are all here to listen to each other and be heard.
>
> So everyone has enough time to speak, we will be limited to [X] minutes. Everyone will speak uninterrupted for [X] minutes at a time until finished. Everyone else will listen."

- Remind people of the Community Assembly question that is being deliberated on.
- Ask for one of the group to volunteer to be the Notetaker.
- Show the hand signals again for:
  - I want to speak
  - Temperature check
  - Speak up
  - Round up
- Egg timers can be used as visual prompts to ease the timekeeping element of facilitation, as they are visible to all. If no egg timers are available, the facilitator can keep time and make the ‘round up’ hand signal when the speaker has had their allowed time, or you can ask someone to volunteer to time-keep.
- Remind people of the Inclusivity Statement and need for respectful, active listening and no interruptions allowed as per the guidelines they agreed to earlier, often called the

Three Pillars.

> “We value all voices equally in the assembly, as the aim is to hear the wisdom of the crowd gathered here and not to have the assembly dominated by individual voices or groups. We recognise that confident speakers are not always right and that those who are not confident speakers will often have the most useful ideas or opinions to put into the discussion. This is why we value all voices equally and we ask you to do the same. We do not tolerate any calling out, abuse or shaming. We welcome all people but not all behaviours.”

Run a first round of everyone briefly introducing themselves and saying what they hope to gain from the event:

- Invite people to share their access needs and where possible, accommodate these.
- Invite people to voice their opinions, thoughts or questions.
- Make sure everyone has a go at voicing their opinion.
- If questions arise from speeches and speakers are available for ‘speed question’ sessions, invite them to your table.
- When it is time, indicated by the Main Facilitator, guide the group to decide on priority statements (ideally 3 statements per breakout group. This also depends on what the Community Assembly working group decided, so it could be more or less) to share during the imminent and final integration phase of the assembly.
  - Repeat the main topics that have been mentioned.
  - Ask the Notetaker to fill in gaps or topics that you may have forgotten to summarise.
  - Lead a temperature check on which statements should be brought to the main assembly integration phase.
- Find someone to present the group’s statements. This can be you or the Notetaker, but if someone else might want to do it, that should be encouraged.

More (In-Person) Group Facilitation Tips

- Listen more than you speak
- Ensure everyone has the same length of time to speak
- Gently intervene to stop interruptions using name tags of the person interrupting
- Ask questions to invite people to speak if the discussion isn't flowing
- Also allow silence to run if people don’t come in immediately
- Encourage respect, thanking people for their input, so every participant feels safe to share their ideas
- Encourage quieter members of the group to speak; allow people to write their input or draw images (Post it notes are a great tool here)
- Be sensitive to the emotions that may arise
- Hold the space calmly and without judgement for participants to agree to disagree
- Close each activity by summing up the main ideas

- Have fun. A sense of humour makes things work more smoothly
- Ask for one of the group to prompt when X minutes are left to begin facilitating the group to select their top priorities - see the Review and Prep phase below

Review Of Break-Out Discussion. Prep for the Final (Integration) Phase

When the discussion has reached its time limit, thank everyone for their contributions. Ask the Notetaker to read group comments out again, one by one. Check with the group that the Notetaker has understood each speaker correctly and recorded them accurately (Notetaker amends as necessary).

At the allotted time, ask the Notetaker to summarise ideas and any priorities emerging from the discussion. As the Faciliator, don't allow this to become further discussion as the group may then not have time to identify the top 3 ideas.

Also ask group members to indicate the importance of each idea with hand signals (Demonstrate).

The Notetaker will make a mark of their own choosing next to each idea to denote its level of consensus in the group, e.g. '+' or '✓' to denote one person's agreement; + + / ✓ ✓ = 2 , etc.

Feedback and Whole Assembly Key Points

Your nominated person will read out your key headings and main ideas from your group's discussion to the whole group. The Assembly Notetaker will write these up visibly on flip chart paper.

Other groups may ask your group questions and/or comment. Timing will be framed by the Main Facilitator. Note: comments at this stage can lead to further comments, so be careful to note that further discussion may be needed at a future assembly in order to keep to time.

Each group may feed back in this way, with the whole group clarifying with questions and commenting within the time constraints.

Depending on the process, ideas can be added to large flipchart paper on the walls for everyone in the whole assembly to vote on. Alternatively, the Assembly Notetaker may then read out all of the headings one by one, then may ask the whole group to vote its agreement (Demonstrate hand signals).

Assembly participants may use stickers to note their votes on the flipchart paper. Alternatively, the Assembly Notetaker counts raised hands, adds totals onto the flipchart next to suggestions.

The Main Facilitator then reminds the participants about the eventual usage of the feedback, e.g. to share with local authority. They may also invite everyone to vote on possible next steps, for instance use of Polis or a follow-on assembly along with sharing outputs with the local authority.

Dealing with Difficult Interactions

Sometimes when you are running assemblies, or doing community work in general, you might have difficult interactions with people. Whilst there is no easy way to overcome these, here are some suggestions:

- Refer to the line from the inclusivity statement: We welcome all people, but not all behaviours.
- Move in when people are interjecting, challenging or talking too much, stating that radical inclusivity means we need to have time for everyone and equal sharing/hearing time.
- Thank them for their input and seek the positive intention of their behaviour (what are they seeking to achieve that is positive?)
- Remember, discussions can be won by people who make the most noise. Your job is to ensure all voices are heard.
- Explain the situation & encourage a quick round-up: “I am conscious of time and our agenda - what is the final point you want to make?”
- If someone interrupts, state the importance of ensuring people are listened to without interruption.
- Offer to talk to the person exhibiting difficult behaviour in more detail during a break or afterwards. If you need someone to behave differently it can be an expression of Radical Inclusion to connect with them in a break or afterwards to keep in relationship with them.
- Sometimes with someone who is very unconsciously in need of attention and can’t be satisfied with a short interaction, avoiding eye contact may keep them quiet or let them know they have been talking for too long.
- If necessary, overtly clarify the objectives of the session again and what is needed to achieve those objectives.

Handling Tricky Situations

- You may experience a situation where a person is triggered or emotionally overwhelmed, if the topic relates to a sensitive issue for them.
  - Suggested response: Give them a minute to compose themselves, but if they are struggling, ask if they would like to take time out to catch their breath. If you have trained counsellors as volunteers, suggest they may talk with them in a safe space.
- You may have someone who feels so strongly that they talk for longer than their allotted time and do not acknowledge your ‘round up signal’, or they may go off topic.

    - Suggested response: “Thank you for sharing that (check participant’s name on their name tag). Just to say though, that as a volunteer facilitator, I have to keep the discussions on track to keep us on time. I don’t mean to diminish the value of what you are sharing, but can I bring you back to the question we’re discussing together here? If you feel you want to elaborate on your concerns, then let’s talk one to one later. OK?”
- You may have a couple of people talking among themselves while someone is taking their turn to speak.
    - Suggested Response: “So everyone can hear everyone’s comments, can I ask you to hold your thoughts and share with the group when X has finished speaking? Thanks”
- You may identify other tricky situations that can disrupt the process. Talk these through at your debrief to help everyone learn from your experience.

Trust the People's 'Engaging Communities' module has a document on how to deal with conflict when engaging with strangers, which uses methods from Non-Violent Communication (NVC) - it is worth reading to prepare for community assemblies.

Using Zoom for Community Assemblies

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:

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

For an online Community Assembly, facilitators can take on 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.

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. If you are wanting to escalate issues where your local council hold decision making power, then your action will be ideally outside or near your relevant authority offices.
- 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 UK Assemblies group; the Community Assemblies team is here to help every step of our journey into upgrading our democracy together.

- Email: assemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk
- Join us on the UK Assemblies Telegram chat

Case Studies

Case Studies

Cornwall's NVDA Assembly to Local Government Representation

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 dialoge 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) ** 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

Case Studies

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.

More Case Studies

Haringey Community Assembly on Climate (2min video)

https://www.youtube.com/embed/LzaTx3AJuvo?si=hiTPjjGJta_omROn

Shrewsbury's 2025 People's Water Assembly

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**.

Co-operation Hull

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.

Eastbourn Citizens and Local Authorities Partnership

Grassroots To Global - Scotland.

- Torry, Aberdeen, Scotland
  - Torry Peoples' Assembly Report
  - Torry's second peoples' assembly
  - The Declaration of Torry
- Overseas
  - East Africa Assemblies and the People-to-people Declaration at Laboot
  - 'Community of Movements' Assembly July 2024

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

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.

Additional Learning

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

- Sortition Foundation's guide to messaging on deliberative democracy: Reforming the political system. A Messaging Guide
- The Community Organising module by Trust the People explains different ways to organise as a community, about the different tools in existence and about what others around the world have done.
- 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.

Need More Help?

Join the UK Assemblies Telegram channel. Ask anything, share your positive stories.

Email the **UK Assemblies working group** with your questions at assemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk