

Community Assemblies

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

- [What Are Community Assemblies?](#)
- [How to Organise and Run Assemblies in Your Community](#)
 - [The Three Pillars of Community Assemblies](#)
 - [Creating a Team](#)
 - [Connecting with the Community and Allies](#)
 - [Assembly Framing, Scope and Topic](#)
 - [Assembly Planning](#)
 - [Community Assemblies - a Quick Start guide!](#)
 - [Script For In-Person Community Assembly](#)
- [Resources to Run an Assembly](#)
- [5 Step Escalation Plan](#)
- [Massembly Resources](#)
 - [Massembly Links](#)

- What happens next?
- Summary of Massembly Results: 31st August 2024
- Summary of Massembly Results: 15th October 2024
- Have your say via Pol.is
- Online Assembly
- Funding
- Additional Learning
- General and Devolved Elections and Assemblies
 - Introduction
 - Escalatory Potential in a Run Up to Elections
 - Elections Action Pack
 - Example Questions for Candidates
 - Resources From Non-XR Organisations
 - Influencing Political Elections

What Are Community Assemblies?

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

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

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

It's time to decide for ourselves, together!

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

By organising **local Community Assemblies**, we can...

- **Open conversations about XR's 3rd demand for a [Citizen's Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice](#)**
- **Grow our local networks** by continuing to build local alliances around issues we are all concerned about;
- **Do outreach;**
- **Keep up the pressure** on local politicians, local and unitary authorities;
- **Spread the word about deliberative democracy** to empower people by showing what outcomes could be achieved;
- **Start a local campaign or project** in collaboration with other groups sharing a common concern;
- **Invite local politicians and candidates** to build positive relationships and ask if they support the **CE Bill** to further climate and ecological protections;
- Depending upon local relationships with political decision makers, if authorities ignore our climate and ecological emergency, we can **escalate pressure via NVDA**. (Check out the [Escalation Plan](#) for more on this)

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

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

Citizens' Assemblies, People's Assemblies and Community Assemblies

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

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

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

How to Organise and Run Assemblies in Your Community

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

The Three Pillars of Community Assemblies

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

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

Radical Inclusivity

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

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

- Eleanor Saitta, hacker and designer

Active Listening

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

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

Trust

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

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

Creating a Team

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

- Bill Mollison

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

Alliance Building

Importance: Essential

Timing: From project start

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

Fundraising

Importance: Nice to have

Timing: From project start

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

Outreach and Integration

Importance: Essential

Timing: From middle of project

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

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

Media and Messaging Crew

Importance: Nice to have

Timing: Middle to end of project

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

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

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

Facilitators

Importance: Super essential

Timing: End of project

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

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

Recommendations:

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

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

Connecting with the Community and Allies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

◦ Door to Door Listening Guide

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

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

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

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

Assembly Framing, Scope and Topic

Relevant teams: Your local group and ally organisations

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

An Assembly for Sharing and Community Building

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

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

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

An Assembly for Discussing a Specific Topic and Generating Ideas

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

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

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

An Assembly for Making Decisions and Proposals

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

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

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

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

A good question is worded such that it is:

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

Assembly Planning

Choose the venue

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

Online Assemblies

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

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

Advance Preparation

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

Zoom Settings Management

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

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

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

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

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

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

Zoom Facilitator Roles

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

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

How to run a Zoom Assembly

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

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

In-depth Plan with Timings

One Month To Go:

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

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

Two Weeks to Go:

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

One Week to Go:

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

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

One Day to Go:

Last shout-out reminder on social media.

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

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

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

Send a reminder email to your local councillors and MP.

One Hour to Go:

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

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

Set up and test any PA equipment being used.

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

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

Set up the children's area.

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

During the Assembly:

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

Be aware of tensions and needs.

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

After the Assembly:

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

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

Pack away all the equipment and tidy up the venue.

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

Have a party with everyone remaining!

How to Organise and Run Assemblies in Your Community

Community Assemblies - a Quick Start guide!

Script For In-Person Community Assembly

This script has been written to help you organise a community assembly.

Please note that this script is written in such a way as to ensure that those who are new to people's assemblies are fully supported throughout. If you are an experienced PA facilitator and are working with those who understand how PAs work, understand their history and the hand signals, you may wish to skip over certain sections. In short, please adapt this script to the needs of your situation and your audience.

Important Things to Consider

- Before you attempt to facilitate a People's Assembly, please make sure you have at least attended one. But remember: it's not rocket science. Give it a go. You'll be great!
- This script is just a starting point. As you do more, you'll figure out your own way of saying what's here. Don't feel that this is the only way in which a People's Assembly can be facilitated, although this method is based on many years of experience in PA's by people from all over the World.
- Other things to note:
 - The two facilitators should be of different genders if at all possible.
 - Ensure radical inclusivity. Allow time at the start of the assembly to get everyone familiarised with using the tech. Think about the language you are using. Is it academic or vernacular? Are you communicating in a way that speaks to everyone within your community?
 - Remember that all voices are valued equally. Trust the process, and allow all people to speak, even if you are not sure you're going to like what you hear.
 - We welcome all people, but not all behaviours: if someone says something that makes you feel uncomfortable (i.e. they may have been racist or sexist), then name the feelings triggered by that behaviour... for example, "what you said just then made me feel very uncomfortable". Do not judge the person: saying "you are a racist" or "you are a sexist" or whatever in this situation is more likely to lead to an escalation, and is likely to put the person into a defensive mode that will make further conversation more difficult.
 - People's assemblies are widely used in action groups and civic democracy groups. For example, the [Peoples Assemblies book on the Rebel Toolkit](#), provides loads more hints, tips and background information on PAs.

Script

- **Input Phase**

- Introduction (Facilitator 1)
- Hand Signals (Facilitator 2)
- Introduce the Concept of a People's Assembly (Facilitator 1)
 - History
 - Inclusivity Statement
 - Testify
- Three Pillars (Facilitator 2)
- Framing the topic: What is the point of this people's assembly? (Facilitator 1)

- **Deliberation Phase**

- Breakout Room - Technical Advice
- How Does a People's Assembly Work? (Facilitator 2)
- Discussion

- **Integration/Output Phase**

Input Phase

FACILITATOR 1: Introduction

- Welcome everyone.
- *Facilitators introduce themselves, perhaps say a little of your background and experience with PA's and Community Organising or Projects - Brief but inspiring! If you want to bring people into the space, perhaps do a short visioning exercise, inviting people to imagine something or think about what brought them to the space.*
- Explain that People's Assemblies have three 'phases':
 - Input (includes introduction)
 - Deliberation (discussion)
 - Integration (Feedback)

- **Input Phase**

During the input phase, we explain the process and structure of the assembly, we introduce the hand signals, and frame the focus of the assembly, as well as what will happen with the outcomes from the assembly.

[If you are having more input here than just presenting the topic for discussion, such as speakers, video etc you will explain that here too]

- **Deliberation Phase**

During the Deliberation (discussion) phase, you will be placed in small groups for *[insert*

chosen length of deliberation phase] minutes and discuss the question/topic of this assembly.

- **Integration Phase** At the end of the Deliberation phase, the groups will come back into the full assembly and feedback what was generated in their small discussion group.

Facilitator 2: Hand Signals

[Demonstrate the hand signals used in assembly to allow people to use them during the introduction and input phase of the assembly.]

- We use hand signals to facilitate a discussion in which all voices get heard, no one dominates and we don't speak over each other. We will outline the hand signals you will need to take part today. Don't worry if you can't remember them as they will be repeated later in the session.

HAND SIGNALS

[As you verbally outline the hand signals, physically show them to ensure people fully understand them].

- **Make a point:** One index finger pointed upwards.
 - The facilitator will stack, but they can choose to stack out of order to ensure RADICAL INCLUSIVITY and ensure all voices are heard.
- **Agreement:** Wavy hands for agreement.
 - This is to help note taker, who can record the level of agreement, and to make sure people are not interrupting others...remember it's all about ACTIVE LISTENING.
- **Clarification:** Create a c shape with one hand.
 - This is to ensure all are able to fully participate. It is useful if people do not understand anything, particularly important if unfamiliar terms and acronyms are used.
- **Direct point:** Two index fingers pointing upwards.
 - This is not for responding, this is just for extra added information that is directly relevant to what is being said – people must be careful not to misuse this to jump ahead in the queue!
- **Technical point:** Create a t-shape with your hands.
 - This is used for technical information such as breaks or timings.
- **Round up:** Create a circle with both hands.
 - Do this after 2 minutes to make sure that those who are more comfortable speaking don't go on and on...remember: RADICAL INCLUSIVITY.
- **Speak up:** Move your hands upwards with their palms facing upwards.
- **Temperature check:** Jiggle fingers at a level that corresponds with feelings i.e. upwards - support, horizontally - ambivalent, downwards - don't support.
 - This can be used to quickly check the feelings of the group.

FACILITATOR 1: Introduce the concept of a People's Assembly

What is a People's Assembly?

A people's assembly is a structured way for a group of people to discuss issues, generate ideas and/or make decisions collectively in a manner in which all voices are heard and valued equally and no one person, or group, is able to dominate the process.

People's assemblies are 'self selected' meaning that anyone can choose to take part. They are not to be confused with Citizens Assemblies which are randomly selected from the population by the process of Sortition, to make sure it is representative in terms of key characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, education level and geography. Citizens' Assembly members would learn about critical thinking before they hear balanced information from experts and stakeholders. They would then spend time deliberating in small facilitated groups, similar to the break-out groups we're going to use in this People's Assembly.

People's Assemblies have been used throughout history and all over the world as a means to enable people to come together and achieve real social change:

- In Ancient Athens, for example, a people's assembly known as the ekklesia, which was open to all male citizens regardless of class, was where major decisions such as going to war, military strategy and the election of public officials were made.
- More recently, in Rojava, Kurdistan, people's assemblies have been at the centre of a democratic revolution. Decisions are made by the community, and the role of the elected representatives is simply to carry out these decisions. The community itself is the seat of power.
- In Spain, the Spanish municipalist movement, known as the Indignados or 15-M movement, used PAs to discuss and protest against the government's austerity policies. At the movement's peak, 80 assemblies were being held each week alone in Madrid.
- In 2014 the Y'en a Marre movement in Senegal helped oust the incumbent and corrupt President by mobilising the youth vote using people's assemblies and hip-hop.
- Closer to home there are the examples of Frome, Torridge and others, all of which are councils that have been reclaimed to some degree by residents in local elections. When councils are run by residents we see decisions get made that prioritise the needs of that community. To give a couple of brief examples, Frome has a Library of Things. This came from a small start up grant of £9000, which enabled over 300 things such as power tools, musical instruments, to be gathered for the whole community to borrow for a small fee. They also repurposed derelict buildings, solar panels sprung up everywhere, a local NHS initiative to prescribe volunteering plus the councils investment in civic and volunteer groups, this led to a 22% reduction in A&E attendances.

Inclusivity Statement

Before we start a People's Assembly, we like to read out this 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. We welcome all people but not all behaviours.”

We want to hear your voice, if you want to speak, no matter what. Whatever age you are, wherever you are from and whatever you do.

The whole process will take about an hour and a half*, and we’d love you to stay for the whole of that, but feel free to go or come as you like or need.

*[*If you have the time, it’s good to do a TESTIFY at this point. It’ll add about 15-30 minutes to the overall length of the PA, but gets people talking about why they are at the PA before the main section of the assembly...]*

Testify

Before we get into the section of the People’s Assembly where you will all be able to talk through our specific issue in a facilitated way, we first like to give anyone who would like an opportunity to talk about what has brought them here today.

- QUESTION: What has brought you here today?
- *Offer the floor to anyone who wants to speak. Ask for a woman to speak first (to ensure that we don’t have a succession of men, men and more men).*
- *Allow as much dead air as is necessary for people to build up the courage to come and talk!*
- *FACILITATOR 2 is timing and doing the ‘round up’ signal as necessary.*
- *After 15-30 minutes, move into the remainder of the PA...*

Resources to Run an Assembly

COMMUNITY ASSEMBLIES



Local Group Pack

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

Support

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

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

- and ask questions. Please join us on the **Zoom link dropped in the Telegram Chat**.
- Email us at: **CommunityAssemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk**

Community Assembly Manual

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

Community Assembly Facilitation Guide

- A summary of facilitating a community assembly

Community Assembly Trainings & Open Calls

- How to set up and run a Community Assembly. YouTube October 2023: [recording of the training](#)
- Facilitation Training for Community Assemblies. YouTube November 2023: [recording of the training](#)
- Introductory Open Call on Community Assemblies YouTube June 2023: [recording of Open Call](#)
- Introduction to the Community Assembly Escalation Plan. YouTube October 2023: [recording of the Open Call](#)

Communications.

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

Working with the Press.

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

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

- [Press release PowerPoint used in the workshop](#)
- [Workshop notes](#)

Funding

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

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

Local / Combined Authorities Map

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

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

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

5 Step Escalation Plan

The Vision

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEMOCRATIC ASSEMBLIES + DIRECT ACTION = FAIRER SOLUTIONS EVERYWHERE

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

A Simple 5 Step Plan

1. **Research:**

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

2. **Prepare:**

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

3. **Act:**

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

4. **Occupy:**

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

- Repeat!

5. Escalate:

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

More Info & Support

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Masassembly Resources

Massembly Links

Thank you for taking part in the
Massembly

Please follow the links below to the following resources:

Massembly Information Cards

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

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

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

[Find out what happens next](#)



What happens next?

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

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

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

Encourage others to join the conversation

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

Join XR!

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

Other ways to learn more and get involved:

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

Summary of Masassembly

Results: 31st August 2024

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

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

1. Citizens' Assemblies and Participatory Democracy

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

2. Civic and Political Education

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

3. Accountability and Transparency in Politics

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

4. Political Reform and Representation

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

5. Environmental Protection and Rights of Nature

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

6. Building Trust and Confidence in Democracy

- Emphasis on rebuilding public trust in the political system through inclusive, transparent, and participatory processes.
- Encouragement of civic engagement and community involvement as a means to foster trust and counter populist movements.
- The role of local projects and assemblies in building understanding and confidence in democracy.

7. Long-term and Future-focused Governance

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

Summary of Masassembly Results: 15th October 2024

Here are the results from Tuesday 15 October online Masassembly.

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

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

1. Citizens' Assemblies and Participatory Democracy

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

2. Education for Democratic Participation

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

3. Reducing Corporate and Private Influence

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

4. Long-term Thinking and Future Generations

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

5. Transparency and Accountability in Governance

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

6. Inclusivity and Diversity in Decision-Making

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

7. Reforming Democratic Structures

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

Have your say via Pol.is

Pol.is voting is currently closed.

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

Online Assembly

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

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

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

Register for the **online assembly here**

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

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

Be prepared!

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

What happens next

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

More information on deliberative democracy:

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

Funding

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

We recommend that local groups wanting to run a community assembly check out **General Fundraising Guidance** on the Rebel Toolkit.

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
- **Humanity Project** in 2025 are targeting ten key locations in the UK and providing funds for those already selected. Come back next year?
- Your local council for voluntary organisations (check name for your location, e.g. WCVO, GAVO, WCVA)

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**.

Additional Learning

More Resources

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

Training and Support

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

Community Assembly Case Studies

- **S. Yorkshire Climate Assemblies-** a council enabled Assembly that made recommendations on the route forward for South Yorkshire. NB the Mayor backs the popularisation of assemblies.
- **Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly-** This was the first climate assembly in Wales.
- **Blackburn People's Jury on Climate Change Crisis - September 2022-** a group organised by the council and the **Sortition Foundation**; they came up with 15

recommendations to tackle local issues related to climate change.

- **Cheshire East People's Panel**- video on the cost of living with **Positive Money**.
- **Los Indignados Assemblies**- Spanish ad hoc citizen coalitions to challenge specific government actions.
- *COP26 Global Assembly**- produced a report answering the question 'How can humanity address the climate and ecological crisis in a fair and effective way?' Findings in their report came from both a **Global Citizens' Assembly**, and self-organised Community Assemblies around the world.
- **Grassroots To Global**- Scotland.
- **Co-operation Hull**
- **Eastbourn Citizens and Local Authorities Partnership**

Additional Guides to Deliberative Democracy

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

Books

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

Other Resources

- [Power of Community Imagination](#) Podcast
- [Participedia](#): Website tracking deliberative processes
- [Decidim](#): A digital platform for citizen participation. Free, open and safe technology.
- The [Innovation in Politics Institute](#) identifies, develops and applies innovations in politics, to strengthen democracy in Europe and beyond. Their mission is "to recognise

and support those political professionals who have the courage to break new ground, are creative and achieve better results – across party lines and across borders – to make democratic politics more successful".

They also: "co-create long-term programmes with a positive impact on politics and society, like awards for state-of-the-art political work, training and networking opportunities for political professionals, and platforms for democratic practice exchange."

- People Powered [Impact Report](#).
 - This international NGO trains and wants government and civil society leaders to form a cohort of innovators interested in launching participatory programs to shape climate policy on topics such as regenerative agriculture, renewable energy, just transitions, clean transportation, decarbonization, and more.
 - To be selected for this program, applicants must be from governmental institutions, civil society organizations, or non-governmental organizations. The program is open to applicants from all over the world, with 15 spots per cohort. This NGO also convenes international organizations and leaders to connect global work on climate engagement and participation.

Citizens' Assemblies

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

Need More Help?

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

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

General and Devolved Elections and Assemblies

Introduction

Extinction Rebellion as a movement is non-party political; we use the phrase 'Beyond Politics' to describe our position. This is due to our Third Demand to **upgrade democracy** and promote the use of **Citizens' Assemblies**. We demand a **Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice**.

A recently emerging '**Water Pressure**' campaign demands a **Citizens' Assembly on Water**.

Meantime, we are still currently suffering within the outdated and unfit for purpose first-past-the-post party political system. To have any influence at all, we need to engage with that, especially in the run-up to the UK general elections, elections in the devolved parliaments and local elections.

Whilst being mindful of not using up too much of our energy and capacity engaging with corrupt and failing systems of governance, some in-house and sister organisations are working in the area of enhancing democracy and who have resources available for us to use. You can find out more about allied organisations in our [Citizen's Assembly book](#) here on the Rebel Toolkit.

There are certain times when it might be useful to get more involved in political issues.

Escalatory Potential in a Run Up to Elections

The Bigger Picture

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

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

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

In The Climate Concerned Mix

Politicians and Officers of Authorities

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

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

Community Groups

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

breakdown through climate catastrophes we are yet to face.

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

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

Seize The Moment!

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

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

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

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

Tips on How To Engage Your Local or Unitary Authority

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

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



Diagram of a power map.

2. Local politicians are likely to be quite scared of dealing with XR, so start gently. To begin, **contact them by email, attend a surgery, or phone them**. Invite them to **attend your local assembly** or ask for their **support for a campaign**. Think about whatever could work locally.
3. Try to make an appointment to meet with the relevant **Chair of Committee** or **Portfolio Holder** responsible for the issue you're raising, to discuss an assembly or particular campaign ideas. If you can, offer your local XR group's support for a policy that politician is involved with; it will be appreciated and helps to build trust. Talk to XR UK's Political Circle / Political Engagement Cymru for help.
4. In advance of your assembly, give the impression of having lots of **local support** for the issue you're raising (which of course may be the case, such as water pollution). Build your credibility by raising a petition; focus this on local people, they probably won't be interested in the views of others! Alternatively, set up a gathering, run a survey, use social media, take photographs, etc. Contact Councillors to alert them to what you're doing and talk about support gained.
5. Follow up what you do by **submitting Questions to Full Council**, which will make the Council's response public, may be reported in the media, and with prior permission you can film the response and use in social media, to grow interest.

Tipping Point of Community Power!

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

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

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

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

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

But What if Your Powers that Be Are Not Listening?

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

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

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

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

What Does Escalation Mean?

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

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

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

[5 Step Escalation Plan](#) .

Need More Pointers?

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

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

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

Elections Action Pack

Upgrade Democracy Time

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

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

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

Imagine we're like a **Wood Wide Web**

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



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

This short video shows how **Community Assemblies** connect us.



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

Local Authority Performance Intel

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

Survey Boards Work

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

Why Community Assemblies Matter

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

How a Community Assembly Might Apply Well-Timed Pressure

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

What Next?

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

Assets

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

Resources and Support

- [How to build Community Alliances](#)
- [Community Assemblies Manual](#) - Everything you need to know on how to set up and run one.
- [Community Assemblies Sharing](#) Telegram chat
- Email: communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk

Example Questions for Candidates

Example Questions for Party Candidates in Local or National Elections

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

Questions for Police and Crime Commissioner Candidates

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

Resources From Non-XR Organisations

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

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

Influencing Political Elections

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

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

Westminster seats



Elections Landscape of Opportunity

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

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

Why Local Issues Matter

Local elections provide opportunities to:

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

'Persuade Elections' Candidates Commit to:

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

Three Questions to Get Started With

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

What Can We Do?

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

Guides to Running Hustings In-Person or Online:

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