

Community Assemblies

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

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What Are Community Assemblies?

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

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

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

It's time to decide for ourselves, together!

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

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

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

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

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

Citizens' Assemblies, People's Assemblies and Community Assemblies

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

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

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

Resources to Run an Assembly

COMMUNITY ASSEMBLIES



Local Group Pack

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

Support

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

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

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

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

Community Assembly Manual

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

Community Assembly Facilitation Guide

- A summary of facilitating a community assembly

Community Assembly Trainings & Open Calls

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

Communications.

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

Working with the Press.

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

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

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

Funding

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

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

Local / Combined Authorities Map

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

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

- contact your regional/national Gardener, who supports local groups in your nation or region; they may suggest whom to contact as potential co-creators. Alternatively:
- email **communityassemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk**
- Fill in a request for help via this [Community Assembly Form](#)
- Drop ins happen every Friday noon at 3pm; check the [Assemblies Chat for the latest Zoom Link](#)

5 Step Escalation Plan

The Vision

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEMOCRATIC ASSEMBLIES + DIRECT ACTION = FAIRER SOLUTIONS EVERYWHERE

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

A Simple 5 Step Plan

1. **Research:**

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

2. **Prepare:**

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

3. **Act:**

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

4. **Occupy:**

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

- Repeat!

5. Escalate:

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

More Info & Support

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Masassembly Resources

Massembly Links

Thank you for taking part in the
Massembly

Please follow the links below to the following resources:

Massembly Information Cards

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

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

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

[Find out what happens next](#)



What happens next?

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

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

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

Encourage others to join the conversation

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

Join XR!

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

Other ways to learn more and get involved:

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

Summary of results from 31st August

Here are the results from Saturday 31st August's in-person and online Massemblies. We will publish the results incorporating further phases of the Massembly as they occur.

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.

Have your say via Pol.is

Pol.is voting can be done [here](#)

At times Pol.is is closed between assemblies or for an upgrade.

Online Assembly

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

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

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

Register for the **online assembly here**

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

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

Be prepared!

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

What happens next

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

More information on deliberative democracy:

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

Funding

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

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

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDS

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

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

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

Additional Learning

More Resources

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

Training and Support

- **Trust the People:** THE expert trainers inspiring and empowering people everywhere to really bring democracy home. Enjoy 8 weeks worth of in-depth and fun training to equip your local community to organise and run an effective magical experience in deliberative democracy. And it's totally **free**, twice per year from the experts in building deliberative democracy.
- **Involve:** public participation charity, on a mission to put people at the heart of decision-making
- **Humanity Project:** an NGO offering practical support to local groups wanting to set up what they call a 'Pop', i.e. a popular assembly. NB their immediate goals of popularising assemblies is shared with XR, but they do not share XR's Third Demand. At the time of this update (August 2024), their volunteers may recommend organisers not refer to XR support in organising.

Community Assembly Case Studies

- **S. Yorkshire Climate Assemblies** - a council enabled Assembly that made recommendations on the route forward for South Yorkshire. NB the Mayor backs the popularisation of assemblies.
- **Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly** - This was the first climate assembly in Wales
- **Blackburn People's Jury on Climate Change Crisis - September 2022** - a group organised by the council and the **Sortition Foundation**; they came up with 15 recommendations to tackle local issues related to climate change.
- **Cheshire East People's Panel** - video on the cost of living with **Positive Money**.
- **Los Indignados Assemblies** - Spanish ad hoc citizen coalitions to challenge specific government actions.
- **COP26 Global Assembly** - produced a report answering the question 'How can humanity address the climate and ecological crisis in a fair and effective way?' Findings in

their report came from both a **Global Citizens' Assembly**, and self-organised Community Assemblies around the world.

- **Grassroots To Global** - Scotland.
- **Co-operation Hull**
- **Eastbourn Citizens and Local Authorities Partnership**

Additional Guides to Deliberative Democracy

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

Books

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

Other Resources

- Community Assemblies Telegram **chat channel** Ask anything. Share your positive stories.
- **Power of Community Imagination** Podcast
- **Pol.is**- Opinion collation software platform for voting on ideas shared by participants in a deliberation process. This software was used during the People's Assemblies at The Big One (April 2023) for crowdsourcing opinions.
- **Participedia** Website tracking deliberative processes
- **Decidim**: A digital platform for citizen participation. Free, open and safe technology.
- **Innovation in Politics Institute** Identifies, develops and applies innovations in politics, to strengthen democracy in Europe and beyond.
Their mission is "to recognise and support those political professionals who have the courage to break new ground, are creative and achieve better results – across party lines and across borders – to make democratic politics more successful."

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

Citizens' Assemblies

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

Need More Help?

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

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