

# What key decisions does your community need to make?

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Follow on actions will take more consistent effort, but:

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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