Guide to Polis

Welcome to a new kind of conversation! Polis is an interactive democratic platform used around the world to gather, understand and analyse what large groups of people think.

- Polis on Water ~ Mon 19 Oct - Thurs 19 Nov
  - Polis on Water ~ How we're using it this time
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  - Polis: Support To Take Part
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Polis on Water ~ Mon 19 Oct - Thurs 19 Nov

Find everything you need to take action, support and promote our Polis on Water

Polis on Water ~ How we're using it this time

https://www.youtube.com/embed/XZd5igfoH-M?si=G-eEpVjW_1ZnABwL

Polis is open **Monday 19th October** and runs for one month until **Thursday 19th November 2026**.

3 Steps to take

1. Have your say on water HERE

2. Share the 'Polis on Water' link with everyone

For Polis to have power, we need to extend the discussion and encourage thousands to take part to push for system change.

> https://joinxr.uk/waterpolis

3. Find everything you need to promote Polis:

- Promo Pack for resources & assets here
- Frequently Asked Questions here
- More info here

How did we get here?

A Community Assembly took place on Saturday 12th September at Love & Rage in London. The assembly discussed the question:

“How might we restore our failing water systems to secure a long-term future for all people, life and habitats?”

- The assembly heard from three speakers; **Doug Parr**, Chief Scientist & Policy Director, Greenpeace UK, **Dr Lynne Jones**, XR Health and honorary associate professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and a visiting scientist at Harvard University and **Steve Conlon** from the XR Dirty Water Campaign.

- The assembly went into small breakout groups to discuss the question and what they'd heard from the speakers. Then, together, they found outcomes they agreed on.

- The three top outcomes from each breakout group were added to Polis as 'seed' statements. These statements act to spark the conversation with other participants using Polis.

- Participants are asked to vote on those seed statements and to add their own ideas for others to vote on.

- Polis filters ideas so that the most popular or most devisive, show up more often and then finds common ground. The outcomes from Polis can be used by everyone to support campaigning and push for system change.

- Watch the recording of the Community Assembly and the speakers' talks **here**.

Polis on Water Promo Pack ~ Resources & Assets

Spread the word!

For Polis to have power, we need to extend the discussion and encourage thousands to take part to push for system change.
To get everyone involved, it’s essential we share the Polis link everywhere. With your friends, family and communities.

Here’s a message to post in a WhatsApp chat or wherever your people are. Share the following few lines:

> **Finding Common Ground on Water**
> It’s time to prove our voices count. Let's take action on water.
> **Open until Thurs 19 November**
> https://joinxr.uk/waterpolis
> **Let’s include everyone. #DecideTogether**

Find the Promo Pack here

It contains:

- Style Guide - colours, fonts, symbols, taglines & slogans.
- Design Pack - brand explainer and tone of voice.
- Logos & Symbols - download to use for social media and messaging.
- QR codes & links - 'Polis on Water' (take part in Polis) and 'Polis Info' (find out more).
- Social media videos and copy - formatted for YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook.
- Press Release templates - one for Local Groups and one to share with allies.

- Email templates - one for everyone and one for allies to share with their networks.
- A5 Flyer - to print off locally to help have conversations with the public.
- Sticker - with QR code to take part in Polis. Print out and stick everywhere!
- Polis short explainer and how to get support



Polis: Support To Take Part

Learn how to take part

We have a guide for anyone wanting to take part, but assure you it really is simple to use and intuitive, once you have a link to start voting. For full information go here

Weekly support drop-ins

Join a friendly weekly Wednesday drop-in for questions and support on how to use the 'Polis on Water' online discussion, any Wednesday **10:30 - 12:30** from **21st October** to **18th November**.

We can also help with how to promote Polis on your platforms to spread the word and get everyone involved or answer your questions on Polis moderation.

Join the Zoom - no registration needed.
Meeting ID: 969 5352 0345

Learn more and find FAQs here.

If you can't make a Wednesday, please email the XRUK Assemblies team at assemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk

Polis Moderators

Moderators

If ideas are exactly the same or very similar, moderators will de-duplicate these so that participants don't see the same idea repeated.

Moderators work together in a supportive team to help get the best experience for participants. The tasks are easy to do and there's plenty of space for working alongside other moderators and getting guidance, including support sessions to learn how to moderate. This work needs a time committment of a approx. 1 hour every couple of days.

Read the Guidance for Polis Moderators to find out more.

Got Questions?

If you have questions about the role and are up for being part of an exciting project that could make real lasting impact on system change, email assemblies@extinctionrebellion.uk or message into the UK Assemblies Sharing chat on Telegram or message into our UK Assemblies Reception on Mattermost.

What is Polis?

Polis is an interactive, inclusive and fair online tool that helps groups of people have conversations and make decisions together. It’s especially useful when you want to understand what a large group thinks about a given topic, as it gathers and organises opinions shared by participants.

> “ Polis is an open-source platform that helps entire cities, states, or even countries find common ground on complex issues. It's been stress tested in tens of thousands of conversations with more than ten million participants worldwide. By collecting and analyzing viewpoints from thousands of participants, Polis reveals points of consensus, even on topics that seem deadlocked.

What makes Polis special is that it allows for everyone involved in a conversation to have an equal chance to share their views; everyone is included. Also, it offers opportunities for extended conversations over days, weeks or even months, until consensus is reached.

This movement towards a consensus is helped by smart processes going on in the background; the algorithm presents those statements that more people agree with. As ideas are increasingly agreed with, they will show up more often to help take the exploration of a topic and the discussion forward. It can also identify different clusters of opinions too.

It helps us see what a whole community thinks, not just the loudest voices.

Polis doesn't allow back and forth arguments, so trolls are sidelined.

For a fuller explanation of the value of Polis, jump to our Benefits of Using Polis page.

Who Uses Polis?

Governments, cities, and organisations around the world use Polis to shape policies or decisions **based on real input from the public**. Taiwan is the poster child and worth exploring. (See case study below)

How We Use Polis in XR

Polis can be a stand-alone tool, or used in conjuction with assemblies. Using Polis can strengthen community assembly processes by **harvesting the 'wisdom of the crowd'**. It produces understandable statistical reports. As the analysis can be shared publicly at the end of a conversation, this process is transparent.

If you would like to take part in using this exciting new way of decision-making, or if you have any questions, or need support with XR's Polis tool, contact the UK Assemblies team.

Case Study - Polis in Taiwan

What happened? The government of Taiwan used **Polis** to help decide how to regulate **Uber**, which was a controversial issue. Taxi drivers, Uber drivers, government officials, and everyday citizens all had different opinions.

The problem: People strongly disagreed. Taxi drivers wanted protection, while Uber users wanted cheaper, safe and flexible rides. Traditional public meetings turned into shouting matches with no real progress.

How Polis helped: The then Digital Minister, Audrey Tang, invited the public to use Polis online. Thousands of people participated by voting on statements and adding their own ideas. Polis grouped people into **clusters** of opinion i.e. people who supported Uber vs people who didn't.

Most importantly, it found **shared values** across those groups, such as:

- Drivers should be insured.
- Prices should be transparent.
- Passengers deserve safety.

The result: Polis helped the government find **areas of agreement** that everyone could live with. These ideas shaped new regulations that balanced safety, fairness, and innovation. Because people saw their voices reflected in the results, they were more willing to accept the final regulations.

This opened the door to Polis being used more widely by the Government in engaging the public in other policy decisions.

Why it Works in Taiwan and Elsewhere:

The government made decisions based on **common ground**, not just opinions from lobbyists or activists. People in Taiwan are now much more engaged in decision making about issues impacting their daily lives.

In this video [17 mins] Audrey Tang talks about how Polis was used to help pass laws with public inclusion.

https://www.youtube.com/embed/LscTx6DHh9I?si=nD4qVwsmGGn8Kt7Q&start=510

Benefits of Using Polis

Introduction

Polis[1] is a powerful open-source platform for harnessing the wisdom of the crowd; this helps communities whether local, entire cities, states, or even countries find common ground on complex issues. It reveals hidden areas of agreement so decision-makers can find consensus and resolve tensions on divisive and complex issues.

Inclusive Participation

Polis is an interactive, simple to use online tool that helps groups of people have fair and inclusive conversations and make decisions together at scale and over extended periods[2]. Unlike standard polls, it involves people directly in the conversation by enabling them to contribute their own statements and ideas[5].

Extinction Rebellion UK hosts its own version of Polis on secure servers running on renewable energy in Switzerland.

What Makes Polis Special?

- Takes all voices into account equally.
- Allows for inclusion of anyone in deliberation on topics, wherever they are.
- Avoids arguments or trolls because there’s no back-and-forth arguing.
- Helps us see what a whole community thinks, not just the loudest voices.
- Enables continued exploration of issues collectively for extended periods to find consensus.
- Protects your privacy.

Video

Looking at Polis - a new tool hoping to reboot democracy and find common ground amongst even the most polarised views. 'Can Taiwan Reboot Democracy?' BBC Click [7mins 38secs]

Understanding Group Opinion at Scale

It is especially useful when you want to understand what a large group thinks about a certain topic[2]. Polis is particularly valuable when you need to understand who exactly believes what within a larger group; for instance, identifying opinion clusters among people with varying levels of experience or background[3].

Potential Outcomes

- Put fairness, inclusion and justice at the centre of decision-making.
- Better decisions are made together based on the wisdom of the crowd informed by experts.
- Enables us to work better together by finding common ground and next steps.
- Provides clear, actionable outcomes.
- Increased awareness and understanding of how people can be empowered to participate in a more democratic process.
- Enhance awareness and practice of citizens' assemblies which add legitimacy to the democratic process.
- Can be used for large-scale participation in decisions.
- Attract UK-wide media coverage (due to the novelty and potential scale of engagement).

Transparency and Statistical Rigour

Polis produces understandable statistical reports. As the analysis can be shared publicly at the end of a conversation, this process is transparent.[2]. The most powerful part is that it highlights statements that different groups agree on, and where they disagree. Finding where people's opinions align makes for more legitimate decision making that everyone has been involved in. This gives legitimacy and weight to any Polis deliberation process, supporting more willing adoption of its conclusions by organisations and institutions.

Policy and Community Applications

- It can be used as a stand-alone tool or in conjunction with community assemblies, strengthening those processes by "harvesting the wisdom of the crowd"[2].
- It has been applied to complex policy debates, such as data-driven political campaigning, where it allowed people to define key issues in their own words[4].
- It enables mapping of the values and motivations underlying people's beliefs, making it a useful tool for finding solutions to difficult policy issues[4].
- Tech upskilling makes system learners potentially more employable, which in turn, may make the democratic process attractive to a younger demographic.

Deeper Dive

Further info:

- Consensus Building in Taiwan, the Poster Child of Digital Democracy by Sebastian Cushing Rodriguez.
- A sophisticated conversation about misinformation via Polis by James Sweetland.

Polis: Gamified Consensus Finding

Polis has been central to the success of vTaiwan. A topic is put up for debate and anyone with an account can comment and downvote or upvote other people’s comments. While this may appear similar to other participation tools or forums, there are several features that set Polis apart.

First is that Polis does not allow users to respond to other people's comments, drastically reducing the risk of trolls disrupting the debate. Second, it turns the upvote and downvote feature into one that clusters people who vote similarly. A visualisation emerges highlighting where there are like-minded viewpoints and division.

As the debate begins, Polis draws a map showing all the different knots of agreement and dissent as they emerge. As views are expressed in greater numbers, the platform gives visibility to statements that find consensus not just among people within the same ideological bubble, but with those outside as well.

Polis in essence gamifies the process of finding consensus. It encourages users to propose and refine viewpoints to win greater support from all sides of a discussion. The greater the consensus around a viewpoint, the greater attention it gets.

As the avatars of each user cluster around specific viewpoints, the platform's design hides divisive statements, provocation and trolling. The debates are spared the toxicity prevalent on other platforms, which so often fail to foster civil discourse.

Eventually, a group of consensual statements emerge. The final viewpoints may not appear like any of the ones made at the beginning of the discussion. The new consensus can then be turned into laws and regulations.

Why XR self-hosts Polis

As an activist organisation, data security is important to us, both to comply with General Data Protection Regulations [GDPR] and to protect our own rebels, in line with XR's Principles and Values. Because Polis is dealing with people's political views, that information potentially falls under 'special category data' in GDPR; this is potentially sensitive information. As a rule, we don't like to keep unnecessary data that can identify people, who may be XR rebels. We use our own Polis server so we can choose what data we keep on people.

We are not making a judgment on whether any particular commercial or free Polis service complies with GDPR (there are at least two reputable paid options), we are just saying that we need to be careful and prefer to host it ourselves, as with many other tools. For much the same reason, XR's Polis servers have always been hosted in on our secure servers in Switzerland, which are powered by renewable energy.

We've also made some other minor changes, for instance to improve accessibility.

AI policy issues and Polis 2.0

Polis 2.0 creates some more issues, because while it is just as easy to use for the people taking part in the poll, it has some new AI-based analysis tools. Automatic grouping of ideas by meaning, as well as grouping them by how people voted, may make analysis of a large conversation considerably easier, especially in handling duplicated ideas. As with all AI, it makes mistakes, but it still creates a useful first draft for our analysis team.

However, in line with our artificial intelligence policy, any use of large language models, and especially sending sensitive personal and political data to corporate servers, has to be carefully reviewed. Currently we enable grouping ideas by meaning, but not automatic generation of summary text, because that would require us to send data off-site to a major Large Language Model [LLM] vendor. For grouping ideas we use a small, energy-efficient self-hosted Llama instance. We appreciate that this is an open weights model and there may be ethical concerns with the training data; we would welcome any suggestions if you have successfully used more ethical models with Polis.

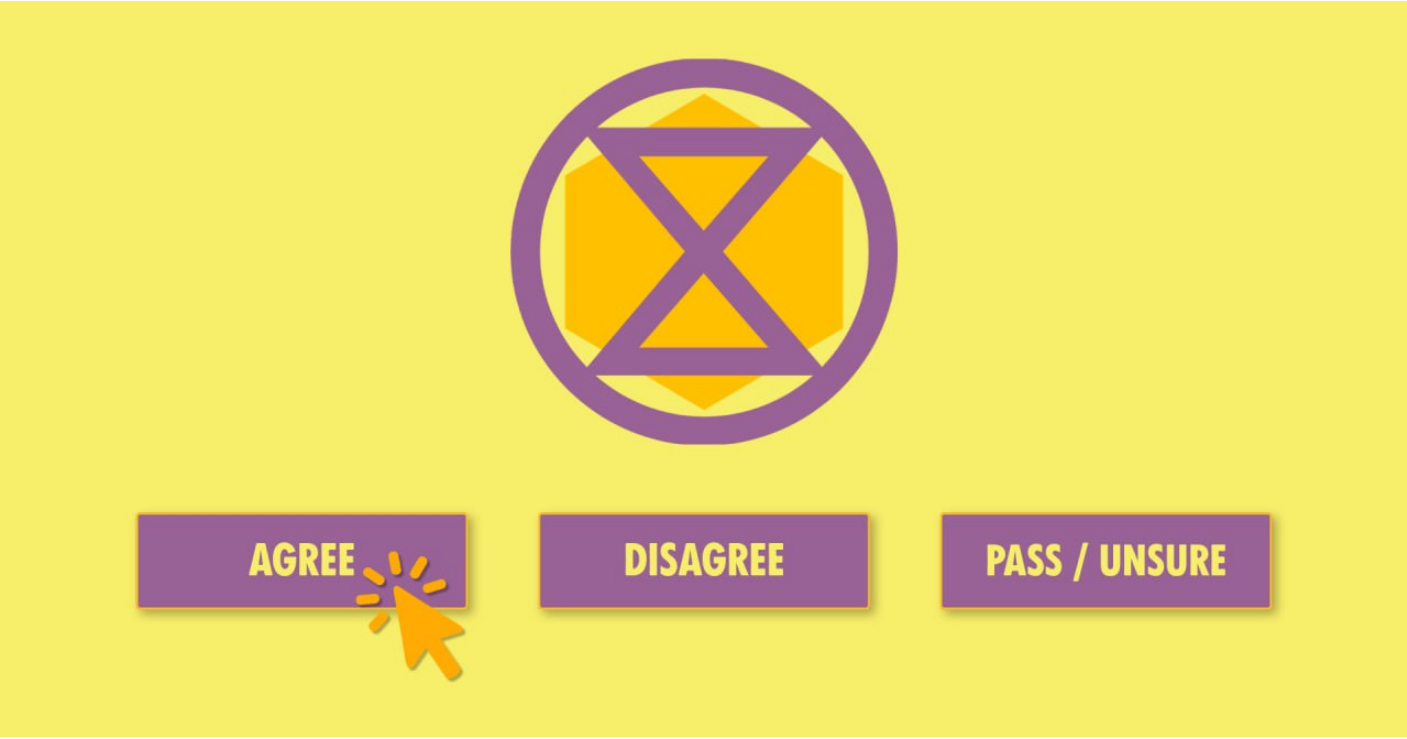
Summary

As a digital engagement platform, Polis offers a powerful framework for collective decision-making and community governance on a large scale.

Sources

1. Pol.is en.wikipedia.org
2. What is Polis? Rebel Toolkit
3. Polis: Why and How to Use it by brook, Chana Messinger
4. Polis and the Political Process by Harry Carr and Josh Smith in partnership with the Open Rights Group
5. How do we find consensus? YouTube (42secs)

Guide: Polis for Participants



How does Polis work?

- You get a link to a Polis discussion on a particular topic. Click-by-click you will see a number of different statements for you to read and react to.
- You can **Agree**, **Disagree**, or **Pass / Unsure** on each statement.
- You can then suggest new statements, and then everyone can vote on those too.

You **won't** be able to vote on your own statement. (If your own ideas do show up, this is a glitch, so please do report this to the Assemblies team.)

Polis uses maths (algorithms) to see where people agree and disagree on issues. It groups people into clusters based on how they vote and not who they are. This helps set priorities fairly. If there are demographic statements, these help cluster groups based on specific characteristics, e.g. age, location, gender etc. Read the XR Polis privacy info here.

The most powerful part: Polis highlights statements that different groups agree on, and where they disagree. Learning where people's opinions align, allows for fairer and more acceptable decision making. More info on the history and use of Polis here.

Adding Your Own Statements

This is your chance to contribute new ideas for everyone else to vote on. Remember, people will be replying with **'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Pass / Unsure'**

This is an example of what you will see when you get the link. Notice you have two ways to take part. You can vote on others'ideas, or add your own by scrolling further down.



How might we restore our failing water systems to secure a long-term future for all people, life and habitats?

LET'S FIND COMMON GROUND ON WATER ~ 19 Oct-19 Nov

- Vote on the ideas others have added. (As many / few as you like)
- Add your own ideas at the bottom of this page.

In this accelerating climate crisis, access to healthy water for us and nature is at risk.

It's time to have your say. Encourage everyone to join in. Share this link far and wide: https://joinxr.uk/waterpolis

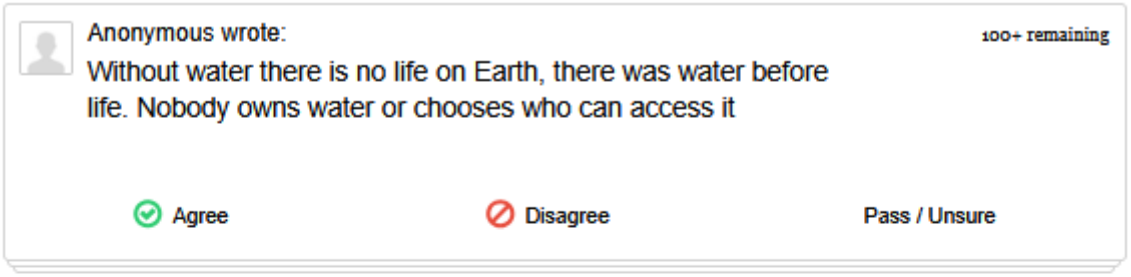
Bookmark the link and come back to keep voting until the 19th November.

Build our power and decide together to shape the future of water to create lasting change.

Learn more and find out why this Polis is crucial!

Sign up for updates and results here

Welcome to a new kind of conversation — vote on other people's statements — the more the better.



Based on the title of the poll, you can add your ideas in the box below — one at a time.

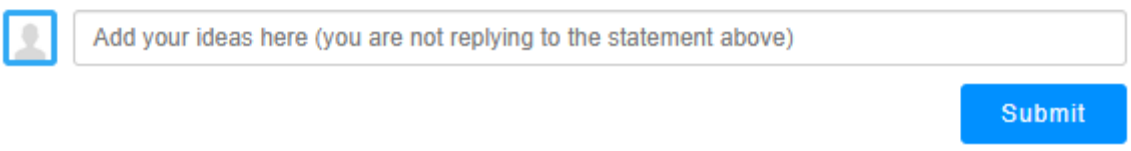
Use clear & concise wording (limited to 140 characters).

This is your chance to contribute new ideas to the poll for others to vote on.

What makes for a good statement?

- A stand-alone idea
- A new perspective, experience, or issue
- Clear & concise wording (limited to 140 characters)

Statements are displayed randomly and you are not replying directly to other people's statements: **you are adding a stand-alone statement.**



- Only share one idea at a time. If you put two ideas in at once, other people taking part do not know which they are voting for and may want to vote differently on the different ideas you have joined together.

- Try to be as clear as you can in your wording; if unsure, read your statement out loud, so you can hear how it seems to someone else.
- Be concise, you are **limited to 140 characters**.
- Your idea / statement shouldn't be a question that requires anything more than a simple response!

What Happens Next

- Polis collates your anonymous responses and analyses the results, learning as the discussion goes on.
- The most popular ideas will be displayed more often, for deeper exploration and consensus building around those ideas.
- The results are then downloaded by organisers as reports. These will be shared on the Rebel Toolkit, via email and across social media.
- If many people have taken part, that gives weight to those ideas and makes them more representative of the wisdom of the crowd. We then encourage everyone to share the results to lobby politicians, organisations and companies. The strength of opinion depends on the greatest possible participation levels.

How Polis Respects Your Privacy

- There is no registration process.
- It is anonymous.
- Your responses to demographic questions help identify which groups vote in particular ways; this helps with fairer decision-making.
- Your computer has its own address - known as the IP address; this information is deleted from our XR servers after 5 days. We have to keep that information for this short time in order to protect us all from spammers.
- If there are too few participants, demographic questions (such as age, gender, location) could identify you. These will be deleted if there is any risk of breaking anonymity.
- Read XRUK's full privacy policy.

Moderation

We use moderation to prevent abuse, and other tools when needed, however the privacy of participants has always been a key concern for XR technical teams working with Polis.

There are trained dedicated Moderators for every Polis poll. They help keep the poll simple and ensure protection of privacy.

Sometimes participants add statements that have two options, in which case Moderators will reword this into two statements, both of which can be voted on. There may be repetition of ideas; Moderators will reject those statements that are too similar.

If you have any questions or need support - contact the UK Assemblies Team.

Guide: Polis for Assembly Organisers

This guide is for anyone wanting to organise an assembly and use an interactive poll on Polis, or as a stand-alone 'sentiment check' on an important issue.

How to Organise and Use Polis

It can be difficult to get an accurate picture of people's opinions and feelings on sensitive or complex topics. Polis is a great tool for you to open conversations, first by seeding some initial facts or position statements into your poll. Secondly by allowing participants to vote on these and add their own, if they feel that important, relevant issues have been omitted.

People can then vote on these added statements; this ability to actively engage is the value of an interactive poll.

You will be supported by the UK Assemblies Team. You can request training on how to run a poll, how to frame your question, how to write good seed statements and how Polis works within an assembly.

Find more general information here on What is Polis?

Difference Between Polis Questions and Statements

Open questions are used as the topic for your Polis poll.
Statements are concisely expressed facts or perspectives for people to respond with either: 'AGREE' / 'DISAGREE' or 'PASS' / 'UNSURE'.

The Question

A good polling or assembly deliberation question or topic inspires, fires imaginations and invites all involved to participate in a spirit of hope, trust, openness, inclusion, creativity and empowerment.

There are no wrong and right answers to designing your Polis question, but it is important to be clear about your ultimate goal first. Then refine and distill the topic to serve your agreed purpose. Think about what will inspire feeling as well as ideas, because that will generate real enthusiasm for the process and can help generate energy for putting in place ideas generated!

How to Frame the Polis question

Begin with getting clear on the purpose of your poll and who is participating. How you frame it is important, because it sets parameters and keeps people focused.

Does your organising group want:

- to expand thinking?
- to find a solution for a specific issue?

Consider who the issue is relevant to, is it...

- a XR movement-wide issue and just XR rebels will participate,
- a local/regional issue (open for just XR rebels or the wider community), or
- a UK-wide issue open to all citizens.

Sense-checking

Co-creating with others will help you develop your question and statements for participants to vote on.

- The question for deliberation needs to be clearly understandable.
- It needs to be summarised in as short a sentence as possible.
- It will be broad enough to allow for creative thinking, but not so broad that a structured poll and possible later conversation around it is difficult.
- Keep participants focused with e.g. geographical locality or time-based limits.

Example Question Openers

- Broad = How might we... How can we...
- Narrow = Should we do X or Y? Do you agree with this or that?

Example Questions

Open questions but with boundaries work well and open up discussions by inviting all voices to join in.

How can we nurture nature in (community / village / town, etc.) across the seasons?
This question sets a geographical limit, which will suggest solutions that can be implemented locally and offer a breakdown of recommendations based on different times of year. It may also suggest where there is a need for possible actions at a national or even international level.

How can (name of locality / town / county) make sure that everyone in our community can access healthy, affordable food for the long term?
Food resilience is a massive topic, with many threads, all of which could be addressed by expert or enthusiast groups coming together on specialist areas.

How might XR be more focused on its demand for systemic change - a Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice?
This could be asked just for UK circle role holders and it could be narrowed down to what they could do within their curren role or team. Or it could be asked to whole movement to get wider ideas of what to do locally.

How might communication be improved between the UK Circles, Nations and Regions, Local, Campaign and Community groups?
A movement wide Polis on this could come up with new ideas and show where there was strong agreement.

Possibly too broad:

How can [locality: local, regional, national] do something about climate change together within the next year?
Being a broad question, it will involve a longer poll, with many more statements to vote on. However, Polis will automatically show which statements gain the most popularity to help prioritisation and point to possible connected issues.

How might we rely less on fossil fuels?
There are no timelines in this question, which broadens the scope. The locality may offer some limits to statements to vote on. This is potentially a huge topic, which will generate need for further deliberation.

Statements

Some examples (each statement cannot be more than 140 characters):

- For XR to stand out and get attention is for our action design to include creative, colourful elements.
- The best way to get feedback on any Movement Strategy or Actions Plans is by presentation with Q&A to every group that requests it.
- Regular Polis polls on different topics would help to understand the views of the movement.
- Local groups should make time for social gatherings to build connection and community between rebels.
- The offer of free cake is the best way entice new members to join a meeting.
- Zoom meetings shouldn't be longer than one hour, unless a break is included.
- I have made good friends within the XR community.

NOTE - always double check that someone can answer with 'AGREE' / 'DISAGREE' or 'PASS' / 'UNSURE'.

Moderation of Polis

Running an interactive Polis poll requires **Moderators**. The work closely with Assembly Organisers.

Moderators are needed to:

- protect those taking part,
- protect the system from abuse,
- join a Mattermost channel for support and to access full guidance.

They moderate peoples' added ideas, e.g.:

- remove Personally Identifiable Information (PII), e.g. phone numbers,
- remove abusive comments,
- edit ideas to better fit criteria for the polis topic or assembly question,
- ensure transparency of the process by explaining rejected ideas via a UK Assemblies hosted ‘XR Polis Broadcast’ Telegram channel.

If you have any questions or need support - contact the UK Assemblies Team.

Polis: In Depth

Deep Dive - Representative Balance

Spoiler alert! No system of democracy is perfect. However, anyone who takes part in an assembly, will mostly say how rewarding they find the experience and some local groups have gone onto holding multiple assemblies. However, sometimes the recording of peoples' discussions can be difficult with the time constraints of community assemblies, that normally only have a few hours to work through what is a jam-packed process. Sometimes, facilitators and note-takers are fresh volunteers, which can create bias, mistakes and limitations. That together with assemblies not being part of our everyday culture means that despite best efforts, the recommendations or outputs of an informal assembly are not as good as they could be.

The key to people valuing this process is assemblies being as **representative and inclusive** of all views as possible. UK Assemblies will ensure that inputted statements for voting on in Polis are well-balanced and include as many participants and their views as possible.

The final decision on which statements remain for people to respond to rests with Assembly Organisers and Moderators who have been trained in fair moderation methods.

One of the three pillars of a community assembly is 'Trust the Process'. We ask of all taking part that they trust Assembly Organisers and Moderators will be offering the best possible experience with their training, knowledge and skills.

Nuts And Bolt Ons

- An assembly deliberation is held, in which participants vote on a variety statements. These can be informative on a topic and help people think through issues, then vote.
- All taking part can then submit their own short statements or comments (<140 characters), if they feel their perspective has not been represented. These will be in their own words, albeit, they will not be able to see their own additions. The important thing is everyone else gets to vote on that additional idea.
- These additional polling statements are then viewed by participants who then vote on them, by choosing 'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Pass'/'Unsure'.
- Polis allows groups or organisation to create inclusive interactions, which can involve up to thousands or even, in the case of Taiwan, millions of participants.
- Participants do not need to complete the entire survey to contribute meaningfully to where we are all at and our preferred future direction(s).

Inclusion, Privacy and Demographic Information Trade Offs

- The poll may also be picking up issues of diversity in perceptions, according to demographic groups they belong to.
- Depending upon numbers taking part, we want to really be inclusive, as per one of the three pillars of community assemblies: ‘radical inclusion’. However, the risk is that if only small numbers take part, demographic information can reveal who is saying what.
- So for instance, if you 'agree' you are a disabled person, share that you live in the Midlands, and believe your budgies should have the vote, then chances are your neighbours and / or other participants will know it is you voicing opinions about including pet birds in future assemblies.
- The Assembly Organiser, Moderators and UK Assemblies team will be making decisions on the day as to what data is kept or deleted to protect privacy of everyone involved. Rest assured, there is training in the lead up to any assembly using Polis, together with guidance for all supporting the process to ensure best practice.

Automatic Curation of Ideas and Like-Minded Folk

- The beauty of Polis is its ability to create a real-time, anonymised report on results of the deliberative process.
- It can also show clusters of opinions in images, so people can get an idea for how participants feel about other inter-linked issues.
- Hundreds of of your evaluations of statements will trigger an algorithm that sorts participants into diverse clusters of like-minded responders.
- Polis identifies ‘consensus statements’, about which all the diverse clusters agree.
- As part of reporting back to everyone who took part, the Assembly Organisers may also share graphics revealing the cross-section perspectives.
- Another positive use of Polis is that over time your statements will tend to become more specific, focussed and offer practical ways forward.
- Bear in mind too, that over time, should these movement assemblies be successful, these Polis supported deliberations could create an on-going feedback loop, deepening insight and connection across the movement. The more we flex our Polis muscle, the stronger it is.

Sharing

- If XR wanted to, information from future assemblies using Polis can also be shared with data scientists, or other groups potentially.
- In the short term, our XR-Wide Assemblies are purely for us to really explore our thoughts on how we operate and what direction we want to take.

In summary then, Polis is allows us to bring our collective intelligence to bear, based on shared understanding of issues and enables us to deliberate at scale, in the tradition of nonviolent communication. It isn’t purely a polling tool, it’s more of an interactive ‘suggestion box’ helping us to get consensus around controversial or contentious questions we all face.

Polis FAQs

What is Polis?

Polis is an interactive, easy-to-use and inclusive online tool that helps large groups of people have conversations and make decisions together, whether at a local, regional or national level.

Polis resolves tensions on divisive and difficult issues by connecting people and ideas and finding common ground.

Why is Extinction Rebellion (XRUK) using Polis?

XRUK want to reflect a collective voice, to allow for as many people as possible to get involved in a conversation and have an equal chance to share their views. Polis offers opportunities for extended conversations that move towards consensus, over days, weeks or even months.

By collecting and objectively reporting the ideas most participants agreed with, we can use these ideas to push for legislative change wherever proof and transparency are needed. We can encourage local, regional and our national government, institutions, or even corporations, to make decisions based on common ground, not just opinions of politicians, from lobbyists or activists.

What are we trying to achieve with Polis?

We are using Polis to collect voices from as many regions, backgrounds, interests and demographics as possible on challenges that matter most to people. This simple tool enables us to work better together by sharing ideas, expressing opinions and letting Polis find common ground to suggest next steps with clear and actionable outcomes on any chosen topic.

The findings, organised into reports by Polis, can be used by groups throughout the UK to enhance awareness of better ways to make decisions and offer positive practice of deliberation on topics. This not only fosters greater citizenship and social connection, but perhaps most importantly, makes the democratic process fair and trusted.

XRUK want to use the data for giving everyone a say to then share with UK-wide media outlets, allies, academics and ultimately maximise participation in decisions to establish popular

democratic demand for change by our institutions of power.

Where has Polis been used previously?

Governments, cities, and organisations around the world use Polis to shape policies or decisions based on real input from the public.

Taiwan has had immense success with regulating Uber; thousands of people participated in formulating policy by voting on ideas about how the service might operate and adding their own ideas. Polis grouped people into clusters of opinion i.e. people who supported Uber vs those who didn't.

Those outcomes helped the Taiwanese government find ways for Uber to operate in a way everyone could live with. Ordinary people shaped regulations that balanced safety, fairness, and innovation. Because people saw their voices reflected in the results, they were more willing to accept the final regulations.

Watch this YouTube video of how Taiwan started to use Polis for engaging ordinary citizens for political decision making.

How can I learn more about Polis?

To learn about Polis generally, you can read the full 'Guide To Polis' on the Rebel Toolkit.

The best way to find out how we are using Polis, ongoing campaigns, and to keep up-to-date with news and progress is to sign up to the XR newsletter. Join our Rebellion Broadcast Telegram chat, or follow XRUK on our social channels.

Which topics can we explore with Polis?

XRUK's current Polis deliberation campaign, running from **Mon 19 October to Thurs 19 November 2026**, is focused around how might we restore our failing water systems to secure a long-term future for all people, life and habitats?

Future discussion topics will be announced through our XR comms channels listed above in the FAQ section: "How can I learn more about Polis?".

How long will it be available for?

Each Polis campaign will be open for a set time, usually a month, to gather as many views on any chosen subject at a time. An extended period of online deliberation enables ongoing exploration of issues as a collective. As people dip in and out and ideas evolve, that time-frame

allows us to find the best possible proof of consensus.

Our current ‘water’ campaign will be running from **Mon 19 October to Thurs 19 November 2026**, based on the question:

“How might we restore our failing water systems to secure a long-term future for all people, life and habitats?”

Where can I find the results of Polis?

At the earliest opportunity, we will collect, analyse and share results on the Rebel Toolkit, then information will be shared via our usual comms channels.

Although we hope to gain national coverage through the press, the best way to keep up-to-date with us, our findings and the future of Polis is through our newsletter and social channels listed above.

Why are we using Google and Meta ads to advertise when they are part of the problem?

We understand the hypocrisy! XRUK are trying to achieve system change; broadening the spectrum of support for our goals means we should also broaden the spectrum of ways in which people can meaningfully take part. Rather than throwing ourselves at the pillars of power we can find the ‘in between’ spaces, as well as their weak spots that we can leverage.

Using these paid channels allows us to reach people outside of XRUK’s network as opposed to organic social posting, which will mostly reach audiences within the activist bubble. Paid social media in particular is very effective at reaching and engaging young people - something that XRUK are prioritising.

It will allow us to showcase Polis to a wider audience across digital channels with key messaging likely to resonate with a broad range of people. Polis offers a voice to those who feel powerless in the face of the multitude of recent devastating environmental and extreme weather events.

Polis will only be truly representative of UK society if many people from all walks of life engage with it, especially those who aren't already following and supporting the climate and environmental movement.

Given the short timeline, we want to be able to reach as many demographics as possible, to be able to truly find common ground.

We will only use list targeting that is compliant with XRUK's privacy policy and GDPR/PECR.

USING POLIS

How do I use Polis?

Polis is an easy to use digital tool. A link will be available through our comms channels, website and email, which will send you to the starting ideas for a Polis-based ‘conversation’ on the topic of water. The ideas get the conversation started and you can add your own.

Each page you click through to will include a new idea for you to read and react to. You can 'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Pass / Unsure' on each idea. If you write new ideas, everyone can share their views on those too. You won't be able to engage with your own idea.

Polis collects your anonymous responses and analyses opinions which are gaining popularity, or are not favoured. The most popular ideas will become obvious, as they will show up more often. You can dip in and out as time permits over the course of the campaign. If you visit the link more than once, you will see how participants’ ideas are evolving around various topics.

When the deliberation deadline is up on **Thurs 19th November, at 23:59** our team will download the results as reports. We will share these on the Rebel Toolkit, our website, social media, via emails and wherever we connect with everyone.

Why am I being shown other people’s ideas?

The Polis algorithm will present multiple ideas, one at a time, but particularly, those that are agreed with most among participants. As ideas gain traction they will show up more often to help take the exploration of a topic and the discussion forward and deeper.

Polis can identify different clusters of opinions, if many people are agreeing with one idea, any closely related ideas may also show up for you to engage with or comment on. The value of Polis is that it will show up points of contention and disagreement too, which have their own value.

It helps us see what a whole community thinks, not just the loudest voices.

What do I need to know before I add an idea?

This is your chance to contribute new ideas to the conversation and for everyone else to vote or elaborate on.

Use clear and concise wording. Please note, your ideas are limited to **140 characters**. Your idea shouldn't be a question that requires anything more than a simple response, otherwise if you are unclear, participants will feel confused and are likely to press ‘Pass / Unsure’, meaning less exploration of your idea.

Remember, people will be replying with 'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Pass / Unsure' and will have the ability to post their own ideas in response to you.

How will you protect my privacy?

"I am worried about sharing my voice and having my name out there."

Your ideas and voting are completely anonymous and do not require a profile, login, or registration. You will be able to access Polis, submit ideas and engage with the platform for the entire length of the active campaign.

Moderators in the XRUK Assemblies team will also make sure that nobody is personally identifiable. Any personal details shared will be deleted promptly.

We have more information on data and privacy below.

Why are you asking demographic questions, such as age, ethnicity, gender, etc?

Your responses to demographic questions help identify if any demographic groups have distinctive perspectives we need to take into account; this helps with fairer decision-making in the long-run. However, to make sure you can't be identified from these types of questions, we will only keep the responses if there are enough participants to make this data anonymous. You can, of course, always pass on these types of questions if you want to.

Participants' privacy will be kept under review during the process of any Polis deliberation. This will be done with the support of the Data Analysis & Insights Circle and in accordance with our risk assessment process.

Will anyone be monitoring submissions?

There are trained dedicated Moderators for every Polis poll. They help keep the poll simple and ensure protection of privacy.

Sometimes participants add ideas that have two options, in which case Moderators will reword this into two ideas, both of which can be voted on. There may be repetition of ideas; Moderators will reject those ideas that are too similar to ensure a single channel of feedback.

XRUK Assemblies will ensure that inputted ideas for voting on in Polis are well-balanced and include as many participants and their views as possible.

The final decision on which ideas remain for people to respond to rests with Assembly Organisers and Moderators who have been trained in fair moderation methods.

One of the three pillars of a community assembly is **‘Trust the Process’**. We ask of all taking

part that they trust that Organisers and Moderators will be offering the best possible experience with their training, knowledge and skills.

How will you make sure my opinions won’t be mocked?

Polis has been created to avoid arguments or trolls and doesn’t allow any back-and-forth communication between users, only the ability to agree, disagree or pass/unsure.

We use moderation to prevent abuse, and other tools when needed; the privacy of participants will always be a key concern for XR technical teams working with Polis.

How does hosting Polis align with Extinction Rebellion's ethos?

Extinction Rebellion UK hosts its own version of Polis on secure servers in Switzerland, running on renewable energy.

Data and privacy

As an activist organisation, data security is important to us, both to comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and to protect our own rebels, in line with XR’s Principles and Values.

Because Polis is dealing with people's political views, that information potentially falls under ‘special category data’ in GDPR; this is potentially sensitive information. As a rule, we don't like to keep unnecessary data that can identify people, who may be XR rebels.

We use our own Polis server so we can choose what data we keep on people, such as demographic information, if the number of participants is a big enough pool such that people are anonymous ‘in the crowd’. This will be a judgement call made by the moderation and Data and Insights team, at the closing of the conversation.

Your computer has its own address, known as the IP address; this information is deleted from our XR servers after 5 days. We have to keep that information for this short time in order to protect us all from spammers.

Read the full XRUK Privacy Policy.

Further FAQs on Polis

For those who want to do a deeper dive, find futher Polis FAQs and more info on 'The Computational Democracy Project' website.

Disclaimer

Please note that Computational Democracy Project does not endorse this adaptation of Polis, but that the following modified version has been produced pursuant to the original License. This includes an adaptation to the logo to incorporate elements specific to our movement. This modified version was produced on 1st June 2025, but further adaptations have been made in October 2026, officially publicised on the 19th October 2026. This modified version of Polis is released under the original License and conditions and as a whole, is licensed under the original License to anyone who comes into possession of a copy. The original License will therefore apply, along with any applicable additional terms, to the whole of the work, and all its parts, regardless of how they are packaged. The original License gives no permission to license the work in any other way. The original License can be found here:

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