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

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