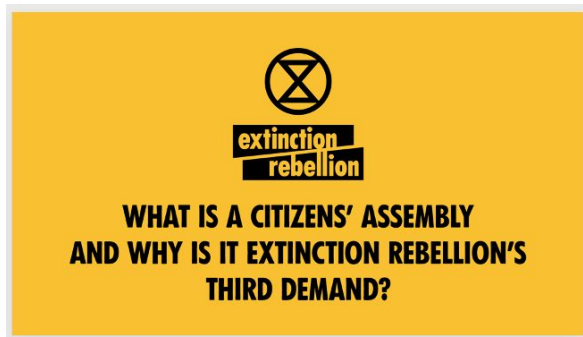


What is a citizens' assembly and why is it Extinction Rebellion's Third Demand?

Speaker's Notes (November 2020)

Duration: One hour in total - 30 minutes talk, 30 minutes for questions

Slide 1



1. Welcome / introduce yourself (suggestion: your role in Extinction Rebellion (XR), how long you have been in XR, why did you get involved with XR - not too long!).
2. Ask the audience how much they already know about XR - do they know the Three Demands?

OPTIONAL: Three demands run-through:

- **Tell the truth:** Government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change - This includes the media, schools, and other outlets to ensure all people in this country are aware of the severity of the crisis.
- **Act Now:** Government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025 - Government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025. We know this is ambitious, but every day we do not act will contribute to more flooding, more droughts, more wildfires and an increase in mass crop failure, not just in far away countries but also right here in the UK. People in the global south are already dying due to natural

disasters and species all over the world are going extinct, risking the collapse of our life support systems.

- **Go Beyond Politics:** Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice - Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice. XR is not trying to exert our will on anyone or claim that we have all the answers, we just want the UK public to have a say on how we respond to this crisis.

Slide 2



A vision of what we have and what we need to see more of:-

- Current situation: Elected representatives (career politicians) in the House of Commons, the day they were debating the climate (2018) for the first time in over 2 years after record breaking Feb temperatures; only 40 out of 650 elected representatives attended. **Oppositional**, facing each other on opposite sides looking to 'score points' and 'win'.
- What we could have: Citizens come **together to find solutions** sitting around a table in small groups with a trained facilitator so everyone's voice is heard, listening and talking to each other. **Collaborative**.
- The current system CANNOT deal with the emergency, that's why we have to demand a CA.

Slide 3



PROBLEMS WITH UK PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM

- One person every 5 years
- Short term decision making
- Not truly 'representative'
- Politicians align with party and dependent on vested interests
- Limited scope for radical ideas

So what is so wrong with the current system?

1. One person every five years -
 - a. You elect one person every five years to represent you on a range of very different topics on which they are not experts.
 - b. Plus specifically in the UK the voting system simply isn't fair: it's a 'first past the post' system and realistically it's mostly between two parties, meaning other parties are not represented. People are disillusioned and many don't even vote.
2. Short term decision making -
 - a. We've known about this problem for 30-40 years, but it hasn't been dealt with successfully. There are always more immediate short term issues that are easier for politicians to tackle.
 - b. Politicians think in political cycles, more concerned with getting re-elected than actually doing good for the country
3. Not truly 'representative'
 - a. Politicians rely on opinion polls to inform their judgements and decisions about what their constituents want. But opinions can be knee jerk reactions – with little consideration of cost etc. How informed are constituents about the topic, before they answer narrow yes/no questions on it?
 - b. Currently the majority of politicians are from similar privileged backgrounds and are not in touch with reality of what most people's lives are actually like
4. Politicians align with party and dependent on vested (individual and party) interests -
 - a. Politicians are concerned about pleasing others in order to get re-elected. Our system is set up on party lines, MPs have to follow party positions.
5. Limited scope for radical ideas -
 - a. All of these point to limited opportunity to be radical, particularly on controversial issues like the climate emergency. Our current political system does not support politicians making hard decisions for long term benefits nor allow citizens a say in what type of future they want.
 - b. Politicians are also not experts, relying on briefings from others who may not necessarily tell them about all the available options

Slide 4



HOW A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY WORKS

Before starting the assembly it should be made clear what the government will do with the assembly's recommendations. A viable question needs to be formed that allows real decision making by the assembly members - not too prescriptive, and not a mere consultation exercise.

1. Randomly select and stratify citizens (sortition)

Members are selected on a random basis, similar to UK jury duty. But it will be a real cross section of the UK population as a whole. 50-200 people. A 'mini- UK' with gender, geographical location, age and social class representing the mix of the population.

2. Hear from experts, stakeholders & rightsholders

Learning - Assembly members receive training in critical thinking and hidden bias. Speakers familiar with the topic, incl scientists, historians, economists, engineers etc (experts), people with vested interests and opinions like businesses, activists, environmental organisations with their interests clearly stated to the assembly members (stakeholders) and people impacted such as farmers, company workers and ordinary people (rightsholders). Facts and different policy options are presented. Presentations will be fair and balanced, and a diverse oversight body will make sure the power of special interests is limited and very open for all to see.

3. Read submissions from public

Broader public to feed in on topics or issues they would like the assembly to consider. There should be some arrangement whereby issues/suggestions from the broader public can feed into assembly consideration.

4. Facilitated deliberation in small groups

Small groups (ca 8-12) deliberate about what they have heard, how it impacts them and their community. They listen to each other, deliberate and find common ground in the best interest of everyone. Each group will have a trained facilitator who makes sure everyone's voice is heard and no one controls the discussion.

5. Draft and vote on recommendations

Assembly will draft and vote on recommendations and produce a report which includes reasons backing the recommendations, as well as summary of different views.

6. Government debates and implements recommendations

- a. Recommendations are put together into a report and presented to the government.
- b. If the process is perceived as fair and transparent by the public it reflects the informed choice of the people and thus the recommendations should be implemented. If the government fails to do that, it undermines its own legitimacy.
- c. The citizens' assembly supports and complements government work by providing solutions that are reached by consensus by the people of this country.
- d. XR is proposing that the government commits to implementing recommendations with over 80% support, and reports publicly its reasons for modifying or rejecting any recommendations.

Slide 5



An Tionól
Saoránach



The Citizens'
Assembly

- Established by Irish Parliament
- 99 citizens
- 5 issues over a 1.5 years
- Legalised gay marriage and abortion
- Informed political debate and referendum question
- CA on abortion recommended w/64%, referendum result 66%

Irish Citizens' Assembly key points:


- Deliberated on: abortion (across 5 weekends, over 5 months between November 2016 and April 2017), same-sex marriage and climate change.
- An assembly on climate change was held, though it only lasted 2 weekends
 - Proves that citizens can be presented with evidence and make informed decisions. For example, an expert on nuclear power presented which the assembly members did not support. They would have considered the pros, cons and trade-offs, but decided against.
- Proves that ordinary people can make brave and radical decisions. For example, in a rural country where people rely on their cars, they are willing to sacrifice and pay more for carbon intensive activities.
- For the CA on abortion, the recommendation had to be put to a referendum.

- This is because it would mean a change in the constitution, and in Ireland the constitution can only be changed through a referendum.
- In this case the CA outcomes were used to frame the public debate and inform the question on the ballot paper for the referendum.
- The citizens' assembly voted 64% while the referendum voted 66.4% ([Abortion stat](#), [Irish CA on CC](#)) showing that a CA is very representative of the sentiment of the people in the country as a whole.
- Interestingly 12,200 submissions were received from the public on abortion, only 1,185 on climate change - this was in 2017, we believe had this CA been now a lot more people would have submitted their thoughts on climate change.
- Most importantly, the CA on abortion broke the deadlock on a very controversial topic that politicians were unwilling to touch for decades.
- Not all CA recommendations have to be put to a referendum, e.g. in the UK we don't even have a constitution! So in this case recommendations could be directly incorporated into policy.

Further information for speakers:

- The Irish Citizens' Assembly considered climate change over two weekends. Here is the report:
<https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/How-the-State-can-make-Ireland-a-leader-in-tackling-climate-change/Final-Report-on-how-the-State-can-make-Ireland-a-leader-in-tackling-climate-change/Climate-Change-Report-Final.pdf>
- Climate change weekends: 30 September - 1 October 2017 and 4-5 November 2017

Slide 6



“There just seems to be a political disconnect all over the Western World. [Citizens' assemblies are] a new layer of democracy. We probably put a couple of hundred hours of total time into it; [...] we're probably the best informed amateurs in the country on this topic at the moment.”

John Long, member of the Citizens' Assembly on Abortion, Ireland

The notion that MPs are more informed than the average person is not true. In some instances they may be but generally they are presented with briefing documents shortly before a vote.

Members of a citizens' assembly will arguably have much more time to get the information, opportunities to ask questions to experts and deliberate with fellow citizens.

Slide 7



There are deliberative democracy processes happening all around the world, it's not something new or invented by XR - these have been happening all over the world for years. Check out [Participedia.net](https://participedia.net) for case studies. But here are some examples of citizens' from around the world:

- **Texas, USA**

In 1996 there was a deliberative poll (not a CA but a deliberative process) on energy options

The Texans were willing to pay extra money for renewable energy and energy conservation - one of the original gas and oil states ended up being a leader in renewable energy at that time.

<https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/how-a-citizens-legislature-made-texas-1-in-renewable-energy/>

- **Gdansk, Poland**

Since 2016 there have been a series of CAs on local issues, including

- Improving flood defences
- Improving air quality

Funded by the city council but run independent of the council, recommendations receiving 80% support are automatically enacted into law, making it a whole lot more than just another form of expensive consultation.

- **France : Citizens' Climate Convention (a CA).**

Question deliberated: 'To cut carbon emissions by 40% before 2020 while maintaining social justice'.

- Over €5 million
- 150 citizen representatives

- 6 x 2.5 weekends, extended to 7 at the request of the CA, last session online
- Undertaking by the President, before the start, to action recommendations by either direct regulation, bill to parliament or referendum.
- The citizens themselves expanded the remit, tackling other subjects such as biodiversity and public health related to food.
- 149 recommendations came out of the assembly - including call for ecocide law.
- 146 initially accepted by Macron - more than 6 have since been rejected
- The '150' is the association formed by the members of the convention to follow up and monitor actions

Currently there are several local citizens' assemblies/deliberative processes on the climate emergency happening around the UK:

<https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/blog/news/keeping-citizens-assemblies>

Further information for speakers:


- <https://sansfiltre.les150.fr/> showing what is happening with the recommendations are so far.
- The French government also has a tracker with recommendations they are implementing, but the assembly members do not agree, so there is an interesting discrepancy there.
- Tracker of current and past CAs and Citizens Juries: <https://www.involve.org.uk/citizens-assembly-tracker>

SHOW 'AMERICA IN ONE ROOM' CLIP

Introduce: Gives a sense of what the process of deliberation is and how the dynamic of a group of people from all walks of life, builds trust and results in people changing their position.


<https://helena.org/projects/america-in-one-room>

Slide 8



CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES

- Think long-term
- Break political deadlock
- Fair, real representation of society
- Transparent
- Informed, discussed and deliberated recommendations
- Collective intelligence



Re-cap: so what is so great about citizens' assemblies?

1. Citizens can **think long term** - they are thinking about themselves, their families and their communities, they are not thinking about pleasing others in order to get re-elected. Do not have to worry about career calculations and political strategy.
2. Citizens can **break the deadlock** on difficult topics e.g. gay marriage, abortion and climate change that politicians cannot, as they fear damaging their career or their party's prospects of re-election whilst citizens have nothing to lose.
3. **Representation** - CAs are a mini public: The aim is to bring together a cross-section of society
 - a. Quotas are used to ensure that the assembly is representative in terms of key characteristics of the population e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, education level and geography.
 - b. Representative sample of the public, it'll have **public support** - someone like you has made this decision. Through allowing a representative group of people to learn and deliberate the public should think "If I heard the same evidence and deliberated with my peers, I would make a similar decision". The goal is not to hear what people already think but for the members to engage in informed, thoughtful, meaningful honest conversation with people they may never normally meet - finding common ground
 - c. **People are more likely to accept a radical decision from their peers rather than politicians and elites.** This allows politicians to put controversial issue back to the people, let them decide and based on that they are more confident to tackle the issue.
4. **Transparent** - everything about the process is transparent:
 - a. How it is organised
 - b. Materials given to the assembly are made available online
 - c. Presentations during the learning and consultation phase should be live streamed and recorded - not deliberation - would inhibit frank and open discussion.
 - d. CAs have been live streamed in Ireland and the CA UK
5. They are **informed** - they gain an in-depth understanding of the issue. Consider alternatives and related impacts. Informed judgements rather than opinion.
6. **Legitimacy** -
 - a. the assembly considers all the issues, including the social impact particularly on the most vulnerable in society.
 - b. Power of special interests will be limited by a diverse oversight body that ensures the process is fair.
7. **Citizens' assemblies in the current system** - The assembly does not replace the government, but supports it by allowing a more democratic process to determine what should be done. This can help improve our broken system by giving ordinary people a real say and regaining a sense of equality.

8. **Collective intelligence** - Studies have shown that the problem solving capability of a deliberative assembly is not down to the ability of each of the individuals, but is a result of the diversity of the group.

There is a diversity of views and ways, thinking and reasoning, insight and experience absent in elected assemblies, who are a more homogenous group with 'blind spots' - of Misinformation and knowledge.

OPTIONAL: Group participation

Ask participants to type into the chat the benefits of CAs that they can recall. The talk has mentioned nine. Recalling the info during the talk helps with engagement and retention. Gives pause to just listening. Read out some of the group's thoughts from the chat once people are done putting their thoughts down.

WHY A UK-WIDE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY?

- A UK-wide citizens' assembly is needed for co-ordinated urgent government action
- We need everyone in the same room for UK-wide policy changes
- Local citizens' assemblies can make local level policy but are not empowered to implement on national scale required



Slide 9

Only the national government has the resources, money and legislative power to address the far reaching and deep changes which will be needed. This includes, tax, industrial policy, health, social and educational responsibilities. International cooperation and agreements which will be important are also within the national mandate.

Slide 10



“ How can the UK reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 ”

OUTCOMES

- Better climate information and leadership from the government
- Fairness is important
- No reliance on future technologies
- Call for follow up CA

LIMITATIONS

- Date set for 2050
- Limited remit, e.g. no freight or import emissions
- Insufficient publicity
- Advisory

- Took place over several weekends in Birmingham early 2020, last weekend split into two online weekends, due to COVID19
- The question for CAUK to consider: How can the UK reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050?
- Commissioned by 6 Select Committees, NOT by the UK government
- Recommendations that came out of CAUK included:
 - Better climate information for the public
 - Leadership from Government and cross party support.
 - Highlighted need for fairness within the UK and protecting livelihoods
 - Removal of green gas should focus on known natural methods, not speculative technology
 - Independent body to monitor and report on progress and a follow-up citizens' assembly on issues related to net zero which CA did not cover
- CAUK limitations, XR's criticism:
 - Limited remit due to 2050 target
 - Not pushing emissions elsewhere in the world - so consider imports and transport
 - The public was not aware at all it was taking place, not covered by media so no public awareness/support/pressure for government to take up the recommendations.
 - CA was not set up to make decisions, limited to advising 6 committees who are themselves only advisory - so no 'teeth' to CAUK
 - The wider public were not able to input by the way of submissions which many CAs allow for.
 - No government endorsement at any stage.
- CAWG/XRUK do acknowledge that CAUK is a stepping stone towards the Climate and Ecological Emergency CA we need. The fact that CAUK members want more information on the CEE and want more leadership supports XR's demand for

government having to Tell the Truth. A need for a more robust CA is now clearer than ever before.

Optional further information for speakers:

- Climate Assembly UK's report (there is also a summary of the report!)
<https://www.climateassembly.uk/report/>
- Excellent article with more info:
<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/10/jury-duty-global-warming-citizen-groups-help-solve-puzzle-climate-action>

OPTIONAL: Group participation

Here you might ask participants to recall why CAUK lacked impact, in the chat. Read out some of the thoughts after people have added their thoughts to the chat.

Slide 11

WHAT WOULD A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE LOOK LIKE?

- Run by independent organisation
- Several citizens' panels, e.g. transport, agriculture, power
- Size: 50-100 members each
- Recommendations that receive strong support
i.e. 80% would expect to be taken on board
- Justice central to all decisions



After speaking to many experts, we have an idea of what this could and should look like. Having said that, we will not be organising the process, so these are just our suggestions:

- If the government were to commission the Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice (CACEJ) tomorrow, we believe the Assembly could start in about 3 months' time
- We would expect that there would need to be numerous assemblies running at the same time on different aspects of the CEE. We expect they would all meet together initially for the critical thinking training and key information about the CEE, then split into groups of 100 on the various topics
- To ensure the element of justice is addressed (justice in the UK, but also global justice) we would expect not only climate scientists, but also historians, social justice experts, economists, and more, challenging the current economic system, and especially rights holders to be invited to speak to the assembly.
- We would expect the assembly to consist of at least 6 weekends with all the topic groups running parallel to each other

- Cost of CACEJ is likely to be several million pounds. France's assembly on carbon reduction cost €5.6mn. Given that the annual cost of the [House of Lords is ca £100 million](#), a citizens' assembly is easily justified.

Slide 12



- XR WILL NOT DESIGN OR CONTROL THE ASSEMBLY. We may have a role along with other social stakeholders ensuring the process is inclusive and transparent.
- Independent - free from interference by government, corporations or anyone else - including Extinction Rebellion.
- This is very important! The public must understand that XR will not impose radical ideas or control the process in any way.
- There are several experienced organisations in the UK that will be able to run it.

Slide 13

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill

In a nutshell, the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill calls for:

- The UK to make and enact a serious plan.
- Include our entire carbon footprint
- The protection and conservation of nature
- A plan which does not rely on technology that does not yet exist.
- A Citizens' Assembly

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill provides a clear framework based on scientific reality and the UK's commitments under the 2015 Paris Agreement to a 1.5degree limit. It was written by an alliance of scientists, lawyers and activists.

If interested, please visit the CEE Bill website - they hold talks explaining more about what it is, key dates, what is needed to get it passed and so on.

In a nutshell, if the Bill is passed it will mean that:

- the UK will make and enact a serious plan on the CEE. This means sticking to our real fair share of global emissions, so that we don't go over critical global temperature rise
- our entire carbon footprint be taken into account (in the UK and overseas) including production of items not made/grown in the UK, so including imported goods and transport
- protecting and restoring ecosystems and mitigating damage caused by supply chains as this has direct impact upon our climate and ecosystems
- plan should not rely on speculative technologies to save the day - used as an excuse to carry on emitting as usual
- a citizens' assembly to work alongside the government to find fair and just solutions. Not legally binding but Parliament would have to consider every recommendation. The CA helps the government and parliament decide on the measures to include in the emergency strategy. (A CA with binding recommendations without Parl getting a say would never get through)

Slide 14

CONTACT US

WEBSITE [XRCITIZENSASSEMBLY.UK](https://xrcitizensassembly.uk)

EMAIL XR-CITIZENSASSEMBLY@PROTONMAIL.COM



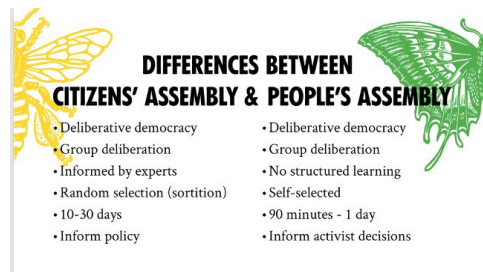
CHECK OUT THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY COURSE
ON [UK.REBELLION.ACADEMY](https://uk.rebellion.academy)

- **"We want a thriving planet, with thriving people and this is the decade we determine if it is going to happen and a CA is part of how it will happen."**
 - The aim is to build support for citizens' assembly on climate and ecological justice amongst the public and politicians.
 - Please write to your MP and ask them to learn about CAs, openly support a CA on Climate and Ecological Justice and to sign up to the CEE Bill
 - Tell people they can join CAAN - Citizens' Assembly Advocates Network - to help spread the message about CAs and why XR believes they are the only way we can get through this crisis. You can get trained to deliver the talk you just heard, or you can invite us to speak to your local group
 - Any questions?
-

OPTIONAL

If this is a XR crowd you are talking to, they may have come across People's Assemblies. If so - it may be worth going through this last slide which explains the difference between People's and Citizens' Assemblies

Slide 15



- CAs are **very different** from a people's assembly in their **structure and purpose**. Which is confusing because they are so similar in name; people often slip up and say the wrong one. So just be mindful of that when you are speaking, otherwise you may make things more confusing!
- Citizens' assemblies are formal structures that can take months to plan. People's assemblies can be done on the spot.
- Most importantly, participants of a CA represent the actual population, so it can be viewed as a legitimate opinion of broader society, while an opinion shared by a PA is of those in a **self selected** group..
- To find the **Guide on Citizens' Assemblies**, go to the XR UK website (rebellion.earth), click on **Act Now** then on **Resources**, and you will see the link to download The Extinction Rebellion Guide To Citizens' Assemblies (<https://rebellion.earth/act-now/resources/citizens-assembly/>)
- To find the People's Assembly Manual, it's almost the exact same URL as the above, but replace 'citizens' with 'peoples' and it will take you to the people's assemblies page. (<https://rebellion.earth/act-now/resources/peoples-assemblies/>)

Note for Speakers

Following the presentation you could have a chat, or alternatively a People's Assembly, on this topic. Some options for a well-framed starting point include:

- How might we help others understand the need for a UK-wide Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice?

- How might a Citizens' Assembly help address the climate and ecological emergency (and its inherent injustice)?
- In what ways might XR get wide-spread public support for a citizens' assembly on climate and ecological justice?
- How might we reach disengaged citizens and help them see the value of a CA process and activate them to support this process?