



**extinction
rebellion**

YORK

**The People's Assembly 2023:
*Crowd-sourced proposals for a climate-conscious York***

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Preface

A People's Assembly is a structured form of participatory democracy that allows people to discuss issues and make decisions collectively.

On 30th September 2023, Extinction Rebellion York (XR York) hosted a People's Assembly on local climate issues. Over 100 local citizens gathered to discuss the future of York as an environmental city, and review progress towards crucial climate targets. The discussions generated a range of actionable proposals set out within this document.

XR York is grateful to Yorkshire Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) for their support in running the People's Assembly, and expresses thanks to those who dedicated their time and energy to creating and attending the event.

Headlines

During our 2023 People's Assembly, a number of proposals emerged with significantly high interest. These were grouped under seven themes.

The theme with the most interest and engagement from participants was **Buildings and energy**. Under this theme, the key proposals were the introduction of rent controls, actioning the local area energy plan, and funding for retrofitting homes. *This theme is most relevant for construction companies, developers, businesses, and the Council.*

Under the theme of **Democracy**, attendees were keen to see more Citizens' and People's Assemblies. This was the second most popular proposal overall. *This theme is most relevant for the Council.*

The **Transport** theme resurfaced the call for free public transport. Other top-priority proposals under this theme were to stop plans to dual the outer ring road, and improve cycling infrastructure. *This theme is most relevant for developers, campaign groups, and the Council.*

For the theme of **Waste**, attendees urged schools, hospitals, universities, and workplaces to swap bottled water for water fountains. Attendees were keen to see the introduction of food waste collections. *This theme is most relevant for the Council and businesses.*

For the **Work and business** theme, the most popular proposal for this theme and overall was to keep money in the city by adopting the Preston model (also known as community wealth building), and an ethical procurement policy. Attendees called for collective support for strike action. *This theme is most relevant for businesses, the Council, and unions.*

Under **Green spaces and wildlife**, enhancing river rights was a key area of focus. Attendees were keen for the expansion of green community spaces, specifically by reducing car access. *This theme is most relevant for the Council, community groups, and campaign groups.*

Under **Community action**, attendees identified a need to link community projects through well-advertised community hubs and expressed strong support for publicly funded allotments. *This theme is most relevant for community groups, individuals, and business networks.*

Context

On 21st March 2019, City of York Council passed a motion declaring a climate emergency and made a commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030. Extinction Rebellion York (XR York) held its first People's Assembly in June 2019, at which local people developed a series of proposals to guide the Council's climate action. A copy of these proposals can be requested by contacting media.xryork@gmail.com.

After a concerning three-year delay, City of York Council approved its draft Climate Change Strategy in December 2022. The strategy was analysed by members of XR York and aligned groups with backgrounds in academia, policy making, and community engagement. The conclusion was unanimous: the Council, and other organisations based and/or operating in York, were not doing enough to achieve climate resilience and carbon neutrality. Nor were the public properly consulted in the development of the strategy and its sub-par targets.

In response, on 30th September 2023, XR York hosted a second People's Assembly on local climate issues. The event was structured around two proposal-generating sessions: 'End fossil fuels' and 'Protect what's threatened'. Proposals were crowd-sourced from local citizens, many of whom are members of local and national environmental groups.

In the first session, attendees identified who has the power to make crucial changes. Large York-based companies, construction companies, York Central developers, local politicians, and universities were identified as having the most power in the city. Proposals for change were then gathered from each group. In the second session, attendees identified pockets of good practice and areas for concern using maps of York. This helped to form further proposals. All proposals were grouped under seven themes: buildings and energy; community action; democracy; green spaces and wildlife; transport; waste; work and business. In the plenary session, attendees voted on proposals and themes they felt most strongly about.

This document lists proposals under the most relevant theme, identifies high-priority areas, and draws parallels with proposals from our first People's Assembly to flag topics of continuing interest and concern.

Themes and proposals

The proposals generated at the People's Assembly were organised into themes. Each attendee was provided with five stickers to place next to themes/proposals they felt were most important. Below, we list all themes/proposals, with the number of votes received in brackets.

Buildings and energy (8)

- Make the local area energy plan happen (12)
- Provide proper funding for retrofitting houses (12)
- Hold organisations to account legally and financially when they're developing construction projects (7)
- Look at accountability in planning around biodiversity (1)
- Support York Central Co-Owned (YoCo) to put pressure on York Central developers to be more honest and open (5)
- Support the Safer Streets campaign for 20mph as a way to build community
- Ensure there is no gas in new homes being built (3)
- Ensure every new house meets passivhaus standards (3)
- Put pressure on the University of York about building on the Heslington West campus (1)
- Transform the housing market to end landlord profiteering, ensure properties benefit residents, and strengthen tenants' rights (including traveller community and those in precarious housing) (5)
- Introduce rent controls (13)

Overall votes: 70

Community action (2)

- Link community projects (e.g. repair shops) through well-advertised community hubs (14)
- Make use of unused buildings for community hubs
- Encourage universities to leverage their influence in the community (1)
- Support community-focused initiatives based on sharing activities (e.g. communal kitchens and community energy projects) (4)
- Create publicly funded community allotments where people share skills and learn (10)

Overall votes: 31

Democracy (5)

- Encourage people to vote and participate
- Use Vote Climate to look up your local MP's climate record and vote accordingly
- Hold those in power to account (6)
- Put pressure on organisations (including charities, universities, and the Council) to divest from fossil fuels (3)
- Hold more Citizens' and People's Assemblies (21)

Overall votes: 35

Green spaces and wildlife (2)

- Close car parks to open new parks (9)

- More collaboration across parks in York (2)
- Expand green community space for food growing and leisure by reducing access for cars (11)
- Put the pollinator strategy back on the agenda (7)
- Increasing the remit of St Nicks nature reserve to protect local wildlife (2)
- Enhance river rights (e.g. no fossil fuelled boats to reduce pollution, and designated bathing spaces for swimmers) (16)

Overall votes: 49

Transport (4)

- Make public transport free for everyone (18)
- Create better and more cycle tracks, including for accessible bikes (11)*
- Build a better transport system that centres on accessibility (3)
- Bust myths around traffic calming and air pollution tackling measures (1)
- Campaign to tackle traffic and pollution using air pollution data (6)
- Campaign against dualling the ring road (11)
- Increase pedestrianisation (9)
- Use the waterways for transport

Overall votes: 63

*See also [York Cycle Campaign's 42 Ways](#).

Waste (3)

- Make recycling clearer for residents (4)
- Introduce food waste collections (16)
- Create more reclaimed food projects around the city (5)
- Stop selling bottled water in schools, hospitals, universities, and workplaces – and use water fountains instead (17)

Overall votes: 45

Work and business (2)

- Keep money in the city by adopting the Preston model and introducing an ethical procurement policy (23)
- Support strike action collectively (10)
- Put pressure on local politicians and big business to shift priorities away from profit and towards local communities (2)
- Engage with trade unions and encourage them to be part of the transition to green jobs (e.g. 'One Million Climate Jobs' initiative) (9)
- Pressure bigger businesses, construction companies and York Central developers to adopt a more social model, shifting power and ensuring investment is meaningful
- Increase jobs in health and social care (2)
- Support collective action from small businesses (1)
- Hold local businesses to account and ensure they use their business for good
- Bring local businesses together

Overall votes: 49

Priorities

The most popular theme was **Buildings and energy**. This theme also had the highest number of combined votes for theme and proposals (70). Below, we list proposals with 10 or more votes under their relevant themes.

Buildings and energy:

- Introduce rent controls (13)
- Make the local area energy plan happen (12)
- Provide proper funding for retrofitting homes (12)

Democracy:

- Hold more Citizens' and People's Assemblies (21)

Transport:

- Make public transport free for everyone (18)
- Campaign against dualling the ring road (11)
- Create better and more cycle tracks, including accessible bikes (11)

Waste:

- Stop selling bottled water in schools, hospitals, universities, and workplaces – and use water fountains instead (17)
- Introduce food waste collections (16)

Work and business:

- Keep money in the city by adopting the Preston model and introducing an ethical procurement policy (23)
- Support strike action collectively (10)

Green spaces and wildlife:

- Enhance river rights (16)
- Expand green community space for food growing and leisure by reducing access for cars (11)

Community action:

- Link community projects through well-advertised community hubs (14)
- Create publicly funded community allotments where people can share skills and learn (10)

Looking back: The 2019 People's Assembly

Here, we list proposals gathered at the 2019 People's Assembly that resurfaced during our 2023 event, in their original wording. This indicates a lasting interest and commitment to the following areas:

- Pedestrianise the city centre (within the city walls) and all future developments (including York Central), excluding disability access
- Public transport must be accessible and free
- Cycle transport in the city should be improved in the following ways: (a) More and improved cycle lanes especially around schools, (b) Road repairs to make cycling easier, (c) Improve cycling around outer York
- Circular economy based upon wellbeing as a measure of success rather than economic growth
- York Council should be a part of the One Million Climate Jobs initiative
- Create a repair culture – including the support (i.e. through subsidies) of repair shops
- Improve recycling so that everything is recycled even if it is not profitable – particularly plastic
- Housing should be sustainable, accessible, and affordable for all
- Challenge existing – and explore alternative – forms of ownership and regulations around housing and land
- New housing and retrofitting to be built to passivhaus standards with sustainable materials
- Council licensing for private renters must have high environmental standards
- Achieve a low energy housing and building stock and maximise sustainable generation by solar and wind power
- Create a strategy for sustainable food, with the council showing leadership to work in partnership to develop and implement it
- Identify partnerships for collection and distribution or processing of surplus food
- A radical, green-by-design approach to sustainable development, where people and environment come first
- Environmental green space compensation
- Achieve improvement in air quality via increases in public transport, more trees and better habitats.

Looking forward: Conclusion

This document identifies a clear, consistent commitment to local action on buildings and energy, transport, waste and green spaces, and a strong desire for more community involvement and participatory democracy. Compared with proposals from our 2019 People's Assembly, the continued focus on housing, travel, waste and recycling shows that limited progress has been made over the last four years and more action is needed. The resurfacing of these proposals also provides a strong indication of what York's citizens really care about. We call on groups and individuals to join us as we take these proposals forward, and to support efforts to make these possibilities real.

XR York will continue to create collaborative, open spaces for deliberative democracy and communicate local priorities to spark real, tangible action. Contact media.xryork@gmail.com for more information on how you, your organisation, or your networks can get involved.