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# How To Engage With Local Sustainability Groups

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# How To Engage With Local Sustainability Groups

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think



There is power in belonging. Everyone can do their bit for the environment. We can adjust our lifestyles. We can become more appreciative of creation. But we can also do far more if we join forces with others.

One effective way is to become part of one of the many environmental pressure groups campaigning for political and social changes, or just a local group that is transforming part of our neighbourhood.

do



If there isn't an environmental group in your locality, consider creating one. That's exactly what happened at St Mary's Ealing in West London. Their creation care group had already been encouraging people towards simpler, more sustainable lifestyles.

They led services on creation care themes, produced an ethical food guide for Ealing and a creation care policy for the church which was adopted by the PCC. 'Some of us from this

It doesn't mean we have to engage in some kind of radical action with a controversial movement (although there is always that option!). We may prefer to get involved quietly and thoughtfully in practical conservation through a more grassroots project.

group then joined with other local residents to form a steering group for the purpose of establishing a Transition Town movement locally,' said Vicar Steve Paynter.

Ealing Transition was birthed and has been running successfully. The group seeks to raise awareness of – and respond practically to – the twin challenges of climate change and rising energy costs expected in the near future.

weblink



EALING TRANSITION  
ealingtransition.org.uk



## Support grassroots action

Do some research about such initiatives in your region. For example, A Rocha UK volunteer David Beattie joined other environmental campaigners in anti-fracking protests outside Lancashire County Hall, Preston.

Their efforts were successful, as Lancashire County Council listened to the local people and rejected fracking applications. Activists had come from a variety of organisations – Greenpeace, Quakers, Fylde Against Fracking, Beautiful Planet Preston as well as Friends of the Earth and CAFOD, the official Catholic aid agency for England and Wales.

'I went with the "Frack Free Lancashire" group,' said David. 'I was also wearing my "Pray And Fast For The Climate" badge. A lady asked if we could pray together for talks going on in the council offices. There were about six of us – a couple of Catholics, a Pentecostal, a Baptist, an Anglican and myself.

'We prayed for about 15 minutes. I don't know if the rejection of the plans meant our prayers were answered, but it seemed that way to those of us involved.'

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## Locate a Transition group near you

Creating a 'healthy human culture' – one that meets people's needs for community, livelihoods and fun – is the aim of the Transition Network.

This is a charitable organisation whose role is to inspire, encourage, connect, support and train communities as they self-organise around the Transition model, creating initiatives that rebuild resilience and reduce CO2 emissions.

Most Transition groups start with growing food – whether on an allotment, community garden or through garden share schemes. Community-owned schemes from bakeries and breweries are also among 'Transition' initiatives.

Such projects are about making a real difference in their communities. Increasingly, Transition groups are creating new jobs and livelihoods and vibrant, viable new enterprises that keep money local and boost resilience.

## Discover a local Friends of the Earth group

FOE is one of the best known environmental organisations which works to help keep the planet in good shape.

What some people may not know is that FOE has a network of local groups. FOE local groups work to improve the environment locally, nationally and internationally. Using a special facility on the FOE website, enquirers can locate their nearest group to find out what they're doing in a particular area.



## Join a local conservation group

There are 47 Wildlife Trusts covering the UK, the Isle of Man and Alderney. Enquirers can use an online map to find their nearest group.

It was in May 1912 – a month after the Titanic sank – that Charles Rothschild held a meeting to discuss his radical idea about saving places for nature. That led to the formation of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, which would become the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, and signalled the beginning of UK nature conservation as we know it. Local conservation organisations, the forerunners to Wildlife Trusts, started to spring up.

## Consider doing practical conservation work, either with A Rocha UK or another group like Conservation Volunteers.

The Conservation Volunteers is a nationwide network of 2,000 community groups.

The Conservation Volunteers have been reclaiming green places since 1959. Today, when one-third of the UK's green places are in danger of being lost or degraded, they believe their work is more important than ever.

One example of their work is the Railway Fields Nature Reserve, The Conservation Volunteers' first Green Hub in London and a focal point for their London activities. In partnership with Haringey Council, local businesses and communities they're developing the site to make it a green space well used by local residents, walkers, families and school groups.



## Serve your local Eco Church!

It goes without saying that there might well be a place of worship near you that has registered with Eco Church. Your own spiritual home could be one of them. So get stuck in and make a difference by greening your church, winning an award and changing your corner of the world.

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