Meetings and Decision Making

Using elements of our Self Organising System (SOS) in your group

- Coordination of your group
- How to Run Meetings
- Making Decisions
- Mandates and Working Groups
- Simple, practical guidance to keep online meetings safe

Coordination of your group

If you have a small group or are just starting one, you'll need a few people who are doing the basic planning for the group. This doesn't mean the coordinators should do all the work! There are just some things it is easier to do with a small number of people.

At a very basic level, a Coordinating group would:

- Plan dates and venues for local group meetings and agree who will facilitate the meetings and take notes if needed.
- Contact with your Nation//Region and perhaps any larger Local Groups nearby
- Understand the Principles and Values, our demands, and have a basic understanding of the structure of our Self-Organising System within XR.

When a group becomes larger, there is a need to have more structure. This might be in the form of individuals or Working Groups given a mandated task or responsibility. Also it could mean electing External and Internal coordinators.

How to Run Meetings

The XRUK Facilitation Circle offers training in meeting structure and culture, facilitation, minute-taking, and decision-making. You may also find the following agenda guide and template useful:

- Agenda Document Guide (Google doc)
- Agenda Template (Google doc)

Types of Local Group Meetings

The aim is to have inspiring meetings where people connect and feel a sense of community amongst those who really understand the criticality of the climate and ecological emergency, and that together we can take positive action.

A mix of in person and online meetings may be useful for those who cannot/do not want to travel & those who prefer not to attend online meetings. Some meetings & events should be focussed on attracting new members. So, this could be by having a guest speaker, a film night or a community building workshop.

It is important to have an **accessible venue** where people feel safe. It also makes your meetings feel more friendly if you provide refreshments. A prepared list of simple jobs people can undertake afterwards will help new members feel engaged with the group. Some meetings may be more focused on existing supporters, such as a meeting to decide the next six months' worth of activities.

Meeting Culture

Whether you have an online or in-person meeting, XR has a unique meeting culture that has roots in our Self-Organising System and our vision for accessible, inclusive, and functional workspaces. It can feel very different from other work cultures, but once you are used to it we hope you will value and appreciate it.

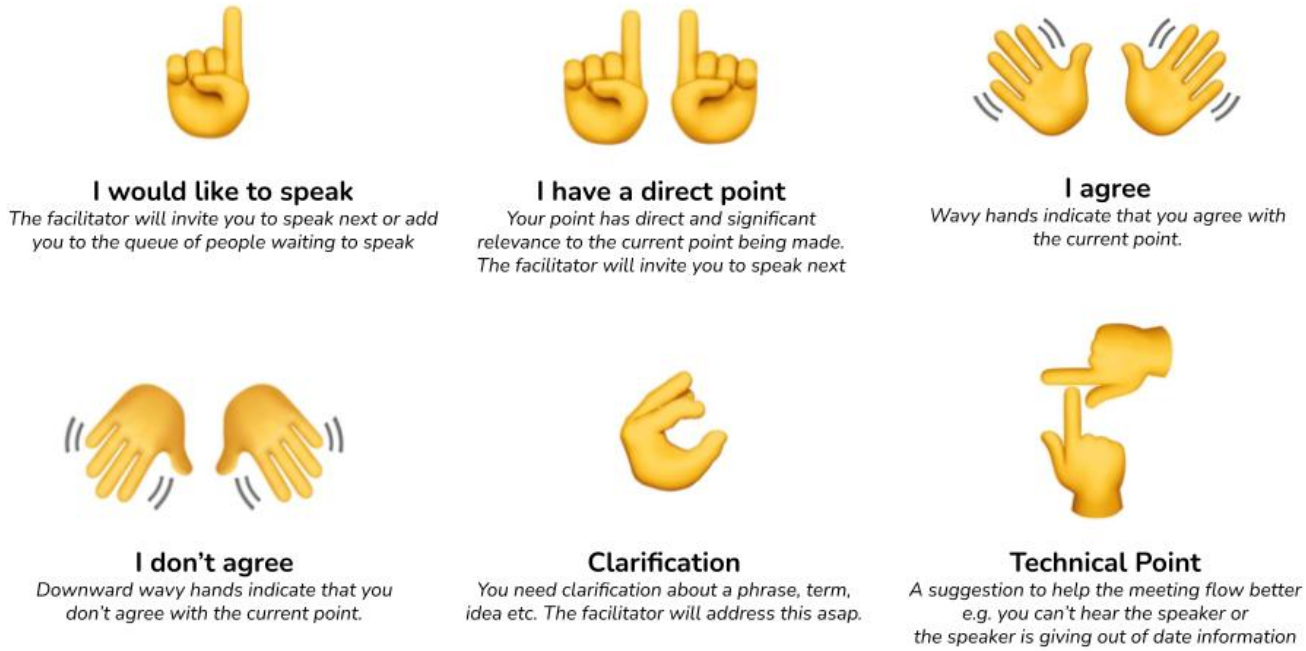
Most of our meetings will include the following:

- Check-ins, where we introduce ourselves and share how we are doing.
- A regenerative culture reminder: we remind ourselves to be kind to one another, pay attention to our feelings and not to take on too many tasks.

- A facilitator: a person whose job is to make sure everyone is heard and that we stay on task.
- A minute taker: a person who writes down the key things mentioned in the meeting, including any action points (tasks that people agree to take on).
- Check-outs: we briefly say how we feel the meeting went or what we are each looking forward to today.

Hand Signals

We use hand signals in our meetings to avoid talking over one another. These are the most common ones:



By following these ways of meeting, it means that no matter which part of XR you are in, if you go to another space you will know what is happening and how to participate.

Meeting Structure

Standing Items

Attendees list

A list of who was at the meeting is important for managing accountability for decision-making, and if a name is not recorded, there is no evidence that they were at the meeting. Some people may want to use pseudonyms on documents.

Assign a facilitator and minute-taker

A facilitator holds the meeting, upholds any agreements made, and manages time and contribution.

A minute-taker keeps an accurate record of what happened in the meeting, including what was decided and what tasks need to be done.

We recommend both roles be filled by trained people who hold no other roles in your group.

Check-ins

Check-ins are a core part of XR's vision of regenerative cultures. They help both the facilitator and those attending the meeting to understand where each other is coming from in terms of feelings, as well as being clear on how to address each other respectfully.

Be mindful that check-ins are there to learn how people want to be addressed, and to see how they are feeling before starting work. It is important to structure check-ins, especially with a time limit, as check-ins can easily take over a meeting.

Check-ins should not be used for updates on any work or any feedback. It's is purely a short personal update, and the facilitator can give some guidance on how to do it - which can be varied each meeting.

Example check-ins:

- "Please check in by saying your name, your pronoun preference, naming one "feeling word" you are with today (Happy/sad etc), and name a non-human animal you relate to. Could you do that in about 20 seconds, then choose someone to pass on to!"
- "Please check in by saying your name, role in this meeting, something fun you've done today or recently. Then choose someone to pass on to!"

Regenerative cultures reminder

> "We are transitioning towards (regenerative) cultures where we respect and listen and do not interrupt. We deal with conflict when it arises using short feedback loops. We cultivate healthy boundaries by slowing down our Yes and returning tasks we are unable to complete and we do not blame and shame. These are cultures built on care and support, where we arrive on time for commitments. We are all crew."

This is a very standard 'regen' reminder, but could also choose to share a short poem or look throught this longer list of suggested options.

Group agreement

Now may be a good time to read out (or point out if it is displayed), your Group Agreement.

Purpose of the meeting

It is helpful for everyone to be clear as to what the meeting is about so that everyone knows what to expect and to keep the meeting on track. As a Local Group, your meeting will likely be your regular weekly/fortnightly/monthly meeting. At times you may organise a meeting about a specific issue, action or event.

Action point review

Action Points from past meetings are reviewed. This should be brief and is not a discussion. This should be an open opportunity for people to ask for help, or hand back tasks they are no longer able to complete.

Updates

For example there could be updates from the following:

- Anyone who has something to bring up from a sub-circle or working group that is relevant.
- The **External Coordinator** of your group if they have attended a Regional or National meeting.
- Anyone who has attended a revelant non-XR meeting or event.

Each update should be concise. They should not be discussions, but if they need to be talked through they should be added as items to the agenda.

The Agenda

By now you may have taken up a large chunk of the meeting already! So depending on how long the meeting is planned for, the rest of the agenda should fit comfortably and not feel rushed. You may want to 'roll-over' items to the next meeeting if time needs to be spent on more urgent items.

Build and finalise the agenda

There are different ways to compile an agenda. Typically it would be through the **Internal Coordinator** (the person who makes sure the team is healthy and achieving its mandate) before the meeting, but it could also be done in the meeting by asking everyone if they have anything to add.

To help direct an agenda item, consider what you need from the attendees:

- Report - Share information or give updates
- Explore - A discussion, time to generate ideas
- Decision - Make a decision

Also, when framing an agenda item, consider:

- What are you bringing?
- Why are you bringing it?
- What do you need from this meeting?

Deliver the agenda

The **facilitator** will then deliver the agenda. Items should time-limited, and by the end of the item there will usually be a list of next steps; perhaps the item needs to come back to a future meeting, or there will be a list of tasks that need to be allocated and complete- these are known as Action Points.

Action points

The **minute-taker** should record all the Action Points from the meeting, including what is to be done, who is doing it, and when it is to be done.
These action points can be noted in bold in the minutes- e.g
AP Greta - make school strike placard

End the Meeting

The last 10 minutes of the meeting should be used to bring it to a close.

Set the date of the next meeting

If your meeting is regular, take time to remind people when the next one is.

If the meeting is irregular, take time to set a date for the next meeting before everyone leaves.

Some groups also use this time to find volunteers to be the facilitator and minute taker for the next meeting.

Check-outs

Like check-ins and the regenerative cultures reminder, check-outs and the vision reminder are core parts of XR’s commitment to creating regenerative work environments.

Run check-outs as you would a check-in.

Vision Reminder (Solemn Intention Statement)

> “Let us take a moment to consider why we are here. Let’s recall our love for the whole of humanity, in all corners of the world. Let’s remember our love for this beautiful planet that feeds, nourishes and sustains all life. Let’s recollect our sincere desire to protect all this, for now, and for generations to come. As we act today/this week, may we find the courage to bring this sense of peace and appreciation to everyone we encounter, to every word we speak, and to every action we make. In this emergency. Together. Rooted in love. We are all we need.”

Online Meetings

Online options are great for non-local meetings. Many of our online meetings use Zoom, but you don't need an account to join a meeting. If you have not used zoom before, have a look at our page on Zoom meetings

Making Decisions

How can we make decisions in a self-organising system?

There are several different ways we make decisions in XR, and you will likely come across each of these fairly quickly.

Role Mandated Decisions

> "Does this need to be decided by the group?"

Many of the decisions you come across do not need to take up time in a meeting. The first thing to consider would be if anyone has a mandate for the decisions that need to be made. It may be that you can make that choice without consulting the team because you have the responsibility (or mandate) for that thing. Or it may be that someone else does, in which case you should ask them what should be done.

Temperature Checks

> "Is this a simple, non-controverisal group decisions.

The question is usually phrased as "How do you feel about..." and then the group displays their enthusiasm by either raising their hands (positive) or lowering them (negative). A neutral response hovers around the middle.

These are often used to gauge how controversial something may be. If everyone is hands-up happy then there is no need to dive deeper into a longer process. But if some people have concerns, then it's advisable to move to the Integrative Decision Process or something similar.

Integrative Decision Making

> Is this a more complex decision?

The nature of what we do in XR means we are constantly making difficult decisions. There are often going to be strong divergences of opinion. Using consensus (everyone agreeing) means long

meetings and slow decisions.

For this level of decision making use **consent**, rather than consensus. This speeds up the process, reduces the likelihood of conflict and encourages ideas and innovation. It is very important for meeting attendees to understand this process.

There are three positions someone can take within this process:

> **I LIKE THIS IDEA** - I'm happy to agree to the proposal.

> **I CAN LIVE WITH THIS IDEA** - I don't like the idea but its not going to stop me doing my work. It's "Good enough for now" and "Safe enough to try".

> **I OBJECT TO THIS IDEA** - Carrying out this proposal would interfere with me being able to do my work. It's not safe enough to try.

The object is to find a solution that everyone thinks is **'safe enough to try'**. The process follows these steps:

1. **Stating Proposal** - Whoever is making the suggestion brings their proposal to the group.
2. **Clarifications Round** - Everyone in the meeting is then asked, in turn, if they need anything clarified to fully understand what is being proposed.
3. **Reactions Round** - Everyone then has a chance to react to the proposal, what they think of it, how it may affect their work, any foreseeable problems etc.
4. **Chance to Amend Proposal** - The person who brought the proposal has a chance to make any changes to it, any additions or changes to phrasing etc. They can also choose to withdraw the proposal or bring it back in another meeting.
5. **Objections Round** - Everyone in the meeting is then asked if they approve or object to the proposal. Objections must come from the role the individual is holding (not a personal view) and they must be concrete objections, either that the proposal will cause harm to the movement or it will stop existing work from being done. Read more about testing objections.

If there are no objections to a proposal, it is passed and enacted immediately. However, if someone raises an objection to the proposal, the group comes together to try to integrate that objection.

6. **Integrating Objections** - The objection is stated for the group and the floor is opened to suggestions on how this objection can be integrated into the original proposal. It may be that the wording needs to be changed or that the scope needs to be limited in some way.

The outcome of this process will either be the original or an amended proposal passed by the group or, if the facilitator or person bringing the proposal choses, it can be taken away to be worked on between meetings and brought back at a later date.

Your Power Within the System

We have created our Self-Organising System with the intention that every rebel has a voice. On an individual level, there are several things that you can do within the system.

- Any rebel can bring a proposal to their team.
- Any rebel can ask to bring a proposal to another team - by contacting the Internal Coordinator.
- Any rebel can ask for an election for a role - if they wish to step back or feel like someone isn't fulfilling their mandate.
- Any rebel can give back Action Points if they are unable to complete them.
- Any rebel can refuse to take on anything new and give back things they are struggling to fulfil.

Mandates and Working Groups

Interacting Between Teams

Our 'SOS' structure is a series of circles (teams) within circles (wider teams). Each circle contains the role of **External Coordinator** who attends the meeting of the **wider circle**. (and the EC of that circle will do the same, and in this way information is passed through the system.)

This applies to your Local Group External Coordinator (EC) attending Nation/Region meetings. But this also applies if you have a large local group and you want to create 'sub-circles' that feed in to your regular group meetings.

External Coordinators also feed FROM the wider circle back into your team.

Note: This should not be the sole interaction between teams. It is recommended if you are working on something that overlaps or sits close to a team many circles from you, that you reach out to them directly. Your External Coordinator should be able to find their contact details.

Mandates

We use mandates to distribute power through the movement. They help us manage without managers, and make our organisation transparent and accessible, with no mysterious 'black boxes'.

Simply put, a mandate outlines your purpose within the system, what is expected of you and what you are responsible for.

Lets say your group wants to organise a fundraising disco. You'll need someone (or a small team), to organise each element of the event. Different people can be given the responsibility to organise the venue, the food, the music, and the advertising. Each of those people has an informal 'mandate' to make plans in their area- they don't need to check every decision with the rest of the group.

But sometimes these responsibilities overlap, and it's important that people communicate effectively with each other. For example, if the venue team arranged a venue that closed at 9pm, but the music team had booked a DJ from 7-11pm, there would be a tension between their

decisions. That's why its important to communicate your actions with the rest of the team, and check there is no harm in them, even though you're not having to get permission to do everything (like you might have to in a more heirachical organisation).

Learn more

If you want to learn more about XR's Self-Organising System, then you can attend regular online training on this or request specific SOS training for Local Groups.

Simple, practical guidance to keep online meetings safe

Take a risk-based approach to online meetings in order to assess the overall risk to Extinction Rebellion. Ensure that people running meetings are aware of the possible risk factors and what steps they can take to increase security when appropriate.

Take care over appropriate platform choice, use available security features, allocate responsibility for online safety, arrange training.

Look out for suspicious registrations or attendees.

Make sure people know what to do during the online meeting and if the meeting is disturbed by unwanted guests or inappropriate behaviour.

Follow security best practice: update software, educate participants, and use strong, unique passwords.

For more detailed advice read this article by Charity Excellence

Also see guidance here on the Rebel Toolkit on using Zoom or **XR's own green energy powered** 'Big Blue Button'.