SOS: making it work for you

How to use our Self-Organising System (SOS) effectively to organise teams and evolve an effective movement through reflection and learning.

Note: If you are looking for the Constitution itself, that is in a separate book. This is to make a distinction between the rules themselves, in the Constitution, and the guidance, here, on how to use them.

Any questions? Visit https://organise.earth/uk/channels/self-organising-system

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- Empowering the Movement

General SOS guidance

Advice on how to organise and make decisions within XR UK using our Self-Organising System

Why SOS? An introductory Q&A

Please click each question to see the answer.

Why do we have a Self-Organising System?

XR's tenth Principle and Value is that we are based on autonomy and decentralisation. The self-organising system (SOS for short) is a set of practices that guarantees this autonomy while also enabling the different parts of the movement to work together.
We also use the SOS to support other XR Principle and Values: mitigating power, reflecting and learning, and creating a regenerative culture.

But why does it have to be a system? Can't we just trust people to organise themselves?

For small groups that work more or less autonomously, the full SOS may be more than you need. But when the regions and nations are interacting with the XR UK Actions, and with the Media & Messaging team, and using the technology provided by the Digital team — and so on — we need some standard ways of organising and deciding, so that we're not having to spend time arguing from first principles all the time. These standard ways are set out in the XR UK constitution.

Who decided how we should organise ourselves?

This decision was made by rebels and founders early in 2019. It is rooted in an evidence-based and tested approach to self-organising called holacracy. As well as safeguarding autonomy, we believe this approach contributes to a regenerative culture and embodies other Principles and Values, like mitigating the concentration of power and encouraging reflecting and learning. It aims to avoid some of the pitfalls that have undermined other progressive movements such as Occupy.

OK, so what's the gist of self organising?

Starting from the aims of the movement as a whole, we break this down into smaller parts. To achieve our demands, what are the things — actions, communications, regen, organisational, technical etc — that we need to get done?
With each of these, we then 'mandate' a team to achieve them. A mandate is what the rest of the movement wants the team to do. Within this mandate the team has complete autonomy (within the Principles and Values) over how it organises itself and its work. Frequently this may involve further decentralisation, dividing the authority in its mandate into smaller mandates. These are given to sub-groups and ultimately to individual roles.

Does a mandate give you power?

The power to decide how you achieve a specified outcome or purpose, yes. But also some responsibilities. As well as the purpose, a mandate also comprises a set of accountabilities. These describe *how* you will achieve the purpose, in a series of activities that others in the movement can expect you to do. The accountabilities of a group, or a role, are what they can be held accountable for.

Is a mandate like a job description then?

Yes, and no. Yes, the mandate gives a general idea of *what* a group, or role, is working towards, and how. But a job description sets the limits of what you're allowed to do, and a manager can direct how you do it. A mandate flips that on its head: you can do *anything you need to do* (that doesn't interfere with someone else's mandate) to achieve your purpose. You are not restricted to your accountabilities. Your accountabilities define what others can ask and expect of you. There are no managers, and no one can direct how you go about meeting your accountabilities.

Managing without managers? Does that work?

It can if we decentralise our power through mandates, and keep evolving our organisation. We establish feedback loops within relevant groups and roles, so that each limb of the movement can renew itself. This helps embody two of our Principles and Values: mitigating power, and valuing reflecting and learning. But in turn it depends on everyone being transparent about what their mandate is, enabling others across the movement to find who is accountable for what, and to give feedback. Hence all our mandates and as many groups as possible are published on the organism view of XR UK.

What roles does every team have?

To work within the XR UK constitution, each team needs to have at least three roles (the Core Roles):

- someone to organise the work of the team and support members in their roles — the Internal Coordinator;

- someone to integrate the work of the team with the broader movement — the External Coordinator;
- someone to keep records of who's doing what in the team, and ensure all members are on the team communication channels — the Group Admin.

Together these roles make sure that the team is as transparent and accessible as it reasonably can be to the rest of the movement — so that we can all quickly find who's accountable for what. There are still quite a lot of meetings, but we keep them as short as possible.

What happens when people disagree?

It's inevitable we will disagree, sometimes strongly. The XR UK constitution outlines an Integrative Decision Making process. If someone feels that something is not working as it should, they express this tension — ideally explaining how it impacts their mandate — and make a proposal for addressing it.

And then you put the proposal to a vote, right?

Not exactly. Traditional voting is something we steer away from, because we try to be less binary than Yes/No, less factional than For/Against. First, a facilitator guides the process of checking everyone understands the proposal and its implications — particularly for them and their mandates. Then the facilitator invites reactions to the proposal. Finally they ask for any objections. We avoid majority rule — voting — or minority rule — veto. Objections are only valid if they convincingly show that harm would arise from the proposal (for example: if a group would no longer be able to exercise its mandate, that would be harm). "I don't think that's going to work" is a *reaction* that the proposer may or may not take on when implementing the proposal, but it is not a valid *objection*.

Does a valid objection mean you have to start from scratch with a new proposal?

Maybe, but hopefully not. Ideally we find a way to change proposal, so that it still achieves what it was intended to do, but without causing harm. A proposal can't go forward if there's a valid objection, but the group is invited to think creatively to suggest changes to the proposal. These changes should retain the purpose of the original proposal while also avoiding the harm identified in the objection. In this way we *integrate* the objection into the proposal, to meet the needs of both proposer and objector. Maybe no one is 100% happy, but hopefully no one holds a grudge either.

Wait, What? Why SOS works the way it does. An intermediate Q&A

Please click each question to see the answer.

Why can’t coordinators simply direct what others do?

Because in the Self-Organising System, **authority lives in the role, not the person**. Coordinators don’t command — they align. Their job is to hold the big picture, set priorities and connect the dots, not to tell others how to do their work. Each role-holder has their own mandate and the autonomy to act within it.

This way, decisions stay close to where the real knowledge and motivation live. It keeps power circulating, prevents hierarchy from creeping back in, and honours Principle 7 (**We actively mitigate power**) and Principle 2 (**We set our mission on what is necessary**). Coordination replaces control with clarity — and that’s what keeps the system alive and responsive.

Why is decentralisation safer than having a strong central leadership?

Because power spread across many people is harder to corrupt, silence or break. In SOS, authority lives in clear roles and mandates, not in personalities or status. This makes the system resilient: if one person leaves, or a mistake is made, others can step in and the work continues. Centralised power may feel faster or simpler, but it creates single points of failure and dependence on a few decision-makers.

Decentralisation builds collective intelligence and accountability. It allows decisions to be made close to where the knowledge and motivation live, while still aligning through shared principles and purpose. This reflects Principle 7 (**We actively mitigate power**), Principle 2 (**We set our mission on what is necessary**), and Principle 3 (**We need a regenerative culture**) — creating a movement that’s distributed, adaptable, and hard to stop.

Why is “good enough for now, safe enough to try” better than perfect — and why does SOS encourage experimenting, even if we fail?

Because waiting for perfect slows everything down — and usually means nothing changes. In the Self-Organising System, we learn by doing, not by designing flawless plans. If an idea is “good enough for now, safe enough to try”, we act, observe what happens, and adapt. Every experiment — even one that fails — gives us real feedback that makes the system smarter.

This approach turns mistakes into learning fuel and keeps the movement flexible and alive. It reflects Principle 5 (**We value reflecting and learning**) and Principle 3 (**We need a regenerative culture**) — reminding us that growth comes through iteration, not perfection. Perfection is static; experimentation keeps us evolving.

Why record everything on the Hub? What role does this transparency play in sharing power?

Recording roles, mandates and decisions on the Hub isn’t bureaucracy — it’s how we share power. When everyone can see who’s responsible for what, authority stops being personal and becomes collective. No one has to rely on insider knowledge or private networks to get things done. Everyone can see who is accountable for what.

This visibility speeds up trust and prevents power from concentrating around a few people who “just know how things work.” It embodies Principle 7 (**We actively mitigate power**), Principle 5 (**We value reflecting and learning**) and Principle 3 (**We need a regenerative culture**). Transparency turns information into a common resource — making the movement more equal, agile and alive.

Why should we welcome tensions — and see conflict as information, not a threat?

In SOS, a tension isn’t a problem to suppress — it’s a message from the system that something needs attention or change. Conflict often signals a gap between 'what is' and 'what could be better'. When we listen to that signal instead of resisting it, we uncover valuable information about what’s missing, unclear or misaligned.
Avoiding tensions lets frustration build underground; working with them helps the team evolve. By naming and processing tensions openly, we strengthen trust and creativity instead of eroding them. This embodies Principle 3 (**We need a regenerative culture**), Principle 5 (**We value reflecting and learning**), and Principle 7 (**We actively mitigate power**). Conflict handled well isn’t destructive; it’s the heartbeat of adaptation.

Why should I welcome objections to my proposal — and treat them as gifts, not obstacles?

Because an objection is a sign that someone else sees a risk you've missed — and they're sharing it before it becomes a problem. In SOS, objections aren't blocks to your idea; they're contributions to making it stronger. When we integrate valid objections, proposals become safer, more resilient, and more likely to succeed with everyone's support.

Treating objections as gifts builds trust and shared know-how. It shifts us from defending our own ideas to improving them together, turning difference into creativity instead of conflict. This embodies Principle 3 (**We need a regenerative culture**), Principle 5 (**We value reflecting and learning**), and Principle 7 (**We actively mitigate power**). By welcoming objections, we practise shared care for the system — ensuring it grows wiser with every decision.

How does updating mandates help prevent burnout?

By keeping mandates clear and current we keep work doable and purposeful. When roles drift or outgrow their original scope, people end up carrying invisible responsibilities, absorbing tensions, or feeling they can never do enough. Regularly reviewing and adjusting mandates lets teams rebalance workloads, clarify boundaries, and drop what no longer serves their purpose. Updating a mandate isn't bureaucracy — it's regeneration in practice. It helps the team stay aligned with reality, not habit, and ensures each person's energy is used where it matters most. This reflects Principle 3 (**We need a regenerative culture**) and Principle 5 (**We value reflecting and learning**): caring for the system means caring for the people who sustain it.

Why should I speak from my role instead of from my personal opinions?

Because speaking from your role keeps the conversation focused on what serves the team's shared purpose, not individual preference. Personal opinions are valuable, but in SOS they can blur accountability — no one knows whose mandate a comment relates to, or how to act on it. Speaking from your role makes clear what authority or perspective you're bringing, and helps others respond from theirs.

It also protects relationships: disagreements between roles are easier to explore than conflicts between personalities. This clarity builds trust and efficiency, ensuring that decisions come from the work itself, not from ego or dominance. It reflects Principle 7 (**We actively mitigate power**) and Principle 3 (**We need a regenerative culture**) — practising humility, boundaries and care in how we use our voice.

Key Terms in SOS

The Self-Organising System (SOS) is the decision-making process adopted by Extinction Rebellion (XR). This guide walks you through some key components of SOS that we adopt to further the principles and values of XR.

- Accountability
- Circle
- Domain
- Mandate
- Purpose
- Role
- Sub-circle

Definitions

Circle

A group or unit within the larger XR organisation.

Mandate

The authority given to an individual or a circle, a description of what they are working to achieve, and what others can expect them to do in order to achieve it.

Roles

Within a circle we create roles to share ongoing work among members of the team. This gives them the authority to make decisions to achieve their given goals — which are expressed in their mandate.

Circles in XR

A circle is a self-governing team within XR. The structure helps us focus on priorities, respond to events, and share responsibility across the movement.

- A circle operates to accomplish a set of well-defined goals.
- Goals for the circle are outlined in a mandate that says what it is expected to do or create.
- The circle decides how they work within their area of responsibility.

Circles and sub-circles

- Circles can delegate a specific task to a set of team members forming a sub-circle. Sub-circles are accountable for the work they do. This way, both groups can work independently towards a collective goal.
- Circles must prioritise activity as requested by the broader circle that created them.

Circle members

- Every circle includes three Core Roles crucial for the team's health, communication, and accessibility to the rest of the movement — more on that later, under 'roles'. Outside the three core roles, a circle is free to distribute roles to its members as it needs.

Understanding Mandates:

Mandates in SOS are descriptions of responsibilities given to individuals or teams, outlining what they are working to achieve and what they are accountable for.

- Components of a Mandate
  - Purpose: Clearly state goals or outcomes that the mandate aims to achieve.
  - Accountabilities: a list of activities necessary to fulfill the purpose, using action verbs.
  - Domains: Include if exclusive control over resources like technology or information is required.

Read this step-by-step guidance on How to write mandates

- Distributing Mandates: “We are based on autonomy and decentralisation.”
  - Mandates are distributed among team members to spread power and share responsibility.
- Changing Mandates:
  - Mandates are created and amended in formal circle meetings, using collective decision-making.
  - If mandate holders are not fulfilling their responsibilities, the constitution sets out escalating steps for resolving issues

Roles in SOS:

Sharing the work to achieve XR’s core demands, together.

- Types of Role:
  - Core Roles: Circles **must** include three Core Roles: **Internal Coordinator**, **External Coordinator**, and **Group Admin**. Together they help to support the team, coordinate with other teams, and keep team records accessible. These roles are re-elected at least every six months.
  - All other roles: beyond the three Core Roles, the circle’s team is free to create any other Role to meet its mandate. Teams are all different, but may have some roles in common.
- Creating or Amending Roles:
  - Creating or amending roles should be done collectively in formal meetings as governance decisions.
  - Any team member can call for an election for any team role at any time.
  - The Internal and External Coordinators of a circle must always be appointed by election.
  - When roles don't involve circle-wide power, individuals can be appointed by volunteering.
- Stepping Down:
  - Individuals can step down from a role at any time.

Your power and responsibility in SOS

A Guide for Every Team Member

As a team member, you have a unique role in fostering an environment where power and decision-making processes are transparent and effectively managed. Here’s how you can contribute positively to your team's success.

Understand Your Decision-Making Power

Recognise your part in decision-making. Spend some time familiarising yourself with how your mandate fits alongside other roles in the team. Identify

- the scope of the decisions that you can take yourself, within your mandate;
- which other roles in the team — and possibly beyond the team — might be affected by your decisions;
- how the purpose of your role contributes to the purpose of your team, its wider circle, and so on up to the three demands.

Step into your authority. Where you have a mandate, you do not have to ask permission of anyone. So take initiative without feeling the need to establish consensus first. Invite advice where you feel you need it, but that’s your decision, not your advisors’. It saves meeting time if we avoid unnecessary consultations.

Exercise your influence responsibly by adhering to the mandates assigned to you. This ensures that power is distributed fairly and decisions are made transparently.

Propose changes thoughtfully when you see an opportunity to improve processes or outcomes. If you believe a modification in your mandate could benefit the team, bring your suggestions to team meetings with clear reasons and potential impacts.

Navigate Team Mandates

Familiarise yourself with the bigger picture. Explore the relationships between teams and what they do on the XR UK Organism view (click on the circles to see their contents).

Clarify the purpose and accountabilities of your role with those you collaborate with. Knowing what they expect of you and what you are responsible for can guide your actions and decisions.

Adjust your mandates when necessary. If any accountabilities do not align with your skills or if you believe you can add more value in other areas, discuss these adjustments with your Internal Coordinator in the first instance. Some roles may have more than one person in them, and you can have informal agreements about who majors on what. You don't have to record everything in your mandate, but keeping it current provides a better guide to future role holders.

Understand the decision pathways within your team. Recognize which decisions you can make independently and which ones require consent by your team. Usually the decisions that require consent are

- how your team divides its mandate between roles and sub-circles, including their mandates;
- who is appointed to what roles;
- whether the team adopts any policies that constrain or empower what the roles can do.

(We refer to these as governance decisions, because they affect the power of the team members.)

Practise Effective Listening and Speaking for Decisions

Listen actively to your teammates. Pay attention to discussions and feedback, considering how the insights relate to the team's objectives and your role. This not only helps in better decision-making but also strengthens team cohesion.

Speak from your role(s), especially in meetings. Decision-making meetings are quicker and more effective if you keep in mind your mandate and whether the decision affects your ability to deliver on that — and if it doesn't, can you save any opinions for a separate agenda item or meeting (possibly a project or team-building meeting)?

Get familiar with integrative decision making (IDM). This method is specified in the Constitution. You don't have to use it other than for governance decisions, but it can be useful even informally to follow the IDM sequence:

- **clarifications** — what exactly is being proposed to happen next?
- **reactions** — how do I feel about it?
- **objections** — am I sure that bad stuff will follow if what is being proposed actually happens? If not, let it happen, see what actually follows, and work from there…

Focus on developing relevant skills that enhance your role's effectiveness within the team. Whether it's improving your strategic thinking or your ability to analyse data, enhancing your capabilities can make you a more effective member.

Lead from within your role

Make your role useful by demonstrating how it can help others. Even if your mandate seems relatively modest — let's say scheduling meetings and taking minutes — you can still have an impact in achieving your role's purpose — which might be "Everyone has the information and records they need to have effective meetings". Keep focusing on all the things that would bring you closer to that purpose.

Be accessible and respond to requests. You are the expert and have the authority in what you do. Anyone in XR can ask for your help in doing the things that you're accountable for. So help make it easy for them to reach you with requests, and respond quickly when they do.

Manage expectations and priorities. While others can expect you to do what's included in your accountabilities, they can't specify how you go about it, or when (unless dependencies are written into the accountabilities, like "Preparing the PA system before the speakers begin"). You may feel you should prioritise other accountabilities first, so let requesters know what they can expect.. If your team follows the XR UK Constitution, then you "must align [your] work with the priorities set by the Internal Coordinator of [your] circle." Those will be general high-level priorities, so, if it's not immediately obvious, check with your Internal Coordinator how a particular activity fits into those priorities.

Reflect, learn, regenerate

We all know there's more to good team work than assigning roles and making decisions effectively.

Be proactive in understanding the impact of your actions on the team's dynamics and outcomes. Reflect on how your decisions help achieve the team's goals and how they affect other members.

Fill your role in a way that supports your teammates in their roles. Offer help when you see opportunities, and be open to receiving support when needed. A collaborative approach can lead to more effective problem-solving and innovation. Create collaborative projects, involving different roles working to a common end.

Stay informed about the broader organisational goals and how your team's work contributes to these aims. Ask for updates from your External and Internal Coordinators. This broader perspective can enhance your decision-making and ensure that your efforts are aligned with the strategy and demands.

By focusing on these areas, you can be a proactive, supportive, and effective member of your team, ensuring that both power and responsibilities are managed wisely to achieve collective success.

How to work things out (and help the movement work better)

Every tension is a learning opportunity

We talk about XR as an organism. Like all living organisms, it is changing to adapt to its environment and new challenges all the time. Cells die and are replaced. Tensions build up in its muscles and limbs and need to be loosened. From time to time its digestive and respiratory systems get infected. This all requires treatment and adaptation.

We notice things that ought to be improved within the organism all the time. We call these ‘tensions’ because the idea of a tension stretches from:

- a mild sense of unease — for example, I have some information that I think others need to be aware of, to
- a risk that something really important to our strategy will not get done, or from
- an opportunity that hasn’t yet been taken to make the movement more effective, to
- the work of one team is about to undermine another team’s ability to do what they need to do.

This page is about how to process and ease different tensions, whether they are problems or opportunities, or both. And, in the process, maybe help the organism adapt to avoid or mitigate similar tensions in the future.

By addressing personal and local needs, we help the whole organism learn, and bring about movement-wide evolution.

Surface and define your tension

Notice the tension. You may start from a general unease and a feeling that something's not quite right. Or it may not be a negative feeling: it could be a sense of good news that hasn't been properly shared and appreciated. Can you remember when and where you first noticed this tension? What was happening then?

To help notice what tensions you may be feeling, try these

thirteen questions to surface tensions

- Is there something I need help with?
- Is any of my work stuck and could anyone here help me get it unstuck?
- Is there anything I'd like to brainstorm that could use a few more brains?
- Am I regularly doing work that is not captured in the mandates of my roles?
- Am I having trouble with any stakeholders?
- Is there anything upsetting or frustrating me?
- Do I intend to make a decision that might impact another role soon?
- Do I have any news/successes/announcements to share "for the good of the whole"?
- Are there any opportunities I'm excited about that I want to see movement around?
- Is someone else waiting on me for something and would an update from me help them?
- Is there anyone I'd like to recognise for doing something great or would I like to be recognised for doing something great?
- Do I have any questions about anything shared during team updates or meetings?
- Is there anything I'm holding inside that would feel better if others were holding it with me?

Give the tension a name. No need to spend too much time on this — you can change it later.

Work out where it starts from. Ask yourself, 'What would need to change for my tension to disappear?' Sometimes the answer may appear simple or straightforward — 'give me that resource, or this information'. And often it may indeed be that simple. But if your answer is, 'Person X leaves the team' or 'this part of the strategy is rewritten', you may need to think a little more.

To help explore sources of your tension, try these

seven questions to map tensions.

1. What, if anything, is standing in the way of me taking action to ease my tension?
2. Is this a one-off situation, or is it something that also happens at other times, to other people and teams, in other circumstances?
3. If it happens at other times/to other people/in other situations, what are the common factors?
4. If it happens to other people, how do they experience it and what do they do about it?

5. Is what I need something that someone else is accountable for (so it is covered by their mandate)?
6. If not, should there be someone who is accountable for this kind of thing?
7. Can I describe or specify the behaviour/information that I want to see, and the circumstances (who/what/when) when I want to see it?

Explore pathways to ease your tension

First work out who has the power to decide on the changes you want to see. And whose advice should they seek (in line with the Advice Process)? Power to decide is distributed through the movement in the form of mandates, so find the role or team with the mandate to address your tension.

Please click any of these pathways that looks like it might be worth exploring.

Request another role to take action, or do it yourself.

If the source of the tension falls within someone else's mandate, ask them to do what they are accountable for to resolve the tension. If they agree and do it, that may be the end of the matter. Discuss options with them as necessary: it's their decision how they go about their accountabilities, so share some ideas for the kinds of things that might work for both of you.

If they don't agree, try one of the other paths.

If the source of the issue is not in anyone's mandate, then can you take action yourself to resolve it?

Change your mandate.

If the tension stems from decisions that you'd like to take but don't have authority to take, consider taking this path.

Would it help you achieve the purpose of your role if you had extra authority to decide and to act? If so, could you propose adding an accountability to your mandate, to give you this authority?

Or perhaps it would help if you gave up some authority and made it available to another role? For example, if the other role has access to information that you don't.

You can make a proposal to change your mandate and take it to your team to seek consent. Make sure that the proposal does not give you decision making power that already begins to another role. If so, that role can object to your proposal on the grounds that it harms their mandate.

Change another role's mandate, or create a new role.

Do you want to be able to expect something from another role that they are not currently accountable for? If so, propose adding something to an existing mandate — or perhaps creating a new role.

Is the target role in your team? If so, take the proposal to your team meeting, where it can be decided on, with any objections integrated into a revised proposal.

Is it in another team? If so, it's a little more complicated, because the other team has the power to decide. Speak to the role holder themselves (or possibly the Internal Coordinator of their team) and see if you can persuade them of your case. Then they can take the proposal to their team.

Alternatively ask the External Coordinator (EC) of your team to bring your proposal to the wider circle that your team is part of. Depending on where the other role is, this may have to be passed through other ECs… that's why getting the role holder on side is often simpler.

Notes:

- If you want to change the mandate of another team, rather than just a role, the process is exactly the same, but the decision is made in the wider circle of which the team is part.
- The process is also very similar if you want to create a new role where there was none before. This is almost always done in your own team, not another one (it's a basic principle of autonomy and self-organising that teams decide their own roles).

Define how something is done.

Do you want to specify how something — a process, activity, project — is done, whichever roles are involving in doing it? If so, define it in a policy.

You still have to work out who has the power to decide on this policy. It could be that many roles and mandates are involved, across many teams. Locate the broader circle that all these roles and teams are in. For example, for an action, it might be the Actions Team; for something

on the website, it might be Media and Messaging, or Digital — or if both these are involved, it may have to go out to the Hive.

As with role mandates, you need someone in the relevant team to propose the policy in a governance meeting of that team.

‘How to write a policy’ is a whole other guidance page, not yet written. In the meantime, here are some examples of different kinds of policies.

Protect access to something.

Is there something that needs coordinated control? Perhaps a PA System that must not be booked in two places at once, or a social media channel where it’s important to avoid competing or inconsistent messaging. If something like this is identified as a ‘domain’, then it can be added to a mandate, giving exclusive authority to the team or role with the mandate.

Do you want your role to be granted a domain? If so

- Check that the wider circle has a claim on the domain within its own mandate (it cannot assign authority to your role that it doesn’t have itself).
- Write a short proposal to the circle that explains the tension you have identified: “as things stand, my role is at significant risk of harm, because I cannot control…” the thing you want to control.
- Present the proposal to a governance meeting of the relevant circle. Be ready to integrate any valid objections that may arise.

Embed the adaptation

Hopefully one of those pathways leads to your tension being resolved.

In the first pathway, nothing changes beyond one task being completed at your request or instigation.

All the other pathways lead to changes in the way our movement operates, and these changes persist until someone else senses a tension about how they work, and proposes further incremental changes (or, in theory, a reversal — but that is very rare in practice).

You have worked something out to help your role be more effective. But there is also legacy that your proposal is leaving behind.

‘We value reflecting and learning,’ as Principle and Value #5 says. By updating our teams, their roles, mandates and policies, our movement is learning, improving what we do and avoiding getting stuck in repetitive behaviour.

‘We actively mitigate power,’ as Principle and Value #7 says. By recording mandates, policies and how we continuously adapt them, we make transparent how power is distributed through the movement, and how its flow is regulated. This helps us see and address any instances in which authority gets centralised in a small number of people or positions.

How to manage your work and stay accountable

No one in XR UK is managed day to day. You have a mandate, which means real authority — and real accountability. Your team’s Internal Coordinator (IC) needs enough visibility of your work to coordinate across the team, offer support when you're stuck, and flag when priorities need to shift.

The good news is that this needn’t take a lot of effort.

Keeping on top of your role

Keep a list of your current tasks and projects. Whatever format works for you is fine — a notebook, a spreadsheet, a to-do list app. The point is that it exists, that it's current, and that your IC can see it when needed. Then both of you will be able to trust that you’re focusing on the right things for the team as a whole.

For each item, try to capture:

- Priority — is this urgent, top priority, low priority, on hold?
- Progress — not started, in progress, near completion, complete?
- Blocks — waiting on someone, lacking capacity, need input from another team?

Reviewing this with your IC regularly keeps you both on the same page, and makes it easier to spot where you need support or where something is stuck. It allows the IC to keep track of and coordinate the work across teams and roles.

Feedback and learning

Your task list isn't just about accountability to others — it's useful to you. Keeping track of what you're doing and how it's going helps you see what's working, what isn't, and what needs to change. This is how we improve — not just as individuals, but as a movement.

For any significant project, start by being clear about what success looks like. Then, as you go, work around a simple loop:

- Try an idea.
- Did it work? How well?
- If it did, keep doing it — and ask whether it could work even better.
- If it didn't, ask why, then come up with a new idea.

It sounds obvious, and in some ways it is. But it's easy to keep doing what feels familiar rather than stopping to assess honestly. Recording your work, honestly assessing it and adjusting as you go is what accountability looks like in self organising.

Meetings — when to show up

You don't need to attend every meeting. But before each one, check the agenda and ask yourself:

- Does something in my work need input from, or affect, another team or role?
- Is there an agenda item relevant to my work or mandate?
- Is a governance decision being made that may affect my work?
- Has the IC asked me to attend?

If any of those are true, you should be there. If none are, you don't have to — though you're always welcome.

How to write mandates

Why mandates?

We are based on autonomy and decentralisation. Mandates are the building blocks by which we decentralise and mitigate any concentration of power.

We divide all the different types of decision we have to make into mandates, and then we distribute these mandates to the people best able to carry them out. We trust them to do just that, and we hold them accountable if they don't.

So the mandate for a circle or role defines which decisions it can make.

Taking care of our mandates — recording them, communicating them, updating them — is *critical* to how we manage ourselves without managers.

What's in a mandate?

A mandate has three parts:

> - a **purpose** — the result we want to bring about (e.g. for XR UK the purpose might be 'Achievement of the three demands');
> - some clear **accountabilities** — the activities we will do to bring about the result;
> - some **domains**, if they’re needed — the resources (e.g. PA system) or spaces (e.g. website, social media presence) to which we need to regulate access.

What makes a good mandate?

- **Short** — rebels need to be able to scan mandates quickly to find the right team, so try to make this easy.
- **Clear** — use plain does-what-it-says-on-the-tin terms that rebels don't need training to understand.
- **Specific** — each circle or role has a purpose which is part of, or contributes to, the wider circle of which it is part. So focus on what your part of that wider purpose is, and avoid overlapping with areas that other circles might think are part of their mandate.

Notes:

- None of this means that your team cannot create richly described visions of the world you would like to bring into being, or the strategy by which you might do this. If that helps you achieve your mandate, do it. But it is separate from your mandate, and serves a different function.
- If circles *do* feel that their mandates are overlapping unhelpfully, then we count this as a tension and one or both circles may work on a proposal to resolve it. This is part of how the wider Self-Organising System works.

Tips for writing mandates

Purpose

Everything starts with the **purpose**. This is the outcome that your team exists to bring about.

Why purpose matters - a short anecdote from history

> “In 1962, President John F Kennedy visited NASA for the first time. During his tour of the facility, he met a janitor who was carrying a broom down the hallway. The President then casually asked the janitor what he did for NASA, and the janitor replied, "I’m helping put a man on the moon."
>
> The janitor knew something that most of us struggle with, the purpose of his work. He kept the building clean so that the scientists, engineers, and astronauts could focus on their mission of putting "man on the moon". They did not have to worry about spending their time on trashcans, bathrooms, or hallways. He did that for them. He saw where his contribution fit in the organization. He connected his purpose with theirs. [source]

How does your purpose connect with achieving XR's demands?

Try answering one or more of these questions:

- What would it look like if your team were wildly successful?
- If I fulfilled my purpose, there would be… [what?]
- We imagine a world where… [what? but keep it specific: remember this is what *you and your team* are creating, not the whole movement]

You should be able to use your answer as a purpose statement.

You can do whatever it takes to achieve your purpose.

What is the point of ‘purpose’?

1. Rebels across the movement can see how their team plays its part in achieving the XR demands.
2. Rebels can see how the organism works and how the pieces work together (like seeing how an organism has a respiratory system, a digestive system, a locomotive system, and how the smaller parts — the bronchioles, the kidneys, the feet and toes — play their parts).
3. Rebels can easily locate the part of the movement that serves a particular function (if you know something that would make the respiratory system work better, you need a way of finding the relevant part or organ).

The movement is complex, but by representing its hierarchy of purpose we make it as simple as possible to understand how it works, and empower rebels to take action to help it work better.

Some Do's and Don't's when writing Purpose statements

Do

1. Keep it as short as possible (there are a lot of teams; rebels haven’t got time to read an essay about each one).
2. Keep it simple and able to stand on its own.
3. Keep it practical. Ground the vision in an achievable outcome.
4. Check that the purpose can reasonably be understood as a subset of the purpose of the broader circle it sits within (the broader circle cannot distribute power to you that it doesn’t itself have)
5. Be clear about how the purpose contributes to the goals of broader circles, but...

Don't

1. ...Define the purpose in such a way that it requires other circles (or the whole movement) to do things in a particular way — that would not be self-organising.
2. Refer to other strategies, policies or mandates that rebels have to read in order fully to understand the purpose (possible exceptions to this are the demands, and the principles and values, which all rebels can be expected to know).
3. Include ‘representing’ a group or individual: the purpose is about how the work serves the wider goal of the organism, not about how one team projects its collective voice to it.
4. Include a list of several activities (these may fit better as Accountabilities) or goals — though you can have one end-point with several attributes.
5. Define a purpose that is wider than the circle itself can achieve — in other words a purpose that depends heavily on effort from the rest of the movement to accomplish fully. It’s great to be ambitious about what a team can achieve, but don’t be

completely unrealistic.

Accountabilities

Accountabilities are the things that a circle or role does day-to-day, the most common activities to achieve the purpose.

Try completing the sentence, "I was watching the team (or role) for a while and I saw them..."

- contacting..., communicating..., coordinating...
- creating..., producing..., designing..., making...
- identifying..., analysing..., evaluating...
- supporting..., assisting..., caring for...
- planning..., deciding...

Try to avoid words like 'ensuring' because they usually imply controlling someone else's work.

Think about all the work your circle/role needs to do to fulfil its purpose.

Again, try to keep each accountability to a single concise sentence, so that all rebels can grasp them quickly.

The holder of a mandate has the *authority to do whatever they need to get their accountabilities done*, unless it impacts someone else's domain.

(Still want more? Check out this blog post from HolacracyOne for some further guidance on writing accountabilities.)

Domains

Domains are things that a role has exclusive control over. These could be physical things (like a PA system or greenhouses) or more abstract things (like payment processes, or event lists).

Only add a domain to a mandate if there is a clear reason for it. It serves as a kind of "Hands off" or "No trespassing" sign. But if there's little risk of others interfering, it doesn't need mentioning. Most mandates don't have domains.

What harm would be caused by having no exclusivity? If a role wants the PA system for an event, but finds it has been taken to another event, the former role experiences harm. If lots of people can add, edit or delete events from a list, there could be harm (e.g. from mistaken deletions), but there may not be. Is it safe enough to try?

Scope - important

A circle cannot delegate a mandate that has a wider scope than its own mandate:

- it can't give a role or subcircle a purpose that is not a part of achieving its own purpose;
- it cannot make someone accountable for doing something that it is not itself accountable for;
- it can't add a domain to a mandate unless it already controls that domain.

Example mandate

Let's say our circle has been given a mandate to organise a fundraising party.

We decide we need a role for finding the venue, which we'll call Venue Finder. Now we need to give the role a mandate so that someone has the authority to find the venue.

> **Purpose**: The party is held in a location with space for dancing and awesome acoustics.
>
> **Accountabilities**:
>
> - Contacting and maintaining a list of potential venues
> - Evaluating the potential venues in terms of access, cost, and other criteria agreed with relevant roles
> - Booking a venue for the date of the party

Should the Venue Finder role have 'Food and drinks tables' as a **domain**? If they did, the Catering role would have to get permission from the Venue Finder if they wanted to move the tables or buy more tables. It is for the circle to decide, when creating the mandate, whether this is necessary or would prevent the Catering role from fulfilling its own purpose and accountabilities.

How to write proposals

Proposals enable ideas to move forward if they are "good enough for now, safe enough to try".

Bringing proposals to your team helps it work better — from unblocking a task to reorganising your roles. They introduce agile and creative ways to progress work, bring new ideas and resolve tensions. ("Tension" is a catch-all term that covers issues from mild unease to full-blown conflict.

See also the guidance on sensing and defininining tensions.)

Everyone can contribute to the better running of their group or team. If you are sensing a tension in the way your team is operating, or have a new idea or spot an opportunity to do something that is not currently covered properly, write a proposal!

You may not need to go through all of these steps below for every proposal, it depends on how complicated the issue is, or how elaborate the idea is.

Proposals should generally try to include the following:

- A short sentence summarising the proposal at the top.
- A brief list of the background, motivations, tensions addressed, including examples.
- The proposal itself. Make this as clear and simple as you can.
- The implications if it gets adopted, and how it will need to be implemented.
- A list of who you've spoken to in creating the proposal. This may include anyone who will be significantly impacted.
- A clear system for receiving feedback, eg please comment on this document, or send feedback directly to me at...

Use the template at the foot of this page if you find it helpful.

Check in with a few other people

Ask for other people's thoughts and ideas. Consider using the Advice Process. This helps to capture collective wisdom and build a culture of collaboration and joint ownership around proposals.

Redraft the proposal to integrate the advice you receive.

Circulate the proposal

Share to the wider team with enough notice for them to consider it properly before you meet.

Concerns or objections

Contact members of the circle who might object to the proposal, based on their feedback, to see if you can integrate their concerns in advance of the meeting. (This step is optional. It may be easier to process objections in a meeting.)

Bring to a meeting

Ask the Internal Coordinator or meeting facilitator to add your proposal to a meeting agenda. Then you can have your proposal processed using relevant decision-making processes. Depending on the response of the team, you may need to be open to amending your proposal or integrating objections.

Your proposal is adopted!

Be clear about any actions that should follow as part of the implementation of the proposal, and ensure these are recorded for follow up.

Keep sensing tensions

We value reflecting and learning. We adopt proposals that are good enough for now, safe enough to try. We **do not** sweat trying to make every proposal perfect before we try it. So, if experience shows that the proposal can be improved, this counts as a tension: please make another proposal for that improvement.

Proposal Template

Summary

This proposal is for the following change(s) to be made: [keep this short and clear].

Background and motivations

[The history and context that led you to propose this change, including examples. Make clear what role or circle/team is affected and how.]

Tension(s)

[What is (not) happening at the moment that your role or circle needs (not) to happen? State in one sentence if you can.]

Proposal

[How will the change(s) in the summary (above) address the tension.]

Implementation and impact

[How will the proposal be implemented? Which mandates, roles and circles/team will be affected?]

Authority

[Which mandate (belonging to a circle or role) has the authority to decide on this proposal — this checks against overreach and mitigates power.]

Advice taken

[A list of who you've spoken to in creating the proposal, which hopefully will include anyone who will be significantly impacted.]

Feedback

[How others can send feedback, pre- and post-adoption.]

How to work with other teams

When two (or more) teams need each other

No team in XR UK works in complete isolation. Your mandates are interconnected, and your work often touches — or depends on — the work of another circle.

When you notice that kind of dependency, it's worth exploring. It might call for a quick conversation, a standing agreement, or something more structural. The aim here is to help you find the *lightest* form of engagement that genuinely resolves your tension. We don’t want to make heavy-handed or complicated changes — so we reach for more structural options only when they're truly needed.

Four levels of cross-circle engagement

1. The Advice Process

Before making a decision that might affect another circle — or where another circle has relevant expertise — seek their advice. It's informal, requires no governance change, and over time builds real trust between teams.

For more details, please see The Advice Process

2. A formalised consultation agreement

If the same kind of coordination keeps coming up, it may be worth making it an expectation rather than a favour. One or both circles can create a simple written agreement — for example: "Where

our mandates depend on each other in [area X], we will consult before proceeding."

Depending on what's at stake, this could be a lightweight written note agreed informally, or a formal policy created through Integrative Decision Making. Let the context and the pressure you're working under guide which fits.

3. A Liaison or Support Role

Where coordination is ongoing but doesn't require embedded representation or governance involvement, you can create a Liaison or Support Role within your circle. The role holder engages directly with the other circle — typically working with specific roles there rather than attending their general meetings, though that may happen occasionally where it's useful.

This is created through your own circle's governance process and carries no decision-making authority in the other circle.

4. A Link Role

A Link Role is the most structural option, and the one that requires the most justification. It's for situations where there's ongoing interdependence that needs to be structural and to involve governance — not just information-sharing or operational coordination.

Before proposing one, your circle should be able to explain convincingly:

- the recurring structural dependency between the two circles;
- why embedded representation is needed, rather than information-sharing being enough;
- why advice, a consultation agreement, or a Liaison Role won't resolve the tension.

This isn't a rigid gate — it's a prompt for clear thinking, to avoid Link Roles being created by default when something lighter would do.

If you create a Link Role

Be explicit from the outset about how the two mandates relate, which recurring processes or decisions require representation, and whether the Link Role is Standard or Decision-making — and why. Clarity at the start prevents drift and makes it easier to review the role later.

At each six-month re-election, ask: does the structural dependency that justified this role still exist? If not, the role should lapse or convert to a Liaison Role. Structure should serve the organism — not the other way around.

What are project groups and when are they useful?

Project Groups in the **Self-Organising System (SOS)** are temporary, goal-focused teams that bring together people from multiple circles to work on a specific initiative.

Key Characteristics of a Project in SOS:

- **Short-term focus**: A project is usually created to address a particular need and is dissolved once the goal is met.
- **Cross-team collaboration**: Projects often involve people from multiple circles, unlike working groups, which belong to a single circle.
- **No formal mandate**: While working groups require a **mandate** from a broader circle, projects operate through existing roles and mandates.
- **Coordination considerations**: Setting up a project should involve defining objectives, aligning activities with relevant roles, and ensuring clear communication and coordination

When to form a Project Group

A **project group** should be formed instead of a **circle (or working group)** when the work is **temporary**, **specific**, and **cross-functional**. Here are key scenarios where forming a project group is the best approach:

- **Defined Timeframe**: If the work has a clear end date or is meant to achieve a one-time goal, a project group is preferable. Circles are ongoing and focus on maintaining long-term functions.
- **Cross-Circle Collaboration**: When an initiative requires input from multiple circles, a project group allows for flexible participation without restructuring existing mandates.
- **No Need for a New Mandate**: If the work can be carried out within existing mandates and does not require a formal governance structure, a project group is sufficient. Circles, by contrast, need a **mandate** from a broader circle to define their purpose and responsibilities.
- **Experimental or Trial Initiatives**: If an idea needs testing before becoming an ongoing function, a project group allows for agility and quick adaptation without committing to the formal structure of a circle.

- **Urgent or Fast-Moving Work**: When rapid action is needed, project groups enable quick mobilisation of relevant expertise without waiting for the governance processes required to establish a new circle.

If a project proves to be essential beyond its initial goal, it can later transition into a **circle** with a formal **mandate** to sustain its work long-term.

Checking your Project has the Right People

Ensuring that a project group has the right participants is essential for its success. Here are key steps to assess whether your project team is well-formed:

- **Match Skills to Needs**: Identify the core tasks required and ensure that the group includes people with the necessary expertise. If gaps exist, seek additional contributors from relevant circles.
- **Clarify Mandates and Roles**: Each participant should understand how their **existing mandate** connects to the project. If someone's role does not naturally align, they may need explicit support from their circle to contribute effectively.
- **Balance Perspectives**: A good project team includes a mix of strategic thinkers, implementers, and communicators to cover all aspects of the work.
- **Check Availability and Commitment**: Confirm that members have enough capacity to contribute meaningfully. If someone is stretched too thin, consider redistributing responsibilities or bringing in additional support.
- **Review Regularly**: As the project progresses, assess together whether the team composition remains effective. If priorities shift, new expertise may be needed, or some members may step back once their contribution is complete.

By periodically reviewing these factors, you can keep your project group agile, well-resourced, and aligned with its objectives.

Organising a Project Team

Once you have the right people involved, structuring the project team effectively is key to smooth collaboration and progress. Here’s how to organise it:

- **Define the Purpose and Scope**: Clearly articulate what the project aims to achieve, how success will be measured, and the expected timeframe for completion.
- **Clarify Roles and Responsibilities**: Assign tasks based on each member’s expertise and mandate, ensuring that everyone knows their contribution and decision-making authority.
- **Establish a Communication Flow**: Decide how the team will stay connected—through regular meetings, shared documents, or messaging platforms—to ensure updates and

coordination.
- **Use Existing Structures Where Possible**: Leverage the mandates of existing circles to support the project rather than duplicating efforts. If needed, designate a point person to liaise with relevant circles.
- **Track Progress and Adapt**: Use a simple system (such as task boards, check-ins, or progress reviews) to monitor work, resolve challenges, and adjust as needed.
- **Plan for Project Closure**: Before the work begins, outline what will happen when the project ends—whether the outcome will be handed over to a circle, wrapped up completely, or lead to a new phase.

By maintaining a **clear structure**, **good communication**, and **alignment with existing SOS processes**, the project group can stay focused, effective, and flexible in achieving its goals.

What has changed in the Constitution?

Please click each question to see the answer.

Why has the Constitution changed?

The Constitution, which sets out the rules of XR UK's Self-Organising System, is updated every few years on the recommendation of the SOS circle. The Constitution was first published in 2019, and this is the third revision since then.

The SOS team collects evidence of tensions and issues with decision-making and mandates over the years, and then proposes changes to address these. The changes are approved by the Hive. The latest round of changes, the first since 2023, were agreed by the Hive on 8 June 2026.

What are the main changes?

The Constitution has some additions which aim to:

- add clarity and explanations where needed;
- add measures for greater inclusion of marginalised voices and to diminish discriminatory patterns;
- make election processes clearer and more robust;
- separate out the Integrative Decision-Making (IDM) process for ease of reference;
- integrate the use of Link Roles within the Constitution.

What is the impact on me and my team?

There are changes to the mandates for the three Core Roles — Internal Coordinator, External Coordinator and Group Admin. Every circle has these roles, and they will each have to be updated on the Hub.

The **Internal Coordinator** role has additional accountabilities for

- acquiring and maintaining a sound knowledge of the Self-Organising System;
- ensuring the active welcome of under-represented and marginalised voices;
- tending the team's culture so that everyone is respected, and tensions (including discriminatory patterns) are addressed.

The **External Coordinator** role has additional accountabilities for

- reporting on the health of this team to the broader circle, including any issues with discriminatory patterns;
- sharing the perspectives of under-represented and marginalised voices, where relevant to the work of the team;
- acquiring and maintaining a sound knowledge of the Self-Organising System.

The purpose of the EC role is changed to include getting the team aligned with the wider movement's work and priorities.

The **Group Admin** role has additional accountabilities for

- making records and communications accessible and inclusive for all team members wherever reasonably possible.
- ensuring the team has a group agreement to maintain the security of the tools and platforms it uses.

And its purpose is changed to to ensuring that rebels can easily find and view accurate information about the team and its work.

If you have any concerns about the impact on your role or team, please contact the SOS team via sos@extinctionrebellion.uk or their Mattermost reception channel.

When do these changes come into effect?

In principle, immediately. The new version of the Constitution is available along with all the supporting documents and SOS guidance.

You should use the new guides for election processes, and you may hold your IC, EC and Group Admin accountable using the new mandates.

In practice, no one will change the mandate records on the Hub straight away. Each team may ask their Group Admin to update to the new mandates on the Hub using the *Copy Standard Role* feature. At some point in autumn 2026, SOS may take steps to update all Core Role mandates to bring them into line.

Last updated August 2026, delete after December 2026.

Role-specific SOS guidance

Advice mainly aimed at the three Core Roles of the Self-Organising System, to help carry out their mandates

How to achieve the purpose of your team (mainly for Internal Coordinators)

Why the Internal Coordinator role matters

Every role in a team plays a part in achieving the purpose of the team.

The Internal Coordinator (IC) role is there to keep everyone collaborating effectively, and healthily, towards this goal. This page gives you some suggestions for going about this role, and how to prioritise and coordinate the team's activities.

Effective internal coordination helps XR:

- rely on your team to play its part in achieving our demands;
- embody the regenerative culture that we need;
- respond to and deliver its strategy.

It helps your team:

- align the work of its members without 'power over';
- support each other, both within role definitions and as people, friends, collaborators;
- support the movement, by being accountable to others for playing your part in our rebellion.

Overview of the role

The Internal Coordinator role is defined by its mandate and has these features :

Purpose:

Your role exists to ensure that the team is doing what the movement asks of it.

What you do:

You will need to keep in mind an overview of all the team's work, how it fits together, and how it fits into the movement. That means things like

- analysing how team roles and projects align with purpose, priorities, strategy;
- identifying gaps and links between roles and projects, along with creative ways to address them;
- making requests of roles to fill gaps and make links, within their mandates.

IC Skills

To fill the Internal Coordinator role you need to practise your skills in aligning people — each with their rich mix of motivations, skills and emotions — with roles which are more formal.

Practise the art of balancing what you ask of your fellow team members within existing mandates (the team's and their individual roles), which might involve:

- coaching and mentoring them on specific activities within their accountabilities;
- identifying the tensions they experience in the team and helping them to process those tensions;
- signposting them to other forms of support.

Also think about what additional roles and mandates the team needs to fulfil its purpose.

Use existing mandates where you can. Create new ones where you see a need that is likely to be ongoing or recurrent, and where you want to 'offload' responsibility and accountability onto someone else.

It's the IC's role to hold all the parts of the team's work. Usually that's too much for one person. But mandates are a way of simplifying what the IC has to hold, because the details are someone else's responsibility. So think of new roles as a way of lightening the load on you.

Tips for keeping on top of your role

- Write down everything you think needs doing.
- Sort each item into one of three lists:

    - stuff that’s in your mandate (do it yourself)
    - stuff that’s in other team members’ mandates (ask them to do it)
    - stuff that’s not in any mandate (if it’s a one-off, make up a one-off solution; if it’s going to keep coming up, consider creating a new role).
- Keep the list ‘live’ — add things as they arise, delete them when done.

Prioritising your team’s work

How do you decide which parts of the work of the team are higher priority?

- If an activity or project is a particularly effective and efficient way of achieving the team’s purpose, prioritise it.
- If it helps work towards a strategy within the wider movement, prioritise it.

If you expect that team priorities are likely to stay the same for several months, consider writing a team strategy that explains the Whys, Whats and Hows of those priorities.

You — or other team members — can also set priorities for the team by defining a team project, with a particular objective. A project may draw on input from one or more roles (the project itself doesn’t have a mandate, but the project team members bring the authority to make decisions from their existing roles and mandates). By asking for project updates at team meetings, you can keep everyone focused on the objective.

How far your Internal Coordinator authority goes

As IC, you are yourself accountable for stewarding and overseeing the team’s priorities.

You may make requests of role holders or sub-circles to work towards those priorities, and, if the request is within the accountabilities of their mandate, then you can hold them accountable for fulfilling the request.

Then the role or sub-circle with the mandate can decide how, and when, they meet your request. As IC, you do not have ‘power over’ roles and sub-circles to decide these things for them.

Remember that every mandate gives authority to its holder to decide how the purpose is achieved, and how the accountabilities are approached. (This is one way we ensure that we are based in autonomy and decentralisation.)

The only exception to this would be if they are accountable for a certain task to prepare an action, and they say they won't do it until after the action. Then you could say they are not fulfilling their mandate.

Working with your Group Admin

You will find it much easier to coordinate your team effectively if you've got solid records about who is definitely in the team, or in its sub-circles, with what roles mandates, and when their appointments run to.

- Firstly it helps you know who you can ask to do what.
- Secondly it helps the rest of the movement know these things, and that helps them to interact with your team without always having to go through you every time. So it reduces your risk of burnout.

The Group Admin role exists to help you with this. You can also work with the Group Admin to align your communication channels in the team, sub-circles and project teams. Sometimes they may be able to help you with storing and sharing team meeting minutes and other records.

Getting support from other teams and roles

It's largely up to you, with the consent of your team, to decide what roles you have in your team and how they help you — as described above. Here are some examples.

- External Coordinator — this is a role that every team should have and you can work with your EC to:
  - find out about strategies and priorities in wider circles, and
  - inform those circles how your team are working towards those priorities;
  - raising tensions that originate outside your team and affect its ability to fulfil its mandate.
- Integrator — some teams have a dedicated role for welcoming and onboarding new members, supporting them as they get to know our systems and Ways of Working.
- Facilitator and/or support from Facilitation circle — to ensure that meetings successfully engage the talents of all team members.
- Regen Advocate or circle — to strengthen the wellbeing of the team and the bonds between its member.

Summary

- **Coordinate activities**: Prioritise and coordinate team activities effectively by aligning team roles and projects with the movement's goals.
- **Develop skills**: Practice skills necessary for aligning people's motivations and formal role requirements to enhance team function.
- **Delegate responsibilities**: Use existing mandates and create new ones as needed to distribute responsibilities and alleviate the coordinator's workload.
- **Organise projects and tasks**: Maintain a dynamic list of tasks categorised by their mandates to manage team workload efficiently.
- **Set priorities**: Determine the priority of team activities based on their impact on achieving team and movement goals.
- **Support team relationships**: Ensure effective team coordination by maintaining clear records of team roles and mandates, and by working closely with the Group Admin to manage team communication and records.

More support

Rebellion Academy has an Internal Coordinator - Quick Start course. The main course is open; register for a free account to do the quiz at the end. A full IC course is coming in the second half of 2026.

How to work with other teams (mainly for External Coordinators)

Why the External Coordinator role matters

The **External Coordinator (EC)** is crucial for integrating the work of your team with the wider movement. By bridging your team and external circles, you ensure that your team aligns with broader strategic goals and shares its insights, resources, and tensions with other circles. This alignment strengthens collective action, improves coordination, and promotes a regenerative culture across the movement.

Effective external coordination helps:

- Synchronise efforts between your team and the wider movement.
- Support distributed decision-making by making sure your team’s input is part of the movement’s overall strategy.
- Manage conflicts and tensions across teams, contributing to the wellbeing and resilience of the movement.

Overview of the role

The **External Coordinator** operates within the parameters of their team’s mandate to keep open lines of communication between their team and the broader movement. Specifically, the role entails:

- Bringing relevant updates, requests, and decisions from broader circles to your team.
- Communicating your team’s progress, feedback, and needs back to the wider movement.

- Acting as a liaison to help other teams understand your team’s mandate and priorities, which helps prevent conflict and supports mutual accountability.

While the EC does not have “power over” others, they play a pivotal role in helping resolve tensions between teams and aligning the circle’s work with movement-wide priorities.

EC Skills

Success in the EC role relies on several key skills:

- **Clear Communication**: share information succinctly and accurately across circles and project groups to maintain alignment and clarity.
- **Conflict Resolution**: identify and help resolve conflicts arising from overlapping responsibilities or goals. For tensions between teams, you may bring issues to broader circles or work directly with other ECs to find solutions.
- **Understanding Mandates**: grasp the boundaries of your mandate in relation to others’ mandates. Knowing how mandates work can help you guide discussions on responsibilities and authority, and how decisions affect other roles or circles.

Tips for keeping on top of your role

- **Document Key Points**: Keep a live list of all cross-team interactions, requests, and tensions that need follow-up. Organise items by:
  - **Matters within your circle’s mandate** for internal resolution.
  - **Inter-circle matters** requiring consultation with other ECs.
  - **Broader circle issues** that may require raising at the Hive or a larger circle meeting.
- **Set Clear Boundaries**: Align all projects and tasks with existing mandates. For new or evolving tasks, clarify accountabilities and consult with mandate holders when necessary.

Cross-circle projects and project groups

For **inter-circle** and **broader circle** issues, it may sometimes be helpful to set up a Project Group to address the issue. It's important to understand the differences between creating a Project Group — which requires no changes to the distribution of power and authority (through mandates) — and a Working Group (or Circle) — which needs a mandate:

- **Project Groups**: Often cross-team and include members from multiple circles, allowing expertise from each role to contribute. Members bring the authority of their individual mandates to the project (e.g. Action Design or Media), making their project role an extension of their circle mandate. Project groups are mostly short-term, and focus on specific goals, disbanding when the project completes.
- **Working Groups**: Are formed within a team and carry a specific mandate given by the broader circle. They generally have an indefinite lifespan, operating until the team decides they're no longer needed. Working Groups delegate part of the broader circle's work to a specialist team, and do not cross circle boundaries.

Proposing a Project: Proposing a project may not require a formal process. However, each project group should plan in a way that respects the group members' existing mandates. Considerations for project setup include defining objectives, aligning activities with roles based on mandates, coordination mechanisms and communication, and reviewing the project's expected timeline.

Team boundaries and authority through mandates

Mandates as boundaries

A mandate defines the limits of your authority but also provides you with significant autonomy to take initiative within those limits. This balance supports decentralisation while ensuring that all actions align with the movement's demands and values.

Collaborating across mandates

When your work affects another role's mandate, collaborate rather than assume control over how that work is done. For instance, if you want to send an update to a group but it overlaps with someone else's newsletter accountability, consult them first — ideally using the Advice Process. Their feedback may help tailor the communication to the group's needs, ensuring it lands effectively without overloading members with too many updates.

Summary

- **Align activities with wider goals**: Keep your team's work aligned with movement-wide priorities through consistent cross-circle communication.
- **Clarify boundaries through mandates**: Use mandates as a guide for authority and collaboration, supporting autonomy without creating duplication.

- **Organise projects effectively**: Recognise the differences between project and working groups and use each where appropriate to mobilise resources and expertise across teams.
- **Resolve cross-team tensions constructively**: Use your position to manage tensions that may arise between teams, respecting each mandate’s authority.
- **Support effective information flow**: Work with other coordinators, facilitators, and the Group Admin to maintain clear, shared records and facilitate smooth team operations.

By following these guidelines, an External Coordinator can support their team’s contribution to the movement, align their work with collective goals, and ensure productive cross-team collaborations.

How to build transparency and mitigate power (mainly for Group Admins)

Why the Group Admin role matters

The **Group Admin (GA)** is vital to supporting the movement's commitment to decentralisation, transparency, and equitable distribution of power. By documenting and maintaining up-to-date records of team roles, mandates, and members, you help ensure clarity across the movement about who does what, with what authority, and how to engage with them.

Effective group administration:

- **Supports autonomy**: By making information accessible, it reduces dependence on any one person for decision-making or communication, ensuring roles remain clear and unambiguous.
- **Maximises transparency**: Clear records empower individuals to contact relevant role holders directly, fostering collaboration across teams.
- **Strengthens accountability**: Transparent mandates make it easier to see how roles fulfil their responsibilities, enhancing trust and efficiency within and beyond the team.

This work ensures the movement can function without traditional managerial roles that tend to concentrate information and power.

Overview of the role

The **Group Admin** plays a key administrative and facilitative role within the team, defined by the mandate they hold. The GA's core responsibilities include:

- Maintaining records of **team membership, roles, mandates**, and term limits for role holders.

- Ensuring that this information is accessible to other teams and (where appropriate) the wider movement, enabling effective collaboration and accountability.
- Supporting **coordinators** (Internal Coordinator, External Coordinator) in aligning team communication channels and keeping administrative tools updated.
- Helping the team to organise meetings by storing and sharing minutes, project updates, and decisions.

The GA role is indispensable for ensuring smooth operations and empowering the movement to embody its regenerative and decentralised culture.

GA Skills

Success in the Group Admin role requires a mix of organisational, technical, and interpersonal skills:

- **Organisation**: Managing records efficiently and ensuring that information is accurate and up-to-date.
- **Attention to detail**: Ensuring mandates, roles, and records are precise and align with the movement's goals and structures.
- **Collaboration**: Working seamlessly with coordinators, role holders, and other GAs to facilitate communication and alignment.
- **Technical ability**: Familiarity with record-keeping tools, communication platforms, and data-sharing systems used across the movement.

These skills ensure that the GA contributes meaningfully to the decentralised and transparent functioning of the team.

Tips for keeping on top of your role

- **Maintain live records**: Keep an up-to-date record of who holds what role, their mandates, and when terms end. Ensure this is visible to all relevant members of the movement.
- **Categorise and organise**:
  - Records of **mandates** (purpose, accountabilities, domains).
  - Membership details, including **roles and sub-circles**.
  - Communication channels, meeting minutes, and key decisions.
- **Regular reviews**: Periodically check for changes in roles or mandates and ensure that information is promptly updated.
- **Accessible storage**: Use agreed-upon tools (e.g. Mattermost, shared drives) to store records securely yet accessibly.

Maximising transparency within the movement

The movement’s commitment to decentralisation relies on clear, accessible information:

- **Role visibility**: Ensure that all role titles and mandates are accessible and up to date.
- **Direct engagement**: By maintaining updated contact details and records, you enable others to contact relevant role holders directly without needing to go through intermediaries.
- **Accountability and alignment**: Transparency helps the movement understand what each team is accountable for and ensures efficient collaboration without unnecessary conflict or duplication.

Working with coordinator roles in your team and other teams’ admins

As Group Admin, collaboration with other roles and admins is essential:

- **Internal Coordinator (IC)**: Work closely with the IC to ensure that all team members’ mandates align with the team’s strategy and that team priorities are clear and recorded.
- **External Coordinator (EC)**: Support the EC by ensuring clear communication between your team and the broader circles, helping track requests and responses from other teams.
- **Other GAs**: Engage with GAs in other teams to share best practices, troubleshoot challenges, and align record-keeping standards across the movement.

Through these collaborations, the GA role becomes a cornerstone for transparency and efficiency in both your team and the wider movement.

Summary

- **Enable decentralisation**: By documenting and maintaining transparent records, you empower individuals to take initiative without relying on gatekeepers.

- **Support accountability**: Ensure roles and mandates are clear, enabling the movement to trust that work is being done effectively.
- **Foster collaboration**: Work with coordinators and other GAs to align communication channels and maintain accurate, accessible information.
- **Embody transparency**: Make information about roles and mandates easily available, ensuring everyone knows who to contact and how to engage.

By focusing on these areas, the Group Admin ensures their team and the movement as a whole can work together effectively, embodying regenerative culture and decentralised decision-making.

Empowering the Movement

XRUK’s Self-Organising System (SOS)

There’s a climate and ecological emergency. We can’t waste time. We need to organise in the most effective way to achieve our demands, to be the most successful we can be.

So what works?

XRUK has adopted the self-organising system, because we recognise that this is the best option available to us. It empowers everyone to contribute, it enables people to work autonomously but with accountability to our Principles and Values and to each other. It allows for agility and flexibility, so we can respond to events quickly. XRUK needs empowerment and it needs flexibility.

Let’s learn from those who have gone before us in other civil disobedience movements. A huge amount of research has been done, on all the major civil disobedience movements of the last 100 years. Four main principles seem to be universal:

1. We need to be large and broad based. We need many more people to join us, and when they do we will need a robust system that can absorb and empower them.
2. Non-violence is much more effective than violence. The SOS enables us to build a non-violent culture in the way we work and communicate with each other.
3. We need a large variety of non-violent methods. XR is good at being creative, different, eye-catching, and that is why so many people are drawn to us.
4. We need to be highly organised, maintain discipline, and maintain our organisational infrastructure even under pressure. This is where the SOS comes into its own.

The importance of structure

Well-known feminist Jo Freeman has written a lot about this, the tyranny of structureless groups, and how informal structures allow for informal hierarchies to develop. Small groups may be able to organise themselves effectively, but when about ten or more people are trying to organise, they need a structure. And we have to actively choose the right structure before the wrong structure chooses us.

Mitigating power

Having the right structure is important because number 7 of our Principles and Values says that we actively mitigate power. We are against hierarchical power, which we are all familiar with, from school, from work and many other places, and it takes a change of mindset to work in a different

way. We need a cultural shift. We can’t swap the structural power of hierarchy for a vague idea, it simply won’t work. We have to find something equally powerful to act against it. Without that, what tends to happen is that the loudest voices in a group rise to the top, and with no system, it's difficult to change that. If an unelected person is running things, people will become unhappy and start leaving the group. We have to actively work for group cohesion, because without that we will achieve nothing.

In fact we can’t mitigate power. Power exists. Power exists in groups as much as anywhere else. It’s power concentrated in just a few hands that’s damaging, because it means everyone else is disempowered. If power is spread to everyone, that is empowerment, which is good. ‘Power to the People’ we say. The self-organising system is about spreading power through the whole movement, so that the people doing the work have the power to make decisions. We don’t have bosses. We are all in charge, which means we have to work things out together, which can be hard sometimes, but it’s worth the effort.

Autonomy and decentralisation

Number 10 of our Principles and Values is about autonomy and decentralisation. These things are at the heart of the self-organising system, and in fact we need a self-organising system in order to live according to this principle.

So how do we go about this?

What non-hierarchical options are there? We could work by consensus, where everyone has to agree to every decision. Again with a small group this can work, but with a large group it is very slow, cumbersome, laborious. With the thousands of rebels we have in XRUK as it is this clearly wouldn’t work, and as we grow bigger it would obviously be daft.

Distributing power

The self-organising system works by spreading power to different roles or working groups, who can make decisions within their roles. They have complete autonomy within their roles, while being accountable to the shared purpose we have, and our principles and values. We see XRUK as a circle (The Hive), with smaller sub-circles within it (e.g. Operations circle), and yet smaller circles within those (eg Actions circle, which again breaks down into more specific roles). The nations and regions of the UK are also represented on the Hive, and the local XR groups are smaller groups within them. The smallest circles communicate with the next widest circle, which communicate with the circle above them and so on. Circles within circles, each having power to fulfil their specific roles. The bigger circles set up the smaller circles, give them roles, written down as mandates or role descriptions, and give them the authority to perform their role.

Consent-based decision making

Most decisions are made within the roles or working groups, but decisions about how we organise things need to be made by the whole group. These decisions are made by **consent**. If someone wants to set up a new role or working group, the group asks not ‘Do we all like this?’, but instead

‘Is it safe enough to try? Will it cause harm?’. Harm, here, means that it will prevent someone fulfilling their role, or will act against the shared purpose we have. By saying ‘Is it safe enough to try?’ we set the bar low for proposals to get passed, and decisions can be made quickly. The person given the role can then go and work on their role with confidence, autonomy, and creativity, and be innovative. They have no power over anyone else, and no-one has power over them. Everyone knows who’s doing what, which should avoid confusion and the things that need to be done falling between the cracks. If things don’t work, we can change them. A role holder can ask advice from those with more expertise than them, or from people who might be affected in their roles by their decisions, but if we take the advice process too far we end up with a consensus type of working, which will slow us down.

Keeping the self-organising system healthy

Once a self-organising system is set up, it will need constant revision. Needs will change, capacity will increase or decrease, but the system is designed to adapt to change. It is fluid, evolving, and like a garden it keeps growing and we have to choose what work we’re going to do in it, and how it’s going to look.

Healthy Groups

Healthy ways of working lead to healthy groups, where every voice is heard. Inclusivity is important in XRUK. Groups have meetings. The way we conduct our meetings is fundamental to a well-running self-organising system. Some people feel more confident at speaking up in meetings than others, which may be to do with culture, language, personality or background. A good **facilitator** will make sure that the meeting is efficient, so as not to waste people’s time (we don’t have time to waste), that everyone has their say, and the meeting isn’t dominated by a few people.

Groups also need good coordination, and should elect an internal **coordinator** to manage the good functioning of the group and its roles, and an external coordinator to represent the group to the next widest circle. Elections every 3 or 6 months are important, as they allow for other people to take a turn at coordination, and prevent power building up with one person.

Building a Regenerative Culture

Good facilitation and coordination mean we can have a good working culture within the group. We need to take care of each other. This means thinking of people’s needs, and spending time together socially, whether in person or otherwise. This is how we build a regenerative culture in practice. We say ‘culture eats strategy for breakfast’. If we don’t have a healthy working culture then however good our strategy is it won't work. We work at the speed of trust.

And more...

There is much more to say about the self-organising system, and the Self-Organising Systems team in XRUK can provide training, advice, and more resources.

Find our reception channel on Mattermost or email us at sos@extinctionrebellion.uk.

Let’s organise to be the best we can be.