

XR UK Ways of Working and Constitution

How rebels in XR UK work together, as defined in our Ways of Working and the XR UK Constitution. The Principles and Values, and the Ways of Working, apply to all rebels in the UK. Within the UK, the nations and regions choose whether to follow the XR UK Constitution or their own version of decentralising and self-organising. All groups within the UK Rebel Hive follow the Constitution.

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Principles and Values

Full-length text of the Principles and Values written in 2018.

1. We have a shared vision of change

Our duty is to create a world fit for the next seven generations to live in. Our hearts tell us a different world is possible. Our vision of change is sufficiently broad that it can contain a variety of opinions on how best to work towards that change:

"A healthy, beautiful world, where individuality and creativity are supported, and where people work together, solving problems and finding meaning, with courage, power and love. This will be underpinned by cultures rooted in respect for nature, genuine freedoms and justice."

2. We set our mission on what is necessary

The change needed is huge and yet achievable. No regime in the 20th century managed to stand against an uprising which had the active participation of up to 3.5% of the population ([see Erica Chenoweth's research](#)). In the UK, this would mean mobilising around 2 million people in order to oversee a rapid change in wealth distribution and power structures, preventing a rich elite from perpetuating a self-serving ideology.

We acknowledge that we are in the midst of a massive crisis, one which can be hard to comprehend and cope with. We are experiencing the 6th mass species extinction and we are not taking adequate steps to avert our civilisation from the most horrendous trajectory of climate change. The world is deeply unequal, with wealth and power levers concentrated in a small minority. We have crises in our mental and physical health, including our children, based in different forms of malnutrition and an increasingly toxic environment. We live with the threat of pandemics alongside antibiotic failure. Our financial system is destined for another crisis bigger than the last. There is a global culture of conquering "others", of competition, of revenge and of terrorism.

We recognise that our job may be less about "saving the world" and more about trying to develop our resilience as multiple collapses take places. We are based in the UK and we love this part of the world deeply. We are focussed on significant change here towards:

- A functioning democracy, where people have real agency in decision making. This would include devolution of power to the level closest to people and communities, with

structures to facilitate decision making locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, where appropriate.

- An economy designed to maximise well-being for all people and minimise harm to each other, our fellow creatures and our home planet. We need policies and laws that achieve greater equality, localised production, reduced consumption, zero carbon emissions and zero waste.
- Creating a regenerative culture. We can begin doing that right now! (See 3. Below and interspersed throughout).

We can focus on symptoms of this toxic system, yet we also we take opportunities to point out that full system change is needed. We also focus on the pillars that keep the current neo-liberal system in place:

- A debt- and interest-based, deregulated finance sector.
- A fake and decaying democracy.
- A media captured to the interests of exploitative rich people and corporations.

3. We need a regenerative culture

A regenerative human culture is healthy, resilient and adaptable; it cares for the planet and it cares for life in the awareness that this is the most effective way to create a thriving future for all of humanity. Regenerative culture means improvements year on year, taking small steps to heal and improve, and on all levels, including individuals, communities, our soil, water and air. More than being a network of “activists”, we seek to find ways of being and doing that support positive change. This can include ceremony and prayer (in ways that are neither dogmatic nor expected) as formats to find inspiration from things bigger than ourselves. We need to reconnect with our love for ourselves, our country and our people alongside wider neighbours; people and the natural world.

Regenerative culture includes a healthy focus on mutually supporting categories of:

- self care - how we take care of our own needs and personal recovery from this toxic system
- action care - how we take care of each other whilst we undertake direct actions and civil disobedience together
- interpersonal care - how we take care of the relationships we have, being mindful of how we affect each other, taking charge of our side of relationships
- community care - how we take care of our development as a network and community, strengthening our connections and adherence to these principles and values
- People and Planet care - how we look after our wider communities and the earth that sustains us all

It's about relationships. Our relationships with ourselves and personal histories, our relationships with what we struggle against, our relationships with other individuals day to day,

and our relationships as a group - these are completely interdependent. Self care is also about taking care of the animal parts of the self that respond instinctively to stressful situations with fight or flight or faint.

4. We openly challenge ourselves and this toxic system

We have a duty to disobey this system which destroys life on earth and is deeply unjust. Some of us will undertake open (**"above ground"**) actions that risk arrest and charges. Evidence suggests that such open civil disobedience and direct action are crucial to change (See for example evidence in CounterPower by Tim Gee and This is an Uprising by Engler & Engler). It isn't necessary or required that everyone do this, as for some there are good reasons not to (we ask everyone to take time to be clear on their own circumstances, fears and motivations here). Importantly, our Extinction Rebellion culture should support those of us willing to put ourselves on the line in this way - there are also many support roles that are useful and we need to enable at least 3% of the population to actively participate. We will practice a security culture to the extent that it enables actions to be planned without being intercepted before they are completed. However our civil disobedience and direct actions are in full public light, organisers accept the risks they are taking, and we have issued a "necessity statement" online as to why we believe our actions are justified.

*We appreciate and admire those willing to take "below ground" or "covert" actions to fight for environment and social justice, within other settings. For clarity, and for the safety of those organising in Extinction Rebellion it is important we are clear that all actions taken in the name of Extinction Rebellion are "above ground," i.e. that they are taken in the open and no below ground actions are taken as Extinction Rebellion.

However we are not just about being out there and taking action, we must also resource all aspects of a regenerative culture and also take time to reflect on whether what we are doing is effective. We might find it challenging to keep a focus on some aspects of this work, including self-care and looking after each other. There can be a pull to do the next thing, to be "active", but this can lead to burn-out.

There is a value in us making changes in our own lives to reflect the changes needed, such as changing our diets, where we go on holiday and so on (however personal responsibility can be overstated and is based, to some extent, in privilege). For all of these challenges we ask for room, patience and willingness to try new things to see if they support our goals.

5. We value reflecting and learning

We don't know how things will change so we are willing to experiment and learn from what we do. Through ongoing questioning, reflection and learning about what has worked elsewhere we will improve what we do and not get stuck in repetitive behaviour. This is an active and ongoing

process, requiring time and input for individuals and groups to think about what has gone well and why, what would be better to be done differently.

6. We welcome everyone and every part of everyone

As a movement we are committed to campaigning for the right to life, and for the future life of our children and the planet. We recognise that in order to change the world, we must change the way we think about and form relationships with those we work and ally ourselves with. The world is currently defined by multiple hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. For those lower down these hierarchies, much of the world isn't a safe space. To create safer spaces we need to work actively to continuously build understandings of how these hierarchies operate, so that we can challenge them and build inclusion through making our spaces more accessible. Therefore, for our movement to be safe for everyone, it needs to be safe for the most marginalised.

This principle includes a commitment to making safer spaces to support inclusivity. It is our goal that every individual is welcomed regardless of ethnicity, race, class, gender, gender identity, gender presentation, sexuality, age, income, ability, education, appearance, immigration status, belief or non-belief and activist experience. Every individual in the movement is responsible for creating and maintaining safer, compassionate and welcoming spaces. New people to the movement need to be explicitly welcomed. A simple starting point is adherence to these core principles.

Physical violence or the incitement of violence towards others is not accepted. Discriminatory behaviour, language or behaviour that exhibits racial domination, sexism, anti-semitism, islamophobia, homophobia, ableism, class discrimination, prejudice around age and all other forms of oppression including abusive language towards others, either during an action or elsewhere, is not accepted whether physically or online

We also recognise that we are complex beings and exhibit many different parts of ourselves at different times and in different circumstances. For example, sometimes we might be caring, at other times judgemental, and at other times carelessly reactive. Some of those parts are parts of us that we're happy to bring, and some of those parts are parts that we're struggling with, or perhaps not even aware they existed until they revealed themselves. With this knowledge, we approach each other from a place of compassion, and encourage each other to increase our own self-awareness.

7. We actively mitigate power

The ground on which this network stands is on the relationships between its participants. We will work every day to build trust, respect and reciprocity among all of us. We assume all members to have good intentions and will react against disrespect. We use conflict resolution

techniques to deal with conflict in a healthy way that will bring growth to our movement. We ground our work in dialogue, healing, collective transformation and justice. We won't tolerate shaming of each other or bullying in any form. This requires us to be honest and clear with ourselves and each other; we all hold prejudices and biases, and these must be acknowledged rather than dwelled upon negatively. It is everyone's responsibility to change destructive habits and behaviours.

We recognise that our world as it stands is currently structured by various intersecting hierarchies based on class, race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability and so on. As such each person's experience is shaped by their position within these various social hierarchies. For instance, being a black woman one encounters different forms of oppression to a white woman, because of how race and gender combine and compound to shape experiences.

Whilst we aim to live in a world where these hierarchies no longer exist, we cannot simply pretend that they don't within our own network. For this reason we aim to centre voices that are normally the most marginalised, by allowing space for them to speak and encouraging those who normally wouldn't to take leadership / coordination positions. This isn't about deciding 'who is the most oppressed', it's about consciously making space for the people who have to fight the most to be heard, recognised and respected.

In practical terms this means: - We weight coordinating roles towards marginalised groups. - Our media messaging includes issues and voices that are normally ignored (e.g. the link between climate change and immigration detention centres). However we are mindful of not trying to speak on someone else's behalf. - Accessibility is important (in terms of child care, wheelchair access, not speaking in technical jargon), both for meetings and actions. - We recognise that oppressive behaviours are socially embedded within us, and privileged people are asked to commit to questioning their privilege and to be open to being challenged. - We refresh those who hold positions of responsibility so that power doesn't get entrenched. - We embed anti-oppressive practice into our training materials. - Our strategy is focussed on doing the work it takes to forge genuine alliances with the grass roots movements of the people who are most marginalised. - We also recognise that sometimes people make mistakes, misjudgements and missteps, and we seek to avoid humiliating exposure when it is clear that an issue needs to be raised and dealt with.

Having a database, social media and a website; fundraising for meetings, etc, means that there is inevitably a centralisation of some power. To mitigate any power issues that can arise we have an Anchor Circle, whose role is transparent and into which there is a process for people to rotate in and out.

Thinking about these questions is encouraged: If you always do a role, is it possible to train someone else to do it? If someone else is taking leadership on a role, can you learn from them so that you can step in? Can you challenge yourself to take on a more upfront role if this is something you don't usually do? Do you take time to learn about power and privilege? Do you have an understanding of how the power and privilege you hold has an effect on other people and the movement you are part of?

8. We avoid blaming and shaming

Blaming and shaming will not serve us in the long run. Whilst a specific campaign may seek to highlight the damaging role played by an institution, including individuals serving that institution, our starting point is that we live in toxic system that has damaged everybody. We can point out behaviour that is unhelpful, exploitative or abusive, and we won't tolerate such behaviour, yet we don't hand away our love or power by blaming and shaming. This is also true in our interpersonal and group dynamics as well as our relationship to ourselves.

We embrace change that creates unity in diversity; we need to set right the relationships between us, avoiding the interpersonal traps that come from games we may inadvertently play and bringing awareness to the structures that would divide us. We accept that emotion sometimes needs to be expressed, that a period of venting can be necessary. We ask each other for good grace in how we share emotion and to return to a baseline of love, respect and conviviality. We need to be compassionate when mistakes are made. Mistakes are opportunities to learn. We look for ways to connect and understand. Listening deeply to each other is a powerful tool. We especially need to listen to those of us that come from groups whose voices tend to be silenced.

9. We are a nonviolent network

Non-violence keeps our movement alive. We use non-violence to reveal the true perpetrators of systemic violence that people suffer from daily all over this world. It is our strategy to bring light to the injustice that too many suffer each day. We feel pain from the abuses of the police and others, and we will keep exposing their violence through our discipline. Non-violence has unequivocally been demonstrated to be an effective tool in mass mobilisations (see the work of Gene Sharp and Erica Chenoweth) and so we base a cornerstone of our movement on this.

At the same time we also recognise that many people and movements in the world face death, displacement and abuse in defending what is theirs. We will not condemn those who justly defend their families and communities through the use of force, especially as we must also recognise that it is often our privilege which keeps us safe. We stand in solidarity with those whom have no such privilege to protect them and therefore must protect themselves through violent means; this does not mean we condone all violence, just that we understand in some cases it may be justified. Also we do not condemn other social and environmental movements that choose to damage property in order to protect themselves and nature, for example disabling a fracking rig or putting a detention centre out of action. Our network, however, will not undertake significant property damage because of risks to other participants by association.

10. We are based on autonomy and decentralisation

We recognise that we can't look to government to solve the world's problems. It tends to concentrate power and wealth in the hands of a very privileged few, and often does not have the interests of the majority of people and the natural world at heart. We understand that we must self-organise to meet our own needs, which in the context of Extinction Rebellion means that we are working to equalise power by disrupting the usual pillars of power that govern our lives. In so doing, our intention is to create access to the resources we need, such as democratic structures that ensure everyone has a voice and an influence, information that comes without the bias of the rich and powerful, decent healthcare, education, social care and housing, clean energy production, and protections in law to prevent ecocide.

Any person or group can organise autonomously around the issues that feel most pressing for them, and take action in the name and spirit of Extinction Rebellion - so long as the action fits within Extinction Rebellion's principles and values. In this way, power is decentralised, meaning that there is no need to ask for permission from a central group or authority. We also promote the ideas of "holacracy" over consensus:

- That it may be agreed in a group for one or two people to do a specific task for the group. Those people are then fully empowered to do the task.
- They are best to seek advice and feedback but they don't need anyone's permission to complete the task.
- They are fully responsible for outcomes and should reflect on them and how to improve in future. If anything goes wrong they should help to "clean up".

At the same time, as a network, Extinction Rebellion self-organises to provide for the needs of the people participating within it, working to provide training in strategic action for change, educating ourselves and each other around issues of power, privilege and how to decolonise, creating better accessibility, caring for our emotional needs in relation to working together, and making time for connection and fun.

Ways of Working

Our approach, skills and capacities as we volunteer in XR UK

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1. Our shared understandings

What volunteering with XR UK involves

- In order to be a rebel with XR UK, we always need to align our intentions and actions with our **Principles & Values** to get our **demands** met. This document outlines what acting in line with the Principles & Values means in practice. It can be seen as part of our move towards regenerative cultures, including how we care for ourselves and others, and how we work in ways that mirror the regenerative capacity of planet Earth.
- To be a member of one of the teams that has signed up to our Constitution (often referred to as the Self-Organising System, or SOS), you also need to:
 - follow the Constitution,
 - learn and respect our ways of working (which are outlined in this document), and
 - if you are in a role which involves handling personal data, sign the Volunteer Data Handling Agreement.
- We aim to be **transparent** in our organisation. This includes:
 - finances,
 - the work of specific groups (or circles), and
 - names of individuals involved.
- This makes it easier to hold each other to account and spreads out the power.

How we make XR UK a regenerative space where all rebels can take part equitably

- We **welcome new people** and open our existing spaces to them where we can, based on the values of confidentiality and trust.

- We **take time to learn** how our use of language, our attitudes, our technologies and our approach affects how Rebels can participate in XR.
- We are respectful and considerate about each others' strengths, weaknesses and backgrounds.
- We **do not accept behaviours or language that discriminate** against any marginalised group.
- We understand that we are **constantly unlearning behaviours that don't meet needs** for safety and security. We understand that by trying new approaches there will be times when we need to change course.
- When we become aware that our Ways of Working are not being followed, we encourage Rebels to **call in (not call out) behaviours that don't meet needs** for safety and security. We do this **without blaming and shaming**; we are all learning. We call people in. We invite people to learn and do better. We include them in creating a new way of doing things. While calling out excludes people, calling in includes people.
- If you are being called in, **you are invited to accept the feedback as a gift** in this ongoing movement of growth and change. Be open to active listening. Try to learn awareness of defensiveness to make space for tension shifting and conflict resolution.
- **XR is an international and internationalist movement.** As the UK is a Global North / Western democracy we need to be aware of when our lens of experience is biasing our work, then take steps to broaden our view without burdening marginalised people with emotional labour. Given a context of continuing global inequality, (violent) oppression and discrimination, and the relative privilege that some in XR in the UK have regarding access to food, health, shelter, wellbeing and safety etc, rebels are invited to speak up and act appropriately where possible to redress these inequalities in the service of harmony, healing, equity and connection. It is recognised that this inequality also impacts in the UK on account of socio-economic group and colour.
- We **seek to support those with less power in society by focusing on their needs**, rather than our own expectations or wants. The majority Global South face the worst impacts of climate and ecological breakdown and injustice. Given that we in the UK enjoy relative privileges which add to their suffering, we bear greater responsibility to mitigate impacts of climate and ecological genocide.
- We **recognise that accessibility and inclusion consists of more than physical accessibility**. It includes considering culturally neutral, sober spaces, along with practical considerations for creating inclusive spaces.
- We **ask about accessibility needs in advance and at the start of events and meetings** where possible, and we **create space in meetings** should an accessibility need come up.
- We **use the pronouns people ask us to use for them**. Not everyone identifies as the gender they may appear as, or the one they were assigned at birth. Some people identify as not having a gender at all.
- We **avoid jargon and complex language where possible**. XR does use acronyms and specialised language but these can be a barrier to accessibility. We take time to write out all abbreviations in full at least once in documents, bracketing the abbreviation. We will explain what abbreviations mean when asked.

- We **make time to mentor and support Rebels**, working to build their skills and confidence within XR. We make training and support available to people with commitments that constrain their availability, using recordings, resources and online courses that can be accessed round the clock.

How we mitigate power and distribute decision-making

- For groups working UK-wide we need an agreed way of **distributing authority between and within teams, for improving collective decision making** — so that we don't have to renegotiate this every time. The [XR UK Constitution](#) sets out the agreed processes, roles and methods of organising in our Self-Organising System (SOS). We sometimes refer to groups as 'teams' or 'Circles' — these all mean the same, though the term 'Circle' has a specific definition in the Constitution.
- We reject **hierarchies of power**, where one role or team has authority over how another works. However, we adopt a **hierarchy of purpose** to help organise our teams. Uppermost is the achievement of XR's shared vision and its demands in the UK, working to create a world that is fit for generations to come.
- We divide the goals set by our vision into sub-goals, each with their own purpose, and their own team responsible for deciding how to achieve it; we keep on creating more sub-divisions. In this way each team and each role adds together to play its part in achieving our demands.
- As well as organising according to purpose, we also organise according to location. Within the UK, the nations and regions choose whether to follow the [XR UK Constitution](#) or their own version of decentralising and self-organising. Small and informal groups may not need to collaborate frequently with others, so may not need processes for decision-making beyond their own limits. As with other groups, however, they may discuss and record group agreements about how everyone wants to treat each other and work together.
- If someone breaks the group agreement, we ensure there is clarity about the breach, and support for changing the relevant behaviour, while also keeping the agreement under review. We revisit the group agreement with the person and the team to ensure it is fit for purpose. If these steps are not effective the person may be asked to leave the team. (These processes should be in your constitution or other agreement, including when and how agreements are reviewed.) Behaviour that doesn't meet needs for safety and security can sap the energy of the group. It might seem like you're doing the kind thing, but other people won't join it or stay in it. If you would like to seek support with a tension or conflict, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the [Transformative Conflict team](#) at xr-conflict@protonmail.com

- In the SOS, **roles and teams have autonomy to make decisions within their mandates**. To inform these decisions, teams should get advice from others affected by the decisions and also from people with experience in the area. This means that decisions are made by small groups, not by large group consensus.
 - We aim to be clear about **roles, their purposes and accountabilities**, and transparent about decision-making. Those making decisions are accountable for the outcomes of their decisions. We reflect and learn based on these outcomes and how advice was taken into account.
 - If you are not taking an active role in the group, yet still taking part in team discussions and decisions you should consider stepping back. Only by committing to work to help the group achieve its purpose do you have the right to have a say in how it is run. Taking part in group decisions without working to put the decisions into action is a form of 'power over' the rest of the group. We aim to mitigate such power. If you have a mandate, including purpose and accountabilities, you are expected to do the things you are accountable for, but you have control over how you prioritise them to achieve your purpose. Mandates define the range, not the amount, of work.
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2. Ways to be around each other

We listen to each other, and speak and act mindfully

- When we listen:
 - We accept that everyone is in the Rebellion because we share a vision of change.
 - We use active listening with the intention to understand what the other person is sharing.
 - We avoid making assumptions, and ask thoughtful questions for clarification.
- We work to **understand the difference between being in dialogue with others and talking at them**.
- If you find it difficult to share speaking space with others, please seek support in how to participate from the Internal Coordinator of your team (who may refer you to other specialist roles or teams in the movement).
- We are aware that **some people find speaking in groups challenging**, so we make space for everyone to participate equitably.

- We use the acronym **WAIT** in meetings to remain mindful of what we say and why we say it:
 - Why
 - Am
 - I
 - Talking?
- **We speak from our own position, beginning statements with “I”** to ensure we take ownership over our opinions and contributions. For example: “I think...”, “I feel...”, and “In my experience...”. Sometimes we may acknowledge contradictory perspectives within ourselves and say, “a part of me feels...” or “something in me resists...”

We work in groups productively and support each other

- When we work in teams, there are several dimensions to our activity:
 - **Task performance and production** — as set out in the mandate of our role, these tasks help the team achieve its purpose and help the movement achieve its demands;
 - **Support of members individually** — seeking and providing advice, coaching, and apprenticing with more experienced team members;
 - **Building a team identity** — where we develop shared values and understandings and loyalties to each other collectively.
- While these different strands are often woven together in the course of our teamwork, it can be helpful to reflect and remind ourselves about each of them. This includes when to pursue each strand and when to leave it. Here are some examples.
 - In meetings, when discussing a proposal from a team member, it can be helpful to **speak from our role(s)** — which means not sharing every opinion that comes into your head, but asking “how can my role support this proposal?” or “does the proposal have an impact on my role at all?” because, if it doesn’t, it may speed performance and production to keep quiet (see WAIT above);
 - Alongside formal meetings, it can be useful to **schedule time devoted to personal relationships**, including giving people the support they need to be effective members of the team, and building our shared values and team identity. This is where we show up as our whole selves, not just our roles.

We treat people and their personal information with respect

- We make sure we only hold the information we need, and, where we need personal data, we take care of it in line with our [Privacy Policy](#).
- We keep the data secure, and delete it when it is no longer needed. (The [GDPR](#) and [Security Circle](#) are here to help.)

More than just resistance, we are building regenerative cultures

- We **take self-care seriously**.
- We **process the emotions we find ourselves experiencing**. Ways of doing this include, but are not limited to:
 - peer-to-peer support
 - listening circles
 - therapy
 - regular breaks and holidays
 - hobbies and sports
 - eating well
 - exercise
 - addressing addictive behaviour
 - mindfulness practices
 - awareness of group dynamics and the tendency for some groups to be silenced
 - spirituality and religion.
- We need to be aware of our risk of burnout.
 - The work we do together is difficult.
 - We limit the times we say “Yes” to things, so that we stay within our capacity.
 - **Burnout compromises our own needs for safety and security**, and may impact our: physical health, mental health, emotions, focus and productivity, decision-making ability, relationships, morale, creativity, self-care.
 - **Burnout compromises others’ needs for safety and security**, and may impact their: team dynamics, communication, team capacity, compassion and empathy, support networks, shared work loads.
- **Take a break if you are not feeling positive about your time in XR**. Negative feelings will have an impact on your wellbeing and the wellbeing of the people you work with.
- We value honesty, authenticity, and sharing feelings of kindness towards each other.
 - We keep our groups as **welcoming to as many people** as possible
 - We **ask for consent** before entering someone’s physical space.
 - We are mindful that we **come from different social and cultural backgrounds**.
- We consider how you “land” with other people.
 - **One person's idea of friendliness will not always match another's**.

- We do not take it personally if our ideas of friendliness are not always shared.
 - We welcome people to bring their whole selves to XR.
 - Sometimes Rebels can get quite emotional or animated in meetings, and this can make spaces uncomfortable.
 - If your feelings are becoming too much, we ask you to respectfully step-back from the meeting.
 - We understand that not everyone can engage with information and ideas in the same way.
 - We celebrate and appreciate each other, ourselves and our relationship with the planet
 - We **make room for gratitude**, towards others and our place in the ecosystem, and try to express it in the moment.
 - We take time to **celebrate what we are getting done**, not just on the to-do list.
 - We develop a deepening understanding of ourselves as part of an interconnected ecosystem.
 - We have a sense of humour.
 - The climate emergency is not going away overnight.
 - We can have **fun in XR, and have laughs and make jokes** even while we do serious work.
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3. How to approach working together

We work together in groups (circles/teams)

- We are all crew.
 - Each of us takes responsibility for how we work together in groups.
 - If we see a task that needs doing, and we can do it, we do. We may do this after first checking that another team has not got a mandate or other authority to decide how the task is done.
 - If we know other people aren't seeing tasks that need doing, we value making the changes so those tasks are seen.
- We treat each other well.
 - We join groups with the **intention to work together**.

- We take up roles and **engage with existing groups** when we have ideas that are in alignment with a group and when we are prepared to do the work.
- We **trust and support our groups** and the individuals within them, even if we are not always in agreement.
- To create and inspire more positive and regenerative ways of being together, we **do not blame or shame** each other.
 - We take time to understand each other's ideas and motivations.
 - If we are feeling an unresolved tension in relation to something another group member has done or said we can invite a compassionate dialogue using short feedback loops.
 - We avoid talking about anybody in a negative way when they're not around as this can corrode trust.
 - We start from the assumption that everybody is well meaning, shares the same goals, and is doing their best.
- We try to communicate openly, honestly and compassionately.
 - One model is Non-Violent Communication, started by Marshall Rosenberg. We share what we observe, feel, need and request.
 - NVC is not the only model of communication.
- We reflect and learn without blame
 - We are all human, and do things that we may regret or feel that we could improve. .
 - We aim for a balance between trying and experimenting while being prepared to change course.
 - Our focus is on compassionate and just solutions.
- We are solution focused.
 - When a problem is identified, we form the habit of suggesting and working on solutions.
 - We encourage and inspire others to be solution focused too.

We are committed and reliable

- We are aware of how much time we and others can realistically volunteer for XR.
 - **Volunteer hours are the most valuable resource we have.**
 - We **take responsibility** for managing the time you have available for XR work
 - We are mindful of using up the time of other volunteers. Thousands of hours are wasted each year by people being inconsiderate of other people's time.
- We are willing to **use XR's tech infrastructure.**
 - Most importantly we use the XR UK Hub
 - to record important details: team members, how to contact them, mandates, policies, sub-circles; and
 - to provide transparency to the rest of the movement.
 - Mattermost is the messaging platform over which we have most control, supplemented by Telegram and Signal for some purposes. WhatsApp enables the collection of data about our teams for use by those who oppose us, and is not safe.

- **Introductory guidance on our online tools** — and on our ways of working generally — is available on the Rebel Toolkit.
- All our ways of working also apply to online spaces including video-conferencing platforms.
- We try to communicate mindfully, compassionately and nonviolently with each other rather than against each other.
- Additionally, we **respect rebels' need for screen-free time**. Online discussions can be a great way to connect over long distances but they can drag on forever and clog up people's inboxes. Discuss issues face-to-face when possible, or at meetings when they affect the whole group, and don't include more people on an email thread than needed.
- We follow through with our projects and action points.
 - **Slow down your "yes"**. Only volunteer for tasks you are willing and able to do.
 - **Return tasks you are unable to complete**, so that someone else can do them. We understand that situations change; returning tasks is done without blame and shame.
 - For significant work, **try to have a back-up person or work with a group**.
 - Lack of follow-through may indicate underlying group issues, such as hurt feelings or unresolved conflict. Working through these issues can help find a solution.

We run efficient, inclusive and regenerative meetings

- **Meetings in XR UK should follow a similar structure**, so that no matter what meeting you attend you will be able to understand what is happening.
 - List of attendees and their roles. We use nicknames if this helps protect people. This is important for accountability of any decisions made.
 - **Assign a facilitator and minute-taker**. As both roles hold a lot of power and responsibility, it is recommended that they attend training where practical and possible. Some groups elect people into these roles.
 - **Check-ins** are an opportunity for people to arrive in the meeting, and to see how people are before starting work. We recognise that not everybody is comfortable checking in, so check-ins are always optional.
 - **Regenerative cultures reminder** provides an opportunity to pause, to connect in with ourselves and the others in our meeting, and our deeper mission for cultural transformation and the wellbeing of all.
 - Read over any group agreement that provides additional guidelines teams work within (this may complement or embody the Constitution and Ways of Working).
 - **Review the action points** (tasks) from the last meeting — the opportunity to see how tasks are going, and if they need to be returned to the group.
 - Hear updates from sub-circles and project groups — the opportunity for the group to hear how sub-circles and projects are doing.

- **Deliver the agenda** — where the main part of the meeting takes place.
- **Collate action points** to ensure we all know what we will be working on.
- Decide the date of the next meeting to ensure we all know when we are meeting again.
- Here is the [agenda template](#) and [agenda guide](#).
- We know how to be in meetings, to keep them efficient, inclusive and regenerative.
 - **We agree our agendas in advance** as much as possible.
 - **We arrive on time**, and we try hard to finish on time, because we value the time each person volunteers to XR.
 - **We are concise** when we talk, so that everybody has time to speak.
 - **We remember WAIT: “Why am I talking?”** Ask yourself if something needs to be discussed in the meeting before you bring it in.
 - **We take breaks in meetings**. Everybody has different energy levels and accessibility needs.
 - We talk when the facilitator invites us to speak.
 - We talk one at a time.
 - We use hand signals in meetings to indicate that we wish to speak.
- We take responsibility for our feelings and behaviours in meetings.
 - Everyone is allowed to mindfully express our personal difficulties and our grief about the the climate emergency if it helps you participate in meetings.
 - Anger can be a challenging emotion to express safely in a meeting, and expressing unfocused anger can be unfair to your team members.
 - If we experience anger around a group decision, and then block the work of the group because we cannot move past it, we should step back from that group.
 - If we are consistently struggling to manage our emotions, we can and should take a step back from our work until we can put support in place for ourselves.
 - The [Trained Emotional Support Network](#) (TESN) is available to offer support to any Rebel in need.

Date last revised:	25/06/24
Mandate:	Systems and Culture
Contributors:	Facilitation, SOS, Principles & Values circles, Disabled Rebels Network, Regenerative Cultures, GDPR & Security.
Intended distribution:	All rebels
Status:	2024 revision of 2019 original version
Purpose:	To articulate the culture of how we work together in XR UK
Timeline:	Ongoing
Feedback:	https://organise.earth/uk/channels/systems-and-culture-reception or sos@extinctionrebellion.uk

XR UK SOS — Constitution, Roles, Processes & Policies

Constitution

A. [Introduction](#)

B. [Basic Principles](#)

C. The Self-Organising System

1. [XR UK Organism](#)
2. [Roles Within A Circle](#)
3. [Sub-circles](#)
4. [Policies & Domains](#)
5. [Choosing Role-Holders](#)
6. [Joining A Circle & Asking People To Leave](#)
7. [How To Make Decisions](#)
8. [Meetings](#)
9. [Record-Keeping](#)

Core role mandates

The mandates for the Core Roles are defined by the constitution (see C.2 above) and are the same for all circles.

All the links below require you to have a Hub login. If you don't, you can view all the [Core Roles on the organism](#) (click the + next to each role to see the mandate).

- [External Coordinator](#)

- [Internal Coordinator](#)
- [Group Admin](#)

Template role mandates

These mandates for Template Roles are suggestions which can be used as templates to copy and adapt by any team for their own purposes. Links on the Hub are below. If you don't have a Hub login, please go to this [list of Template Roles](#) and click the + next to a role to see its mandate.

- [Integrator/recruiter](#)
- [Regenerative Culture Advocate](#)
- [Link role](#)
- [Decision-making Link role](#)

Elections and appointments to roles

- [Nominations process for roles in XR UK](#)
- [Considered Majority Vote for Roles in XR UK](#)

Key Policies

- [Co-option Policy](#)
- [Criteria and Conditions for Membership of an XR UK Working Group](#)
- [Harmful Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Representation and Mitigation of Power in Nations/regions](#)
- [Hive Policy on Link Roles](#)

Agreements

- [Volunteer Agreement](#)
- [Ways of Working](#)

Guidance

See the [SOS: Making it work for you](#) book for the main guidance on practical self-organising.

Specifically on the Constitution, there is a [Constitution Companion](#) which provides an explainer in simple language

Training

- [Calendar of live SOS training](#)
- [Rebellion Academy SOS training](#)

Use of terms in groups that are not signed up to the constitution

Any person or group can organise autonomously and take action in the name and spirit of XR so long as the action fits within XR’s principles and values. In this way, power is decentralised, meaning that there is no need to ask for permission from a central group or authority.

How groups organise is up to them, as long as it aligns with the Principles and Values (including "We are based on autonomy and decentralisation" and "We actively mitigate power"). There is no requirement to follow the XR UK Constitution, but the advantage of doing so is that provides a set of agreements about how we distribute authority and decision-making across the movement. This provides clarity and transparency so that we do not lose time arguing about who has the right to make each decision.

Many groups - particularly Local Groups, Affinity Groups and some Community Groups - may feel that the full constitution is not appropriate for them. For example, they may not want to commit to having all the **Core Roles** in the constitution. But at the same time they may want to follow the basic 'pattern' of the Self-Organising System approach. (This also helps if, at a later date, the group circumstances change and it wants to sign up to the constitution.)

To support and enable this, the XR UK Hub uses the same basic structure of data for these groups, but uses different terms, as shown in the following table.

Signed up to the consitution	Not signed up
Mandate	Scope
Purpose	What this group/position is for
Role	Position
Accountability	Activity
Domain	Resources
External Coordinator	Connector

Signed up to the consitution	Not signed up
Internal Coordinator	Coordinator
Working Group, Circle, Sub-circle, Group, Team	Group, Team

Groups in the right hand column have not actually received a mandate from a broader circle. A mandate is how a circle or team distributes power and authority to its sub-circles. Groups on the right simply have their own authority under the Principles and Values (see top of page).

And because there is no mandate for the group, other groups cannot hold them 'accountable' for performing specific activities. So we replace 'Accountability' with 'Activity'. And so on.

Constitution resources

Supplementary guidance that is referenced in the XR UK Constitution

Integrative Election Process for Roles in XR UK

[Note: this guidance is referred to by the [XR UK Constitution](#) (Section C.5).]

1. Discuss the role

The facilitator makes space for questions. Explain the purpose, domains and accountabilities where necessary. This may include, for example, what led to the creation of the role, and the key relationships with other roles and circles.

Make sure that everyone is clear on

- what this role is responsible for,
- how much time and energy it will take, and
- what the value of the role is in relation to the circle.

Set a term for the appointment. For Internal and External Coordinator appointments, the maximum term is six months. Otherwise, the term is typically three, six or twelve months.

2. Gauge interest from people

Who has capacity for the role? Whose passions might it engage?

If it appears that there may be only one candidate for the role, slow down and triple check that nobody else is interested. You might say something like "If we could offer any kind of support, what support might you need to take on a role like this?"

Make sure to encourage people who may not be confident enough to consider the role by listening first to those not already in the role - this gives your circle a chance to reflect on the importance of rotating role-holders and allowing people to experience different responsibilities.

For people on the edge of interest or who might love to do the role but don't have capacity you could say "what support might you need to take on this role?".

For people who don't consider themselves available or suitable for the role, but who could be effective in it, might they take confidence from the support of others and the clearing of any blockages?

3. Make nominations

There are two rounds of nominations.

You can nominate yourself or anyone in your team.

- In person: write a nomination on a piece of paper and pass it to the facilitator who will read them out.
 - Online: each person puts a name in the chat and sends at the same time for everyone to see. The facilitator may set up the process — “Type the name in the chat box, but don’t hit Enter. Anyone need more time? No, Ok. Then hit Enter on my count. 3...2...1...Enter”
1. In the *first round* each person gives a reason for their nomination (for example, "I nominated this rebel because they have good relationships with the people they'll need to work with, and a strong grasp of the strategy as it has evolved"). No one may abstain or nominate multiple people for the same role in the first round.
 2. In the *second round* each person makes a nomination again, having heard and reflected on each other's explanations (it's ok to stick with your first choice). No one may abstain in the second round, but nominations for multiple people may be permitted, if this has emerged in discussion of the first round. If anyone has changed their mind, they should give a reason for their new nomination.

The intent of this process is to share reasoning, but people may decline to justify their nominations if they feel strongly. They may *not* comment on anyone else's nominations.

4. Make a proposal and check for consent

Guided by the number of nominations, together with the reasons given for them and the needs of the role (from Step 1), the facilitator makes a proposal for who to appoint.

If appropriate, the proposal may include sharing the role between more than one appointee.

The facilitator then establishes whether everyone consents to the proposal. This includes the appointee(s), who should be asked last.

Seeking consent may sometimes be straightforward if there is a high degree of consensus.

If it is more contentious, then reviewing and refining the proposal should follow the Integrative Decision Making process. It may be that the proposal has to be modified to integrate any objections.

Once there are no objections to the proposed appointment,

- celebrate the appointment, welcome and support the new appointee(s)
- allocate an action point, usually to the Group Admin, to update shared records of the appointment (usually on the XR UK Hub).

Considered Majority Vote for Roles in XR UK

[Note: this guidance is referred to by the [XR UK Constitution](#) (Section C.5).]

The steps in the process are:-

1. The facilitator reads out the mandate of the role.
2. The term of the appointment is agreed by the team (normally 3 or 6 months).
3. Anyone willing to stand for the role comes forward or someone else does on their behalf. Nominations can also be made for people who have not put themselves forward, but who others in the team feel might fit the post well. If nominating someone in this way be careful not to put social pressure on anyone to stand if they are unsure [Note 1].
4. If possible each candidate has someone speak on their behalf [Note 2]. They explain the positive reasons why their suggested candidate would fit the role well (without commenting on other candidates). If there is no one to speak on behalf of a candidate, they can speak for themselves.
5. There is a round of clarifying questions for the candidates. These questions can also be responded to by the candidate or others in the team.
6. A vote is taken. All voting members vote using a secret ballot (private messaging the facilitator if using zoom.)
7. Everyone is asked if they have any objection to the candidate with the most votes being elected. Objections must be valid under the Constitution. Objections are tested using the Integrative Decision Making objection criteria in the XR UK Constitution section 7 f vi.
8. If there are valid objections, the facilitator works with the objector and candidate to integrate the objection. This means looking for a solution which removes the objection but which is also acceptable to the candidate. If an objection cannot be integrated a new election is held without including the candidate objected to. The facilitator decides whether this happens in the same meeting or a future meeting.

If there are no objections or if all objections have been integrated, the candidate is elected.

Note 1

If you put someone forward for a role without discussing it with them previously, and the first they hear of it is in front of a group, the social pressure (especially in large circles) can be very strong (even if meant in a kind way). It could push someone into a role for which they are not ready or emotionally in the right place. Encouraging someone to step into leadership can be a positive thing,

but it's recommended that you discuss the idea with the person before the meeting, giving them enough time to consider whether it's right for them.

Note 2

Candidates speaking for themselves can lead to "campaign speeches" which is a group dynamic we would like to avoid in XR where possible. Having someone else speak for the candidate can mitigate this to a great degree and brings the speaker's perspective and endorsement as well. This is why wherever possible we recommend the candidates have someone speak on their behalf.

The Advice Process

[Note: this guidance is referred to by the [XR UK Constitution](#) (Section C.7).]

The Advice Process can be practised in many ways, but they share a common factor, which is that anyone can make any decision within the mandate of their role after seeking advice from

1. other roles who will be meaningfully affected, and
2. people with expertise in the matter.

There are two key principles:

- **Advice received must be taken into consideration.** The point is not to create a watered-down compromise that accommodates everybody's wishes. It is about accessing collective wisdom in pursuit of a sound decision. With all the advice and perspectives the decision-maker has received, they choose what they believe to be the best course of action.
- **Advice is simply advice.** No one, whatever their role, can tell a decision-maker what to decide. Usually, the decision-maker is the person in the role with a mandate that relates to the decision, or the person who either first noticed the issue or is most affected by it.

In practice, this process proves remarkably effective. It allows anybody to seize the initiative. Power is no longer a zero-sum game. Everyone is powerful via the advice process.

It's not consensus

We often imagine decisions can be made in only two ways: either by a person with authority (someone calls the shots; some people might be frustrated; but at least things get done), or by unanimous agreement (everyone gets a say, but it can be frustratingly slow).

It is a misunderstanding that self-management decisions are made by getting everyone to agree, or even involving everyone in the decision. The advice-seeker should take all relevant advice into consideration, but can still make the decision.

Consensus may sound appealing, but it's not always most effective to give everybody veto power, which effectively leads to 'minority rule'. In the advice process, power and responsibility rest with the mandate to make the decision. Ergo, there is no power to block.

Ownership of the issue stays clearly with the mandate-holder. Convinced she made the best possible decision, she can see things through with enthusiasm, and she can accept responsibility for any mistakes.

The advice process, then, transcends both top-down and consensus-based decision making.

Benefits of the advice process

The advice process allows self-management to flourish. [Dennis Bakke](#), who introduced the practice at the American power-generation company [AES](#) (and who wrote two books about it), highlights some important benefits: creating community, humility, learning, better decisions, and fun.

- **Community:** it draws people whose advice is sought into the question at hand. They learn about the issue. The sharing of information reinforces the feeling of community. The person whose advice is sought feels honoured and needed.
- **Humility:** asking for advice is an act of humility, which is one of the most important characteristics of a fun workplace. The act alone says, "I need you". The decision-maker and the adviser are pushed into a closer relationship. This makes it nearly impossible for the decision-maker to ignore the advice.
- **Learning:** making decisions is on-the-job education. Advice comes from people who have an understanding of the situation and care about the outcome. No other form of education or training can match this real-time experience.
- **Better decisions:** chances of reaching the best decision are greater than under conventional top-down approaches. The decision-maker has the advantage of being closer to the issue and has to live with responsibility for the consequences of the decision. Advice provides diverse input, uncovering important issues and new perspectives.
- **Fun:** the process is fun for the decision-maker, because it mirrors the joy found in playing team sports. The advice process stimulates initiative and creativity, which are enhanced by the wisdom from knowledgeable people elsewhere in the organisation.

Steps in the advice process

There are a number of steps in the advice process:

1. Someone notices a problem or opportunity and takes the initiative, or alerts someone better placed to do so.
2. Prior to a proposal, the decision-maker may seek input to sound out perspectives before proposing action.
3. The initiator makes a proposal and seeks advice from those affected or those with expertise.
4. Taking this advice into account, the decision-maker decides on an action and informs those who have given advice.

Forms the advice process can take

Because the advice process involves taking advice from those affected by a decision, it naturally follows that the bigger the decision, the wider the net needs to be cast.

For minor decisions, there may be no need to seek advice. For larger decisions, advice can come through various channels, including one-to-one conversations, meetings, or online communication.

Some organisations have specific types of meeting to support the advice process, or follow formal methods. The [Integrative Decision Making process](#), which XR UK uses for governance decisions, can be seen as a formal variety of advice process. Some organisations choose to have circles made up of representative colleagues who go through the advice process on behalf of the whole organisation.

When decisions affect large numbers, or people who cannot meet physically, the process can be held online.

- The mandate-holder can post a proposal on the [UK Forums](#) and call for comments and then process the advice they receive.
- The team can use decision-making software like [Loomio](#), a free and open-source tool, or [Murmur](#), which embodies Integrative Decision Making. The process for using the advice process on Loomio: start a discussion to frame the topic and gather input, host a proposal so everyone affected by the issue can voice their position, and then the final decision-maker specifies the outcome (automatically notifying the whole group).

[Equal Experts](#), a UK network of software consultants, specialising in agile delivery, has written an [open playbook](#) to share their ongoing experience of a real-world implementation of the Advice Process (the organisation had approximately 1100 members in 2021).

Underlying mindsets and training

The advice process is a tool that helps decision-making via collective intelligence. Much depends on the spirit in which people approach it. When the advice process is introduced, it might be worthwhile to train colleagues not only in the mechanics but also in the mindset underlying effective use.

The advice process can proceed in several ways, depending on the mindset people bring to it:

- The initiator can approach it authoritatively ("I don't care about what others have said" or, alternatively, "I fully comply with what others - someone highly respected, or the majority - have said").
- They can approach from a perspective of negotiation or compromise ("I'll do some of what they say so they're happy, but it will increment my frustration levels by 1").
- They can approach it co-creatively, which is the spirit of the advice process ("I will listen to others, understand the real need in what they say, and think creatively about an elegant solution").

Role modelling

Coordinator roles in teams need to be role-models. Successfully distributing authority requires careful, proactive effort. Roles and mandates support this, but Internal and External Coordinators can help further by modelling and demonstrating the advice process in their own decisions. Other team members will take cues from their behaviour.

Modelling and demonstrating can take several forms:

- When you want to make a decision, pause and ask: Am I the best person for this decision? (That is, does it fall principally within my mandate? Might it also affect others' mandates? Am I most closely linked to the decision, or the person with most energy, skill, and experience to make it?). If not, ask the role you think is better placed to take the initiative. If they don't want to, you might be best placed after all.
- If you are the right person to make a decision, identify those from whom you should seek advice. Approach them and explain what you are doing. ("I'm using the advice process. Here is an opportunity I see. This is the decision I propose to take. Can you give me your advice?"). You can also share who else you are asking for advice. Once you've received advice and made your decision, inform those you consulted (and anyone else who should know).

- When colleagues ask you to make a decision ("What should I do?"), instead ask them "What is your proposal?". Share your advice and suggest who else to ask. Remind them the decision is theirs.

For many of us, unlearning the habit of making all the decisions is hard. It requires commitment and mindfulness. If you find yourself falling into the old pattern, take the opportunity to acknowledge your mistake, and restate the importance of the process. This can turn a mistake into a powerful learning moment. Better habits are formed through repeated practice.

[Note: this text is largely copied, with light adaptation, from a [longer one](#) that is part of the [Reinventing Organizations Wiki](#). Copyright belongs to the original creators of that text. [Note: Once we have got more of our resources in order, David as SOS Resource Steward will contact Frederic Laloux to check this is OK. He has been a friend to XR in the past.]]

Objection testing

[Note: this guidance is referred to by the [XR UK Constitution](#) (Section C.7).]

When a proposal is brought using the Integrative Decision Making process, the facilitator asks each member of the team if they have any objection.

If there is an objection, the facilitator tests it by asking questions to determine whether it is valid within the terms of the Constitution.

Integrative Decision Making aims to integrate all valid objections to a proposal.

To be valid, an objection must meet all of the following criteria, which can be addressed in any order:-

Criterion	Valid	Not valid
The proposal causes harm - where harm is defined as degrading the ability of the circle to achieve its mandate	Is your concern a reason the proposal causes harm? or...	... Is your concern that the proposal is unneeded or incomplete?
The proposal limits the objector from achieving the mandate of one of their roles	Would the proposal limit one of your roles? or...	... Are you trying to help another role or the circle in general?
The objection is created by the proposal and does not exist already	Is the harm created by this proposal? or...	... Is it already a concern, even if the proposal were dropped?
The objector is reasonably sure the harm will happen or doesn't consider the proposal safe enough to try	Would the proposal necessarily cause the impact? or...	... Are you anticipating that this impact will occur? (If "Yes," ask the next question)
	Could significant harm happen before we can adapt? or...	... Is it safe enough to try, knowing we can revisit it at any time?

If the grounds for objection are that the proposal goes against a policy of the circle or its broader circles, or breaks a rule in the Constitution, or clearly violates XR's [Principles and Values](#) or [Volunteer Agreement](#) then the objection is automatically valid.

Facilitating Integration

- It is up to the proposer to see if they can find a way of integrating a valid objection.

- They can ask the objector for help with this: “What can be added or changed to remove that issue?”
- Or ask for contributions from anyone to resolve the issue.
- With each suggestion, the question for the objector is “Would this resolve your objection?”, and the question for the proposer is “Would this still address your tension?”

[Note: Parts of this text are derived and adapted from the [Governance Meeting Process](#) published by [HolacracyOne](#) with permission, © HolacracyOne, LLC.]

Decision Making Processes

[Note: this guidance is referred to by the [XR UK Constitution](#) (Section C.7).]

This page includes some basic steps and then details specific decision making processes. It is aimed mainly at facilitators and is derived from the earlier [Guide to Decision Making on the Streets](#).

A fair process helps to get people on board with a decision that may not be their first choice. If people feel what they care about has been heard and the decision is made for a legitimate reason, they are more likely to accept it and remain engaged with the group. Finding a way to balance a fair process with an efficient one is the fine arts of facilitation!

Consent Based Decision Making

The overarching approach we recommend taking to decision making is consent based decision making. **Consent based decision making is about finding an option that sits within everyone's range of tolerance** ("OK, I can live with it"), not their range of preference ("I love it"). This is because finding a proposal that everyone loves will be really difficult while finding one that everyone can live with will be a lot easier. Let's go with a proposal that's good enough, rather than trying to perfect it. Explain this approach to the group before starting the decision making process.

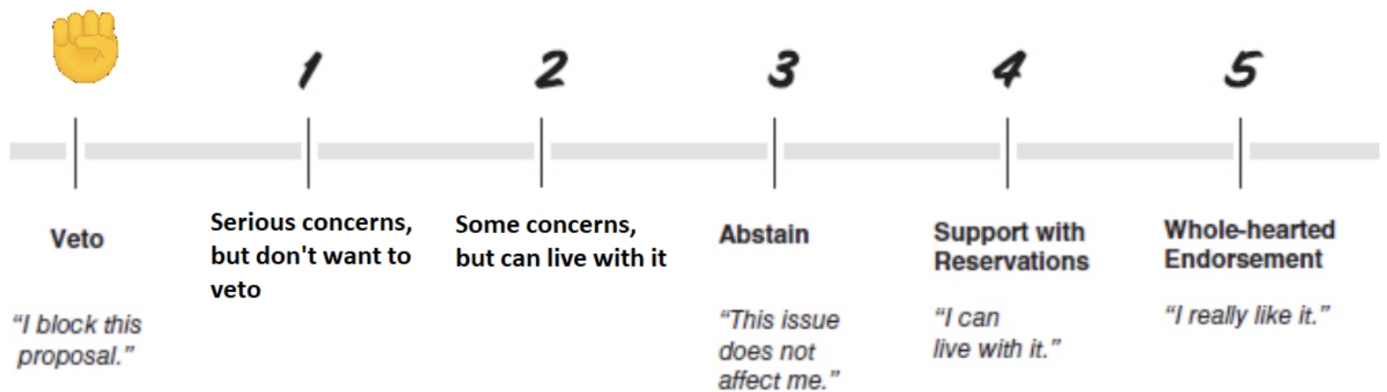
Tips for before starting the process

It's good to be clear about the type of decision making process that will be used before the process starts. This way people will set their expectations, for example, whether they will have to accept what the majority wants to do or whether the proposal will be changed based on their concerns. Always state the decision making process and give a brief explanation before starting it. Don't get into endless discussions about what process to use, you should decide how to decide as their competent and confident facilitator.

Most decisions are time-bound, especially during rebellions, so decisions have time limits. Getting clear on the time limit before the meeting and stating it at the start will help the group understand why you're using a specific decision making process, e.g., "the police will make arrests within 5 minutes, so we're going to do a majority vote".

1. Fist to Five

Fist to Five is a decision making process which allows people to state more than yes or no. This is very similar to consent except that people can give more nuanced responses. It's important to people to be able to express dislike, so we need to give them a way of doing it that's not a block. They can state any of the following options:



Follow the steps for either a meeting or people's assembly as described above, then:

(Explain the instructions very slowly, maybe even twice. Don't be rushed yourself or people will feel rushed and they don't like it.)

1. Explain the different response options, i.e., the Fist to Five are ("Instead of asking you to vote yes or no, I want you to hold up a number of fingers:

- 5 finger if you really like the proposal
- 4 if you think it's pretty good
- 3 if you want to abstain (e.g., "I'm indifferent")
- 2 if you have reservations but can live with it going ahead in order to not hold up the group
- 1 if you have serious concerns, but wouldn't veto this version of the proposal (see below)
- **Fist if you have a major concern that means you want to veto this version of the proposal. It's very important to make this clear to the group.** Vetoing the proposal should be grounded in a reason (e.g., violating XR UK's Principles & Values or someone may get hurt due to the proposal), rather than personal preference (e.g., "I just don't like it").

2. State the threshold at which the proposal will be passed, e.g., "Given that we have 10 more minutes so need to make a decision quickly, the proposal will pass unless someone blocks". (This sets the threshold for passing the proposal as quite low, so it is quite likely to pass.)

- If there is a veto or serious concern, you can either ask the person voicing it what they would need to amend to pass the proposal.
- Ask the proposal/idea/question and record the number of people for each number. Hopefully, major concerns will have been voiced before this stage, but just before asking people to respond remind them that you do want to hear major concerns if

anyone has any because then we can amend the proposal to make it better.

- Alternative option: for a secret ballot you could choose to ask people to close their eyes if they're comfortable doing so.
- It's useful to check in if you have large quantities of low numbers - if there isn't a block, but everyone is at 1 finger (they have concerns), then you might want to spend more time thinking about this proposal - if you have time. You could say something like "I'm seeing lots of 1s - can I invite one or two people to speak to why they've given this a 1?" Then use that to decide if we need to resolve something before moving forward.

3. State the outcome:

- If there is no block (i.e., a fist) and you're short on time, consider the proposal passed.
- If there's a block, invite that objector(s) to share their reasons, then work with them and the proposer to amend the proposal and ask people to decide on the new version by showing a number again.
- If you have time, invite those who have expressed serious concerns (1) to share their concerns. If multiple people have serious concerns, it's worth considering whether to work with the proposer and objector to amend the proposal if possible, as described above.

Pros: Allows for more nuance; people can express that they have a concern but don't want to block the proposal. Asking for a number can speed things up.

Cons: Need to explain what the numbers mean and people need to remember it so it can be too complicated in time pressured situations. You need to start off with one proposal; this will not work when there are several on the table. Works best with a small group of people, say less than 10.

Thresholds: As the facilitator you can set the threshold; you can declare the decision as passed even if there's one or two people disagreeing (majority vote situation) or decide to hear from everyone who has a niggling concern. **The threshold you choose will depend largely on the time limit and the seriousness of the decision.** If people do not agree with the threshold, they will tell you. As a facilitator, it's most important here to keep open and to welcome refinements - not always easy, especially when under pressure.

In the above example, we've set the threshold in favour of the proposal passing since it will only be blocked if someone concerns so serious they are prepared to veto the proposal. This is deliberate - we want to be biased in favour of taking action and trying things.

However, we also want good proposals, so if you have the time or the decision is very important, consider resolving the issues of those who have serious concerns - the facilitator and group can set the threshold wherever they like.

2. Majority Vote

The group is expected to go with what the majority is in favour of.

Follow the steps for either a meeting or people's assembly as described above, then:

1. Ask the group to raise their hands if they are in favour of the proposal, against it or abstaining (eyes closed for a secret ballot).
2. Record the number voting for each.
3. Announce the decision.

Pros: Fast, perfectly fine to use it when a decision needs to be made super rapidly or is inconsequential, e.g., "shall we move to the shade?". But when the decision will be contentious, Fist to Five would be better. Works well when there are many people. It's OK to disagree and this method reflects that.

Cons: The minority may be unhappy, feel undervalued and disengage from the group.

3. Temperature Checks

Temperature checks can be seen as a type of voting, but they are usually not taken as a formal decision unless all hands are in the air or the decision is inconsequential (e.g., should we stay here or move to the shade?"

Follow the steps for either a meeting or people's assembly as described above, then:

1. Tell people you're going to do a temperature check and what the response options are:
People do jazz hands in the air for yes, and downward jazz hands for no.
2. Ask the question.
3. Announce the decision.

Pros: gives a quick idea of how the group feels about something.

Cons: can be ambiguous what it means when people put their hands in the middle, can be hard to look at a crowd and determine how many people are doing each, can be hard to see hands that are down because of people standing in the way.

By asking yes or no (or any question with a binary response), you cut down on the amount of discussion needed. Thinking about the different issues related to the topic and asking a series of binary questions can be useful to get a sense of how the group feels really quickly. It can also be useful to check in with one or two people who indicated that they disagreed so that at least they can feel heard and hopefully be less frustrated.

Comparison between the processes

Below is a table allowing comparison of three different decision-making processes, Fist to Five, temperature check, and majority voting. The table outlines their details and relative speed to aid you in choosing the right process for a given decision making scenario.

	Fist to Five	Majority Voting	Temperature Check
Number of response options	6 (see section above)	3 (yes, no, abstain)	4 (Agree, not sure, disagree, abstain)
Speed	Medium	Faster	Fast
Strength	Allows people to give more nuanced responses & allows proposals to be adjusted into something everyone can live with , rather than just rejected	Quick & can be used when there are several options available	Quick & can be used when there are several options available
Weakness	Slightly more complicated so will take more time to explain	Many people may be frustrated	Can be ambiguous what hands that are at chest height mean

How do I know what process to use?

There are many different aspects of the decision that may influence which process you want to use. The key ones are:

- **Is the decision urgent?** We’ve provided some fast versions above, but you will have to use your intuition to decide what’s the best way to balance discussion and speed.
- **Is the set of options clear?** See below on brainstorming if there’s no options. If there’s several you could do a majority vote to choose the most popular option and then do consent decision making to ensure it’s something everyone can live with.
- **How contentious is the topic?** Are there a lot of feelings? Best to discuss it thoroughly. As stated above, people usually accept a decision when they feel what they care about has been heard and the process is fair, so it’s worth slowing things down and hearing from people when tensions are running high. A round of hearing from everyone is always a good idea in tricky situations, make sure it stays as a round though and doesn’t become a discussion.

- **How consequential is it?** For example, are we considering moving to the shade to hold the People's Assembly or deciding on an action that will trap MPS in their offices for days? This greatly determines the decision making process you'll want to use. Moving to the shade can be decided by a vote or temperature check and no one will be that upset. A very spicy action will need strong agreement with lots of time to hear dissent and seek advice and feedback from those with expertise.

- **Does it affect a large number of people?** If yes, have you gotten their input? This is tricky because high profile, spicy actions in some ways affect everyone in the movement.

We recommend reminding people that the Principles & Values and the **Rebel Agreement** are what we have to guide behaviour and that people have the autonomy to make their own decisions within those parameters.

- **Who's best equipped to make the decision?** If there's a person or a small group with the information and knowledge to make the decision and you trust them, why not let them make the decision? The group could share some thoughts with them and then leave them to it. Remind people that sometimes it's OK that some people have their say and others don't, because it might be an issue that person cares about in particular while everyone else doesn't care (e.g., a focus on health and safety, or a focus on fairness).
- **Can it be trialled for a period of time?** Or is it a one off event? If it can be trialled, ask those with concerns to give it a go with the knowledge it can be changed in a day or two if they still have concerns.

You can determine what process to use using [The Decider App](<https://thedecider.app/>), a website that will ask you questions similar to those above. At the bottom of the start page you can click on the different options and read about each including their pros and cons in detail. You can also see a [comparison of decision making processes](<https://thedecider.app/side-by-side-comparison>).

****Rapid Decision Making****: As a facilitator, you generally don't want to bring too much of your own input to discussions. But when a decision needs to be made rapidly (usually in a "the police are here and we need to do something quickly" context), facilitators can be quite active in suggesting what to do. So don't be afraid to make a proposal, ideally by summarising the opinion that has been voiced most frequently and turning it into a proposal. Or after a temperature check on 2-3 proposals you have in mind. ## What if I don't have a proposal? Some different options to generate ideas include:

- Ask if anyone has a suggestion (and ask them to be brief) and ask the group to use wavy hands to signal what ideas they like. Capture them all somewhere so everyone can see if possible. Do a decision making process above on the idea that got the most wavy hands. Best to set a time limit on this.
- People's Assemblies are great for generating many different ideas because people have the chance to discuss in small groups and may be more comfortable sharing wacky ideas. Again, watch the group to see what ideas get the most wavy hands and pick that one.
- Negative Brainstorm: pose the question in the opposite form, e.g., what action do we not want to do today? This will take some time.
- Even though you're the facilitator, don't be afraid to suggest one if you have one.

What if there are several options?

Are the options mutually exclusive? Could the options be combined? Remember, you may not need the perfect option, but an option that is *good enough*. **If all your options are good enough then see what elements of them could be combined, but it is possibly more important to simply start taking action on one of them.** In this situation, if you are stretched thinly, maybe the key criteria is which option will take the least of your limited capacity, or which can be delegated to a volunteer or temporary team.

Keeping track of the different options is essential, but can be difficult, especially when there's many different variations of the same option. Visual aids can help such as writing it down and labelling them plan A, etc. Although if you refer to it as "Plan A" make sure you're all on the same page about the plan you're talking about. Then get people to vote so that you can narrow down the options and explore the top 2 further. Also, consider 'unpacking' exactly what people mean by specific words.

Try asking people to vote for each proposal and use consent based decision making to make sure it's workable for everyone in the group.

Keeping it Smooth

A good facilitator can help keep the group on track to making a decision that works for everyone in the group. Encourage people to come to the meeting with all the information they need to make a decision. Point out logical fallacies (e.g., "those options are mutually exclusive") and correct information when you notice it.

Information: Rebellions can be hot beds for rumours. Tensions can run high, people can be on edge which leads to exaggeration, especially when information is being relayed through multiple people. For example, the police changing shift can lead people to jump to conclusions that they are trying to clear the site. Fact check information and don't share it unless it is from someone you trust personally or you've witnessed it directly. As a facilitator, remind the group to make decisions based on the best evidence available rather than hearsay.

Dissent: It's your job as facilitator to ensure that everyone in the group can share their thoughts, especially the voice of doubt or concern that will probably make the proposal more robust. You can decide to set the threshold for dissent really high ("Does anyone have any major concerns with this proposal?") or really low ("Does anyone have any little grumbings with this proposal?"). If there are people who you think might have a hard time speaking up, you can set the threshold lower for them. You may also model some dissent yourself so people feel comfortable saying theirs.

External factors make the decision for you: Make sure that the decision being discussed is not already decided by an external factor. For example, during one people's assembly in the rebellion

last October people spent a long time deciding whether to hold a road overnight or not. Half way through the People's Assembly, someone asked "Who here is actually willing to sleep in the road tonight?" Two people put up their hands, and so the decision was pointless because there were not enough people willing to do the proposed option.

The key thing here is that if there is work to be done, check that enough people are willing to do it and they are heard on the issue. This should be done during the fact finding stage before you start the decision making process.

Other external factors could be that if we don't act this minute, the police make the decision for you, so that limits you to choosing options already on the table.

Polar collaboration: Ask those who feel strongly about the issue to work together outside of the meeting and come back to the group with something that works for them. This is useful when there's a few that care and others that don't and it saves the latter sitting through those who care thrashing out the details.

Discouraging unnecessary permission seeking: Sometimes people bring a decision to the group that they can actually make themselves because it's in their role description/mandate. Check whether the decision needs to be made by the group or whether that person can make the decision by themselves - they may still want to hear advice from the group. You don't have to know the mandates, exactly but use your judgement and if in doubt, just ask "Are you sure you need a group decision/input on this? Is it a decision you can make within your mandate?"

Amplify: When someone from a traditionally marginalised background makes a contribution it can often be overlooked or repeated by someone else who takes the credit. Accrediting the originator of the idea with their idea can be really helpful to make sure the idea nor the person doesn't get overlooked. Some facilitators highlight that they are not being strictly fair when it comes to young people for example. They take their points/questions more often and give them more time to speak, and publicly acknowledge that I am doing it and why...

Facilitation leadership: Facilitation leadership is helping the team achieve their purpose and ensuring everyone can contribute so the team can harness its collective wisdom. See more under Leadership in the Building Healthy Teams [link to come].

Consistency: Although it's great to represent representatives and leaders, on the time scale of a rebellion, it can lead to a lack of consistency in who is turning up to meetings and so there's no capacity to get to know each other and build trust. You could encourage the representatives that do come to site meetings to show up consistently.

Preparing to facilitate: As a facilitator, you need to bring groundedness, fairness, sensitivity to emotions, and wisdom. Yes, that's a very tall order! If you are to facilitate, try to find some quiet time beforehand to relax a little, look after your needs and ground yourself so you can stay cool and collected and help others do it too.

Framing questions: the direction in which a proposal is made, e.g., "the proposal is that we leave the road" vs "the proposal is that we stay here", can influence the outcome of the decision. People tend to agree with questions and no one wants to be the naysayer (or at least it can be difficult to speak up sometimes), so people will probably tend towards passing the decision. That means you're more likely to stay if the proposal is that we stay where you are, and more likely to go if the proposal is to stay put. There's not much that can be done here because there's no neutral framing in this example, but it's something to be aware of.