

How to start a Local Group

Contents

1. What is a Local Group ?
2. Meetings
3. Structure - Working Groups (WGs) and Affinity Groups (AGs)
4. How we work together
5. Communication and Platforms
6. National Co-ordination
7. Pathway to mobilisation
8. Need help ?

1. What is a Local Group ?

No Extinction Rebellion (XR) group in your area ? Time to get one started ! One of our core principles is that anyone can take action in the name of Extinction Rebellion as long as they adhere to our Principles and Values. That means you can take action, and start new groups, without anyone's permission ! This is a suggested guide to show how you can achieve that.

Principle 10. WE ARE BASED ON AUTONOMY AND DECENTRALISATION

We collectively create the structures we need to challenge power. Anyone who follows these core Principles and Values can take action in the name of Extinction Rebellion.

Glossary

A **Local Group (LG)** is a group of people that gather to create an Extinction Rebellion (XR) community presence in a local area by building support and taking action towards XR's three demands. In this way, they are similar to traditional forms of community organizing. A crucial difference is that XR local groups decentralise into different Working Groups as much as possible.

A **Working Group (WG)** focuses on a specific area of work and is allowed to decide how that work gets done. For example, if the Communities team want to start outreaching to the Muslim community, they can decide it in their group without asking permission from the rest of the local group (more on decision making later).

A **Coordination Group** is a group of the coordinators from the different WGs which meet to decide key local issues and how the working groups will be strategically focussed.

Affinity Groups (AGs) are direct action support groups. They are made up of 8-12 people and are autonomous to do the actions they want to in the name of XR as long as they adhere to the [Principles and Values](#).

2. Meetings

First you need to gather those that are sympathetic or interested in the Rebellion in your area. This can be easily done by creating a Facebook event and putting flyers in local cafes, hosting a public “Heading for Extinction and What We Can Do About It” talk, etc.. The basic idea is that these meetings exist to inform and inspire new people and then get them into groups to take on roles and jobs so the whole mobilisation can grow quickly. The meetings are not primarily there to work out the details of who is doing what and where etc. This can be done in smaller groups like Affinity Groups or Working Groups - more on this later.

Related Resources:

1. Tips on running Meetings
2. First Meeting Template- [Quick facilitation](#) brief
3. [Template for general Meeting Structure](#)
4. [How to organise an empowering open meeting](#) (Detailed)

3. Structure

Local groups have a community organising function. Membership can continue to grow because, as new people join, the group should split into smaller, autonomous (but linked) Working Groups, such as Action and Logistics, Art, etc.

Tip: don't try to make decisions in large groups! Split into smaller Working Groups. Regular LG meetings will also benefit from breaking into smaller groups for discussions, decision making, etc. - ensure enough people to facilitate each smaller group.

In order to challenge the current system we need to get organized. This often means taking on more responsibility for the running of the group and helping it to function. This is primarily by done by a **Coordination Group** which make decisions on how the Local Group should be run, based on input from the Working Groups.

Each Working Group should have two coordinators and one that that is the “external coordinator” which attends the Coordination Group meetings. This means information can pass between the Working Groups through the coordination group (4-8 people) about the Local Groups different needs. The Coordination Group should meet regularly to discuss the needs of the group.

Working Groups

As mentioned, the Working Groups should ideally have two coordinators, an *internal coordinator* who manages the groups communication systems and helps to bring new rebels into roles and an *external coordinator* that attends Coordination Group meetings to share key information.

TIP: If you are struggling to find anyone to step into a coordinator role- a good idea to go round and people individually if they are up for the role rather than asking to the group as a whole. Conditional commitment can be your ally here, for example asking “*Would you be up for coordinating this team if you were to do it with someone else?*” and then finding two people that yes- then they are a pair of coordinators!

Here is a suggested list of core Working Groups and an introduction document to each one:

- [Regenerative Culture](#)
- [Communities](#) (Formerly Outreach)
- [Media](#)
- Arts
- Actions
- Finance and Fundraising
- Tech
- Legal
- [Talks and Trainings](#)

Affinity Groups (AGs)

When there are six or more AGs it is recommended to create an Affinity Group Council where spokespeople from each AG can give debriefs on past actions and take future action plans to their affinity groups. The Affinity Group Council should also include a coordinator from the Arts WG so that they can suggest action plans based on local/national coordination. This method of organizing affinity groups is sometimes referred to a [spokescouncil](#). Though in Extinction Rebellion it is important to recognise that we organise through a post-consensus format which allows autonomous action and doesn't require all groups to agree on proposed forms of actions. Want to do it a different way? Feedback it to the AG council. No effect? Go off and do it yourselves !

REMEMBER: INDIVIDUALS CAN TAKE PART IN ALL TYPES OF GROUP: You can take part in direct actions with your close-knit Affinity Group, help with specific tasks within your chosen Working Group(s) and also stay connected within the wider community provided by your Local Group.

Related Resources:

1. [How local groups work](#) (4mins)
2. [Suggestions for First Affinity Group meeting](#)
3. [Affinity Group Pack](#)

4. How we work together

An important part about Extinction Rebellion is our culture of how we connect and work together. We understand that everyone is coming from different backgrounds and that to some things like Hand Signals might seem quite strange, but they really help us to communicate well and get through meetings.

Facilitation, helping to guide and hold the meeting, really helps to make sure that we are working well together. Facilitators help to make sure that no one dominates the conversation and that the meeting ends on time.



Our culture also comes with some suggested guidelines about how we work together too. This includes a Group Agreement, which you can stick on the wall at your meetings to remind everyone about the culture of the meeting. It is also recommended to put up a copy of XR's Principles and Values.

Principle 3. WE NEED A REGENERATIVE CULTURE

Creating a culture which is healthy, resilient and adaptable.

A great way to introduce people into Extinction Rebellion is with an induction that explains facilitation, hand signals and our Principles and Values. This can be run regularly to bring in new members.

Different groups have different ways of working together and there is no one size fits all option. It is important to recognise that those from different cultural backgrounds will work together in different ways.

Related Resources:

1. [Hand Signals](#) for meetings (we don't really use the "I'm Confused" or "Veto")
2. [Induction](#)
3. [Template Local Group Agreement](#)
4. [Regenerative Culture and Avoiding Burnout](#)
5. Principles and Values Poster
6. [Facilitation Training \(29mins\)](#)

5. Communication and Platforms

Communicating within the group should be done on Basecamp and Signal.

- **Basecamp** is an online organising platform for collaborative work. It is where store lots of our key documents and have internal conversations about what we are working on. We recommend using Basecamp for storing main documents, organizing online meetings and message boards for new ideas.
- Minutes should be taken at all group meetings and shared within the group on Basecamp. This is best done through **Google Docs**, a free, web-based software office, where you can edit documents in real time.
- For announcements and public events, **Facebook** and other social media sites have the best reach.
- **Signal** is a secure messaging application available for smartphones (it can also be used on laptops). A more widely used alternative, though less secure, is **Whatsapp**. Use Signal for quick communication within the coordination team and within the working groups via group chats.



To be added to Basecamp or for any further questions, please contact our Internal Communications team on tech@rebellion.earth

Once on Basecamp you will be able to administer it at your Local Group level for your collaborative activities.

Related Resources:

- [Intro and Overview of Basecamp](#) (2mins)
- [How to use Basecamp with Extinction Rebellion](#) (4mins)
- [How to use the Basecamp HQ, Teams and Projects](#) (2mins)
- [How to take Minutes](#) (6mins)
- [Meeting Template for Minutes](#)

6. National Co-ordination

Regional Coordinators and Local Links

Local groups can feed into national coordination through their **Regional Coordinators**. Each region will have at least two coordinators that will liaise with the external coordinators of the local coordination team. The regional coordinators then meet on a weekly basis in the Regional Development meeting to feedback ideas, concerns etc from their region and resolve any issues that arise.

Additionally, each working group will be able to liaise with the national working group through their **Local Link**. Each national working group has a Local Link role which will support their local working group coordinators and feedback the work they are doing to a national level. More information on this and how to contact your Local Link are in the 'The Working Group intro documents listed in section "3. Structure", above.

Self Organising System

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".

Related Resources:

1. [Self Organising - Intro to Teams/Working Groups](#) (6mins)
2. [XR UK Organism- Diagram of the XR Structure](#)
3. [A guide to Self Organising Systems in Extinction Rebellion](#)

7. Pathway to mobilisation

The group can get started by organising a public meeting. From this a local talk and Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) training should be arranged. After the NVDA training, Affinity Groups will be formed for the area. The main point being that in terms of doing actions, people are formed into affinity groups and the members have received NVDA training. And other people in a local group engage in equally important support roles and/or in other local activities. Organising an action will help to mobilise existing members of the group and will draw in new people. New people can then join existing working groups/affinity groups and grow the structure of the group.

Related Resources:

1. [Resources Roadmap for Local Group Growth](#)

8. Resilience

Throughout the process of starting a local group it is important to bear in mind that the group may not work out as you pictured it or as is detailed above. You may find that people in your area would prefer to create lots of AGs for big actions rather than a Local Group, or that you struggle to find coordinators for the different WGs. That is okay. Different groups will also work better with different structures that are more suited to them and that's fine- it's your call. This document is just a guideline to help groups along the way. The majority of us are only just starting to de-school our mind from centralised and hierarchical ways of thinking about how groups and organisations work. There will be bumps along the way and sometimes it will feel pretty chaotic (in fact maybe most of the time!) but through this decentralising we are reconnecting more communities and giving a voice to the voiceless.

Extinction Rebellion often recommends looking at this through a *service orientation* - this means that instead of expecting x outcome when you do y , you do y because you believe it is the right thing to do. For example, if you organise a public meeting, publicise it online, share around flyers etc and only have two people show up, you are okay with it because you did the right thing by organising the meeting itself. Letting go of the expected outcomes of our actions helps to better connect with the intent behind them and be more resilient when things go unexpectedly.

Related Resources:

1. XR [Resilience Statement](#)
2. XR [Reading List](#) (See Resilience Section)

9. Need help?

So you're ready to go and start your local group! Please let the regional development team know if you have any issues or want a hand to get things started. They can help to connect you to your regional coordinator and offer guidance on any bumps along the way.

Please contact xr-regionaldevelopment@protonmail.com for help or to join the local coordinators Basecamp area.



1 Find Co-ordinators

Form a coordination team with two chairpeople. Ideally this should be two people with a gender balance and different roles in XR (e.g direct action and lobbying/regen) so they can support each and draw on each other's strengths and experience.

2 Talks/Trainings

Organise the standard talk around the region or city. This then leads to an NVDA training (which can be set at the same time and advertised at the talk). This then leads to the creation of an affinity group and local groups which are geographically based (eg North Manchester, Brighton etc)*

3 Working Groups

The local group then organises itself into working groups and establishes their working group coordinators. The Actions working group should also work with Affinity groups to set up a local affinity group council.

4 Affinity Groups and Council

Affinity groups should form at the end of NVDA trainings with between 8-12 people. Affinity groups then delegate one person to speak on behalf of the group to the local council.

5 Action

The local group plans new actions and coordinates them with the Affinity Group council for feedback and participation. New actions should be always thinking about how to bring in new people (flyers, press articles etc)

6 Consolidate

Following a period of action, working groups should a organise a session for debriefing on what worked well and what to improve. Affinity groups should also have debriefs and report feedback to the council.

7 Restructure & Repeat

Take the necessary restructuring steps (e.g splitting into two local groups/ creating subgroups). Consolidate the feedback and plan for future actions!