



THE HOW-TO GUIDE TO

PLANNING EFFECTIVE NVDA

**(NONVIOLENT
DIRECT ACTION)**



OUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Anyone who follows these core principles and values can take action in the name of Extinction Rebellion

WE HAVE A SHARED VISION OF CHANGE

Creating a world that is fit for generations to come.

WE SET OUR MISSION ON WHAT IS NECESSARY

Mobilising 3.5% of the population to achieve system change – using ideas such as “Momentum-driven organising” to achieve this.

WE NEED A REGENERATIVE CULTURE

Creating a culture which is healthy, resilient and adaptable based on mutual care and support.

WE OPENLY CHALLENGE OURSELVES AND OUR TOXIC SYSTEM

Leaving our comfort zones to take action for change.

WE VALUE REFLECTING AND LEARNING

Following a cycle of action, reflection, learning, and planning for more action. Learning from other movements and contexts as well as our own experiences.

WE WELCOME EVERYONE AND EVERY PART OF EVERYONE

Working actively to create safer and more accessible spaces.

WE ACTIVELY MITIGATE FOR POWER

Breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation.

WE AVOID BLAMING AND SHAMING

We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame.

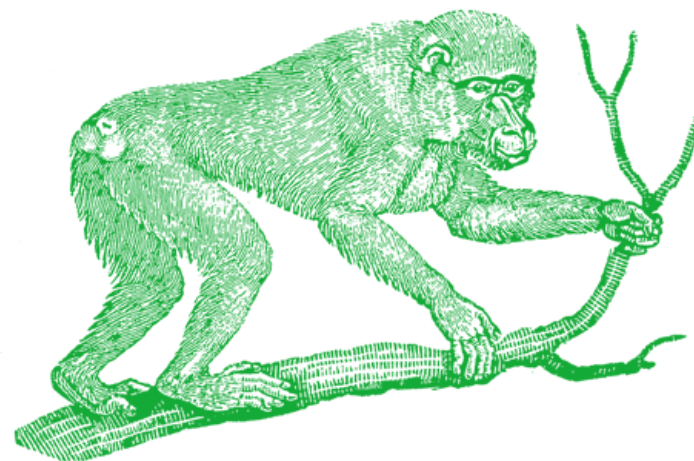
WE ARE A NON-VIOLENT NETWORK

Using non-violent strategy and tactics as the most effective way to bring about change.

WE ARE BASED ON AUTONOMY AND DECENTRALISATION

We collectively create the structures we need to challenge power.

YOU ALREADY HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN ACTION?



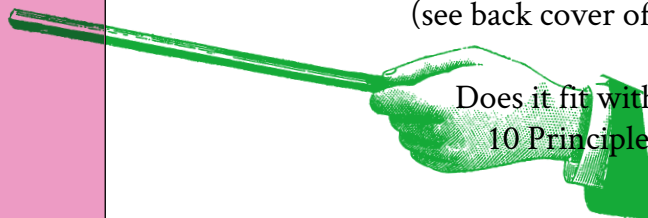
GREAT!

FIRST, chat to your Affinity Group (AG) about:

WHY are you doing it?

How will it raise profile of one or more of our Demands? (see back cover of this publication)

Does it fit with **ALL** of XR's 10 Principles & Values?





UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION



Our actions can be categorised in three (sometimes crossover) ways:

DISRUPTION

To create disruption through mass civil disobedience, towards achieving our demands.

OUTREACH

To tell the public the truth, and bring people together at the protest, or through media.

VISIONING

To demonstrate the future we want to see through beautiful, creative, collaborative action.

NONVIOLENCE IS KEY

Extinction Rebellion has nonviolence as one of its core principles which is non-negotiable for everyone who wants to take action under the name of XR. It is as a fundamental cornerstone to the way we are working and divergence from this principle will put the whole of our international network at risk.

We are a mass movement using nonviolent civil disobedience. Our actions never involve any physical or verbal violence towards people. This is sometimes hard to define and is discussed in the NVDA training. Talk in your AG and come to some consensus. You may want to go further than acting with nonviolence, and actively show love: E.g. giving gifts of flowers to MPs.



STRATEGIC NONVIOLENCE

We work from the perspective of strategic nonviolence, meaning that we are choosing it primarily because it is the best strategic choice as clearly demonstrated by the social science research. One of our main references for this is the work of Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan and their study 'Why civil resistance works'. This body of work has concluded, among other things that:

- ♥ Nonviolent uprisings are about twice as successful in achieving their aims compared with violent uprisings.
- ♥ Nonviolent uprisings are more inclusive as they attract wider segments of the population to take part.
- ♥ Nonviolent uprisings manage to create more stable transition to a system change than violent uprisings.
- ♥ We will never win against the authorities with violence as their resources will always outnumber ours.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We define nonviolence by how it is perceived by the general public. We believe nonviolence lies a lot within the gesture of how you do actions and if you take accountability for or not. E.g. an elderly lady chipping away at a window with a toffee hammer and sitting peacefully til she is arrested could be perceived differently to a masked young man throwing a brick at a window and running away.

- ♥ Taking accountability for actions is key.
- ♥ The gesture of how you do an action is important.

VERBAL NONVIOLENCE

We are also emphasising verbal non-violence within XR, meaning that in all situations we stay respectful towards police and the people in power and don't resort to blaming and shaming individuals as outlined in our principles and values

This is clearing the space for us to focus on the real systemic issue and give opportunity for the people in power to more easily defect and come out in support of the movement.

PRINCIPLED NONVIOLENCE

Strategic Nonviolence is our primary stance, but some rebels may have a spiritual and faith-based stream which contains a principled stance when it comes to nonviolence. Both positions are welcome within XR and help us to guide our actions. Acting from a motive of principled nonviolence supports our desire to be inclusive.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The term 'Civil Disobedience' presumes nonviolence whereas 'Direct Action' can be oppositional. The key to the effectiveness of Civil Disobedience is mass participation – everyone getting involved! Within XR's Strategy there are three parts to Civil Disobedience:

DISRUPTION Often triggers an emotional reaction which makes the public focus on an issue and is likely to get lots of media coverage.

SACRIFICE Willingness to stand up for what we believe in: it shows the public we are walking our talk.

RESPECT This isn't about political beliefs, it's about being human with each other. We are in a toxic system. We should treat individuals with compassion so they can help us to change it.

INCLUSIVITY

XR is aiming to grow the movement to a critical mass of 3.5% of the population: Throughout history, a mass movement that has mobilised more than 3.5% has never failed. In designing actions we aim to create ways for everyone to be involved. Not all actions are for everyone, some are mass actions which show our collective strength, others are done by small groups and are highly disruptive – regardless of what kind of civil disobedience people take part in, everyone is respected for their role.

If your action involves the risk of arrests, choose an area that will be a 'safer zone.' Families with small children may wish to be there instead of on the 'front line.' Think about different levels of civil disobedience and try to design actions so that whoever turns up, there are ways they can be included and involved. The decision to risk arrest or prosecution is a personal one and is of course affected by your social position. There are plenty of roles for people who don't want to or can't take these risks.



CREATIVE ACTION

XR Actions can be drawn on a scale between disruptive and creative or can have both qualities at the same time. Artistic and symbolic actions can be memorable, moving and allow more people to get involved.

- ♥ Create a narrative – this may be with banners, placards, costume, music, drama, speeches.
- ♥ Consider the look/feel of the action: how are you creatively getting the message across, are our Demands clear? Is it sombre and emotionally moving, is it farcical and poignant?
- ♥ Consider using chants, songs that everyone can join to convey your message. You could also invite musicians or spoken word artists to help raise the energy.
- ♥ Dress smartly if not in artistic costume, to be taken as seriously as possible. Hi-vis may be more appropriate for safety and consider practicality of wet, cold, hot weather etc.
- ♥ Adhere to the principle of individual accountability: we do not hide our faces (with masks etc). We act honestly and accountably for our actions. It may of course be appropriate artistically to have a mask as part of a costume: consider this carefully.
- ♥ Make sure your action primarily promotes the Core Demands of XR rather than your own talent/performance group/artistry.

MOMENTS OF WHIRLWIND

When planning large-scale actions, XR attempts to bring about 'Moments of Whirlwind.' This is when the action is so big, disruptive, everywhere in the media and everyone is talking about it that the public are forced to make a moral choice. It becomes harder to remain 'neutral' on the issue of the climate and ecological crisis. We aim to polarize public opinion and present a very simple choice of caring about the future or not. It is important to remember that everyone needs to become aligned in the cause, not in the movement. We cannot expect everyone to like our tactics. When we hear angry drivers say 'I agree that we're in a climate emergency *but...*' we are winning.

ART PRINCIPLES

- ♥ We aim for consistent quality, yet we like stuff to be handmade by us.
- ♥ Use ecologically sound materials, preferably recycled.
- ♥ We embrace imperfection, mistakes, over/under inking, the human touch, a DIY attitude, or DIT: do it together.

PLANNING

Give yourself time. At least a month planning, preferably. This is especially important for nourishing a regenerative culture. It also allows you to sit with ideas and reflect and develop them without rushing into things.

BEFORE AN ACTION

- ! Making sure our plans are rooted in our values and theory of change.
- ! Careful and thorough planning.
- ! Thorough training, learning and organising.

TAKING ACTION!

Stay grounded and connected to your intentions, to each other, to nature. Check in regularly with each other, stay close to your buddy at all times.

AFTER AN ACTION

Planning a welcoming home party, physically and emotionally nourishing ourselves. In the debrief we explore what went well, where conflict or tensions arose, and how we can improve for the next cycle.

REST

Allowing ourselves time to simply be and rest, gathering strength for the new cycle.

It is best to tell everyone what you are doing – there is huge power in telling the government, the police and the media where you will be and when, and then doing it. This is an act of pure defiance. We are too many to stop. We are reclaiming our power. It is also

respectful to give members of the public / city transport management due warning of disruption so they can choose to not drive their car/take another route. Recognize important routes where access needs to be clear for emergency vehicles. *We aim to disrupt, but not to harm.*

There may be different levels of **OPENNESS** in the planning of an action and within parts of an action:

COMPLETELY OPEN

All parts advertised on social media, best for mass-mobilisation

COMBINATION OF OPEN AND CLOSED

This is the main model used in XR – a hybrid of the effective elements of mass mobilisation and high disruption. Actions are openly advertised (e.g a mass rally outside Parliament) with certain parts that are co-ordinated secretly by Affinity Groups (e.g like the location of particular roadblocks.)

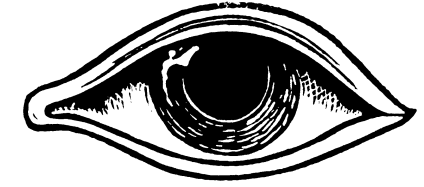
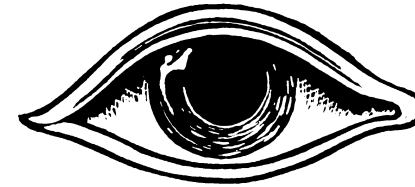
CLOSED

All aspects hidden due to need for surprise. Rebels take closer care with their secure communication channels. We recommend this for high risk actions.

Please consider seriously the potential for public backlash and ask for feedback from other trusted rebels/ contact the national Media and Messaging team for advice on a channel through media@rebellion.earth

Think about **NUMBERS** when planning:

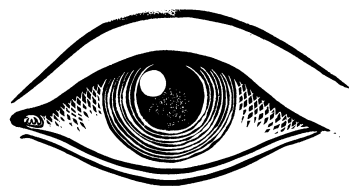
- ♥ How many rebels are needed? How will you reach out to them?
- ♥ How many public do you expect to be there?
- ♥ How can more people be involved?



- ♥ What roles carry the risk of arrest?
 - ♥ What can you achieve with the number of rebels you have?
 - ♥ Has everyone done an NVDA (Nonviolent Direct Action) training and/or other trainings? Highly advised! Contact your local XR to find out when trainings are going on.
 - ! Which parts of the area / terrain are public, or private, or a highway?
 - ! Are you blocking any emergency service access, e.g. near to a hospital or fire-station? (Don't!)
 - ! What will police presence be like / are there private security there?
 - ! What legal implications will the location incur? Is there a byelaw in place? What different criminal charges could there be depending on exactly where it happens?
 - ! How will you publicize the location? Do you meet up at the location you are disrupting; or meet in a publicized location and keep the area you want to disrupt secret?
 - ! Have you considered all possible scenarios and how you might deal with them? E.g. heavier security for a building than you anticipated, dense public presence that is in the space you want to use, another event or blockage already occurring etc.
- Think about **LOCATION** when planning:
- ! Always do a reccie! Scout the location out thoroughly, preferably at the same time of day as when your action will take place.
 - ! How does your chosen location fit with your narrative?
 - ! Does it gain publicity?
 - ! Does it cause effective disruption if that is your aim? Who are you disrupting?
 - ! Will disruption be to influential people more than public; is it an influential area?

ROLES WITHIN YOUR AG

It is advised to have these designated roles covered and a back-up for each role in case of someone being unable to attend at short notice. This is not an extensive list of roles for larger actions.



POLICE LIAISON – Ready to speak to police before/during actions, more info below

STEWARDS – help guide people where to go and speak to the public/ hand out flyers.

DE-ESCALATION – person who has good skills at calming a situation, e.g. speaking to a rowdy member of the public or speaking to a crowd to calm an undesired atmosphere.

WELLBEING – Wear blue high-vis or sash or green for first aiders. Looking after everyone's well-being: making sure everyone is calm and grounded. Preferably also a First-Aider. Should carry essentials e.g. water, emergency snacks, sun-cream, umbrella, heat pads, sanitary items, first-aid kit, basic toiletries, other good stuff!

ANCHOR – is a point of stability during the tumult of an action and offers check-ins as needed by rebels on the ground. They might be someone who can't come to the action or wants to support from a distance, thus conserving their energies especially for pre- and post-action support.

MEDIA TEAM – live-streaming, taking footage to edit, interviewing etc.

SPOKESPERSON – ready to speak to any press, well-versed on the narrative of your action and core values and Demands of XR

LOGISTICS – person to lead on gathering equipment required *and* taking it away again.

ARRESTEE SUPPORT – Willing to go and wait at police stations to welcome brave rebels back to the free world: making sure they can get transport home, that they are ok, giving them massive love. Preferably go in pairs. This could be waiting long through the night so designate shifts. This person needs to communicate with the back office about where arrestees have gone. Must be sober.

ACTION CO-ORDINATOR (Not the same as an 'organiser' in legal terms)

An excellent communicator, verbally and electronically. Making sure everyone is in the loop and giving the action go-ahead in the moment. Need to think on their feet and be strategically responsive. Advised to not risk arrest and have a back-up co-ordinator. Could have one co-ordinator's phone that is passed on if switching roles. On the ground it is useful to have 3 people in this role, to make quick decisions via consensus together, or individually if the need arises. But ahead of time important to have one person bottom-lining the project.

LEGAL OBSERVERS (external to your AG)

Wear orange high-vis. On the ground at an action. Legal observers are trained volunteers who support the legal rights of activists. Legal observers are independent from the protest and do not participate. They monitor arrests, collect witnesses and help connect arrestees with support at the police station.

These roles are designated as low-risk of arrest, however there is never any guarantee how the police will respond to an action and we are all responsible for ourselves and our actions: more on Legal stuff on the next spread.

Create a web of information flow between these roles. If we are to truly de-centralise, the hierarchy must be a web. Instead of a top, there is a middle. That middle is breath, heart and information. It empowers instead of commands. We flow organically together like a flock of birds with no leader, moved by instincts

LEGAL, ARREST, AND SUPPORT

As a mutually supporting network we are all responsible for ourselves, and while we support each other as best we can, your actions are your own. Prepare yourself for all eventualities before an action. Know your rights. Research the legal implications of your action.

Our actions aim to create a dilemma for the authorities. By having a large group of people partake in civil disobedience the police either have to arrest a large group of people, straining their resources and potentially looking oppressive, or allow the disruption to continue which will pressure infrastructure, business, and government. Effective actions are where this dilemma is created. The first would result in disruption of the legal system, the second legitimises your protest and allows continued disruption of the road, business, or government – Hurrah! In terms of preparing for an action it's recommended that everyone reads *Climate Emergency – What you need to know* before heading out. It's a good read for all and may help you later if you go to court.

Part of being empowered is making informed decisions and in the Legal Briefing we talk about some stuff that may be new to you, or if you're experienced it may be good to get a refresher. **READ IT!**

EARTH PROTECTORS

By signing up as an Earth Protector you are clearly stating that you believe that damage and destruction to the Earth and its inhabitants is a crime – and you will have a unique Trust Fund document in your name to show this, which carries legal weight. It can be used in court as primary evidence that: *You are not a criminal – You are a Conscientious Protector.*

BURNER PHONES

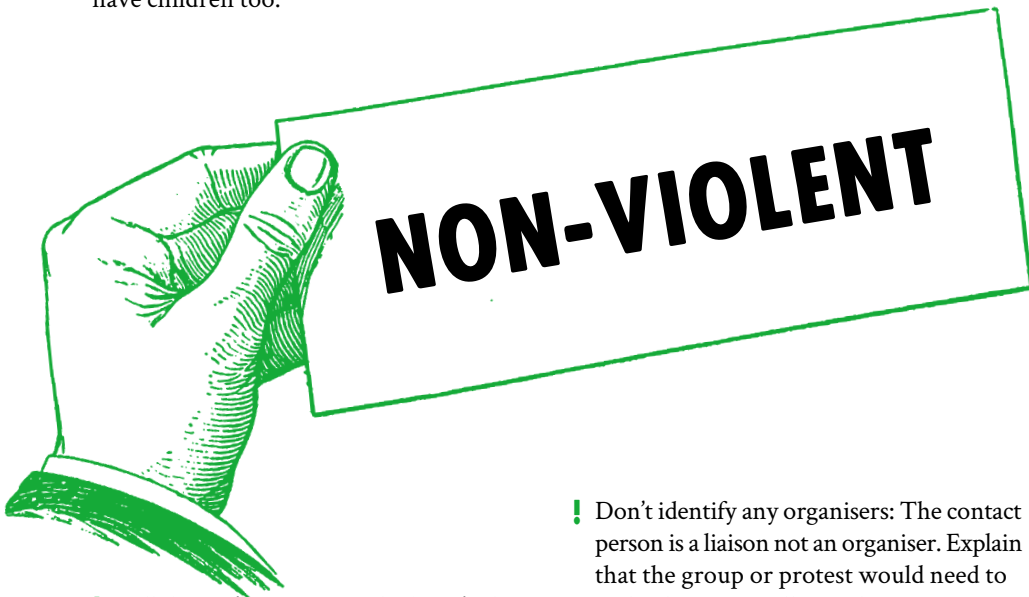
General advice is do **NOT** take your regular phone when you are risking arrest on an action – the police can copy **EVERYTHING** from your phone while you are in a cell, putting other XR members at risk. Either leave it with your well-being person who will meet you when you are released, don't bring it out, or have a burner phone that just has numbers saved of the back office, recommended law firm and point of contact to meet up with after release.



COMMUNICATION WITH THE POLICE

It may be useful to talk to the police during or in advance, especially if it is a large disruptive action. Think about how the police might interpret this action and speak to them before and during an action (once it is in the public realm, if it is.) Giving them the maximum information possible alleviates tension and stress and means they can plan to police the action proportionately. Keep in mind that in the long run, we want a *loyalty shift* from the police, and they have children too.

- ! Reassure them that, on the day, you will be available to keep an open line of communication and they can trust us to do what we have told them – and stick to timings!
- ! Remind them that this is a strictly non-violent organisation and we want to have a respectful relationship with the police, and everyone else
- ! We respect that they have a job to keep the public safe and we will try to help with that.
- ! We are not asking for permission but informing them.



- ! Tell them it's a protest and what it's about – NOT an 'event', etc. – this is important legally.
- ! Focus on the common ground of prioritising public safety and show we are well organised in thinking about stewarding, alternative traffic routes etc.

- ! Don't identify any organisers: The contact person is a liaison not an organiser. Explain that the group or protest would need to make decisions collectively in response to police requests and that you cannot control the protest: individuals do as they wish. Any named organiser or leader risks a different set of legal charges. It's OK if it's obvious who co-ordinators are, so long as they aren't named or self-admit.

The police liaison role helps keep police calm, remind them of our nonviolence, and helps keep them occupied rather than information gathering on all the activists or organisers present.

Civil-disobedience does *not* include:

- ! Being aggressive to police – verbally or physically
- ! Physically trying to prevent arrest by locking arms with another person etc.
- ! Running away from arrest – or running to get to a wall to paint etc.
- ! Getting into physical contact with police either by trying to jump over barriers or pushing past them.
- ! Shouting at the public or police: singing is better!

All these behaviours encourage police aggression and can create a tense atmosphere.

MEDIA AND MESSAGING

Very important to consider how your action will come across/how you want it to be portrayed: it is useful to agree on the following:

1. The main narrative
2. FACTS to support choice of action
3. Spokespeople on the ground who can speak confidently on (1. and 2.) to press and media

It can be useful to create a 'Key Messaging & Factsheet' document around an action press, spokespeople, XR central media team, social media reps etc. The messaging strategy for any action must always be in line with the Core Values and Principles.

When publicising the event, think about:

- ♥ **WHO** you're talking to (e.g. locals, green campaigners, school kids, etc),
- ♥ **WHERE THEY ARE** (Facebook, community notice boards, listening to local radio)
- ♥ **WHAT LANGUAGE THEY SPEAK** (science/facts, supporting their community, spirituality, empowerment).

MESSAGING GUIDANCE

When planning the action, do your best to ensure the activists who are going to be present at the action understand what to say if approached by the media for an interview/quote. Or know who the press liaison on the ground is to direct them to.

Get in touch with your local media team well in advance of the action so that they can prepare a press release and spokespeople. Send 250 words and 5 W's: Who, what, where, when, why, HOW? to describe the action also to press@risingup.org.uk for further coverage and support.

When talking to the media – bring your personal story, who you are, why you are doing this, your heart; then talk about the climate and ecological emergency and why it must be responded to in this way; and then move onto specifics about the narrative of your action or backing it up with more facts.

IMPORTANT

It is always advisable to discuss the action with others to make sure you're barking up the right tree.

Depending on how big or small, how much publicity you intend to gain, how much disruption you want to cause it may be good to discuss with other people in this order:

1. Your friends / your AG
2. Other AGs / experienced friends in XR
3. Your regional XR group, particularly their Actions&Logistics working group or other reps from relevant groups to help you plan (ideally someone from your AG would be in each of these different working groups)

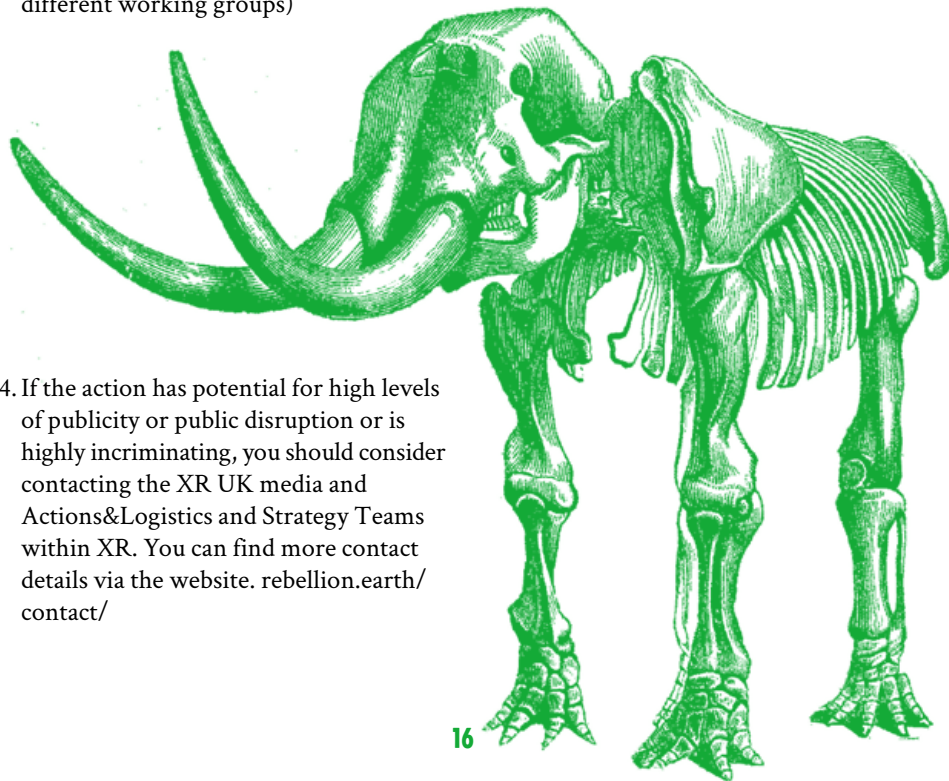
4. If the action has potential for high levels of publicity or public disruption or is highly incriminating, you should consider contacting the XR UK media and Actions&Logistics and Strategy Teams within XR. You can find more contact details via the website. rebellion.earth/contact/

RESOURCES

For further information and up-to-date manuals and resources, visit the Action Group page on the website: rebellion.earth/act-now/resources/action-group/



This document has been put together to empower rebels and give clear info on the important things to consider when planning an NVDA. It is intended for rebels who have done an induction, NVDA training and are part of an AG (Affinity group, or you could consider it an Action Group.)



FINAL CHECKLIST

Narrative clear, headline grabbing opportunity?

XR demands clear?

Following all Principles & Values?
Logistics planned?

Site-visit done in advance and planned on the day?

Banners/signs/artwork/flyers created and ready?

Transport arranged to and from?

Everyone involved communaicated with?

Social media/press release written and posted?

Police informed?

Legal briefing sought and explored?
Health and safety risks explored?

Pre-action check in – how are we feeling?

Arranged a post-action debrief?

The 5 W's: Who, What, Where, When, Why, HOW?

WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

XR DEMANDS FOR THE UK

We are facing an unprecedented global emergency.
The Government has failed to protect us.
To survive, it's going to take everything we've got.



Government must **TELL THE TRUTH** by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change.



Government must **ACT NOW** to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025.



Government must create and be led by the decisions of a **CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY** on climate and ecological justice.



**extinction
rebellion**