

Extinction Rebellion UK's relationship with Green and Black Cross - in response to their and others' concerns

Thank You Green and Black Cross

Thank you Green and Black Cross, for everything you've done to support the right to protest in the UK and empower Extinction Rebellion to take mass civil disobedience on the climate and ecological emergency. Extinction Rebellion is immensely grateful for the support Green and Black Cross (GBC) have given to individuals and the whole movement in the UK. From being integral in establishing Extinction Rebellion's Legal Support working group in Nov 2018, to fielding calls to support Legal Observers (LO's) and arrestees at Extinction Rebellion actions, GBC gave irreplaceable help, at a time when their capacity was low. Extinction Rebellion hope we can continue to discuss with GBC how we can give support back, through changes or clarifications, through encouraging more people to volunteer with GBC, and if appropriate through financial support.

As a young movement made up of many individuals who have worked with and respect the work of GBC as well as a range of people who are completely new to protest, there are vast differences in understanding of the essential role and nature of legal observing, rights to protest, or the issue with passing on information from the police to other rebels.

Extinction Rebellion hope to continue our dialogue with GBC face to face with our Legal working group, other impacted working groups, and through our movement listening forums. We hope this statement represents the movement's gratitude to GBC. The information below is intended to clarify the relationship between GBC and Extinction Rebellion, specifically how our Legal working group and Arrestee Welfare Coordination group has functioned and will operate moving forward. It is also our intention to answer the questions and concerns raised in GBC's public statement on Extinction Rebellion.

Improvements after the November Rebellion

Extinction Rebellion was very aware after the first phase of rebellion during November that we had to provide more support for rebels after arrest, and to help rebels gain an informed understanding before attending a protest. Forming our own Legal Support WG was an important and exciting part of improving this. We have always been clear that the Extinction Rebellion Legal Support WG is not a professional legal body but a group of volunteers informed by legal professionals to establish, in four months, an infrastructure to handle the possibility of a mass arrest such as the 1000+ people arrested during the International Rebellion.

Clarifying Mistakes and Making Improvements

Some mistakes were made. Firstly on various occasions, LOs did not act as thoughtfully as they should have during the International Rebellion. However, we don't believe that this was due to poor training – all the trainings that the Legal Support WG is aware of took at least five hours, were based on GBC

training materials and met GBC's quality standards. Neither did Extinction Rebellion plan for LOs to cover roles such as stewarding, police liaison or media spokespeople. There are various reasons that are imaginable for LOs overstepping boundaries: For many LOs, it was their first time LOing; they were exposed to a lot of high-stress situations and difficult crowd dynamics. Individuals may also have naively asked LOs to steward, without consulting the Legal Support group. So we are aware of these problems and are thinking of ways we can mitigate it in the future, e.g. Doing more education work around the role of LOs across trainings and working groups; having LOs coordinated by an external organisation.

Response when GBC Withdrew Support

Some decisions were taken when GBC withdrew support two weeks before the International Rebellion - this was due to their capacity and a disagreement over using google forms. Aware of the need for independent Legal Observing, but with the only independent organisation we were working with withdrawing training, coordination and call outs for support, two weeks before we were aware that thousands of people would engage in civil disobedience, XR decided to run three LO trainings themselves. These were entirely based on the GBC LO training materials and delivered by trainers who had co-facilitated up to a dozen GBC LO trainings with a more experienced GBC trainer. Extinction Rebellion does not want to provide Legal Observer training and this was never our intention, which is why we are currently in the process of finding alternative independent organisations that may be able to provide LO training and coordination.

Communications Security

The use of google forms and WhatsApp was the best way the Legal Support group could quickly organise hundreds of LOs to stay in touch with them, and look out for their wellbeing and security. These channels were not used for any purpose that could incriminate them or others. And no LOs' contact details were shared with anyone outside XR Legal Support working group. We didn't get everything right but the Legal Support group always tried their best and we're proud of some of the resources that Extinction Rebellion was able to provide: e.g. detailed [legal guidance](#) on the XR website, and in [handouts pre arrest](#), a 24/7 hotline for legal observers and arrestees, a separate safety line for LOs during the protest, 24/7 LO coverage at all protest sites, and defendant meetings.

Anti-racism Work and Arrestee Welfare

Extinction Rebellion are working slowly and carefully to further develop a culture of anti-racism and solidarity with other groups. Partly this is through The Arrestee Welfare Coordination group who have also been working to meet arrestees from police stations, and give support after their release. They are currently working to make sure there is explicit consideration made of the varied experience faced by different groups in activism, protests, arrest and legal proceedings. With this in mind, the group is beginning to develop appropriate support; run train the trainer sessions for arrestee support, and spreading this to local groups; and aiming to clarify messaging around arrest at all stages of rebels involvement with Extinction Rebellion.

Donating to Green and Black Cross

It has been suggested within our networks that Extinction Rebellion should donate some money to GBC. GBC has not asked for this, and without a dialogue around directing more resources to GBC, financial or otherwise, it's difficult to move forward with this. At this time Extinction Rebellion Finance team have advised generally that it is inappropriate to donate monies given for Extinction Rebellion work, to another organisation, where there hasn't been a prior agreement (for example to pay for services). Extinction Rebellion can appear to be financially "well off" in a crowd funder, where monies are actually either spent or allocated to parts of the Extinction Rebellion network, for example international and local UK. The Finance team are currently looking into ways Extinction Rebellion can create funds to support frontline environmental and social justice support organisations in the UK.

We Remain Open to Dialogue

We remain open to dialogue to continue to improve this relationship after GBCs external-facing break. But whatever happens in the future, we are deeply thankful for the groundwork which Green and Black Cross have laid to create a precedent for respecting the right to protest in this country, and for ensuring the police's actions during public protest are observed and held accountable. Extinction Rebellion have been supported by so many rebels and non-rebels including GBC who worked ridiculous hours and left their comfort zones to ensure rebels were trained, and supported, throughout our rebellion. We want to again thank GBC for helping to establish our own Legal Support working group, and for all the help which has supported the many individuals arrested as part of Extinction Rebellion protests since October 2018.