

Talking about the Crisis on the Street

Part of our job as rebels is to Tell the Truth so engaging with the general public during a Rebellion is vital, and those passers by might be a bit annoyed with you/Extinction Rebellion, so be prepared!

What are your aims:

Listen to them, find out what they know, or don't know so you can share some great facts with them.

But not too many facts, it can be overwhelming to a non-rebel.

To create an engaging, and personable conversation - they might have a stereotype of a climate activist - undo it!

Empower people to believe we the people can change history (historical examples, including BLM)

Shift any anger to you/XR to the system

Conclude the conversation with next steps - a leaflet, sign up to XR, link them to a Heading for Extinction talk, joining a Local Group...

Be confident, positive, and not the harbinger of doom!

Things to remember

Practise before you go, preferably on non-rebels, and don't skip the difficult questions scenarios!

Every time is show time ☐☐

You want to have a conversion, after the first 2 minutes, you shouldn't be talking more than 50% of the time.

Avoid blaming and shaming, and if they are critical, be super nice - we practise what we speech!

As soon as you mention climate crisis, people will either engage or walk on, be polite to those that don't stop, and being over cheery can be received as cheeky!

Introduce yourself - open and honest. It's very humanising and levelling to admit you're scared and that you're not some extremist activist.

Example openers

"Hi, I'm....., and I'm here protesting against the climate crisis with Extinction Rebellion, do you please have a couple of minutes to chat..?"

"I don't know if you knew but the United Nations has warned us that If we don't cut global emissions immediately, global warming will lead to food and water shortages and mass starvation".

“Did you know that in the last 30 years, greenhouse emissions have risen by 60% and if we don’t cut them by 2030, we won’t stay under the recommended 1.5 degrees of global warming and I’m really scared...”

More punchy facts

Ask your Local Group for their favourite worst facts - this is also the easiest and most interesting way to gather some science wallops, and if you do it via social media, everyone can access the information. It will probably also result in numerous non-XR sources to quote, and this creates factual credibility. Here’s a few to start you off...

- The World Bank predicts that by 2030, the climate crisis will push 100 million people into extreme poverty.
- The Lancet estimates that between 2030-2050 over 560,000 people will die as a result of global warming every year.
- Arctic summer Ice is likely to disappear by the end of the century and 39 degrees celsius was just recorded, there are fires!

Developing the conversation

Your goal is to gently lead the person to asking them what they think about what the government is doing about the climate crisis. Chances are, they will think probably not much.

Then, introduce them to our Demands, and explain the Citizens Assembly, referencing that the French government just held a CA and agreed to consider making ecocide a crime (don’t forget to explain ecocide).

Top tips:

- Use the third person, not “I think...” because it sounds like this is what I want you to think!
- If someone is looking for an argument, don’t give them much time - you’ll miss positive opportunities to engage with other passers by, so wrap up the negative conversation with! “We’ll just have to agree to disagree”.
- Key aim is to emotionally engage them, how they see the situation, this leads to a deeper psychological response, which more likely to trigger a next step
- Know your next steps: do you have leaflets? Have a sign up sheets, links about Heading for Extinction talks - use your phone if you have one to show them how to find them online...
- And thank them for chatting with you.

Let’s be frank, you’re probably going to have some difficult questions to answer!

Again, prepare! Practise with your LG on a zoom before you attend the rebellion, all take turns! Take a deescalation training, if you can.

1. **“Technology will save us!!”**

We have all the technology we need to become carbon neutral. What we lack is the political will and urgency to transition. Whilst some technology might be helpful, there are

huge problems with this mindset. First, it encourages inaction, assuming that someone will come along and save us. Second, this does not stop the exploitation of our planet's resources. Third, introducing geoengineering solutions can have huge unknown knock-on effects that we can't predict. And most importantly, relying on technology does absolutely nothing to address the reason the underlying cause of climate breakdown - 100 companies destroying the planet for profit.

2. **"You're just being annoying, disrupting the general public"**

We wish it wasn't necessary, but since declaring climate emergency last April, the government has done nothing to reduce emissions and we're currently likely to hit over three degree warming, not the 1.5 that all the governments signed up to in the Paris climate Agreement

3. **"Haven't the government agreed to achieve carbon zero by 2050?"**

It's too late, it needs to be by 2025, or global warming will cause environments and societal collapse. In November 2017, a statement, titled "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice", signed by 15,364 scientists from 184 countries stating "we have unleashed a mass extinction event, the sixth in roughly 540 million years".

4. **The classic, "What's the point if China don't do anything!" There are lots of responses for this one!**

We started the industrial revolution. We have a moral obligation to lead the fight against climate breakdown. China is enormous, so you can't compare total emissions. per person, UK emits 7.8 tonnes of CO₂, China emits 5.6 tons. Even worse are historic emissions per capita, which put the UK 2nd, behind only Luxembourg. Most importantly a huge portion of goods are made in China, the UK's emissions do not include imported emissions, so China's emission levels are inaccurately high. Far more accurate is to compare the carbon average carbon footprint per person. In this measure we are nearly 3 times more culpable for climate breakdown than China. (11.5T vs 4.3T)

5. **"Renewables are too expensive".**

Onshore wind and solar are now the cheapest forms of energy in over 60 countries, including the UK! And this is despite the UK government's immoral policy to cut subsidies for renewables whilst continuing to subsidize fossil fuels at a higher rate than any other EU member.

6. **"You'll leave people in fuel poverty by switching off fossil fuels".**

There are multiple transition reports from various institutions which detail exactly how we can move away from fossil fuels. In fact, fuel poverty in the UK is a result of austerity by the government and the privatisation and lax regulations imposed by the government on the energy industry

7. **"We could all stop eating meat / driving / flying / (insert defeatist argument here) and it would make no difference"**

C-19 just showed us that we can adapt our lifestyle choices when we have to, this is an emergency and if an emergency footing is required to protect life on Earth, we can do it! That's why we demand a Citizens Assembly.

8. **"It will damage the economy".**

There are loads of great plans to transition to low carbon infrastructure and technology which will generate massive numbers of jobs. What's more, the cost of not addressing climate breakdown - in infrastructure damage, health care, human life - will be many, many, many times greater than taking action.

Once you feel confident dealing with the awkward questions and people, you will positively enjoy chatting and listening with the majority of passers by who won't be confrontational. Being prepared for the worst means you'll be empowered to do outreach in public - at rebellion, and everywhere else!
