

Why we have the Hub

How are you communicating with people in your working group?

- Are you using WhatsApp? Or Telegram? Or Signal?
- How do you communicate with other working groups?
- Do you have to use email? Or another channel to add to the ones you already use?
- How do you find other working groups?
- Or do you have to depend on who you already know, and ask around everyone who might know someone in the other working group, so you can get in touch?

There is a problem

- WhatsApp is discriminatory - if you don't have a smart phone, you can't use it. Plus it mixes personal and XR chat in one place, so you can't have any time off. And it is just a stream of chat - you can't tell who is replying to whom, and finding stuff you saw a week or two ago is hard. Similar criticisms can be applied to Telegram and Signal (though, at least, Signal is pretty secure and doesn't automatically leak all your conversations to the authorities).
- For rebels who are neurodiverse, dyslexic and / or who are involved in many groups and teams, having to manage a number of apps and a number of groups within those apps, can cause confusion and stress, and could impact their mental health.
- Using WhatsApp, Signal and Telegram also means that members are 'siloe'd' in their groups without the ability to act autonomously and search for and join other groups, and also means members who **are** involved in other groups have to constantly cross-post information to those members who are 'siloe'd'. This creates a reliance on, and an additional unnecessary workload for, those members who are cross-posting and again causes them stress and potential burn-out. Having the public Reception channels for each group on Mattermost gives rebels the ability to join those channels, communicate quickly with the other groups' members and then leave the channel afterwards. The Town Squares on Mattermost also means everyone has access to the same information and negates the need for cross-posting.
- Depending on who you know is slow, and concentrates power in London and in the main UK Working Groups, who get to know each other.

There is a solution!

Since August 2019 we have been installing, developing and honing a new set of communication tools for XR. They have been in use globally by most XR groups elsewhere in the world since 2018.

They provide chat, more permanent forum discussions, and secure file storage. They run on renewable energy powered servers, in Switzerland (which has the best data protection laws in the world -- no more leaks to the authorities whenever they express an interest).

They are tied together by our in-house developed communications Hub. As well as providing a handy front end menu to the services, it also shows you the whole structure of all the XR groups on the new services -- every working group, region, district or local group, how they fit together, how to contact or join in discussions on any of the tools with each one, and everything you need to finally be connected with the rest of the organisation, in the UK and throughout the world, if you like.

The Hub also decentralises everything - every group on the Hub can administer their own spaces on Mattermost, Forums and Cloud - no need to rely on the bottleneck of having to ask a central admin to do everything (although the regional and national admins are there to help if you get stuck).

Don't Panic!

Oh no, you may be thinking, a new tool with hundreds or thousands of discussions going on. My head will explode!

Don't worry. We have spent a lot of effort in hiding everything you don't want to see. You join the new services as part of an XR Group (a Working Group, Local Group, or whatever). You then see only the conversations that involve that group. If you are in more than one group (e.g. many people are in both a local and regional group), you see the conversations for all of your groups.

Once in, you can connect to any other XR Group because there is a list (on the Hub) of all of them, showing how they connect together, with clickable links to join in their public "Reception" chat channels or forums.

Once you have joined a chat channel or forum, it is added to the list you can see within the website or app, and you can take part in the discussions. You can leave again at any time, and they will disappear again.

Mobile or Static

If you use your mobile to organise your life and carry it with you expecting to be permanently in touch when you want to be then that is fine - there are excellent dedicated mobile apps for both Apple and Android devices that will make your XR life available anytime you want it without mixing it in with your family and social life.

If, on the other hand, you regard screen addiction and always-on connectivity as symptoms of what is going wrong with our society, and you prefer to use a proper keyboard and full size screen while sitting at a table or in an armchair, then that is fine too. The websites for chat and discussion forums are easy to navigate and help you keep track of the things that concern you while shielding you from unwanted distractions.

Or you can mix and match and use both mobile apps and bigger screen websites as and when you like.
