

# Pause for the Planet (P4P)



The first Pause for the Planet, north side of Dorking High Street, 4th September 2020

## OVERVIEW

'Pause for the Planet' in Dorking came about as a result of the Earth Vigil held in Parliament Square during the September 2020 XR Rebellion. The basis for the action is to provide an opportunity for people to pause and take time out to reflect on the climate and ecological crisis. We also want to demonstrate to the public at large that 'taking action' can be a quiet, safe, non-intrusive activity. Currently, our lives are filled with uncertainty - sitting quietly can provide a release from the tension and fear we're holding within ourselves.



The first Pause for the Planet, south side of Dorking High Street, 4th September 2020

The first session took place on Friday 4th September in three locations in the town, each with two people. We subsequently decided to simplify, refine and repeat on Friday 11th September in a single location in front of the War Memorial in South Street, Dorking, opposite Waitrose. New banners were made - everything had to lie flat as we had nothing to tie banners to, and were conscious of not being seen to 'deface' the War Memorial.



The second P4P on 11th September 2020

One participant, sitting with eyes open, estimated the following:

***"I counted 70-90 vehicles in every 5-minute period. That's about 100 sets of eyeballs every 5 minutes. Add, say 20 for pedestrians, it all rounds up to about 1500 an hour – impressive".***

Another observer of the action told us ***"their silence was disarming. It by-passed mental defences and shouted to my heart that this is Important"***.

As ever, we learned, and decided bigger signage was needed to ensure passing traffic could more easily read the message. Bigger main banners were made, designed to be able to stand, lean and/or get attached with ties (see detail later). The location is great as it offers us the chance to split into groups by spreading out onto a raised area of pavement by the memorial - a Dorking town map also gives us a chance to put up a second sign in this area.



The third P4P session, held on 25th September

XR Dorking is now running Pause for the Planet every fortnight. If all we achieve is to keep the climate crisis in the public consciousness, that will be enough, but if participation in this meditative action swells and grows maybe others will come to realise the only way we can pressurise local and national government to take action.., is to take action ourselves - by joining XR (Dorking) and getting stuck in.

### **GUIDANCE FOR OTHER GROUPS**

We've been asked to contribute to an information pack to help other groups across the country to start something similar, so here goes...

### **PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES**

- To keep awareness of the climate crisis alive and kicking.
- To provide an opportunity for people to pause and take time out to reflect on the climate and ecological crisis.
- To provide a momentary release from the tension and fear we are holding within ourselves.
- To demonstrate that 'taking action' can be a quiet, safe, reflective activity.
- To have an action that doesn't require a mountain of props/ infrastructure.
- To have an action that 'pulls' people towards XR, rather than XR 'pushing' itself onto them.
- To provide non-XR members with a bridge to join the XR Dorking group.

## MESSAGING

We decided on 'Pause for the Planet' with soft, gentle colours - nothing aggressive or harsh.

**Main Banner;** 'Pause for the Planet', constructed so it can stand upright, be leaned against a wall or tied to railings. Large enough lettering to be legible to passing motorists and to people passing / queuing on the other side of the road:



We wanted some messaging around the power of silence and stillness and found a quote by Rumi which states "the quieter you become the more you can hear". We adapted this into two long banners (see following images):



**Note:** there is another excellent Rumi quote to consider using: “ There is a voice that doesn’t use words. Listen”.

**‘Join Us’ Banners;** two small banners, designed to be tied to public seating, inviting passers-by to join:



The only other props used are four XR flags, an A3 XR Dorking poster and currently, a poster calling for people to back the CEE bill. We also have two boxes of leaflets; XR Dorking & Back the Bill.

## FORMAT

- Organisers arrive 15 minutes before the start time, with the key props (see list) and ‘dress’ the venue.
- Participants arrive at the designated time with whatever they want to sit on, wearing whatever they like and ideally, with face masks.
- Organisers make sure social distancing is maintained and settles everyone in.
- A briefing is given along the lines of:
  - ❑ We will sit in silence for 9 rounds of 9-minute meditations. As each round finishes, you’ll hear the ring of the bowl.
  - ❑ Once we’ve completed nine, 9-minute sessions, the bowl will be rung 9 times. Do get up and stretch whenever you need to, but please stay in silence.
  - ❑ Someone will be sitting or standing with eyes open as a ‘conversation point’ should any passer-by wish to engage. They are wearing a sign around their neck reading “conversation welcome” but won’t be ‘pushing’ themselves at passers-by. If people stop, a simple “thank you for stopping, do join us for as long or as little as

you like” is usually enough to to start a conversation, or simply act as an acknowledgment of their engagement, no matter how brief.

- ❑ Should someone wish to join, you may be asked to swap out to maintain the rule of 6. If so, re-settle yourself near the main group but not so close that you’re a part of it. As passers-by finish and leave, you’ll be told you can re-join the main group.
- ❑ Unless you are the ‘point’ for conversation, please stay in silence.
- ❑ Ideally, we’d like to swap out the conversation point every 3 rounds to give everyone the chance to sit in silence, so please offer yourself up for this.
- ❑ At no time will we ‘push’ ourselves on the public or even offer leaflets. We wait for them to come to us and take from this whatever they wish.

## **PROPS/THINGS TO ORGANISE**

### **The venue**

- Doesn’t block the pavement or impede passers-by.
- Makes it easy for 6 meditators and passers-by to maintain the 2m social distancing rule.
- Has high visibility (pedestrians and cars).
- Is close to a second potential location where - under the current Rule of 6 - a second group could form or participants could go to when giving their space to a passer-by.
- Has public seating to make it easy for passers-by to join for as long or as little time as they wish to.

### **Banners/Visuals** (see photos at end of document for construction tips);

- Simple, quiet, soft colours, clear messaging.
- Constructed to work for the venue: stand alone, lean vertically, and/or or be tied to posts or railings.
- Tabard for the conversation point person; we chose the message ‘conversation welcome’.
- Two sets of props – perhaps more as time goes by – as if the size of the group grows, extra venues will be needed as long as the rule of 6 is in force.

### **Other posters/leaflets**

- A3 Affinity Group poster and A5 Affinity Group leaflets, in a box for people to help themselves.
- Any time-relevant posters and leaflets such as Back the Bill.

## Misc

- If possible, use existing public seating for passers-by, otherwise, supply a spare folding chair with an invitation to join. (*Note*, be aware that a yoga mat may not be suitable for passers-by to use!).
- Weights to keep banners/signage anchored if laid on the ground (e.g. nice pebbles, dressmakers weights, old-school scale weights).
- Singing Bowl, drum or similar to mark each 9-minute session, and the end of the meditation.

Our aim is to keep things as simple and uncluttered as possible in an attempt to pull people towards us, rather than pushing ourselves at them.

## Extra Images/Info

- All banners were made using acrylic paint; first, a wash of pale colour was made by adding the paint colour to an equal parts mixture of fluid matte medium and water. This helps to keep the plastic content down, but stiffens the banners slightly.
- Once the colour wash had dried, the lettering/symbols were done by hand using calligraphic tools or stencils with acrylic ink/high-flow acrylic.

This main sign is designed to lean against a wall and/or be tied to posts/rails.



The following images show how the braces can be locked' in:



Here it is, with braces locked in:



The banner is attached to the battens using velcro (see next image): the soft, 'loop' velcro is sewn on to the back of the banner and the wooden battens have the stiff, 'hook' velcro (it comes in self-adhesive rolls). This means that if the banner gets damaged or the bracing system needs adapting, the banner can be removed. All banners have eyelets and cotton tape as if the opportunity to tie them on to posts or railings is there, it makes things more stable and due to the velcro, the bracing is easily removed.



Our second banner can stand alone, although we've found that it needs someone sitting behind with a hand on it for stability - it has a tendency to blow over in high winds!





Both banners can be rolled up on their battens:



And stored/carried in a bag:



We have another cloth bag with shoulder straps for the small banners, and everything else fits into a medium-sized basket/box. Having car transport to the location helps, but 2 people could easily carry what's needed on public transport.

Any questions, please email [cb@clairebenn.com](mailto:cb@clairebenn.com)