

Rhizome guide to Spokescouncils

This guide was first drawn up for the Stop New Nuclear blockade of Hinkley power station. It's designed to support affinity groups in preparing effectively for spokescouncils at action camps. Customise the text for your camp, action or gathering.

Please make sure that your affinity group understands the information below. If you need any clarification ask one of the facilitation team.
Thanks

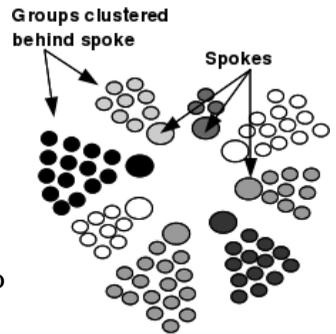
What is a spokescouncil

A spokescouncil is one tried and tested way of using consensus decision making in large groups of people. Each affinity group chooses a spoke, a person who will act as the voice of the affinity group, representing them in meetings.

Sometimes the spokes will meet with their affinity group present (see graphic). Only the spokes speak, but the rest of the group can listen. Occasionally the meeting will pause whilst spokes confer with their affinity groups.

Sometimes just the spokes (and a notetaker from each group) will meet. In this case the spoke is also acting as the ears of the group as well as the voice. This is how spokescouncils are most likely to work during the blockade.

At the camp we may use both of these variations, depending on factors such as the whether we can all fit in the largest marquee.



Spokescouncil 'Etiquette'

- Please respect that only the spokes are there to speak. Everyone else is there to listen. On rare occasions other voices might be asked to contribute by the facilitator, but please don't do so unless you're asked. The whole point of a spokescouncil is to reduce the number of voices to a manageable number.
- If you're concerned that your spoke isn't articulating the group's views, chat to them and not the whole meeting, and they can request a pause whilst your group huddles and talks.

Responsibilities of each affinity group

For spokescouncil consensus to work each affinity group needs to:

- **choose a spoke.** You might choose a different spoke for each meeting, in which case we suggest each spoke act as notetaker in the previous meeting to see what the role of spoke involves
- **appoint a notetaker** for any spokes-only meetings to allow the spoke to focus on the discussion and ensure the group gets good feedback from the meeting
- **attend every meeting** – not all of you need to be there. That's up to you. But as a minimum send a spoke and a notetaker
- **discuss the meeting agenda** in advance and ensuring the spoke has a good grasp of the group's ideas, concerns, and ideal outcomes as well as any options a group might block or stand aside from
- **consider the perspectives of other groups** to make reaching consensus more likely. Liaise with other groups in advance if this helps
- **contact the facilitation team** (add contact details) to **put items on meeting agendas**

Tips on choosing an action spoke

Think about the following criteria when choosing your spoke. Remember there's a possibility that a spoke might be arrested, so have a couple of stand-by spokes:

- ✓ able to see the problem but also see creative ways forward
- ✓ stay calm under pressure and work to a tight deadline
- ✓ contribute only what needs to be said rather than everything that could be said
- ✓ listen and appreciate other affinity group's perspectives
- ✓ understands any pre-agreed action groundrules
- ✓ represent the views of their group accurately and succinctly



This text is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike 2.0 England & Wales license. See rhizome.coop/resources for details.

Graphic anticopyright: seedsforchange.org.uk