**Digital Blockade Proposal- a template for Rising Up!**Gail Bradbrook, Ceri Barraclough and Roger Hallam, Sept 2016

Rising Up! is the working title of a strategy and potential new organisation, working on an uprising in the UK. The strategy is being drafted and consulted on this autumn, involving activists who are also part of various organisations (such as Earth First!, Reclaim the Power, Radical Think Tank and Compassionate Revolution). One aspect of the strategy is to design templates for how to do successful actions and events that can be used in a variety of circumstances. This is a draft template for a Digital Blockade.

## **Rationale**

**What a blockade is**  
A digital blockade is an attempt to cause an “opponent” to be overwhelmed by telephone, social media and website communications. It involves a sizeable group of people committing to making use of these communication channels in the same period, to overwhelm the systems of the opponent. It doesn’t involve hacking into anyone’s digital systems or website (it is possible an autonomous / anonymous group might choose to do that off their own backs, but we would not be in control of that). Digital blockade actions are more fun and movement building when linked to a more “sexy” action happening at the same time – enabling people to feel part of and contribute to the more significant / visible action.

**Purpose- attrition and disruption**  
The purpose is to get the opponent to face the force of your concern about their actions. It is a form of “attrition action” i.e. an action which wears them down. Medium sized organisations are, according to the literature, especially vulnerable to this type of action- they don’t have the capacity to cope with significantly increased traffic. We know that change generally doesn’t happen unless a movement is confrontational and causes disruption.

**Animating a mass movement**  
The digital blockade action itself is not illegal. It allows people to join in as part of other actions, for example a concurrent occupation, blockade or other form of direct action, without risking arrest. It allows people to join in who might not be able to make the physical action- we may have many supporters who live rurally and can’t always get to an action in a far off city, who are parents or carers etc. It is essential for a mass movement to be successful, that it activates the “long tail” of passive supporters into action. The majority of these folks won’t immediately take a centre stage role but are happy to join this kind of action. It may also be that by taking this form of action they will move into a deeper role later- it is a good way to include people beyond the more obvious low level involvements. We want to move those who sign petitions, donate money or re-post on social media to do a form of action that directly supports action against the opponent. This kind of action can move people up the involvement curve.

**Wider benefits for Rising Up!**  
Digital blockades are relatively easy to organise and have been used by movements worldwide. Once we know how to do them successfully, they can be used in a number of situations. For example we are anticipating announcements to be made about Fracking. Whilst the Autumn Rising Up strategy currently centres around aviation, it would be useful to have a ready-made action type available to support the anti-fracking movement. Other movements in the UK, including those we might want to ally with, could also benefit from this type of action, for example it might be used against a detention centre.

## **Proposal- creating a generic pledge to take part in digital blockades**

The Autumn strategy for Rising Up! proposes a Digital blockade as part of one of the main actions. However, there is a concern that launching that too early would cause some people to stay at home, rather than join the action in the airport. It would be useful to develop a list of people that are willing to join in with this type of action when they are available, i.e. it would be good to develop a deployable group of people that might participate (a % of them) whenever an action is announced.

For these reasons we suggest creating a “generic pledge” to ask people to participate in digital blockade (it can be hosted on [www.compassionate-revolution.net](http://www.compassionate-revolution.net)). It might say something along the lines of:

*I pledge to join in with digital blockades of organisations that are damaging the environment or participating in social injustices (whenever I am available and such actions are organised). I will give an hour of my time to telephone these organisations and will post on their websites, facebook page, etc according to the instructions of those organising the blockade.*

When a specific blockade is organised we can then mail this group of people to ask for participation. We think we need about 50 people to make it effective. We can then begin marketing this action type immediately by starting with the marketing of a generic pledge.

## **Outline plan for a blockade**

1. 6 weeks to Month before: research the target- best phone numbers to use, what social media they have, etc. It is also sometimes possible to find the contacts of Directors in the company using companies house, linkedin etc. Think about the general approach to the blockade.
2. 3 weeks before: outline the blockade on a facebook event page (details are not needed at this stage) and market it widely including to the list of pledgees on Compassionate Revolution. INCLUDE a link to a website people should go to in the event that the facebook page is taken down. Include a Poll so people can pick a time slot they are available (you can use doodle instead of facebook if that is taken down).
3. 1 week before: script the interventions you are asking people to make.
4. Day before: update the FB page with the scripts
5. On the day: ensure the event page is staffed so that any feedback on how it is going can be live fed into the process.

## **Example**

Name of page: We want to live: Luton phone blockage.

**Short description**

Join hundreds and soon thousands of people phoning, contacting, facebooking and tweeting Luton on 17th Sept to tell them they want no new runways and not more climate change. On the day of the first mass occupation of Luton (see details here). We want a world young people and our kids can live and thrive in!

**Pinned post/Long description (example, details don’t need to be accurate for this example)**

Climate climate is going to lead to human extinction (need link) unless we act now. Vital habitats (link) – water food and air - essential for provide for human life are going to disappear if don’t dramatically change course. Massive increases in temperature (link) and sea level raise (link) are going to destroy our ability to grow food for billions of people and flood our coastal cities in a matter of decades. If we want a world worth living in for todays young people and for our kids we need to start taking effective action. All this is real – the time for denial is over! Check it out (link). **We want to live**! Instead of this nightmare, we want a world which uses our amazing technologies and human creativity to provide a decent life for everyone on this planet, which works within natures limits rather than trashing them. This is totally possible but only if we can NOW to save our future.

Aviation is a massive cause of carbon emissions and is increasing at a totally unsustainable rate – at over 100% at year – making a mockery of authorities claims to want to stay below the 2C increase in temperature agreed at the Paris conference last year. As with other carbon emissions most of this is due to the top 1% doing most of the flying. **THIS HAS TO STOP – WE WANT NO NEW RUNWAYS**. On the 17th September there will the first ever mass occupation of Luton to show we are serious about stopping more runways and calling a holt to this life destroying expansion. Not everyone can make it to the airport or is able to do direct action but **EVERYONE can make a few phone calls right**! So hundreds of people are going to take an hour out on the 17th to phone a few vital phone numbers to tell Luton we want no more airport expansion and to clog up the their communications. It’s legal, its effective and its super easy! Join us now!

WHAT TO DO…..

Telephone blockades are now being used all round the world now to clog up the actions of the bad guys. It’s simple – it’s effective- and it’s totally legal. You just have 7 ways to contact them: telephone numbers, email addresses, facebook pages, twitter etc – ring them up and keep to the person at the other end on the phone for as long as possible (more details of the numbers and other contacts will be given in due course).

Make a note now of the webpage (*address*) where to can find all the details in case this Facebook page is taken down.

All you have to do at this stage is join this event page and share it with all your friends. We will soon put up a poll and you can tick against the hour you want to do. We need 50 people to do each hour. We will start will 11-12am on Saturday – once that slot is filled we will introduce 12-1pm and so on spreading out over the day and then over the week. This airport will get a real message that no more expansion is going to happen.

So let’s get to it – this is a super exciting plan and there are 1000s of people out there into doing it – your job is to tell them about it – contact your family and friends, your work mates and campaign groups, anyone and everyone you can think of. Remember we want to live – right! It’s really as basic as that – everyones want no more climate change so let’s show people what they can do about it.

Thanks!

## **To resource this**

* We need 5 admins to do the whole thing.
* Set up the FB page with the above texts and get the 5 admins
* Meet on jitsi to organise the points below – no need to physically meet (<https://meet.jit.si/>)
* Get a blurb and link on the main action website page and FB pinned post to our FB page
* Someone put up posts everyone day or two on why aviation is crap and why phoning in is easy and promoting the direct action. And get similar posts on the direct action FB page. Monitor sheet – take off anti climate crap. Respond to comments - shows this page is much alive and buzzing.
* Work on a backup website in case it is taken down (this could be done on Compassionate Revolution) and work out a way of contacting people through messaging on FB in that eventuality
* Everyone promotes it all around their networks and on FB and find people who will do it
* In some cases, people involved in the actual direct action can also be phoning/ tweeting etc while sitting round doing physical blockading etc – double strength action!
* Put up the poll for 11-12PM asap so that we can get that filled out and then move onto the next hour slot once it gets filled up – do posts saying “only 30 more people needed to fill out 2-3pm – this thing is taking off tell your friends!”
* Encourage people to form groups – meet up for lunch/phone party/meet up and everyone passes round the contact details each on separate piece of paper so that if there are say 10 people all 10 of them are phoning a different number at the same time and then once off the phone they pass the sheet onto the next person (bit like pass the parcel). Think up ingenious ways to keep people on the phone.
* Get the phone numbers / social media details out on the page asap – just go onto Luton site and root around till we get them – do research on who has intelligence or capacity to get it –With each number say what is for and some ideas on how to clogg it -eg ask for speak to manager about X.. etc.
* Have party afterwards and plan the next phone blockage to coincide with the next bigger off line blockage. (Note this direct action is part of a strategic pre planned campaign of escalation to bring down the system to get the change we all know is needed – no really! – it has to be done so it’s going to be done!)
* Keep notes on lessons learned so we can improve this template