



ENSURING THERE ARE ENOUGH HOSTS FOR MEETINGS

One aspect of NWR that many members enjoy is the cosy atmosphere of meetings held in a member's home. Most groups hold at least some of their meetings in a member's home.

Local Organisers and programme organisers sometimes report that they struggle to find enough people to host and the responsibility falls on a few, which they perceive as unfair.

It is not mandatory for members of NWR to host, and some members may feel unable to offer this for reasons other than limited space in their homes. No member should feel pressurised to host, or be penalised or excluded because of their inability to host or perform any other role in the management of the group.

What can a local organiser do to encourage more members to host?

Have an open and honest conversation with your group to outline the challenge you are facing finding enough hosts for meetings.

Talk to your group about the situation

- Gently explain that you've noticed that the group is becoming reliant on a small number of members who offer to host.
- Explain that you are aware that some are unable to host for a variety of reasons, but if anyone else is able to host occasionally it would be much appreciated.
- Next, you might want to run through the options your group has if not enough people come forward to host or give people a week or so to come forward to offer to host before moving onto this stage of the conversation.

It is best not to embrace extravagant hosting where hosts may feel obliged to provide home-made biscuits or cakes. In fact, it is NWR policy that only basic refreshments are provided. In some groups it is the host's responsibility to email reminders and lead the discussion. Could these tasks be putting people off hosting? If so, perhaps these tasks could be shared throughout the group?

“We tell hosts that they should only provide basic biscuits - except for special occasions like birthdays, and tea or coffee is sufficient”.



Another factor that could make a member reluctant to host is that they don't think they have a big enough house. Some groups put a limit on numbers for particular meetings where the host isn't able to accommodate big groups, or hold the meeting on subsequent evenings in two members' homes.

Alternative options

If not enough people come forward to host, your group might like to consider holding some meetings via Zoom or use some of the following options –

Alternative locations for NWR meetings

- Look for an alternative location for some of your meetings.
- Does your library or community centre have a room they would let you use?
- If your meetings take place during the day when pubs are quiet, they may section an area off for you
- Town/Village Hall hire
- Some restaurants have a room for private dining that they may let you use for free with the purchase of drinks.
- Would a local hotel let you have use of their lounge?
- If your meeting is in the evening, perhaps a café would stay open late for you?

A last resort would be to reduce the number of meetings – this is obviously the least desirable outcome and should be avoided if possible.

And finally, remember that it isn't the LO's sole responsibility to find enough hosts, it is the group's collective responsibility.