

The Politics and PR of Green Laning for MPV Green Road Users



I'm not sure if it's always been there or if the burst of social media in the last few years has made it more obvious but the increase in the number of vandals driving our Green Lanes is worrying. At a time when we most need people to play the clever PR game, a sudden influx of 'mud pluggers' has begun to wash over the [country](#) and it doesn't even seem to be down to a lack of education. Well not Green Lane education at least.

It is an incredibly simple fact that all our Green Roads/Lanes are under attack from people that would have us banned from them forever. The most common ammunition they fire is that MPV use has damaged them. It seems obvious then that we take every sensible precaution we can **to not present an image** that Green Laners are thugs or vandals.

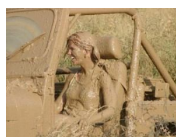
Now I love a tricky lane and a challenge. I love a good photo opportunity and I make the [odd video or two](#) but it has got to the stage, annoying as it may be, that if you want our hobby to survive, you have to think about what you post online.

The people [against MPV](#) use on Green Lanes are sadly, better organised, better funded and greater in number. They are also more than willing to use any underhanded tactic they can employ to meet their aim of having green laning banned. We have to adapt or we will quite literally become extinct.

All the admins in the popular [Reloaded network](#) of facebook Green Laning groups have a zero tolerance for anything of this nature. They certainly lead by example in style and approach. It's common to see the experienced laners on these groups make one attempt to educate, just in case the person bragging of a mud session doesn't know the laning etiquette. After that, if there is no sign of redemption, they are unceremoniously dumped from all pages in the group.

Most experienced laners will know this as common sense but for anyone new to laning, please take the following into account. I can't make you do any of this but my guess is many of the forums and [social networks](#) of laners will not want you along if you can't take these points on-board.

1. The most important decision, do you drive the lane or not? I know if it's muddy and waterlogged, it looks a challenge but churn it up more, get a walker [taking a picture](#) of you wheel spinning through or, heaven forbid, get yourself stuck half way along a lane your damaging by driving it.....you can see where that's going to go. Be prepared and OK with making the decision *not to drive a lane!*
2. I'm not going to go into depth about what is legal and what isn't. Make sure you know where you are and that you are allowed there. Vehicles can be impounded and crushed and it is some of the worst PR green laning can receive. [Trailwise](#) is an excellent resource to help you in this area and access to it can be obtained by [joining CALM](#) (supporting disabled access to the countryside) for a very reasonable £20.
3. [Group numbers should be kept small](#). Now this can be tough and it's down to common sense and your group enjoyment as well. I won't preach about that but for heaven's sake don't take pictures and [video](#) of a big convoy. You might be the most respectable group in this fair land but if the anti's get that footage, and believe me they do, you will be branded something else. Yes, I know it's annoying but use some sense and think what it might look like or could be used for by someone who doesn't enjoy our hobby. My classic is the brew stop when your two groups might meet part way through the day. Perfect photo opportunity isn't it? Well yes it is but if posting it you should include a brief explanation of why there are so many vehicles together.
4. At times, many laners will [fancy](#) a fix of mud and something more challenging but being respectable people you pop off to your local pay and play. Again, brilliant photo opportunity and risk free you might think. It remains a classic tactic of the anti's to take pictures and video from a respectable laners facebook or YouTube channel and portray it as something else. There is only so much you can do to protect against this but I always think if you clearly label what it is, if they do use it, it can in fact become a massive PR own goal for them. Just be clear about what you're posting.



5.



Leading on from that and as a general rule, always think about the media your posting, especially if your images are popular in [the Green Lane](#) world. Posting something on a Green Lane focused page or site will be seen as an indictment of the image. I've certainly seen organisations taking my comments and images out of context and some images just look wrong to start with. This one was posted on a laning page just before Christmas as an example of a nice snowy lane. I'm sure it is a legitimate lane but it had no qualifying text or [description](#) and to all intents and

purposes appears to be a footpath not wide enough for a 4x4 to drive on. Not ideal on a national green laning page.

More and more as a user group, we have to appreciate that we are under constant media scrutiny. It's easy to have the attitude that 'it's our right of way so we will drive it regardless' but that will simply create a backlash of public opinion. Public opinion we dearly need to be in our favour if we are to keep these lanes open.

If intelligent debating isn't your thing and to be honest, on social media it is very much a skill set requiring diplomacy and facts to back up your arguments, don't get drawn into the trap the anti's often lay. A rant by a '4x4 guy' with no qualifying facts, especially one purporting to represent a Green Laning organisation, will be [food](#) and drink to their table. Veiled threats are a foolish mistake and falling right into their trap. As well as potentially landing you



in hot water it will also tar all respectable laners with the same brush. This is a time when we have to lead by example!

It's a shame we have reached this stage where the various MPV laning

groups have very much been caught out in the PR stakes. It's a little worrying that some of them still seem reluctant to turn up to the party on this front but that doesn't mean you, the everyday laner, can't do your part.

I think in the current climate, even within our own green laning user group, if you can't or won't play the PR game you'll find yourself out in the cold quite quickly and possibly even unwittingly become the poster boy or girl for some anti's campaign of discrimination.

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