

Banner Drop

Art Blockers Image.jpg
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Banner Drop Briefing

(please read, particularly for banner drops in more inaccessible locations)

Choosing the right location for your banner drop

When selecting the location where you will organize the banner drop, try to find a place that is:-

- Visible
- Accessible to the activists who will drop the banner
- 'Instagram-able' (should look nice/impressive on photos and videos)
- Safe.

Think about locations with high footfall and traffic. Banners will be dropped on the Friday morning - perhaps in locations where they may remain up for the week or longer.

Recce your location in advance at the time you wish to install and ensure it is safe to position a banner there.

If planning on installing your banner on a bridge over a road - depending on the type of banner you are using please ensure you have a safer Plan B site in mind if the wind is unsafe at your original location. Don't forget to reinforce all of the mounting holes in the banner fabric to tie your rope / zip ties to. You'd be surprised how easy a banner can rip once it's hung and the wind starts blowing. All it takes is extra stitching or clear duct-tape on the reverse.

If installing on road bridges consider the main direction of the traffic, for example around London, banners could be sited above arriving bound carriageways in the early morning as the public leave enter London for work.

Briefing

Before the action can start, plan how many people you will need to hold / install the banner, and where each of them should stand / access the site. During COVID-19, these people should be in a bubble, and perhaps using their daily exercise to install the banner. Please see legal info below.

Ensure that people are prepared to talk to the police / security / public / press should they arrive and check the government website for guidelines during lockdown in advance of the action day.

Shifts - consider staying besides your banner so it does not get stolen and you can do something if there's a risk of it being damaged by the wind. Utilise this time for your daily exercise by the banner! Also consider moving your banner to another location to get more than one shot for social media, for instance if you have a site like an incinerator in your area you could do a shoot in front of it and then take your banner to a road bridge. If you have a strong team you can take your banner on a tour and leave it at a site where it gets most public views for an extended amount of time.

Installation

Here's a link to a [handy instructional video for installing on motorway bridges](#)

A team of 3 - 4 is best for larger heavier banners. For a 10m mesh banner you will need 5-6 people. Vinyl banners should be rolled and mesh banners should be rolled from either end to the middle to make a scroll. On a 10m mesh banner you should fix the centre of the banner first and then roll out on both sides, fixing as you go.(see video above).

If installing above a road, wait for a gap in the traffic so that drivers aren't distracted by the installation. If the location is busy, consider installing very early in the morning. Be aware that wind increases significantly as large trucks pass under the bridge.

Stay beside your banner so it does not get stolen and you can do something if there's a risk of it being damaged by the wind.

If you're not 110% sure it will be safe, hang the banner somewhere else.

Use heavy duty plastic zip-ties and install the banner on the inside of the railings ensuring it is attached along the entire length of the top edge (mounting holes should be no more than 50cm apart for vinyl banners and 1m apart for mesh banners.) Wait for a gap in the traffic and flip the banner over. Fix the remaining edges of the banner in place.

Pedestrian footbridges are easier and safer than road bridges (especially if cycling to location).

Knots. If you don't want to use plastic zip ties, either get someone experienced with climbing or sailing knots or go online and learn a few basic knots such as a figure of 8, bowline and round-turn with two half-hitches. Practice somewhere safe first.

- Round turn and two half-hitches (for tying onto a pole or bar) [instructions](#)
- Bowline [instructions](#)
- 1 Figure of 8 loop (takes more rope, but easier than the bowline) [instructions](#)

Zip Ties are quicker and easier for novices - ensure they are heavy duty plastic zip-ties (you can get reusable ones).

Safety

- If you are hanging your banner above a road on a bridge, safety is the highest consideration. If you're not 110% sure it will be safe, hang the banner somewhere else.
- Use mesh banners for safety in the wind. Banners must be hemmed with eyelets every 100cm and recommended to reinforce eyelets with heavy duty waterproof tape (Tesa extra Power Clear Duct Tape - Waterproof Repair Tape, 10 m x 50 mm or Gorilla Tape). Banners with eyelets from the Art Blockers will not need further reinforcement.
- Ensure all edges of the banner are fixed in place with secure fixings.
- Material strength. Whatever your banner is made from, be sure it is strong enough not to rip in the wind and that attachment points are also strong.
- If installing above a road avoid using padlocks or carabiners which could potentially be dropped. Mesh banners do not need weights when hung from road bridges.
- At the very least tie part of the banner on before you put it on the outside of the bridge. Get the knots at the top of the banner tied with some slack while the banner is sitting safely on the ground at your feet. That way if anything goes wrong or you need a rest, you're not stuck trying to hold the banner so it doesn't fall. Again, practice this somewhere safe.
- If the site allows, ideally install all the top fixings along the length of the banner on the inside of the railing and then flip the banner over to the outside. Ensure the fixings can easily take the weight of the banner and are not in a position that they will rub and wear in high winds.
- Fix the rest of the banner in place, ensuring all edges are secure.
- Wind on motorway bridges can be significant and increases as large vehicles pass underneath. If this makes fixing the banner difficult or you think it might rip, have a backup location in mind. Possibly on some railings besides a road, at ground level.
- Wear facemasks and observe social distancing at all times.

Action Wellbeing

As we are in a lockdown we would advise to find a location where the banner can be dropped from and left, without supervision for as long as possible.

If you do have to stay beside your banner, ensure you are following the government COVID guidelines, take your daily exercise one after the other to check on the banner (particularly if there is risk of it being damaged by the wind). Please see the legal section below.

Pack-down

Ensure that you use the same levels of safety when you remove your banner as you did when you installed it. If your banner is installed above a road, wait for a gap in the traffic to remove it - making sure nothing can fall into the road from the bridge.

Here's a link to a [handy instructional video](#)

Legal Information

If creating a banner in your bubble and hanging a banner from a window at home, or a place that has agreed to hang the banner, there should not be any legal consequences of such actions.

This action is not a gathering or event.

We advise activists to consider the legal implications of staying with the banner during lockdown - there is a risk if dropping the banner and leaving it, that police may seek after you later too.

You will most likely receive a fine if caught by police, as well as other potential charges.

In terms of further potential criminal offences that could be committed by people involved in a Banner Drop action, there appear to be two potential ones that the police have used at protests involving banners in the recent past.

The first is:

Section 22A Road Traffic Act 1988 - Causing Danger to Road Users. The relevant part of this piece of legislation is:

(1) A person is guilty of an offence if he intentionally and without lawful authority or reasonable cause -

(a) causes anything to be on or over a road, in such circumstances that it would be obvious to a reasonable person that to do so would be dangerous.

It goes on to define dangerous: "dangerous" refers to danger either of injury to any person while on or near a road, or of serious damage to property on or near a road; and in determining for the purposes of that subsection what would be obvious to a reasonable person in a particular case, regard shall be had not only to the circumstances of which he could be expected to be aware but also to any circumstances shown to have been within the knowledge of the accused.

So, the key here is to make 110% sure that there is no chance of the action being 'dangerous'. It seems pretty clear that if the banner drop is done safely, as illustrated in the previous sections, there would be no offence committed under this section of the Act. This is an either way offence, so will depend massively on where it is tried (magistrates or crown court). There is a chance of prison time for this (7yrs if tried in crown court).

The second is Criminal Damage:

Criminal Damage is the “deliberate or reckless damage” of property without lawful excuse. The damage does not have to be permanent – people have been accused of this offense after using chalk on paving stones. It includes interfering with property in a manner that causes loss, which could include loss of profit (e.g. by setting off a fire alarm). Defence can often hinge on the ‘lawful excuse’ aspect of this offence. This offence is divided into two: Damage below or above £5,000.

If value of damage is under £5,000 Sentencing starting point: conditional discharge and compensation order (i.e. you may be asked to pay back the costs of cleaning and repair), tried in a Magistrates Court. Maximum sentence: custodial sentence of up to 3 months, £2,500 fine
If value of damage is over £5,000 Sentencing starting point: a suspended sentence* and compensation order, tried in either a Magistrates Court or Crown Court. Maximum sentence when tried in Magistrates Court: £5,000 fine and six month custodial sentence. Maximum sentence when tried in Crown Court: custodial sentence of up to 10 years.

*A suspended prison sentence is the term given to a prison sentence imposed by the court, and then suspended (i.e. ‘delayed’). The court may decide to delay the prison sentence to allow the defendant a period of probation, or to undertake treatment for an addiction, or to meet conditions in the community. If the defendant breaches the terms of the suspended sentence, or commits another offence, they are likely to be sent to prison to serve the original prison term imposed.

Having items with intent to cause Criminal Damage

Activists found on their way to an action with bolt-croppers have been charged with having items with intent to cause Criminal Damage. The most ridiculous arrests we’ve seen for this were for having permanent markers!

The other potential offence is from the old piece of common law legislation - Public Nuisance. Those involved in the Extinction Rebellion October 2019 rebellion will probably remember that this was the legislation the police used to try and disrupt our disruption! Here is a link to [an explanation of public nuisance](#)

In simple terms it is an unlawful act which interferes with the lives, comfort, property or common rights of the general public. In practice, it appears to be the fallback legislation that the police use if they can’t think of anything else to use to deal with issues!

Banner droppers should also do some research about their intended location for placing the banner to check whether there are any local byelaws that apply. For example, dropping a banner from a bridge over the river Thames in London would contravene byelaws that apply to the river. There may be similar byelaws in place for particular bridges, so it is best to check.

All those involved with the banner drop are advised to have completed a Know Your Rights training, understand and adhere to the principle of non-violent direct action, and can seek further information and advice through [Green and Black Cross](#)
