

National Cycle Network Route 81
Report on Signing in Wolverhampton

May 2006

General

This report is based on a ride by the Wolves on Wheels Ranger Group on 11th March 2006, and other observations made since then.

The ride on 11th March 2006 started at Wolverhampton Station and followed the Cross-City Route to Aldersley, then the canal route to Pendeford (with continuation to RAF Cosford to inspect Staffordshire signing, not covered in this report).

Questions of route alignment are not discussed here (except for the last stage to Pendeford where overall signing is affected).

As a test of signing, some riders unfamiliar with the route took part (as recommended by Sustrans).

The majority of the signing is complete and requires no comment. Only problem points are discussed here. These points are through-numbered.

One problem noted at points throughout the ride is the use of round posts for new cycle route signs. These are vulnerable to vandalism, and several signs were found to have been turned. Square posts should be used, or appropriate ant-vandal fixings may be available, especially where round posts from existing street furniture have been used.

Supplementary note: It has also been observed since this ride, that British Waterways have signed the Main Line Canal towpath from Sandwell to Wolverhampton with finger posts and information boards showing Route 81. This is a major improvement on the canal itself, and it would now remain for local authorities to sign main access points to and from the highway where appropriate.

Signing: Cross-City Route (outbound direction)

1. Pavement between Railway Drive and Lichfield Street: This is now shared use, and the two small “No Cycling” discs should be removed.
2. Darlington Street Island: Sign in subway area has been pushed out of position. **(Picture 1).**



Picture 1. Darlington Street Island, subway

3. Darlington Street Island: At the exit from the subway, a route sign to “West Park” points right and along the gardens in the central reservation of Ring Road St Andrews, but this is not the crossing point. A cyclist following this sign to the point opposite Park Crescent would find the Ring Road separated by steel barriers. The sign should point back and left towards the toucan which is the actual crossing point. It may not be possible to correct this by means of temporary Ranger Signs, other than by completely removing or covering the sign. This should be replaced with a new left-pointing sign as a matter of urgency. (Picture 2).



Picture 2. Darlington Street Island, exit from subway

4. Kingsland Road / New Hampton Road junction: There is no sign at the end of Kingsland road indicating that the toucan should be used to cross New Hampton Road.

5. Gibbons Road / Crowther Road mini-roundabout: The sign at the bottom end of Gibbons Road, right-hand side, pointing towards the mini-roundabout, serves no purpose. (Picture 5). A sign indicating the required right turn at the roundabout is needed (see comment on Picture 6 following).



Picture 4. Bottom of Gibbons Road, right-hand side

At the mini-roundabout itself, there is a sign serving for the inbound direction, pointing up Gibbons Road. **(Picture 6)**. A further sign should be added here for the outbound direction, pointing right along Crowther Road. The two together would clearly indicate that the route turns here.



Picture 6. Crowther Road, after mini-roundabout

6. Hordern Road / Wildside: There is no indication on Hordern Road that the route crosses over and proceeds up the ramp. A sign is needed on the left of Hordern Road before the ramp, with diagonal arrow (up and right). Street furniture is available in the appropriate place for this.

Further Route 81 signing at the bottom of the ramp should be added as confirmation.

7. Valley Park: Shortly after the top of the ramp, there is a junction of three paths which needs discreet signing to show which paths are used by Route 81, for both directions. This is known to be a sensitive area, so small Ranger Signs nailed to fencing would be appropriate.

8. Aldersley Stadium: The shared use paths between the stadium and the start of the new path to the canal junction have shared use signing, but no Route 81 number patches or arrows.

Signing: Canal Route

9. Shropshire Union Canal: The current alignment of Route 81 after Autherley Junction is on the towpath to the left of the canal from Autherley Junction, past Water Travel boat moorings, then departing left into the housing estate towards Wayside. There is no signing for leaving the towpath, or throughout the rest of the route (Wayside, Droveaway, Barnhurst Lane) to the Wolverhampton / Staffordshire boundary.

However, we do not recommend adding any signing here at this stage, for the following reason:

It is now known that British Waterways intend to develop the towpath on the right of the canal between Droveaway (turnover bridge) and Pendeford Mill Lane, enabling the route to pass safely under this road and join the South Staffs Route already surfaced and signed on the pavement on the north side. WOWCC has always advocated this route rather than the dangerous crossing from Barnhurst Lane.

In view of this development, WOWCC now advocates even more strongly that it would be logical for Route 81 to use the paths in the public open space on the right hand side of the canal, all the way from Autherley junction to Droveway, thus avoiding all the difficulties of the current alignment. Additionally, the bridge at Autherley Junction crossing over the Shropshire Union Canal should be looked at, since there appears to be an extra lane over this bridge, alongside the paved part, now overgrown but possibly serviceable to take Route 81 directly into the public open space avoiding the barrier on the towpath immediately after the bridge.

Signing: Cross-City Route (inbound direction)

The ride on 11th March did not include riding in the reverse direction, but the following points were noted which affect inbound signing.

10. Aldersley Stadium: Signs from the canal junction and on the shared use tracks to the stadium are needed (see Point 8 above).

The entrance to Valley Park just before the stadium exit to the highway is not signed. Clear signing is urgently needed here.

11. St Andrews Close: After leaving Coleman Street and crossing to join Hordern Road, cyclists use the ASL at the traffic lights to cross over Hunter Street / Craddock Street into St Andrews Close. (In the outbound direction there is a marked cycle lane across Hunter Street).

When positioned at the ASL, the Route 81 sign pointing into St Andrews Close is not clearly visible, even from the far right hand edge of the ASL. A “straight on” route sign is needed either on the street furniture immediately opposite, or at the ASL itself.

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