

# Luton Local Access Forum

## Meeting 5, minutes

### Date and time

Wednesday 10 September 2025 at 6.30pm

### Venue

Luton Town Hall, committee room 4

### Attendees

Russell Cartwright (RC)

Chris Godden (CG), Highway Development Control Manager (Planning), Luton Council

Chloe Houseman (CH), River Lea Project Officer, Luton Council

Councillor Javed Hussain (JH)

Mamnun Khan (MK)

Deni Krevesic (DK), Transport Planning and Policy team, Luton Council

Roy Mccrudden (RM)

Antony Swift (AS), Head of Transport Services, Luton Council

Louis Upton (LU)

Katarzyna Wysocka (KW), Head of Climate Change, Luton Council

### Secretary

Sarah Smart (SS), Rights of Way Officer, Luton Council

### Objectives

To agree the minutes.

To discuss on-going rights of way and access matters.

#### 1. Welcome and apologies

MK welcomed everyone and the following members sent apologies:

John Mardle (JM)

Cherry Newbery (CN)

David Oakley-Hill (DO)

Raheed Salam (RS)

Sam Willis (SW)

SS advised that Sam Willis had resigned.

## 2. Priorities and areas of special interest

### Nature Towns and Cities funding for Luton's nature conservation initiation

KW gave a presentation on the Nature Towns and Cities: Roots to Healthy Places project. Key points from the presentation included:

- Luton have secured almost £1 million of funding
- It is a three-year project that will run until March 2028 followed by a short period of evaluation
- It will focus on:
  - community engagement
  - enabling access to healthy places to enhance well-being
  - improving biodiversity
  - working with partners
- Branding of green spaces will be important
- Three corridors, all passing from Luton out into surrounding areas:
  - one extends north of Luton out into the Chilterns
  - another (The River Lea corridor) extends west out into Houghton Regis
  - the third is Dallow Downs to Blows Downs
- A significant aim is to build people's confidence to get out into the countryside
- Research, tests and trials; the findings of research will be tools for improvement
- Helping communities to share their green spaces
- Removing barriers to access, which will vary according to ethnicity and disability
- Social prescriptions and enabling those with complex needs
- Weed control trials and grazing management review

The presentation gave rise to questions, discussion and comments; key points were:

- Will the project fund more outdoor gyms in parks? Outdoor gyms are funded by public health
- Dogs can be a barrier for some parts of the community; a solution may be a community outreach programme to establish how best to address concerns, possibly education to reduce fears and enhance dog-owner responsibility
- A lack of toilet facilities can be a barrier; JH mentioned the possibility of composting toilets

### River Lea linear park

CH who is project officer for the River Lea linear park gave a short presentation introducing the project.

Key points from the presentation included:

- The park will use existing green spaces
- It aims to connect green spaces to give a walking and cycling route
- Aligns with the local cycling and walking improvement plan (LCWIP)
- Better connects to the town centre to improve active travel
- Links with arts and culture
- Aims to achieve a designation that will provide protection and attract funding
- Open Lea II aims to open up the river and create three more pocket parks
  - by the Galaxy Centre
  - between the library and the hotel, where the disabled car park currently stands
  - in Church Street by Power Court
- Survey and maintain any culverts that are to be kept
- Plant more trees and create rain gardens in the town centre

- Riddy Lane rain gardens where the river is inaccessible through the allotments
- Create circular routes
- Conduct an accessibility audit to look for infrastructure upgrades

The presentation gave rise to questions and comments; key points were:

- Can details of the assessments that form part of this be provided to the LAF? It was agreed that this could be done once ready
- Open Lea II will be transformative and positive for the town centre
- Can we not open up the allotments so that the River Lea can be truly accessible? There are legal barriers to this
- Deculverting at Power Court is still an issue, we should have pressed for a better outcome
- How is the Power Court deculverting progressing? The river diversion has been agreed and work has started, but the stadium planning permission is subject to clarification on flooding

Action: SS to circulate presentation

Action: CH to share draft character and valued landscape assessment when ready

KW left the meeting at 7:20pm; DK joined the meeting at 7:20pm.

### Local transport plan update

DK gave a presentation on the local transport plan (LTP5) and thanked everyone for their feedback. Key points from the presentation included:

- We are about halfway through the process
- The final draft will be in plain English with charts and figures; it will be public facing
- Technical reports will support the final draft and will be available to all for reference
- The final draft will go before the Oversight and Scrutiny Board (OSB) on 20 October 2025
- It will then go to the Executive
- High-level consultation will be for 12-weeks from November 2025 to January 2026
- All materials will be available online
- Results will be collated and approved for publication
- The aim is to publish in March 2026

The presentation gave rise to questions and comments; key points were:

- Will the LAF be able to see all documents in order to discuss this at our meeting in December 2025? All documents from the OSB will be available on the council website, the LAF can discuss this in the December meeting and then provide comments after the meeting

Action: SS to add as a priority item to agenda for December meeting

### 3. Annual report

MK presented the annual report and asked for feedback, especially on the focus for the coming year.

RC asked for numbered paragraphs in all documents for ease of reference.

SS provided information on balanced membership. Members should include:

- users of local rights of way or open access land (walkers, horse riders and cyclists)
- owners or occupiers of land which has a public right of access (the largest being Luton Council)

- representatives of issues relevant to the area, such as tourism, nature and heritage conservation, health, public transport or community safety

AS will seek potential members from the disability task force and from organisations that respond to LTP5.

MN would be happy to connect with potential new members to provide information on the work of the LAF.

It was agreed that the report would be finalised by the end of September 2025.

Action: ALL to send any feedback on the annual report and plan to MN who will finalise the report by end of September 2025

Action: AS to seek potential members from the disability task force and from organisations that respond to LTP5

Action: SS to publish the annual report on the website and send to Natural England

#### 4. Forward plan for 2025 to 2026

The forward plan was included in the annual report (under focus for the coming year).

#### 5. Minutes of the last meeting

Forum members agreed the minutes without amendment.

#### 6. Matters arising

##### Actions completed:

- Kat Wysocka and Chloe Houseman attended the meeting to update the LAF on their project
- DK responded to the comments (on the LTP5 interventions) submitted by the LAF
- SS spoke with Kieran Franzen about the map of the CYCLOPS junction at Austin Road and then updated LU.
- AS provided a contact at The British Horse Society about identifying potential horseriders for the membership of the LAF and SS has made contact
- The removal of the stile is in-hand and the maintenance work at the kissing gate on FP25 has been completed
- SS spoke to Jane Conway and Hertfordshire Council about Offley 039 path maintenance issues and updated CN, the final clearance is due to take place shortly (they were waiting for all bird nests to be vacated)
- The LAF position on consultations is on the webpage
- SS sent .pdf copies of the walking festival fliers to LAF members
- Information about the walking festival was posted on the Step Forward Luton app
- JM represented Luton LAF at the 'Improving access to greenspaces and the Chilterns countryside' stakeholder workshop on 15 July at Futures House.

##### Actions discussed

- AS reported that the updating of the cycle network map is on-going; the checks will be completed by October with the aim of printing and publishing online by December.
- ALL to seek suitable additional members; this is in-hand
- CG reported that although the map of rights of way was ready for uploading on the Council website it needed to complete accessibility checks and possibly needs re-creating as it is off poor quality

## Actions carried forward to the next meeting

- CG to make the map of rights of way accessible and then upload it to the Council website
- RS to share data from young people relating to active travel

## 7. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP)

CG shared a list of consultees from the previous RoWIP, but it needs updating and he asked for feedback from LAF members. It was agreed that the list of consultees would be circulated and suggestions for additions would be made.

RC asked about signposting and LU asked for a realistic signposting policy as part of the RoWIP.

LU offered to draft a list of things the LAF would like to see included. CG mentioned the 2016 draft ROWIP (which was never published) and it was agreed that this would be circulated.

Action: SS to circulate list of consultees for RoWIP and the 2016 draft RoWIP

Action: ALL to advise CG of any groups we should contact directly regarding the RoWIP

Action: LU to draft a list of things the LAF would like to see included in the RoWIP

## 8. Public path orders (PPOs)

CG reported that LU had identified an obstruction on the diverted path from London Road to Newlands Road (FP43) and he will raise this with the contractor for action.

CG reported that LU had kindly provided information on a process to dedicate paths on council owned land and that we would use this for the diverted path at Cemetery extension (FP25) and for Offley FP39 (L045).

Action: CG to follow up on obstruction on path L044

## 9. Public spaces protection orders (PSPOs)

CG reported that this is with the neighbourhood delivery team. They have cleared the paths, apart from the path at Leyhill Drive where a neighbour has erected a shed on the path. They will notify residents of the changes, including the need to remove the shed. This is imminent. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the agenda for the next meeting.

Action: SS to include on agenda for next meeting

## 10. Definitive map modification orders (DMMOs)

### Stanmore Crescent

SS reported that the enforcement process has been completed. The path is now clear and in use.

### Wigmore ward

CG reported that Hertfordshire Council have now made the DMMO for Luton path L045, which runs from Offley 039, via a wooded area to Crawley Green Road, as well as the upgrade in status of Offley path 039 from footpath to restricted byway. The section of path along the boundary that is being removed from the Hertfordshire definitive map has led rise to some objections. Most have been withdrawn following discussion with the council but one remains. Luton Council have sent a letter of reassurance to Hertfordshire Council and hopefully the final objection will be withdrawn.

LU asked about the work needed to upgrade this to a restricted byway and it was agreed that LU and CG would walk the route together so that CG can make a note of any work required.

Action: CG to arrange to walk route of L045 with LU

## Beech Hill and Biscot ward

SS reported that the paths being considered for DMMOs in Beech Hill ward and Biscot ward have been out for informal consultation and that so far almost all responses are favourable. Beech Hill ward has 15 responses to date: 12 for Beech Hill path, user on foot and bike, some very positive including for gated section, but 2 do not feel the gated section is required as a public right of way or would be unsafe if re-opened; 4 for Newark Road path all positive, user on foot and cycle.

Biscot ward has 12 responses to date: 3 for Marlborough path, all positive, user on foot and bike; 5 for Abigail Close, positive, user on foot; 2 for Bath Road, positive, user on foot and bike; 2 for Montrose path, positive, user on foot; L274 Biscot Rd to Dorrington Cl, 2 response, positive, user on foot; L276 Biscot Rd to Ellenhall, 1 positive user on foot; L279 Highbury Rd to Coyney Green, 1 positive, user on foot.

Two responses for Beech Hill path suggest potential for objection, so Beech Hill path will probably be in a stand-alone DMMO while the other paths in the two wards are in omnibus orders, which will save money.

It was agreed that SS would circulate the link for the surveys on these two wards, so that LAF members could respond to the survey if they know any of the routes.

Action: SS to circulate link for Beech Hill and Biscot ward surveys

Action: ALL to complete Beech Hill and Biscot ward surveys, if they know any of the routes

## Barnfield ward

SS reported that the research and surveying work on potential routes in Barnfield ward is about 50% complete.

SS reported that Luton Council have decided to process Wigmore ward next.

RM asked whether, to speed up the process, volunteers could walk some of the simple routes and provide the survey information. A discussion followed, but it was concluded that this was likely to result in more data than could be readily processed by the council team available. It was agreed to continue for the present and review this again in the future.

## 11. Registers

There have been no changes to the registers.

## 12. Planning applications impacting on rights of way

CG mentioned that the planning application for the Vauxhall site may impact on rights of way.

## 13. Ongoing projects and consultations

There are currently no ongoing projects or consultations not already covered.

## 14. Any other business

None.

## 15. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 10 December 2025 from 6:30pm to 8:30pm in the Town Hall, committee room 4.

The meeting closed at 8:15pm.

# Actions

SS to circulate presentation

CH to share draft character and valued landscape assessment when ready

SS to add item to agenda for December meeting

ALL to send any feedback on the annual report and plan to MN who will finalise the report by end of September 2025

AS to seek potential members from the disability task force and from organisations that respond to LTP5

SS to publish the annual report on the website and send to Natural England.

SS to circulate list of consultees for RoWIP and the 2016 draft RoWIP

ALL to advise CG of any groups we should contact directly regarding the RoWIP

LU to draft a list of things the LAF would like to see included in the RoWIP

CG to follow up on obstruction on path L044

SS to include on agenda for next meeting

CG to arrange to walk route of L045 with LU

SS to circulate link for Beech Hill and Biscot ward surveys

ALL to complete Beech Hill and Biscot ward surveys, if they know any of the routes

Actions carried forward from the last meeting

CG to upload the map of rights of way to the Council website

RS to share data from young people relating to active travel