



Luton Local Access Forum - Minutes, meeting 7

Date and time

Wednesday 25 March 2026, 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

Venue

Luton Town Hall, first floor, committee room 4

Attendees

Russell Cartwright (RC), arrived 7.31pm

Konni Deppe (KD), Edible High Town, Luton Health and Nature Partnership, Wildlife Trust (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire)

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

Safa Hassan (SH)

Councillor Javed Hussain (JH), arrived 6.42pm

Mamnun Khan (MK)

David Landau (DL), Friends of People's Park

Aaron Matthew (AM)

Cherry Newbery (CN)

Raheed Salam (RS)

Louis Upton (LU)

Claire Wainwright (CW), Footpath Secretary for Ramblers Lee and Icknield Group and Footpath Officer for Ramblers Bedfordshire Area

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, especially those new to the local access forum (LAF). Information was provided about the forum.

CG informed forum members that he is retiring shortly.

SS reported that Roy Mccrudden has resigned and that Rick Donnelly, had been nominated to represent Parks.

The following members sent their apologies:

- Rick Donnelly (RD), Operations Manager (Facilities & Business Support)
Parks Cemeteries & Crematoriums
- Antony Swift (AS), Head of Transport Services, Luton Council

2. Minutes of meeting 6

Forum members agreed the minutes of meeting 6 (December 2026) without amendment.

3. Matters arising

SS confirmed that most actions are complete or are covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Actions discussed:

- The sequence of actions for the DMMO on L045. The order has been confirmed so sequence no longer needed.
- CN had sent details of the Right to Bid to CG and investigated. The Luton council contact is Jackie Barker, One Public Estate Project Manager. She advised that a Telecoms company is sharing the site. They have been contacted and a response was expected by the end of January 2026. To date CN has received no further information.
- SS reported on the River Lea Linear Park (RLLP)
 - A draft Landscape Characterisation Assessment (LCA) was received for five out of the eleven characters in December. The panel are happy with the consultants' approach, and they are to continue the work. The updated deadline is now March 2026.
 - There have been some delays in the stakeholder workshops, awaiting government guidance on the local plan. The consultants have continued with the draft, without stakeholder input, to prevent major delays. Stakeholder workshops will still be delivered but dates have not been confirmed.
 - The River Lea Linear Park (RLLP) strategy is at the final draft stage after having received comments from internal and external stakeholders. Design consultants are being engaged for the design of the strategy and to review content. Once designed, the strategy will be shared with senior leaders and elected members, before eventually the public. RS has a copy of the draft strategy and agreed to provide that.
 - The RLLP has been included in a proposal by the Natural England to be included in a Northern Chilterns Super National Nature Reserve (SNNR). We won't hear the outcome of this until mid-2026, but if we are successful, it will provide benefits in terms of designation/recognition and strong planning policy for the area, collaborative approaches to protection and management, as well as attracting funding.

- KD reported that biodiversity work is being carried out on the river by Thames Water and Affinity Water.

RS was asked to provide the report on young people's perspective, which he summarised at the last meeting. He will seek approval to share the report.

Action: RS to provide a copy of the draft RLLP strategy.

Action: RS to seek approval to share the report on young people's perspective.

4. Branding

A brief discussion on branding took place. It was agreed that we would use the logo shown at the top of these minutes. However, the logo will be reviewed if a member produces a better alternative.

5. Membership

The forum currently has nine members as Roy McCruden has stepped down. Claire Wainright has just joined. Neville Williams and Graham Simpson have not attended for about a year. Grahame represents Be Active Bedfordshire. Gaps in our membership are horse riders, carriage drivers, and those with disability. Land ownership is also a gap, although Luton Council is considered the largest local landowner. Rick Donnelly is representing Luton Council (Parks). Information was given on how to join.

6. Ongoing projects and consultations

6.1 Local Plan

SS reported that the government has introduced changes to the way that Local Plans are produced which means we are having to review the timetable and process. The draft Local Plan has been delayed and is likely to be several months away, possibly next year. JH explained what is covered by the local plan. CW asked about the constraints on land and the requirements on Luton Council to supply housing, stating that the local plan is important in helping control where development takes place. CN raised concerns about protecting green space, as Wandon park is to be built over, despite being protected in the last local plan. LU stated the need to push for a stronger clause protecting green spaces.

LU reported that research is done for the local plan: the green spaces are audited (open space strategy) and the green and blue infrastructure is studied. Both studies were looking for feedback, which the LAF provided. Key points were:

- that the LAF need to look at the draft reports when they become available
- that the reports be presented to the LAF

A discussion followed covering:

- inaccessible nature reserves, such as Slaughters Wood
- the local nature recovery strategy
- the lack of green space versus the increasing density of population in the town centre

- Pride and Place funding for Central and Marsh Farm areas of Luton (£40 million total over ten years) with neighbourhood boards focussing the use of the funding
- wider spaces, especially Natural England opportunities and the North Chilterns SNNR

It was agreed that we would write to both MPs requesting a meeting to discuss the Pride and Place funding, in particular consultation with local residents on green and blue spaces.

It was agreed that we would invite Jo Calwell, the new Luton Council Head of Climate Change to attend the next meeting.

Action: SS to write to both MPs on behalf of the LAF requesting a meeting.

Action: SS to invite Jo Colwell, Head of Climate Change, Luton Council to next meeting.

6.2 LTP5

LU reported that the LAF provided feedback on LTP5. Key points were:

- Luton faces enormous challenges with transport
- The report contains, 225 policy measures to improve things, largely to shift people up the sustainable transport hierarchy, from private cars to buses, cycling or walking
- 16 policies are currently being worked on
- Priorities for other policies is unclear, possibly to allow a flexible response to funding
- Collaboration and engagement are vital if people are to change their behaviour
- There has also been public consultation

Action: SS to ask for an update on LTP5 for the next meeting and an action plan for implementation.

JH left the meeting at 7.53pm.

6.3 Wandon Park paths

SS reported that the LAF provided advice to Department for Transport on the stopping up of paths in Wandon Park.

6.4 Cycle map update

SS reported that the cycle map has been reviewed by members of the LAF and their comments have been incorporated where possible. The map is now with the printers, and the artwork should be completed for final review, by the end of March 2026.

6.5 Nature Towns and Cities workshop

RS reported that £1million has been awarded for 'Roots to healthy places' to connect people with green and blue spaces. There are three themes around access:

- River Lea
- Dallow Downs
- Bradgers Hill

The workshop looked at what can be done elsewhere to connect people to nature and to communicate better with communities. A walk along the River Lea for workshop participants. KD and SS will be attending.

6.6 L043 maintenance issues

CG reported that no progress has been made.

6.7 Digital rights of way map

CG reported that this is on hold.

7. Definitive map modification orders (DMMOs)

7.1 Beech Hill ward

SS reported that a total of nine routes were recommended for recording on the definitive map in this ward. A deed of dedication has been drafted for three routes in Kingsway Park and is awaiting review internally. The DMMO will be processed once the deed of dedication has been confirmed.

7.2 Biscot ward

SS reported that a DMMO is being prepared to cover ten routes in this ward.

7.3 Barnfield ward

SS reported that preparations are being made for the consultation on 50 routes in this ward. The number of routes makes consultation in this ward challenging and it will be split into four areas for the consultation to make the process easier.

7.4 Central ward

SS reported that nine routes have been surveyed. A further 5 routes remain to be surveyed, including the route along the busway, which crosses into other wards and will be more complex.

7.5 Streatley RB23 and RB41, A6 to County Boundary

SS reported that Central Bedfordshire Council have issued a notice of a DMMO. The order is to upgrade the bridleway to a restricted byway. The order has been made but has no effect until and unless confirmed.

This claim began several years ago and there were several meetings and discussions with Trevor Tween and Steve Battlebury. Jane Conway is also aware. The legal order is not seeking to make any changes to anything on the ground, it will record the rights as restricted byway on the Definitive Map which could mean use by

non-mechanically propelled vehicles – horse and cart. Trevor agreed with the making of the order providing there were no changes to what is there currently. It was felt that there would not be significant use by carriage drivers so as to cause any damage to the site. Central Bedfordshire Council has no plans to remove bollards at the A6 end at the present time.

7.6 Luton RB45, Selsey Drive to Crawley Green Road

SS reported that a notice of the confirmation of the Hertfordshire County Council order has been posted at the Town Hall. The advertising period ends on 26 March 2026.

CW asked whether the definitive map project was confined to the excluded area and SS confirmed that additional routes outside the excluded area were also being included where identified.

CW asked whether Luton Council has a backlog of applications for DMMOs as is found in many county councils. SS confirmed that only one application was outstanding from the British Horse Society (BHS) for a route from the A6 on the northern boundary of the borough. This may be dealt with by Central Bedfordshire Council when they process other routes in that area as part of development along the borough boundary.

RC asked about the workload and whether the council would complete the project if the cut-off date were to be repealed. CG confirmed that the council's intention is to complete the project, but this may not be on record. It was agreed to keep monitoring progress and that a tabulated report would be requested for future meetings to highlight changes and progress.

Action: SS to produce a tabulated progress report for the next meeting

8. Rights of way improvement plan (ROWIP)

CG has nothing to report, but will organise a presentation for the next meeting.

Action: CG to organise a presentation for the next meeting

9. Public path orders (PPOs)

Nothing to report.

10. Public spaces protection orders (PSPOs)

CG explained that these routes were subject to gating orders, which had expired. He reported that Beech Hill and Whitwell Close paths are now open; Leyhill Drive path remains blocked by a shed and a legal letter is being prepared for the shed owner.

11. Registers

SS reported that there has been no change in the registers.

12. Planning applications impacting on rights of way

CG reported that the LAF might wish to review the Vauxhall site planning application when it comes in. He will endeavour to notify his successor about informing the LAF planning applications that impact on rights of way. CW stated that as The Ramblers

are a statutory consultee, she should be made aware of any planning applications and can make these known to the LAF.

KD asked about the path through Gillam Court, at the bottom of Hitchin Road, which has been closed off with a high fence. CG agreed to investigate and feedback to the LAF.

Action: CG to review planning application for Gillam Court regarding the footpath through the development.

13. Any other business

LU requested a presentation on Wigmore Park including information on when the existing paths and park closes and the new paths and park open.

Action: SS to arrange for a presentation on Wigmore Park.

DL and CW mentioned the Ramblers Don't Lose Your Way map of lost paths. They asked whether SS was using that to inform the DMMO project. SS was unaware of the project.

Action: SS to investigate the Ramblers Don't Lose Your Way map of lost paths.

MK thanked CG for his contributions to the LAF.

14. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 17 June 2026, Luton Town Hall, committee room 4, 6.30pm to 8.30pm

What is the Luton Local Access Forum (LAF)?

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on Highway Authorities for any area to establish a LAF for that area.

The main purpose of Luton LAF is to give advice on the improvement of public access in Luton for open-air recreation, responsible enjoyment and other related matters. The Luton LAF provides advice on access within the Luton Borough boundary and land outside Luton that is owned, managed or controlled by Luton.

Officers:

Chair: Mamnun Khan

Vice-chair: Louis Upton

Secretary: Sarah Smart



Actions

- RS to provide a copy of the draft RLLP strategy.
- RS to seek approval to share the report on young people's perspective.
- SS to write to both MPs on behalf of the LAF requesting a meeting.
- SS to invite Jo Colwell, Head of Climate Change, Luton Council to next meeting.
- SS to ask for an update on LTP5 for the next meeting and an action plan for implementation.
- SS to produce a tabulated progress report on DMMOs for the next meeting.
- CG to review planning application for Gillam Court regarding the footpath through the development.
- SS to arrange for a presentation on Wigmore Park.
- SS to investigate the Ramblers Don't Lose Your Way map of lost paths.