

Luton Local Access Forum Annual Report 2025-26

1. Chair's note

I am delighted to present the second Annual Report of the Luton Local Access Forum (LLAF).

Over the past year, the Forum has continued to play an important role in advising Luton Borough Council (LBC) and other stakeholders on improving access to the outdoors, supporting active travel, and ensuring that the needs of residents are considered in planning and development decisions. Our diverse membership brings together users of public paths, landowners, community representatives, and those with a shared interest in making Luton a more accessible and enjoyable place for everyone.

One of the most significant areas of our work has been supporting the mapping of Rights of Way within Luton's historic Excluded Areas. This long-term project is vital in identifying and protecting paths that the public has a legal right to use and ensuring they become visible on definitive and Ordnance Survey maps. We are encouraged by the progress made across Beech Hill, Biscot and Barnfield wards, with 78 paths currently advancing through the process. We also welcomed the addition of a new Restricted Byway within the borough and continued to provide advice on the management and reopening of paths affected by Public Spaces Protection Orders.

The Forum has remained actively engaged in shaping the strategic direction of the borough. We have worked closely with officers responsible for the Local Transport Plan (LTP5), and many of our recommendations have been reflected in the emerging document. We have also provided detailed input into the Local Plan consultation process and supporting studies, consistently championing the importance of active travel, accessible green and blue spaces, and the protection of Luton's nature assets for future generations.

Members have also contributed to several projects that seek to improve access to nature and outdoor recreation, including the Nature Towns & Cities programme, Roots to Healthy Places, and the development of the Lea Linear Park. These initiatives recognise the important role that accessible green spaces play in supporting health, wellbeing, and community cohesion.

As advocates for public access, we have continued to scrutinise major development proposals and infrastructure projects that could affect walking, cycling, and recreation. Whether considering changes associated with Wandon Park, reviewing transport improvements in Bury Park, or monitoring future town centre, airport and industrial developments, the Forum has consistently sought to ensure that access, safety and sustainability remain central considerations.

The coming year will present both opportunities and challenges. We will continue to support the development of a new Rights of Way Improvement Plan, engage with the adoption of LTP5 and the emerging Local Plan, and monitor major developments across the borough. We also intend to broaden our membership and increase

awareness of the Forum's work, particularly among underrepresented groups, to ensure that a wide range of perspectives continues to inform our advice.

I would like to thank all Forum members for their time, commitment and expertise throughout the year. Special mention goes to LBC Officer Chris Godden, who has retired, for all his help in getting LLAF off the ground, and meticulous attention to detail. Thanks also to Cllr Javed Hussain, for his support to LLAF, attending every meeting and providing an excellent overview of roads and transport development. We look forward to engaging with the new portfolio holder Cllr Javeira Hissain. I am also grateful to Sarah Smart, our Secretary and Rights of Way Officer, and to officers and councillors across Luton Borough Council who have positively engaged with the Forum. Their support has enabled the LLAF to make a meaningful contribution to improving access and connectivity across our borough.

Together, we remain committed to ensuring that Luton is a place where residents and visitors can enjoy safe, accessible and sustainable opportunities to connect with the outdoors and with each other.

Dr Mamnun Khan
Chair, Luton Local Access Forum

2. What is the Luton Local Access Forum?

2.1 Background

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on Highway Authorities for any area to establish a LAF for that area. In the past Luton was part of a Joint Local Access Forum with Central Bedfordshire. Luton withdrew from the JLAF in 2022, believing that a LAF focussed on Luton would be more effective in dealing with the challenges in the Borough. Once a Rights of Way Officer (Sarah Smart) had been appointed Luton started the process of forming the Luton LAF.

2.2 Purpose and goals

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

3. Officers and members

3.1 Officers

Chair: Mamnun Khan
Vice-chair: Louis Upton
Secretary: Sarah Smart

3.2 Members

The total number of LLAF members, at 17 June 2026, was 13, including:

Mamnun Khan (Chair), Louis Upton (Vice Chair), Russell Cartwright, Konni Deppe, Councillor Javeria Hussain, David Landau, John Mardle, Sam Mostyn-Willis, Cherry Newbery, David Oakley-Hill, Raheed Salam, Graham Simpson and Claire Wainwright.

Neville Williams, Roy McCrudden and Councillor Javed Hussain left the forum during the last year.

Members represented:

- Users of public paths and access land
- Owners and occupiers of land with public paths/access land
- Other interests

4. Meetings

Minutes and meeting papers are available on [Local Access Forum](https://luton.gov.uk/local-access-forum) on Luton.gov.uk

4.1 Meetings held during 2025/26

- 10 September 2025
- 10 December 2025
- 25 March 2026
- 17 June 2026

5. Advice and activity

The LLAf's remit to improve public access is impacted by a broad range of activities in Luton. Here are details of some of the important things we've reviewed and given advice on.

5.1 Rights of Way

For a large Borough, Luton has few Rights of Way (RoW) because when RoWs were first mapped in the 50s, most of the town was "Excluded". It's important to map the Excluded Area so that paths the public has a right to use will be visible on Ordnance Survey maps. Luton has started on this with the aim of completing by 2031. This is an important access initiative which the LLAf supports and reviews at each meeting. So far surveying, evidence gathering and informal consultation is largely complete on 2 wards (Beech Hill and Biscot) and Barnfield has been surveyed and is being prepared for consultation. A total of 78 paths in the 3 wards are progressing.

Luton gained a new RoW: a "Restricted Byway" running from the edge of the borough near Rochford Drive to Crawley Green Road. A group from the LLAf visited the new path with a manager from Highways to discuss how the path should be opened for use.

Public spaces protection orders (PSPOs) can be used to close problem paths. The closures are reviewed periodically with input from the LLAf. As a result, two paths have been re-opened and a third should re-open after action from the council.

5.2 Luton policy documents

LLAF continued to work closely with the team developing the Luton Local Transport Plan version 5 (LTP5) and many of our suggestions have been built into the draft prepared for Council approval.

Luton Local Plan development was interrupted by changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. Since the process has restarted LLAF have provided input on the “Community Involvement Paper” a scoping consultation for the Local Plan. We provided detailed feedback on the objectives and emphasised our priorities for the plan:

- Active Travel - the Local Plan policies must support LTP5.
- Access to Green and Bluespace – In some areas access is poor. Opportunities for new space are extremely limited and what we have may be under threat.

We also provided input on two studies commissioned to support Local Plan development: “Open Space Strategy” and “Green & Blue Infrastructure”. We believe these studies will provide valuable information on where greenspace needs to be protected in the Local Plan.

5.3 Access Improvement Projects

Members of the LLAF have been involved in several projects aimed at improving access and participation:

- “Nature Towns & Cities - Roots to Healthy Places”: a key focus of this project is to improve the health and wellbeing of all communities by increasing their access to parks and countryside.
- The “Lea Linear Park” will improve connectivity for people and habitats into and within the park, increasing knowledge and understanding of the River Lea corridor to connect with local communities.

5.4 Other proposals affecting access

Paths and access land are constantly threatened by developments. One of the strengths of the LLAF is that its diverse membership can spot and respond to these issues.

In January this year, LLAF provided advice on proposed changes to paths as a result of the development of Wandon Park. We were concerned because paths across the park were used by many children to walk to school and it was not clear that the future network of paths and streets had taken this into account. It is vital that walking routes will be safe and pleasant to use.

In November 2025, LLAF provided advice to LBC on the proposed Bury Park Traffic Improvements trial, offering support while also asking questions about traffic displacement and meeting accessibility needs. We hope to see significant enforcement of existing traffic rules and a successful deployment of an effective red route scheme.

6. Focus for the coming year

To enhance the impact and long-term viability of the LLAF we will:

1. Recruit more members. We aim to widen our representation by recruiting members with a disability, horse-riders, landowner representatives, as well as more generally anyone who wants to help shape issues of human geography in Luton.
2. Publicise the work of the LLAF more widely on LBC's website, on social media and through member networks.
3. LBC have commissioned a consultant to develop a new Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This document has an important interaction with the LLAF's aims so we will work closely with them on this.
4. In addition, we will work with LBC on the two key policy documents:
 - We need to ensure that the adopted Local Transport Plan incorporates our input.
 - Local Plan: we will respond at each consultation phase as well as reviewing supporting documents relating to access.
5. We will continue to scrutinise Major Developments to ensure that "access" is taken into account. For example:
 - Major developments in the centre of town include Power Court, The Stage in Bute Street and Luton Station. These will have a big impact on access in, around and to the centre of Luton.
 - There are a couple of industrial developments south-east of town which we will continue to review: the former IBC site at Kimpton Road (Luton Gateway) and Prologis Park next to Windmill Road (this site should open up a stretch of the Lea).
 - Airport development means "moving" Wigmore park further from town. We need to make sure the new park is a great facility for people and nature and that there are safe, easy car-free ways to get there.
 - As well as the Airport, there are other big housing developments North and East of the Borough. It is vital that "car-free" access is critical for workers as well as passengers.

We will continue to support the project to map the Excluded Area (finding RoW and adding them to the Definitive Map). Once we have more experience with the practicalities of listing RoW, it is likely LLAF will look to influence which paths should be prioritised.

We will also support Luton's initiatives to improve access and connections to nature across our communities including the "Roots to Healthy Places" project and the river Lea linear park.