



Who are the Forum members?

Steve Bumstead
 (Chairman)
 Angela Barker (Central
 Bedfordshire Council)
 Dave Taylor (Luton
 Borough Council)
 Jon Balaam
 Tom Chevalier
 Julian Clark-Lowes
 Andy Gerrard
 Brian Golby
 Pauline Hey (Vice Chair)
 Jason Jordan
 Angela Kirby
 Andy Knight
 Marion Mustoe
 Andrew Pym
 Gillian Sharp
 David Simkins
 John Tyler
 Tony Welch
 Rosalyn Whisker



Large carved chair at
Rushmere Park

Annual Review 2011-2012

A word from the JLAF Chairman – Steve Bumstead

This is my first year as Chair of the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Joint Local Access Forum having been a member of the forum and its predecessor, the Bedfordshire LAF, for a number of years. I have been fortunate to have been supported by a very able vice chair and committed members who use their expertise for the benefit of the Forum.

Through a combination of our regular meetings and very effective sub group meetings, the forum has continued to provide advice to our Local Authorities and other agencies. The sheer quantity of consultations, which the forum has been invited to respond to, has at times been overwhelming, but it is good to see that more and more people are aware that the forum should be consulted and that they appreciate the responses that we provide! We just need to be able to find more time to pull the responses together around the challenges of our other jobs.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first year as Chair of the forum and look forward to continuing as Chair for another year.

What is the Central Bedfordshire and Luton JLAF?

The Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF) is an independent statutory advisory group which works on improving public access to land in Central Bedfordshire and Luton for all types of open air recreation. This group of local volunteers has attended six meetings over the last year to discuss outdoor access matters and many of the issues arising from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The forum is made up of people with wide experience of a diverse range of outdoor access interests. The members are drawn from countryside user groups, farmers and land managers and other relevant interests. There is a requirement to have a balance of interests to enable the group to develop actions which will improve outdoor access in Central Bedfordshire and Luton for all.

Consultations and Advice

National Planning Policy Framework

Central Bedfordshire Council - Local Area Transport Plans

Rushmere Park – Framework document

Luton Borough Council – Proposed Gating Order, Leyhill Drive

Central Bedfordshire Council – Outdoor Access Improvement Plan

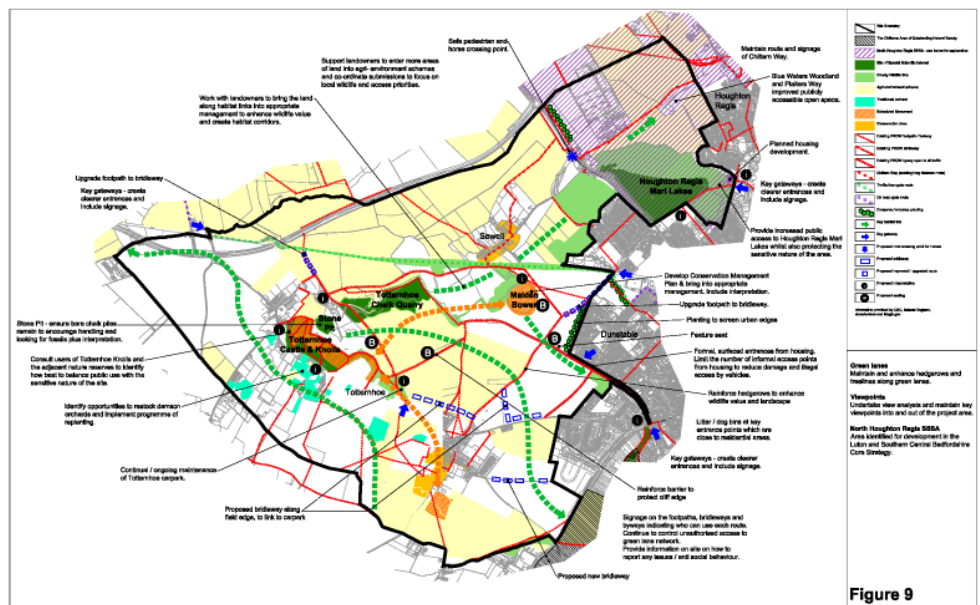
JLAF members have continued to provide input to the Central Bedfordshire Council Outdoor Access Improvement Plan (OAIP):

- Attendance at an Action Planning Workshop to provide input on the suggested actions that would achieve the aims within the draft OAIP.
- Suggestions for flagship schemes that could be included within the OAIP.

The sub group will continue to provide input until the new plan is adopted.

Totternhoe Vision Plan

Central Bedfordshire Council presented the draft vision plan for Totternhoe which is being developed as a partnership between the Groundwork Trust, the Wildlife Trust, the National Trust, the British Horse Society and Bedfordshire Police. The Totternhoe area is a special area providing a valuable resource for a variety of users, but it also has a number of issues which the plan is seeking to address. The forum welcomed the plan, especially the focus on biodiversity, the creation of new links between the existing routes and the potential for a new crossing over the A5 once the A5-M1 link road is built.



TOTTERNHOE VISION PLAN

You are welcome to our meetings

Members of the public are always welcome to attend our meetings to learn more about what we are doing to improve access to the outdoors in Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

Future meeting dates and times, agendas and minutes can be found on the website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Our meetings this year

16/05/11 Gateway Centre, Dunstable Downs

11/07/11 Rushmere Country Park, Heath and Reach

13/09/11 Luton Hoo Estate, Luton

14/11/11 Priory House, Chicksands

18/01/12 Priory House, Chicksands

21/03/12 Fire Station, Dunstable

Central Bedfordshire Council – Rights of Way and Definitive Map updates

The forum has been very pleased to receive regular updates from the Rights of Way and Definitive Map team at Central Bedfordshire Council on progress made over the last year. This has included information on BVPI results, Public Path Orders, TCPA Orders, Definitive Map Modification Orders and progress on the strategy to replace stiles with gates/gaps. This is a key priority for the forum which has worked hard over recent years to promote least restrictive access on rights of way. It is good to see the number of stiles reducing through a combination of the hard work of rights of way officers, amenable landowners and committed volunteers.

Inputs to Local Authority policies

A number of draft local authority policies have been reviewed by the forum over the past year which include:

- Luton Borough Council: policy on access barriers and bollards on cycle tracks, footpaths and footways
- Central Bedfordshire Council: Rights of Way Enforcement Policy
- Central Bedfordshire Council: Rights of Way Applications Policy
- Central Bedfordshire Council: Rights of Way Ploughing and Cropping Policy.

It has been very pleasing to see that comments made by the forum have been included in the final versions of the documents.

JLAF visits

The forum meets at a variety of venues to provide opportunities for members to visit interesting sites and to balance travel times for members. During the summer months we try to hold meetings at venues where a short walk can be undertaken before the meeting. This year the forum visited Dunstable Downs and Rushmere Country Park where members were able to see recent developments at the sites. A very interesting meeting was also held at Luton Hoo Estate where members were able to see how the estate balances modern environmentally friendly farming techniques with historic precedence to create a profitable and bio diverse farm.



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**Youth Parliament**

Our forum Chair, Steve Bumstead attended a meeting of the Youth Parliament to get ideas from them as to how to get more involvement from young people on the forum as this has been an area that has been hard to recruit for. It was very interesting to hear from them about the things that would encourage them to use the countryside more which included organised events, fishing access, bush tucker, camping facilities and raves! They also cited lack of transport as an issue with getting into the countryside as they had to rely on mums/dads. It was agreed that rather than inviting youth parliament members to our forum meetings, that forum members would attend their meetings as this was more likely to be successful.

Green Infrastructure Consortium Local Nature Partnership Bid

The forum supported a bid from the Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium for a Local Nature Partnership Development Grant bid. This was successful with £19k of funding received. This enabled the GIC to broaden its activities and extend into additional sectors which has resulted in a more collaborative, evidence based approach to improving the green infrastructure network that people, the economy and ecosystems depend on.

Huddle

Anna Mangini, our JLAF coordinator attended one of our forum meetings to provide an overview of huddle to our members. It was felt that this will only be a success if all members of the forum are able to have access and a letter was written to Natural England to this effect. In the meantime two members and the secretariat signed up to receive a login and training. Huddle is now being used by these members, but its benefit will be limited until all members can have access as information posted on there can only be retrieved by those with a login.

£5m for Luton Borough Council from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund

The forum was very pleased to hear that in July 2011, Luton Borough Council was awarded £5 million from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, covering the period up to March 2015.

The grant will be used to fund a variety of projects to improve walking and cycling routes and public transport infrastructure in the town, as well as publicity materials and other incentives to reduce car use for both journeys to work and personal travel. Recent experience from similar initiatives in other towns and cities has shown that, on average, this can reduce car trips by 10%-12%. During 2011-12 the grant was used to fund :

- Improvements to the section of the National Cycle Network route 6 through the Limbury meads area of the town
- New cycleways and crossings on Sundon Park Road
- Development of website that includes information and maps on walking and cycling (www.travelluton.co.uk)
- An updated leaflet on the Lea Valley walk through the town
- Officer time on a range of Initiatives to encourage sustainable travel to school, work and for personal travel