

Lowton East Neighbourhood Development Forum (LENDF)

Contact Email Address: lendf99@gmail.com

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 14 April 2025 at Lowton Social Club

PRESENT:

Chair	Prof. Graham Wardle (GW)
Secretary	Liz Brown (LB)
Treasurer	Irene Thomson (IT)
Minutes Secretary	Minutes taken on this occasion by Irene Thomson

Councillor	Garry Lloyd (GL)
Councillor	Jenny Gregory (JG)

Apologies:

Councillor Mike Smith
LENDF Minutes Secretary Gill Turner
LHSRG Secretary Gill Dickenson
Ed Houlton

Guests:

Luke Brown, Lowton Community Hub
James Ridyard, East Leigh AFC

No. of attendees = 18

1. Welcome and previous minutes

Minutes not read out at meeting, but copies have been sent out by email and posted on the Facebook page and will be put on the LENDF website in due course.

New visitors and guests were welcomed to the meeting.

2. AGM

LENDF's Chair (GW), started the meeting with the AGM.

It was announced to those present that three members were willing to continue their roles.

- Graham Wardle was nominated to continue as Chair by Kath Houlton and seconded by Cllr Garry Lloyd.
- Liz Brown was nominated to continue as Secretary by Kathleen Johnson and seconded by Cllr Garry Lloyd.
- Irene Thomson was nominated to continue as Treasurer by Kath Houlton and Cllr Jenny Gregory.

Two positions were currently available.

- **Social Secretary.** Kath Houlton put herself forward as a candidate and this nomination was agreed by Kathleen Johnson and seconded by Tim Ashcroft. Kath was welcomed to the committee.
- **Minutes Secretary.** Gill Turner had recently contacted the Chair with a request to step down. Many thanks go to her for her hard work over many years. Notification of the vacant position had not yielded any response, but at the meeting a candidate came

forward. Margaret Mitchell is willing to do the minutes for each LENDF meeting but would need her written notes to be typed up. Kath Houlton volunteered to do this task. All agreed and Margaret was welcomed to the committee.

Irene Thomson, Treasurer, then read out a financial report of the activities during 2024. Due to the changes in policy at Wigan Council regarding how Brighter Borough monies is administered, LENDF are no longer involved in the process of submitting applications on behalf of other organisations/groups as they now need to make their own applications direct to the Council. A copy of the report was available at the meeting for anyone to view. At the close of the meeting, it was then handed to the Chair.

3. Pensioners Hut – Luke Brown, Lowton Community Hub

Luke Brown gave detailed information about the recent demolition and land clearance of the green pensioners hut.



The structure dates back to the 1950s and was well used by the local community, by both the young and older generations.

The structure was initially used by the Community Hub as a storage facility but the condition worsened especially when the roof collapsed in the winter of 2024, and it was broken into a number of times via rotten wall panels with lots of additional damage caused.

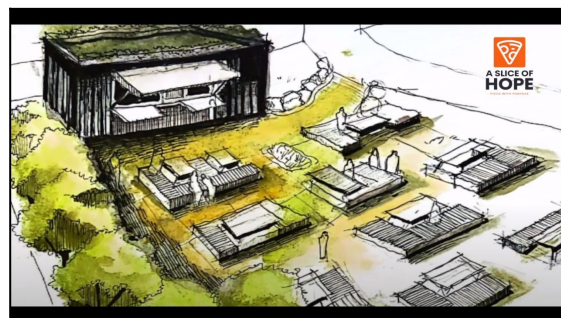
As the structure was serviced by both electricity and water mains, the demolition was needed on safety grounds. Upon removal there was 120 tons of hard standing installed.

The Community Hub now have proposals for a pizzeria to be created in its place which will be called A Slice of Hope.

Three shipping containers will be merged together (cladded and insulated) to create the pizzeria and windows will be installed, plus a serving hatch for the outdoor seating area which will be on astroturf with garden planters. The front area of the Community Hub needs its 'kerb appeal' improving as well. There are plans for new fences, cherry trees, bulb planting and creation of attractive planters for all year round display.

The proposals include culinary training, educational spaces, community group access for running classes i.e. toddler groups. A commercial sized pizza oven has been acquired and many of the food products will be sourced from local farm shops. Opening is planned for June/July 2025 with Friday and Saturday nights only at the moment but possibly other nights as well.

Menu suggestions required (ie Dojo Pizza), or unusual topping ideas, plus any residents with experience in running a pizzeria are welcome to join the Pizza Hub Steering Group.



Questions to Luke from those present:

**Income v Costs ?*

As a social enterprise the Community Hub will be able to repay the investments made but will ensure any charges to the community for using the facility will be kept to a reasonable and affordable level.

Running the pizza oven has had a cost analysis as it is the most expensive portion of the project.

**Youth Club Activities?*

As well as the current activities on the agenda for the Youth Club, there will also be an opportunity to encourage youngsters, their families, and other groups to 'meet and eat' within the seating area. The area is secure as it is within the fencing of the Community Hub. The Leigh Youth Hub will be encouraged to link up with this new Lowton venue, but the main target groups will be in the Lowton/Golborne/Newton areas.

Plans will be drafted to tie in with a celebration of refurbishing Oaklands Park in the summer of 2025.

**Parking?*

There is sufficient parking at the rear of the Community Hub.

**Takeaway?*

Yes, it is planned that pizzas can be bought from A Slice of Hope and eaten elsewhere. Additional public waste bins will be needed, and Cllr Garry Lloyd made a note to enquire about obtaining them.

**Tasting Volunteers ?*

Yes please. There will be a soft launch prior to the official one.

For more information see the Community Hub's website <https://lowtoncommunityhub.co.uk/>

4. Civic Field and Carpark – James Ridyard, East Leigh AFC

James Ridyard gave an update regarding extending the carpark for the club. Quotes have been obtained to convert and expand the area that is currently covered in stoneage to **either** black asphalt **or** a system of plastic grids which grass can grow through. The grassed plastic grids are very expensive (£70,000+) but offer better drainage and look better when the carpark is empty. The asphalt is much cheaper (£20,000+) but not as nice to look at so a mound would be created where it borders the road to partially hide it from the houses opposite. Planters would also be added to further disguise the carpark from residents and contain flowers to add to the biodiversity of the area. The extended carpark may necessitate the two apple trees being cut down. Plans haven't yet been finalised. Environmental grants are not available to a sports charity so they would get no financial help for the more expensive option (although creating a 'Friends Of the Civic Fields' CIC

might?) Most people at the meeting agreed that an extended carpark would help alleviate on-road parking but there was disagreement on how it could be done.

The wooded areas of trees/bushes that line the car park are in need of attention, especially as some trees are old/dead and could be a hazard. These will be removed and the bushes trimmed back or removed as well. All resulting plant material will be chipped and used as a mulch elsewhere on the site. A new pathway will be created giving the community and families attending matches a much safer and attractive area to use. The openness will also help to reduce litter dumping and anti-social behaviour. In time, another new path will be put all the way around the field so people can enjoy walking without getting too muddy. The council have just installed kissing gates around the Civic Field and Redrow have provided money to install a small fence along their section to cut down off road bikes making a mess of the field.

Questions to James from those present:

**Will the carpark be an eyesore when not in use?*

James intends to have more usage of the carpark during the club's events once it's extended. Also see above for raised mounds and planters to help disguise it.

**How can you prevent cars parking on the street?*

James has tried to address this with constant reminders to club members and visitors to avoid parking in the street near residents' properties. Signage has been produced on a number of occasions, but they get stolen each time.

When the proposals for the new car park are in draft format then local residents will be further consulted and able to view the plans.

**As the club grows, will it get more income?*

Yes, but so will the outgoings. The current costs per year are £140,000, and only a small profit is made to plough back into the club. New memberships and money raising events are planned.

**Can 'parking lines' be painted on the road?*

Not the responsibility of the club as they only lease the land itself from the Council. They have little control regarding parking other than the car park itself. Also putting lines on a carpark means paying higher rates!!

**Emergency Services have difficulty using Hesketh Meadow Lane as it's already narrow and the additional vehicle parking can cause problems.*

James agreed but said the club have done as much as they can. Parking instructions are sent to parents to advise parking efficiently and considerately, but many away team parents don't read them. There are not enough club volunteers to do extended car parking duties. The work done by the council to install double yellow lines on the junction of Oaklands Rd and Burnsall Ave have meant turning into these roads via Hesketh Meadow Lane is easier.

5. Love Lowton – Linda Graham

Linda is Chair of Lowton West Residents Group, and they have started a Love Lowton campaign with litter picking events. **They are looking for more people to join their group of pickers.** They have 6 members and currently pick most Wednesday mornings, alternating 2 groups of 3 pickers each week. Please let them know of Lowton grot spots!

The Lowton West Group can be contacted via the <https://lowtonwestresidents.weebly.com/> website and **click on** their email address. They also have a Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/386153668638233>. Their recent litter pick on Slag Lane produced 11 bags of rubbish and on the Parkside Club's field area they managed 14 bags of rubbish. There are other groups in the area that arrange occasional picks and they regularly network with each to try and cover various grot spots. Please volunteer!



6. Garton Drive and Haywood Close Issues

Graham Wardle, Chair, gave news of a second 15m high telecom pole to be erected on the Seddon's Farm estate (often colloquially referred to as the Garton Drive or Braithwaite Road estate) on the grass verge adjacent to Garton Dr and Haywood Close.

Information can be found on Wigan planning portal: <https://planning.wigan.gov.uk/online-applications/> then type in *either* **A/25/098471/TCSO** in the search bar *or* Garton Drive. Click documents and associated documents to view the details. Also view the map.

On the portal there are 18 strong residents objections and yet no supporting comments. GPD Prior Approval was required! This was GRANTED on the 19th of March.

Cllr Jenny Gregory stated that she has a meeting planned with the mast company, IX Wireless Ltd, and asked Graham for any information about how many residents (and their addresses) were notified of these proposals. From previous experience it is already known that legally only 4 of the closest properties need receive notification and/or 2 signs are erected. Has this been done? Graham to get that information together. In theory, if there is already a nearby mast then telecoms companies should share this infrastructure. As usual residents were only informed at the last minute and had little time to respond.

Haywood Close – Public Right of Way No 41 and No 42 (close to the planned mast)

At the time of building the Seddon's Farm estate in the early 1980s Public Right of Way (PRoW) No 42 was realigned on the 'soakaway' land as a 10ft wide path with a core of chalk 8 inches deep. Little or no maintenance has taken place since. As a result of the 'No Mow May' policy in recent years this path is no longer visible and is covered by 2 inches of soil (mud when wet). Furthermore, there are no PRoW footpath signs indicating the presence of either PROW 41 or 42. In 2022 Wigan Council accepted that work needed to be undertaken to restore this PRoW to its former condition. However, Wigan Council stated there were not enough funds to do the work at that time, and its rejuvenation would be

undertaken in the near future. It is now 3 years on, and Graham is awaiting further news. Cllrs Jenny Gregory and Garry Lloyd offered to enquire on progress on behalf of LENDF.

Nb. An organisation that can be approached for footpath help is the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society (<https://pnfs.org.uk/>). This organisation is also trying to produce a database of Public Rights of Way. Linda Graham mentioned that she knows a Lowton resident who is a member of that organisation and she will make enquiries about legal council responsibility for signage and path clearance. The chair is to contact this society.

7. Councillors' Business



Cllr Jenny Gregory reported that **Section 59 signs** have been put up in 7 places in Lowton. This includes Hesketh Meadow Lane, Laburnum Rd, Firtree Walk, and around High Field Moss. These signs notify owners of vehicles that the police have the power to confiscate vehicles immediately if being used illegally. Since being installed, some bikers are now avoiding these areas. If you have any information or evidence which can be passed onto the police, please report using the blue section of this sign. Dates, times and any descriptions are very useful.

Off road bikers are using **Burnsall Ave**: GMP have now identified a few of the offenders.

Cllr Jenny Gregory reported that Hesketh Meadow Lane is to be resurfaced (from Newton Rd to Burnsall Ave) on the 24th-25th April, weather permitting. A

resident asked if speed bumps could be installed at the same time. Graham Wardle said he had already received information from Highways Agencies stating these measures are no longer used as they can be dangerous and polluting. Furthermore, speed restriction should be achieved by a mandatory speed limit of 20mph and education. Cars and bikes have been known to skid/swerve and larger lorries can jackknife. A Speed Indicator sign might be useful though. NB. In 2017 Michael Gove when Roads Minister stated that that all speed bumps should be removed [paraphrased], albeit no funding was forthcoming!

Cllr Jenny Gregory had received today (Monday 14th April) a notification of improvements to the traffic light system at Winwick Lane with Newton Road. This will include pedestrian crossings, plus a **new** set of traffic lights further back on Winwick Road to stagger the flow and reduce the amount of 'standing traffic' outside the properties at that junction. The proposals will go out for consultation during April/May/June. The documentation will be emailed to all on LENDF's mailing list and posted onto Facebook when consultation dates are available.

8. Oaklands Park Official Opening

A date will be organised to hold an official opening of Oaklands Park with an emphasis on teenagers and junior school children. This is likely to be in July. Local groups will be invited to take part including James Ridyard from East Leigh AFC, Luke Brown from the Lowton Community Hub and Lowton Social Club. Our Social Secretary, Kath Houlton, will head the steering group organising the event. Any offers of help will be gratefully received. Funding is available from Kompan, the park contractors, for this event.

A £150 donation from Kompan (thank-you) has been offered to plant an Oak Tree in the park in November when the tree is dormant. Martin Smith, an Environmental Officer from the Council, has kindly agreed to help us. We will then have at least one oak tree left standing after all the house building locally!

9. AOB

a) Once again the council will be approached to rectify the situation of the missing key for the Community Notice Board on Braithewaite. Two successive keys have not fitted the lock!!! Cllr Garry Lloyd will chase this up.

b) Parkside Tritax. Local community groups: LENDF, LHSRG, LaGTAC, and LWR have all submitted comments during the consultation period. Kathleen Johnson, the Chair of Lane Head South Residents Group (LHSRG) informed the meeting that LHSRG has a meeting with a number of Wigan Officers and Councillors on 8th May and has a list of 7 questions to ask them: 1. Wigan support for traffic reduction at Lane Head with other councils. 2. Winwick Lane Northbound weight limit. 3. Lane Head Bypass. 4. Air Quality. 5. Weight limit on Newton Road. 6. ANPR data. 7. Left hand lane works on the A580

c) The Biomass Plant Planning Application immediately off J22 of the M6 on Highfield Lane is due soon and LENDF will report when it is available online for residents to view. It may impact traffic in and around J22. Here are the latest details:

<https://www.warringtonguardian.co.uk/news/25082362.mp-residents-visit-similar-anaerobic-waste-site-planned-winwick/>

d) Wigan Local Plan will be out for consultation from 30th April to 24th June. The good news, the Bypass is included. The bad news: so is Parkside Tritax.

e) Traffic matters: Graham Wardle specifically referred to two traffic issues:

- (1) It had been reported to him by concerned motorists that new signs have been erected to indicate that the speed limit on Warrington Road, Golborne has recently been changed from 60mph to 40mph. Both LaGTAC and Wigan Council have clear evidence to show that the average speed was already less than 40mph. Graham will find out the exact nature of these changes, and why – and report back.
- (2) The residents of Sandy Lane, Lowton persistently have to endure unacceptable excessive speeding within the 20mph Zone. LaGTAC has monitored and analysed the speeding characteristics of this 20mph section, with 28 operational studies undertaken over the last four years (mainly over the last two years). Although speed measurement data (average speeds) have been regularly published in the social media and LENDF minutes, there has been no significant reduction seen in speeding even though hi viz community policing has been undertaken on numerous occasions. The average speed is still 29mph in a 20mph zone! Please be warned that from now on the GMP Road Policing Unit (Enforcement) will be working in conjunction with the Community Speed Watch and Police Support Volunteers. Take note: it may no longer simply be a case of receiving warning letters!

**Next meeting, please come and join us:
Monday 9 June 2025 at 7:30pm at Lowton Social Club**