

Copy of article published in February 2022 Edition of 'Around Kirkby Lonsdale' by Kirkby Lonsdale Town Council, Kirkby Lonsdale Parochial Church Council, Kirkby Lonsdale Rugby Club, County Councillor Nick Cotton.

The Brow and Ruskin's View

There has been a lot of speculation about the reasons behind the sudden closure of The Brow footpath, which gives access to the important tourist attraction, Ruskin's View. There have been questions about the need for such a closure.

The land known as Church Brow is owned by the Town Council. The footpath on The Brow is the responsibility of Cumbria County Council. Historically, The Brow has always been a problem. In the mid-1980s, the then parish council carried out significant improvement works which helped stabilise The Brow. However, Storm Desmond (December 2015) and subsequent storms have seriously eroded The Brow at river level. Drainage runoff has also affected the stability of the slope.

The Town Council has employed technical consultants who have given interim guidance and developed ways of stabilising the slope and protecting the footpath. Following an initial assessment, a slope stability report was produced, and a topographical survey has been commissioned. Having received the slope stability report from the Town Council, Cumbria County Council were left with no option but to close the footpath last Sep.

The site investigations have highlighted the current instability of the slope and the fragility of the footpath, together with the adjacent St Mary's Church land including parts of the old Churchyard, parts of the New Churchyard and of the Glebe Field and Motte. Kirkby Lonsdale PCC are having work done to establish the extent of risk and/or damage and this will inform the final design solution.

The decision to close the footpath for safety reasons was not taken lightly. Relatively temporary measures to prevent public access were put in place but have not been entirely effective. The Town Council has agreed to contribute 50% of the cost of more secure measures which are being urgently discussed with the County Council.

The footpath closure has presented the Church with particular difficulties around access to, and use of, the New Churchyard. The Kirkby Lonsdale Rugby Club helped, by allowing access from their land for funerals, mourners and visitors. This is not ideal, and the Church are looking at how to provide a better, controlled, access from the town side of the new graveyard.

The unfortunate reality is that The Brow footpath and Ruskin's View will be closed to the public for some considerable time. The Town Council and St Mary's are exploring the possibility of providing a viewing platform to enable visitors to enjoy Ruskin's View from within the old graveyard.

The cost of repairing The Brow and reinstating the footpath has not been finalised, but estimates suggest it could be in excess of £1m. For environmental reasons, complying with the Environment Agency's working window, much of the work can only be done between June and September. This puts the target start date for remedial work at June 2023, which is when the funding will have to be available.

A fundraising strategy has been developed. The Town Council recognises the importance of this project and has agreed to contribute £100,000 towards the cost, in addition to £34,000 for initial technical surveys. The Town Council relies on council tax for income, so residents will see an increase in the Town Council section of their council tax bills, to reflect this.

If the concerns which have arisen since the footpath was closed reflect how the community values The Brow and Ruskin's View, it is hoped the efforts being made by all parties to protect The Brow and the footpath will be supported. Support for the fundraising campaign will be critical.

Updates will be provided at least quarterly in AKL and further information can be obtained by accessing the website: kirkbylonsdaletowncouncil.org.uk

February 2022