

# Five year path repair plea answered amid concern graveyard landslip

An Edinburgh community's five-year plea for the council to fix a landslip has been answered amid concerns part of a graveyard is at risk of sliding into the water.

Heavy rainfall caused the landslip along the Colinton Dells footpath in 2020, blocking a key entrance to the popular walking route which leads to the Colinton Tunnel Mural.

A petition was launched calling for repairs recently gathered over 500 signatures and said the closure had deprived locals and visitors of a "quieter avenue for exercise and nature" away from the busy cycle route which passes through the area "for too long".

Now residents have been promised work will begin this month to rebuild the path and install a new drainage system at the entrance, at the end of Dell Road by Colinton Parish Church, to prevent further landslips in future. It's hoped this will allow re-opening by mid-December.

In addition council officers are understood to be investigating the removal of three trees on the riverbank by the end of the church's graveyard, which it's feared could also begin to slip into the water if left unattended.

Colinton resident Mike Scott said the trees' roots would remain in place as they "serve a purpose in helping to stabilise," adding: "It's the top of the trees that act as a giant sail and so that when the wind blows that's what threatens to tip them over."

Eddie Banks, a retired engineer living in the village,

said: "The alternative is if you don't take them down, then you could lose part of your graveyard. Which one do you want? Keep three trees, or lose part of your graveyard? I know what the locals would say."

Mr Scott, who conceived the idea of decorating the old Colinton railway tunnel with a colourful mural, expressed concern visitors could miss out on the attraction as, while other points of access are available, smartphone maps and local signage "show that route as being open," leading to confusion.

"If they come out to visit the tunnel and come down here thinking they can get to the tunnel, that's where the frustration creeps in," he said.

"What we want to do is make the tunnel fully accessible 24/7, 365, and take it from there."

He added the landslip also meant walkers couldn't complete the Colinton and Craiglockhart Dells circular route.

"Dog walkers, runners – lots of people used to go on this loop because you weren't doing the same way as you were coming back, which lets face it is a bit tedious.

"It'll be quite something to have it open again. Originally this was temporary barriers and they kept being bypassed or cut out and as you can see the ultimate solution from the council was literally this welded fence, you can't open the gate."

Anne-Marie Birch, whose house sits on the riverbank, has also been campaigning to get the path re-opened. She said: "It's a beautiful walk. It's peaceful and takes you away from the top half with the cyclists."

She feared her garden could also begin to slide into the water "if it's not attended to".

She added: "I've been looking for this because I think of the Dells as my back yard and I've not had access to it since February 2020. So now to get it open again, for the whole of the street, for everyone, has been key."

Conservative councillor for Colinton Jason Rust commented: "All the community groups have come together which has been really good."

A motion by Cllr Rust calling for action which warned elsewhere along the Water of Leith "may be affected by damaging slope movements in the future," highlighting the council had "a responsibility to repair and to maintain these areas".

He said: "I think there was a feeling that because they were looking to tender during Covid the materials and the prices were not as good as they could be," while adding it was a "very significant area for the local public".

He said: "After we've dealt with the drainage and the path, I think they're going to investigate full removal [of trees] but keeping the roots, or potentially looking at taking some away, to make sure the situation doesn't get worse."

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter