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UPDATE

29 September 2026

Dark Lane – protecting an important part of our town

The closure of Dark Lane continues to generate considerable local interest and concern, and BSTC recognises the importance of the lane to the town and the wider local community.

BSTC has written to Devon County Council (DCC) officers and councillors to outline the importance of Dark Lane and to request that it be reopened as soon as it is safe and reasonably possible to do so.

On Friday 25 September, a Town Councillor and the Town Clerk met with Devon County Council officers and our County Councillor, Nick Hookway, to discuss the situation and to further emphasise the importance of Dark Lane to the town and local community.

Why has Dark Lane been closed?

Dark Lane is under the control of Devon County Council as the Highway Authority, and decisions regarding its closure and reopening therefore rest with DCC. The decision to close the lane was not taken lightly. Devon County Council sought advice from specialist geotechnical engineers with expertise in landslips and slope stability, following concerns regarding the condition of the embankments.

The assessment identified a potential risk to pedestrians and vehicles and recommended that the route be closed in the interests of public safety. BSTC is aware that some residents feel Devon County Council has adopted an overly cautious approach. However, where specialist advice identifies a foreseeable risk of injury arising from potential bank instability, the Highway Authority has to take that risk seriously. It cannot knowingly permit continued public access where there is an identified safety risk, relying solely on warning signs or individual judgement.

BSTC fully recognises the inconvenience caused by the closure and the importance of Dark Lane as a local route and community space. At the same time, the potential consequences of a bank failure occurring while the lane remains open could be significant.

What is being done?

Devon County Council continues to explore potential funding opportunities to assist with future remedial works, including internal funding sources where appropriate.

BSTC remains committed to working with Devon County Council, the County Councillor and other relevant stakeholders to identify a long-term solution for Dark Lane. We will continue to raise the importance of the lane and keep the situation under review as further information becomes available.

BSTC will keep pushing for this and will share further updates as they become available.