

On the night – A walk around the city



Leeds Flooding - 26/12/2015

FLOOD RESPONSE

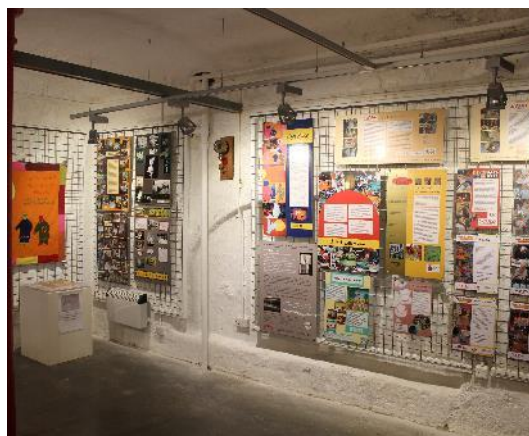
Three horizontal blue wavy lines representing water, positioned below the title.

A community exhibition in response to
the December 2015 floods in Leeds

Chris Sharp, Assistant Community Curator

Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills and Thwaite Mills Watermill

Who am I, what is an “Assistant Community Curator”, and what has all of this got to do with floods anyway?



Why an exhibition on floods in a museum?



Image: Darryl Calvert

A museum under water...



Exhibition introduction

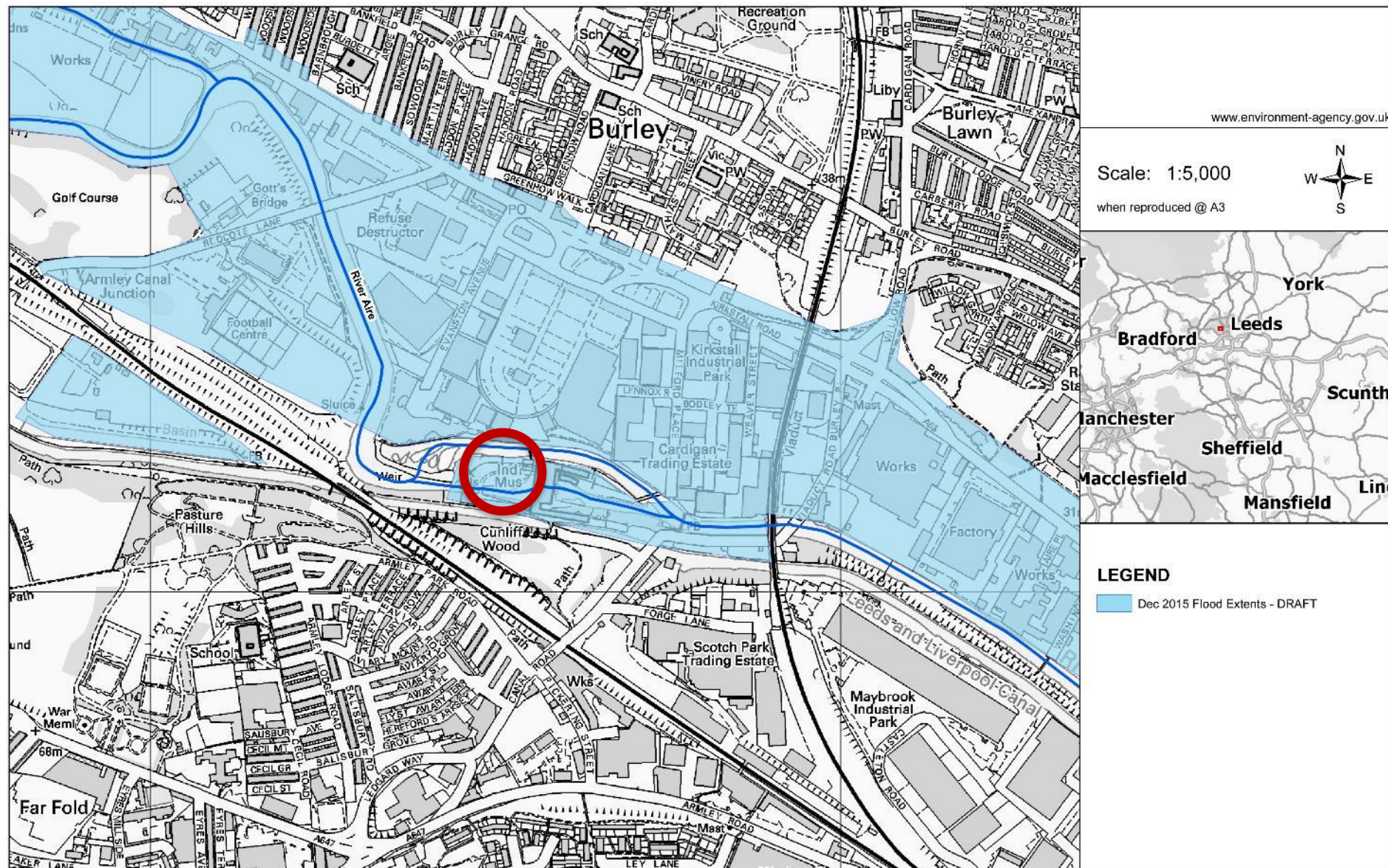
In late December 2015 Leeds was affected by one of the most significant floods since records began. Stormy weather, saturated ground, and high river levels led to severe flooding across many parts of the city, particularly along the River Aire.

The museums at Thwaite Mills and Armley Mills were badly affected, along with people's lives, businesses, and homes. The deluge of water affected the people of Leeds in many ways, causing hardships and pain, but also uniting communities in the face of adversity.

This exhibition has been co-curated by the people of Leeds to mark the event one year on and would not have been possible without their contributions. The photographs, stories, and artistic responses have all come from them. Also included are relevant objects from Leeds Museum and Galleries' collections.

Illustration of the river flooding the valley...

Boxing Day Flood Extents - Armley Mills Industrial Museum



Around Armley Mills

Leeds
Museums
& Galleries

Every building in this picture contains human stories...



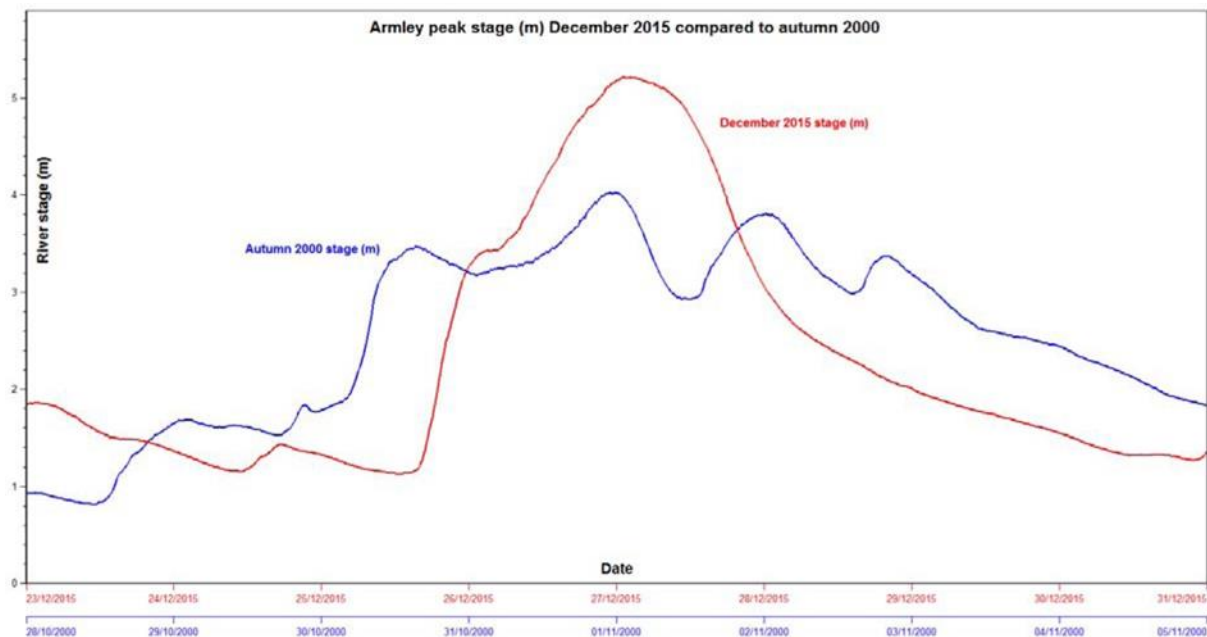
For the museum at Armley, it could have been worse...



A flow gauge at Armley measures the amount of water in the river. In the early hours of 27th December the level was measured 1.2 metres higher than the previous record from 2010.

This however would have been higher still had we been able to take into account all of the water that left the river 0.8miles upstream and travelled down Kirkstall Road towards the city centre.

This flood is considered a once in more than 200 years event by the Environment Agency.



Around Thwaite Mills

Homes and businesses under water...

Leeds
Museums
& Galleries



Thyssen Krupp Woodhead

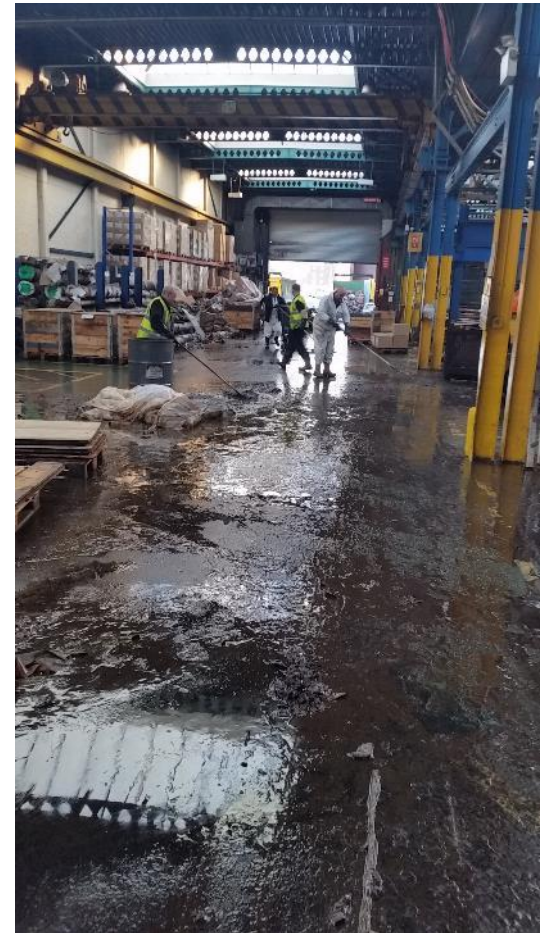


Part of the industrial landscape in Leeds for over 100 years, employing around 100 people in 2015...



Thyssen Krupp Woodhead

An end of an era for manufacture in the city,
a personal tragedy for the people affected.

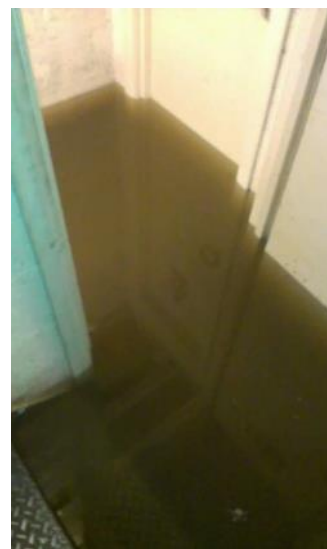




Costa,
Kirkstall Bridge



Asda House



Private residence



Offices



Parkland

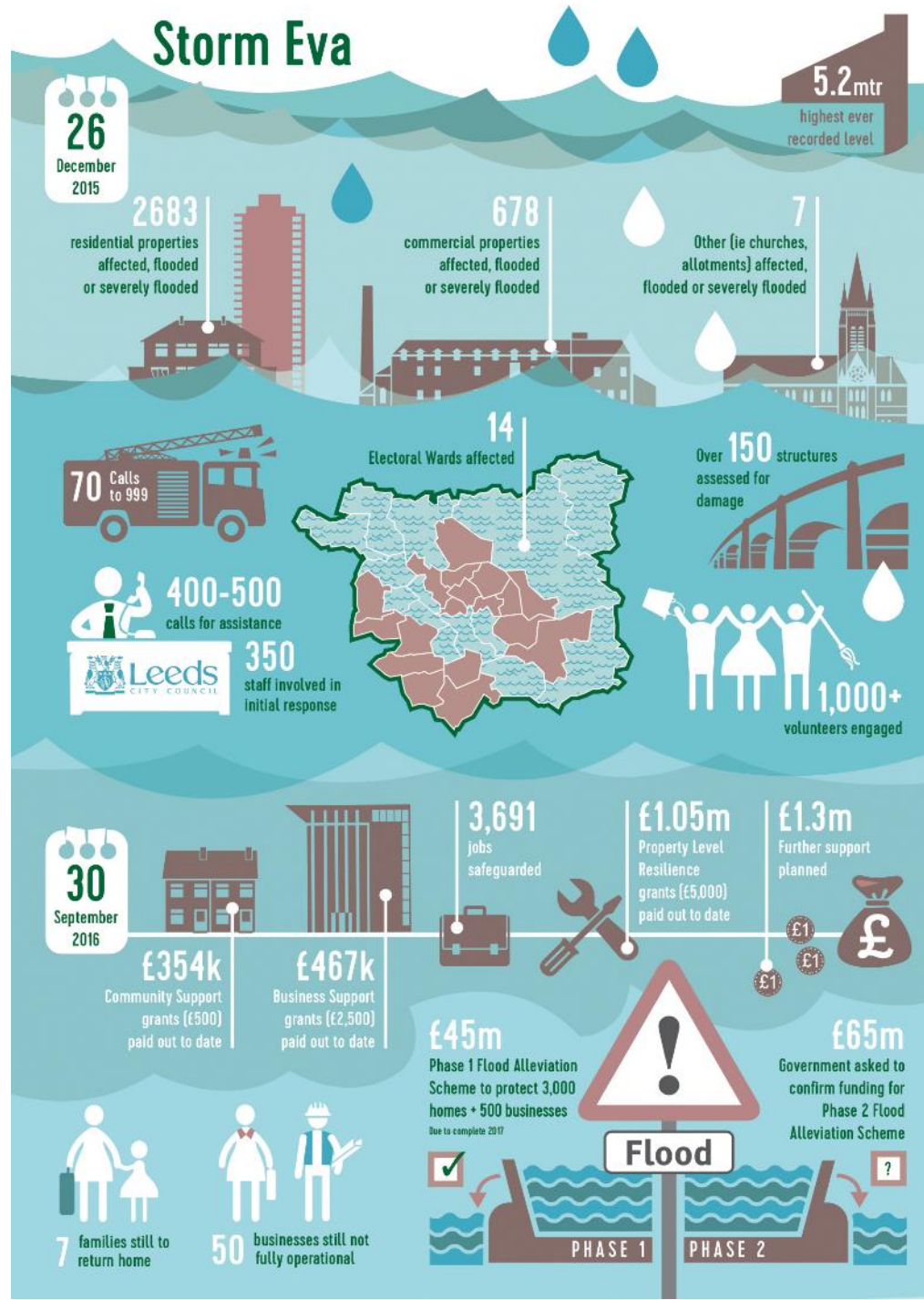


Roads



Museum exhibits

Floods by numbers



An Unprecedented Event?

How does the 'Boxing Day Flood' of 2015 compare to previous flooding events?



Press coverage, then and now

Leeds
Museums
& Galleries



Yorkshire
Post, 1952

Malton
and Ilkley



YORKSHIRE Evening Post
YORKSHIREEVENINGPOST.CO.UK #championingleeds MONDAY DECEMBER 28 2015 72P (\$4P TO SUBSCRIBERS)

LEEDS FLOOD: SPECIAL REPORT
SEE PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 AND 8

'INDEFENSIBLE'

THE DEVASTATION this weekend's floods have brought on Leeds's homes and businesses is eclipsed only by the damage it has caused in the hearts of its citizens.

For the hundreds of families counting the cost today of seeing their houses, possessions and memories under a tide of dirty flood water there can be little comfort or consolation that these Christmas floods were the worst for generations.

Rain and the inevitable rise in river levels is a fact of life for England, and always will be.

YORKSHIRE Evening Post COMMENT

The fact remains however that such events as witnessed in Leeds this weekend are unthinkable in the Capital and much of the South East, where state-of-the-art flood defences have long been in place.

Technology is so advanced that the kind of devastation we have suffered as a city is completely avoidable. Is it expensive? Of course, but cheaper than seeing treasured mementoes ruined by encroaching floods and a city's entire economy put at risk. The Government has made much of the notion of a Northern Powerhouse and Leeds, with its burgeoning financial and retail sectors has been placed squarely at the heart of this drive.

But a Northern Powerhouse is nothing when it's under water. This city must have critical inward investment to make sure it has the protection from floods on this scale ever happening again. What's good enough for London is good enough for Leeds.

The city is an economic force to be reckoned with - the beating heart of northern England and we demand that Prime Minister David Cameron announces immediate action to ensure that this situation is not repeated in Leeds, or anywhere else EVER AGAIN.

People and Priorities!

Rodley in 1953



Kirkstall in 2015



Wellies and people power



Bentley and Tempest staff clean up Armley Mills after the flood of 1946.

The Thwaite Mills team are joined by volunteers to reclaim their site, 2015.

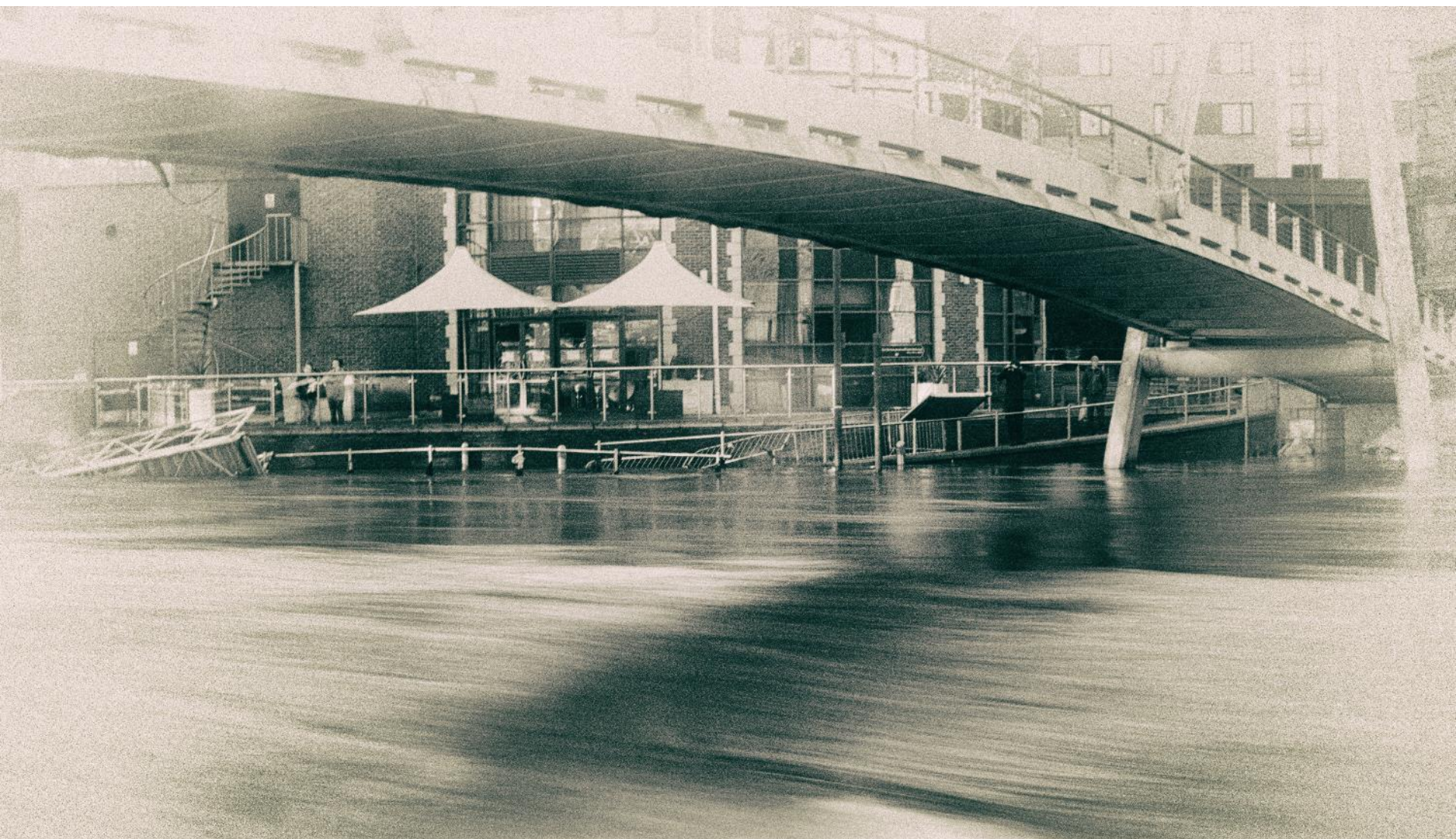


A photo opportunity?

Blue skies, calm weather, and a bank holiday – why most of the images we were sent of the devastating flood are serenely beautiful.

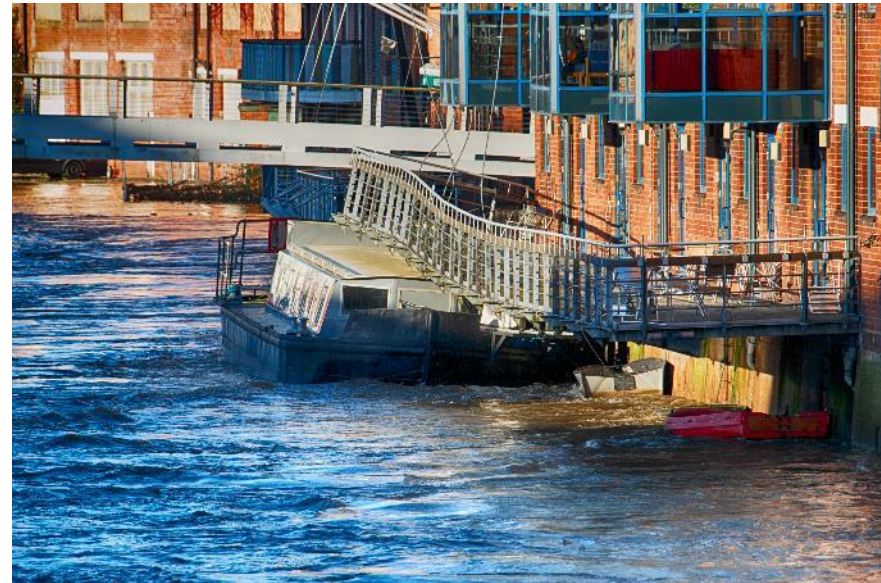








When in reality, lives were severely disrupted...



Leeds responds

Thousands of hours of volunteer work in the immediate clean-up.

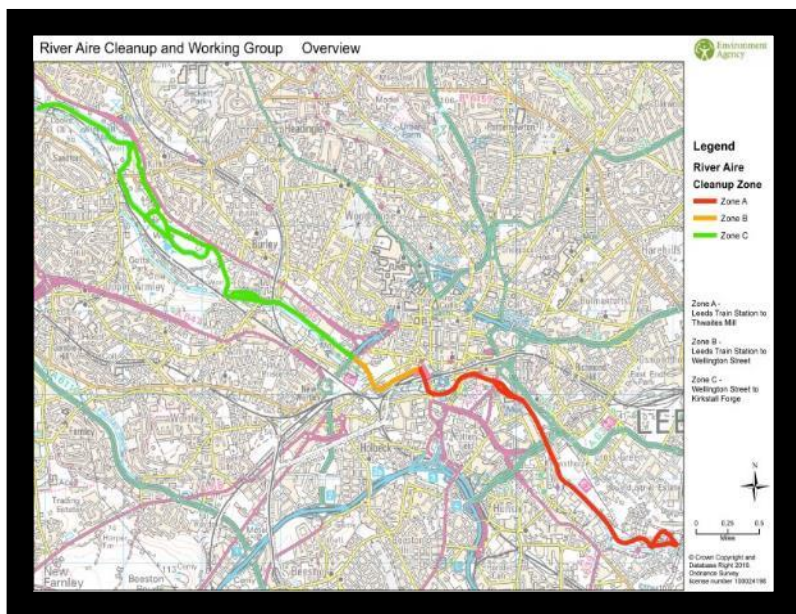




It became apparent there was a need for organisations and communities to work together on an ongoing project to restore the waterways.

With the help of local residents, canoe clubs and Canal Connections inaccessible areas were cleared.

Volunteers including local businesses and Girl Guiding Leeds turned out to help remove the debris from the trees. These groups were managed by Groundwork, Canal & River Trust, and the River Stewardship Company.



After the flood...

Community and agencies working together.



Creative responses



- Theatre
- Novels
- Painting
- Models
- Sculpture
- Exhibitions
- Photos
- Prints
- Blogs
-

People really want to talk about and represent their experience of the flood!



“As the day drew older, the becks became more and more swollen, until the usually sluggish streams were changed into roaring, eddying torrents, the fresher colour of which had replaced the familiar indigo hue of the water”

“The bridges of Calverley and Swillington, above and below Leeds, were destroyed, and a singular circumstance is related of a hare, which escaped alive on the body of a drowned sheep.”

“The scene at the Railway Station at Kirkstall baffles description.”

“The water on the streets at its deepest part could not be less than four feet...”

“The ground in which the Abbey stands shared the same fate as its neighbours, but fortunately the flood did not reach the fine old ruin itself.”

“The basements of the houses...were speedily filled with water, the residents in several cases having to fly before the irruption, leaving all their goods and furniture behind them.”

Newspaper reports from
Leeds in 1775 and 1866

The Future:

- Once in a 200 year event?
- “What are you doing to protect the museums?”
- Flood Alleviation Scheme
- Climate Change – and a pause for some perspective
- How will people respond next time?
- Prepare, Educate, Inform

FLOOD RESPONSE



photographs by:

John Wang, Keith Batty, Annie Hodgson, Susan Childs, Mike Blanshard, Ben Daure, Tim Baxter, Darryl Calvert, Mark Douglas, Mark Dobson, Lionel Theobald, Jon Sandground, Mike Blanshard, Stephen Ward, David Hill, Claire Bradley, Terry Donohoe, Ben Fox, Jez Bligh, Daren Lawn, Neil Burton, Marie Millward, Lassaad Laouini, Anne Esslemont, the staff at Thwaite Mills and Armley Mills... And many more!

And special thanks to:

Canal Connections, Becca Dent, Environment Agency, Girlguiding Leeds, Team Kirkstall and Open Source Arts, Seagulls Paint, Thwaite Mills, Armley Mills, Asda, Playful Leeds, Leeds University, TK Woodhead, Leeds City Council, Arts Council England, and many more people for their support, involvement, and ongoing work to improve Leeds following the flood.