

Press release: Call for volunteers for river clean up in Otley

A volunteer day is being held on Thursday 16 May, from 10am until 3pm, to help with litter picking, vegetation and tree management along the River Wharfe.

In partnership with the Environment Agency and Leeds City Council, the River Stewardship Company is running the volunteer day as part of preparations ahead of works on flood defences in the town. Consultants WSP are also taking part in the event.

The town suffered flooding on three occasions between November and December 2015, which saw 74 properties affected. The government is investing £2 million in a scheme to reduce the risk of flooding to homes and businesses.

Leader of Leeds City Council, Councillor Judith Blake said:

Effective stewardship is a key element of maintaining a healthy river system as well as crucially reducing the threat of flooding, which communities in and around Otley continue to be vulnerable to. Volunteer days like this are a great way of helping the community, meeting new people and carrying out a really important task so I hope everyone taking part enjoys their day.

John Woods, flood risk officer with the Environment Agency said:

We've been really impressed with the high levels of attendance and involvement at community drop in events to help to shape our proposals for the Otley Flood Alleviation Scheme. The last volunteer day was a great success and hope that people will come out in force again, and show how much the people of Otley love their waterfront.

Jacob Batt at scheme consultants WSP said:

These clean up days are a great way for organisations like WSP to volunteer and give something back to the local community and so we are very keen to continue to support and take part in these events.

The flood defence scheme is being led by Leeds City Council working closely with the Environment Agency. So far the project team has carried out environmental assessments, gathered information for a hydraulic report and an economic appraisal for the scheme and completed assessments of structures,

geotechnical, drainage, highways, and utilities.

Outline designs for the scheme are now being developed. The next steps include submitting an outline business case for the scheme, seeking planning permission and finally developing a detailed design before construction can begin.

The options include using flood defence walls, flood defence embankments, maintenance including vegetation clearance and riverbank realignment.

Once the final scheme has been chosen from the shortlist of four, construction work should begin in autumn 2019. The Otley Flood Alleviation Scheme is one of several schemes that is adopting a catchment-wide approach. This means the entire River Wharfe catchment area will be considered to help reduce flood risk. This approach looks at a combination of natural processes and engineered options to help slow the flow and catch water further up the catchment so that flood peaks are reduced further downstream.

If you can give some time to help with the volunteer day, or would like further information, please contact Sarah Emberson at the River Stewardship Company at Sarah.emberson@the-rsc.co.uk or 07766 352932.

All personal protective wear will be provided on the day, but please come in suitable clothing and sturdy footwear.

A further volunteer day is being planned for 13 June.

If you have any queries about the scheme, please email frm@leeds.gov.uk