

Press release: Green light for next stage of Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme

The next stage of a major scheme to help protect Leeds from future flood risk has been given the green light at a meeting today (Thursday 6 June).

Members of the city plans panel have now supported a planning application put forward by Leeds City Council, working alongside the Environment Agency, so that work on phase 2 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme along the River Aire can get underway.

Phase two of the Leeds flood defence scheme, covering the Kirkstall Corridor will be delivered in two-steps, as Leeds City Council are taking a pragmatic approach to allow work to get underway as soon as possible. The approval is for the first of two steps which will, when combined, be a £112.1m investment in Phase 2 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The first step starting this autumn, will use £65m funding already secured from the Government, alongside additional financial support from Leeds City Council and partners. This will reduce the risk of flooding along an 8km stretch of the River Aire from Leeds city centre through the A65 Kirkstall Road corridor and will provide an initial level of protection against the threat of flooding from the River Aire which equates to a 1 in 100 (1%) chance of flooding in any given year. This is the same standard that Phase 1 of the scheme currently provides to the city downstream of Leeds station.

Talks are continuing to secure the remainder of the funding to carry out the second step and complete the scheme in full which, pending further planning approval, would double the standard of protection offered by the whole Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Now that planning permission has been given, Leeds City Council can award the contract that will see the detailed designs for the first step of phase two drawn up this summer, followed by work starting in the autumn. The first step of Phase 2 will provide linear defences along the 8km stretch upstream of Leeds station and focuses on three key areas – Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills, Kirkstall Abbey and Kirkstall Meadows.

- At Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills, which suffered significant flood damage in 2015, the defence works include new protective walls, a new higher bridge to improve water flow and two new control structures on the goit which can close when the river levels become too high.
- A new structure will be built at Kirkstall Abbey in front of Kirkstall Abbey Sluice Gates which will limit the amount of water during high river levels going down the goit channel. The structure will also be a walkway that could open up new views.
- The proposal at Kirkstall Meadows is to transform 2.4 hectares into a

wetland habitat and also feature kingfisher banks, otter holts and wetland scrapes for fish. A new flood embankment will reduce flood risk to the adjacent railway line.

The first step also incorporates a flagship Natural Flood Management programme that will be delivered across the catchment upstream of Leeds alongside engineering works within the city. This programme, delivered by the Environment Agency on behalf of Leeds City Council, will involve working with partners and landowners to deliver a range of measures, such as the creation of new woodland, woody debris dams and wetland areas, which can slow the flow of rainwater into the river, helping to reduce the risk of flooding and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Additional planning approvals will be sought from the relevant authorities as the catchment wide programme develops.

Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:

“The planning support given today is fantastic news so that we can get on and start delivering the next phase of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme to provide the protection from the threat of flooding and the reassurance our communities and businesses need and deserve.

“This two-step approach is a pragmatic way of doing what we can with the funding we have now, but we remain absolutely determined to get this scheme completed in full to offer the best possible level of protection we can for Leeds and surrounding areas.

“Working with the Environment Agency and partners we have taken an imaginative catchment wide approach, with a strong focus on using natural measures such as tree planting to do the job for us, so we look forward to seeing these works begin later in the year.”

Flood risk manager at the Environment Agency, Adrian Gill said:

“Our joint project team is delighted to have achieved this milestone of getting planning approval to progress the next stage of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme. We can now begin work on the ground at pace, within the funds we have available.

“Our ambition is still to complete both steps of this second phase of the scheme. The first step will provide much better protection from the River Aire upstream of Leeds station through the Kirkstall area and out to Newlay.

“The natural flood management measures that will be delivered across the catchment upstream as part of the first step will not only help reduce flood risk but also restore and create new habitat, increase biodiversity resilience and improve water quality. This will contribute to delivering the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan and realising the vision of the Northern Forest in the Aire catchment.

“We are looking forward to the next stage of delivery and being able to share the detailed design of the proposed scheme with the residents, businesses and wider community of west Leeds.”

Step two of the Phase 2 scheme will be the creation of a flood storage area near Calverley. Moveable weir technology also featured in phase one of the scheme in the city centre will be used to allow water to be stored and then be released slowly back into the river in a controlled way.

The second step will reduce the risk of flooding along the 20km stretch of the River Aire from the outer ring road to the west of the city, through the city centre and out past Stourton, providing an increased level of protection against the threat of flooding from the River Aire which equates to a 1 in 200 (0.5%) chance of flooding in any given year. When constructed, it will make the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme one of the largest flood defence schemes to be constructed in the country.

Work on this step will continue and includes:

- Investigations which are currently being carried out into the structure of the listed Apperley Bridge in Bradford to understand what alteration work is needed to reduce the impacts of flood risk. The bridge will be restored to retain its appearance and protection will be provided underneath to reduce erosion.
- Working with the landowners and seeking planning permission once more detailed design work has been completed.
- Securing the remainder of the funding required. A separate planning application has also been submitted to carry out landscape works benefit the environment and wildlife, and improve access to amenities. This will include two new bridges, improvements to footpaths and new woodland and natural areas. If approved, the works will be delivered as part of the first step of phase two of the scheme.

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