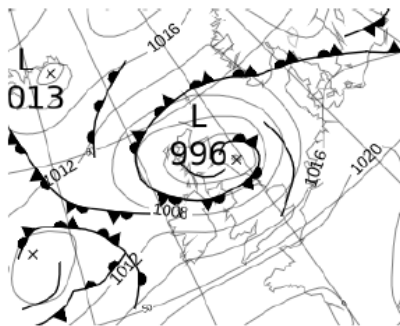


Summer Flooding 2012

Environment Agency Report for the Overview & Scrutiny Group – Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

1. Preparation

1.1 Unusual Weather

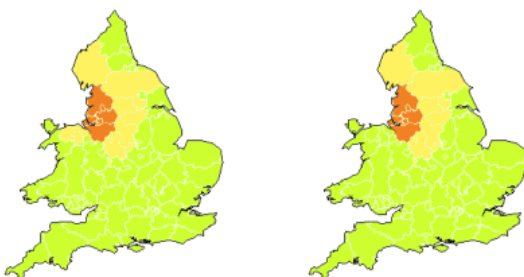


Heavy rainfall and possible flooding in the North West on Friday 22 June was forecast as early as Wednesday 20 June. The Flood Guidance statement issued on Thursday 21 June at 10:30 included an early warning of the expected heavy rain on Friday in Lancashire and Greater Manchester. It said:

“On Friday, an area of persistent rain, perhaps with localised torrential downpours, brings a LOW risk of both surface water and river flooding for parts of North West England, perhaps especially Lancashire”

On the morning of Friday 22 June, a more specific heavy rainfall warning was issued by the Flood Forecasting Centre. It predicted rainfall totals over a 27 hour period of up to 120mm in Lancashire.

1.2 Warning and Informing



14:00 - 23:59hrs
Friday
22 June 2012

00:00 - 23:59hrs
Saturday
23 June 2012

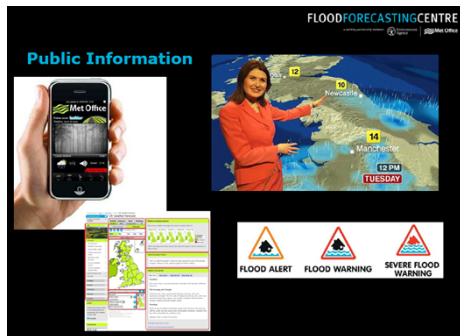
We organised and led teleconferences with local authority emergency planners and other emergency responding organisations including Police and Fire and Rescue services during the morning of Friday 22 June. We took this opportunity to ensure that all the responding agencies were aware of the widespread risks of flooding later that day and to respond to any concerns that they had. On Friday morning our advice was that impacts were likely to be greatest in eastern Lancashire and that we expected to issue Flood Alerts later that day and some Flood Warnings were likely. Flood Alerts covering the principle areas affected were issued by 16:00 on Friday 22 June.

We worked hard to raise awareness of the risk of flooding and actions people can take to prepare, producing press releases for the regional press, contacting local authority chief executive departments and providing media interviews for TV and radio. The first of these was on

Thursday at 5pm. We issued 4 proactive press releases and continued to offer proactive media updates and interviews throughout the event. In total we dealt with 29 press enquiries.

We were also very active on social media, sending out messages to our followers on Twitter who include the public and key stakeholders like MPs, local authorities and fire and rescue services. They in turn re-tweeted our messages to ensure that our coverage was maximised. In total we posted 63 tweets and there were 514 re-tweets of our messages. In total we reached 71,859 individuals with our messages.

1.3 Acting Early



In response to forecasts of heavy rain, we sent our teams out within the borough on Thursday 21 June to ensure that debris screens, culverts and bridges were clear of material. Our teams visited priority locations once again on Friday clearing further debris that had accumulated during the early part of the period of heavy rain reducing the risks of flooding. We worked alongside Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council during this period.

2. Response

2.1 Rainfall and River Levels

The predicted band of heavy rainfall began in the south of the region in the early hours of Friday 22 June, moving steadily north through the day. Over Friday and Saturday rainfall totals of 100mm were recorded across much of Lancashire. A period of particularly intense rain across East Lancashire caused particular problems between 1800hrs and 2100hrs, with intensities of 10-15mm per hour recorded in several rain gauges.

River levels responded rapidly to the heavy rainfall, particularly following the most intense period of rainfall on Friday evening. Record river levels were reached on the upper River Irwell in the Bacup and Rawtenstall areas. We recorded the highest river levels in 20 years on the river Darwen in the Darwen area.



2.2 Protecting People and Property

Flood defences constructed by the Environment Agency were tested across the region. Our work over the last two years replacing and reconditioning assets that were in poor or failing condition made an important contribution to reducing the impact of flooding or preventing it altogether in Blackburn.

2.3 Flood Warnings and Operational Response

During Friday evening we issued warnings to homes and businesses at risk of flooding in Darwen. Our Incident Control Centre and incident room staff spoke to hundreds of members of the public who called in to report flooding and ask for assistance. We took information, and prioritised our response to locations where we knew we could be most effective, focussing on river flooding. We ensured any calls we received from more vulnerable members of the community were passed to Fire and Rescue services and Police for immediate attention.

2.4 Media

During the incident we made proactive use of social media like Twitter, monitoring concerns of members of the public and tweeting information to help people take action to protect themselves and their property.

3.Recovery

3.1 Community Recovery

Environment Agency staff visited communities affected by the flooding at Shorey Bank, Buryfold and Grimshaw Park to discuss issues with residents and listen to concerns. Since the flooding, we have had a regular presence in the communities that experienced the worst flooding. We have been listening to and recording the experiences of individual home and business owners and providing information and support for clean-up activities where we can.

Our priority is to work with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and community groups to support affected communities to recover from the impacts of the flooding and get back to normal as soon as possible. In areas where several properties flooded, and then subsequently flooded again on 29 June, we set up drop-in-centres drawing on the support of the National Flood Forum who offer independent advice and information. In other areas where flooding was more isolated, we spoke individually to those affected. This is the beginning of our commitment to support communities that have flooded.

3.2 Ensuring Assets Perform

Field teams continued to remove debris, clear blockages and check that our flood defence assets remained in good condition to provide protection should further heavy rain occur. They and other staff provided visual surveys of the impacted areas and began to record flood extents and impacts.

3.3 Investigations

Work has commenced with BwD and United Utilities to investigate the causes of flooding and consider what action we can take together to reduce risks in the future and support members of the community who have experienced the devastating impacts of flooding. Teams of surveyors have visited each location, recording the routes that flood water took and listening to the members of the public to put together a clear picture of the nature of flooding in each community. We have shared our initial findings with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and continue to work together to investigate flooding from all sources.

4. Next Steps

4.1 Clarence Street Culvert, Shorey Bank



A culvert partially collapsed, holding back water which over-topped river walls and flooded property in the Blackburn Road and Duckworth Street. Urgent repair works are ongoing at a cost of £460k. The Clarence Street culvert, which carries the River Darwen, experienced a blockage and partial collapse. This to be 240 metres downstream of the culvert entrance where service pipes run across it - the culvert is over 500 metres long and working conditions are difficult.

4.2 Buryfold

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council have successfully bid to our Regional Flood and Coastal Committee for in-year funding to resolve the flooding issues at Buryfold and we can confirm £80k is allocated to this scheme for completion by end March 2013.

4.3 Future Capital Works

We continue to work in partnership with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and others to identify the potential for future capital works that will minimise the risk of flooding. Moving forward, we expect new schemes ranging from those at individual property level to large civil engineering projects and we are working with BwDBC on how best to deliver these in partnership including seeking partnership funding.

Appendices

A) Details of properties flooded

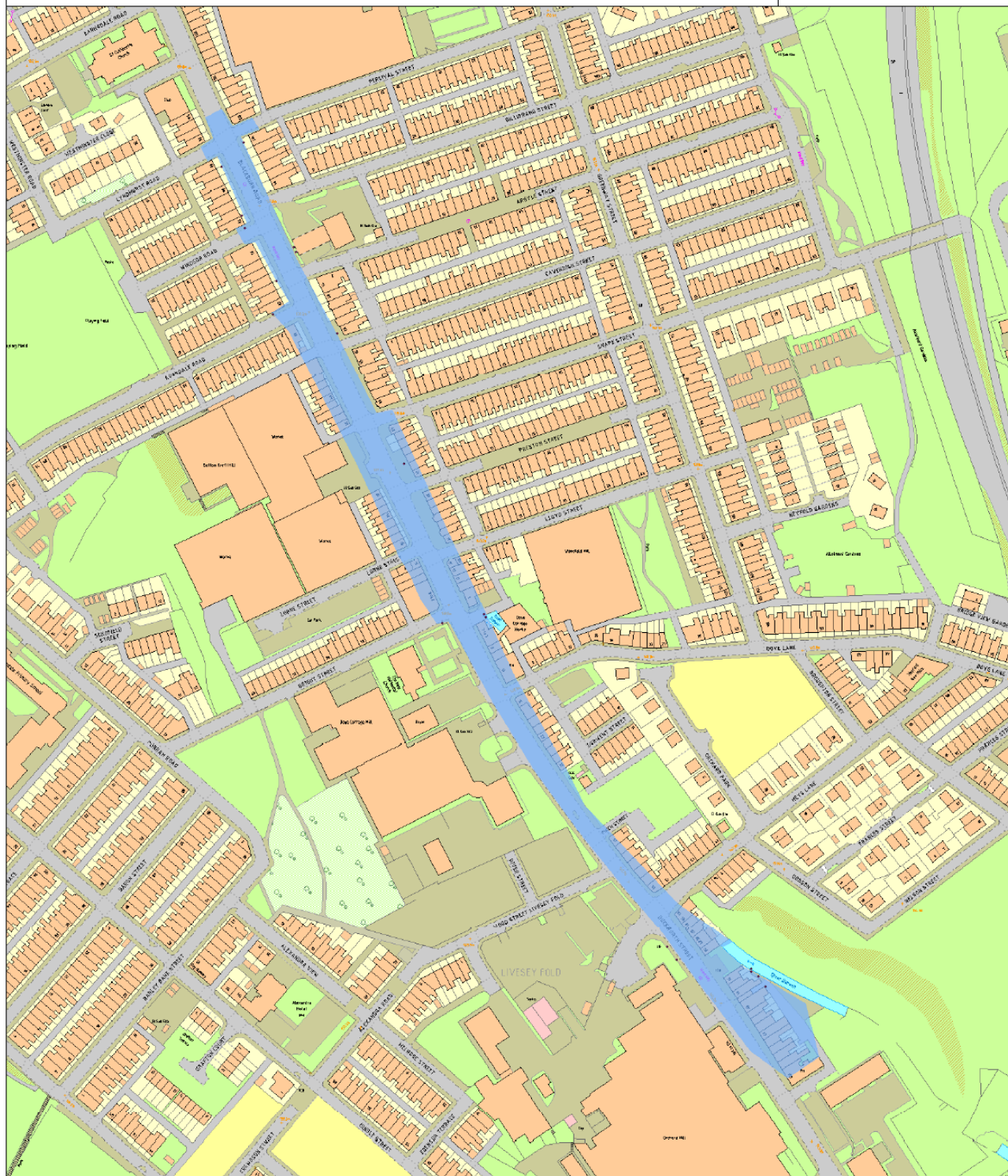


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22nd June 2012 Prop

B) Maps of affected communities

- i) Blackburn Road ii) Grimshaw Street iii) Scotshaw Brook iv) Buryfold Brook

Darwen Flooding 22 June 2012 1:1000 @ A1



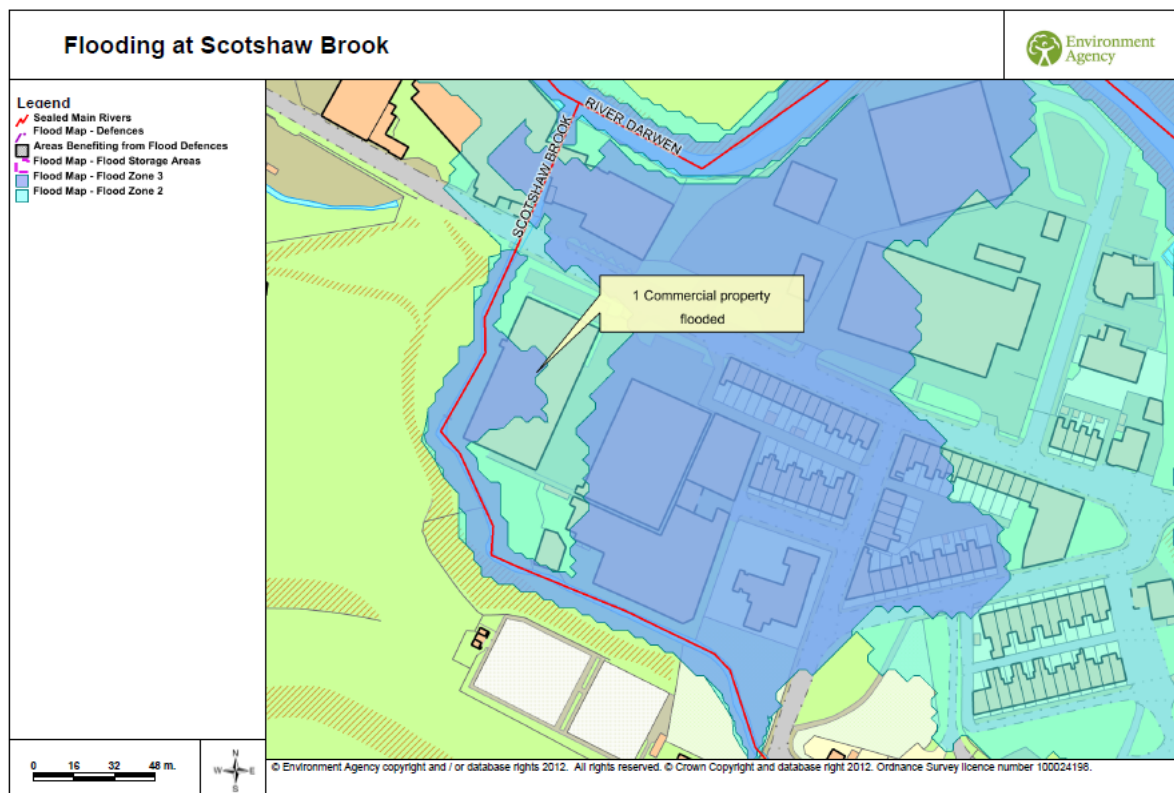
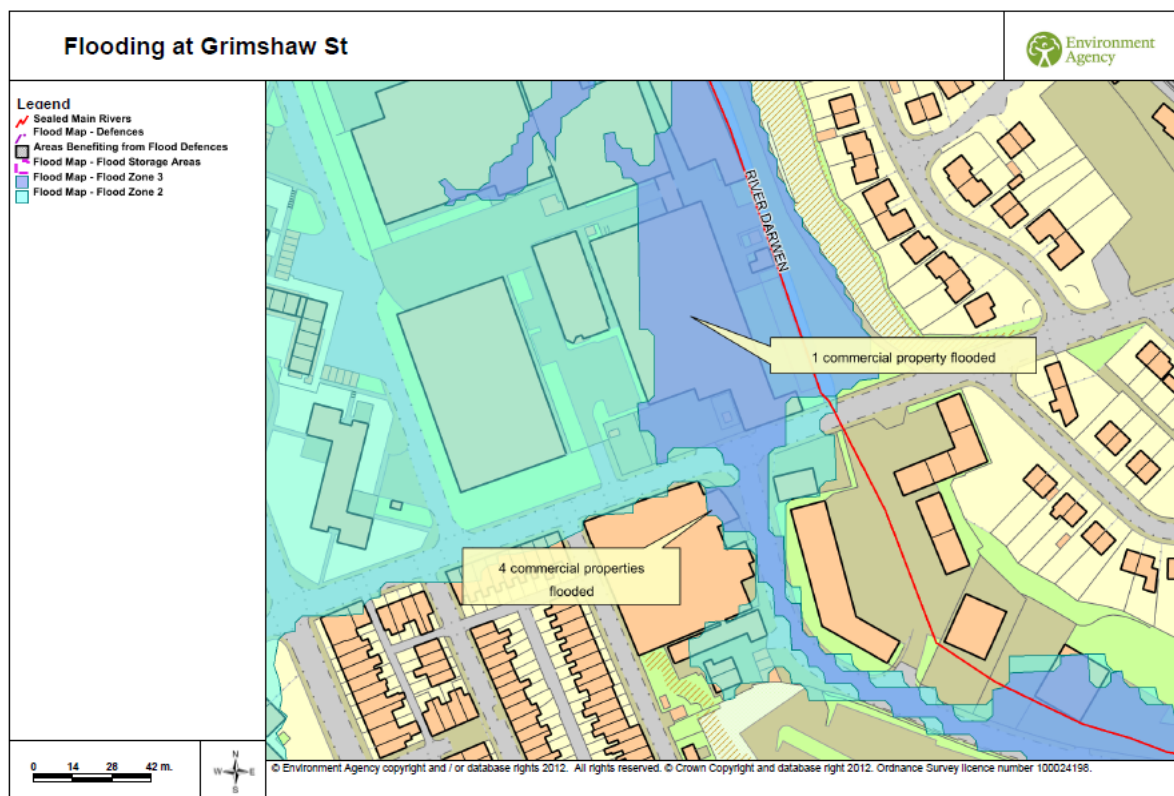
Legend

■ Darwen Flooding

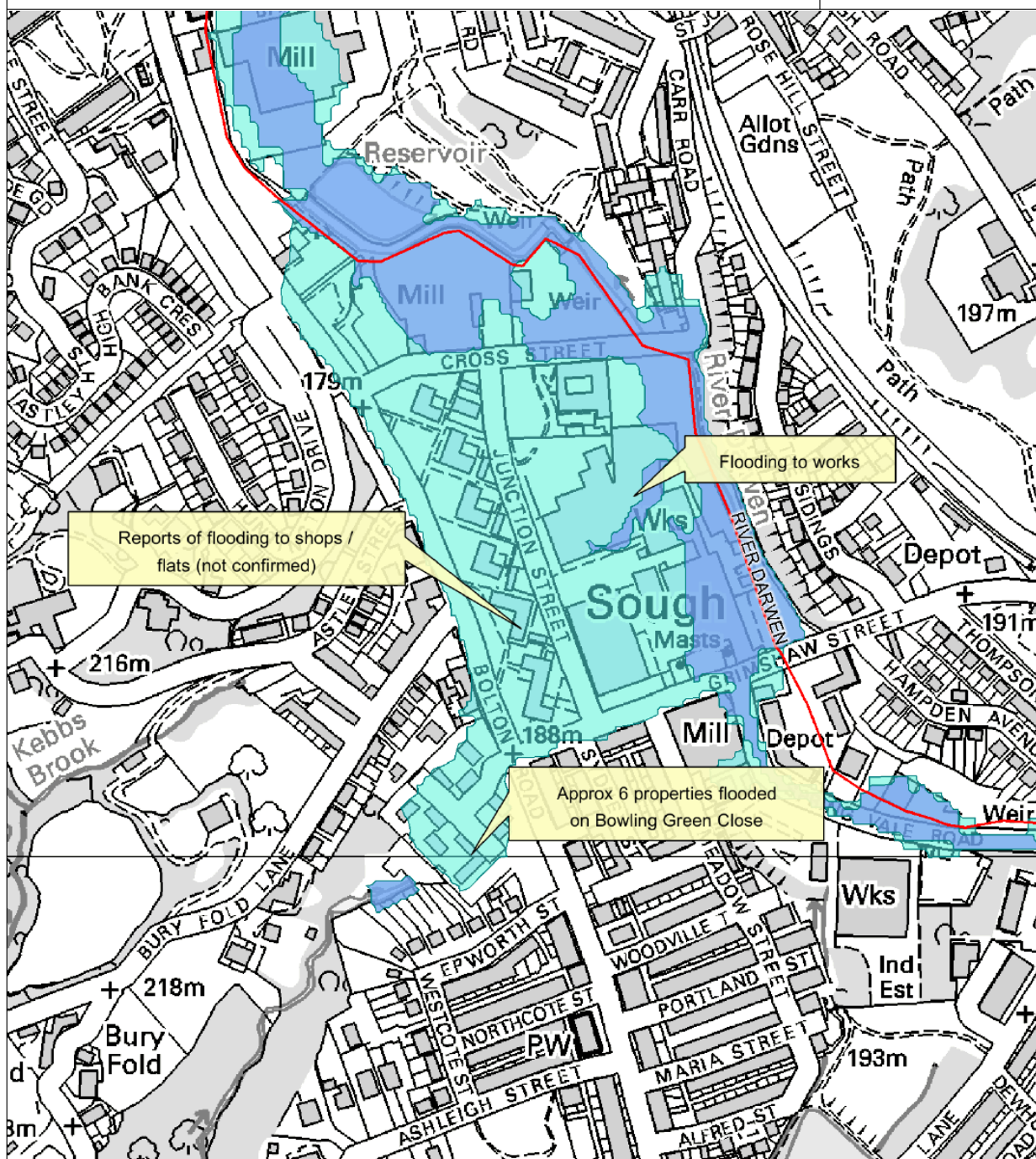
0 25 50 75 100

Meters

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Flooding from Buryfold Brook



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Legend

Sealed Main Rivers
Flood Map - Defences

Areas Benefiting from Flood Defences

Flood Map - Flood Storage Areas

Flood Map - Flood Zone 3

Flood Map - Flood Zone 2



0 45 90 135 180 m.