



PRESS RELEASE

20th March 2018

'PLASBERG' EYESORE REMOVED FROM RIVER AIRE

Plastic pollution tackled by Leeds residents, waterways charity, environment body and local council

Leeds South Bank residents joined forces with a charity, a public body and the local council last week to tackle the problem of a 'plasberg' floating on the River Aire.

The mound of plastic pollution was not only an eyesore in the stretch between Leeds Dock and Hunslet, but was also potentially damaging to the local wildlife, so a group from the H2010 development on Goodman Street teamed up with Canal & River Trust, Environment Agency and Leeds City Council to get rid of it.

Some took to the water in canoes, whilst others cleaned from the path, and together they collected an astonishing 63 bags of waste from just a 200 metre stretch. Most of it was plastic food and drink containers that had been irresponsibly discarded, but there was also a lot of polystyrene packaging.

Becca Dent, volunteer development coordinator at Canal & River Trust, said: "As the charity that cares for 2,000 miles of waterways across the country we undertake a lot of litter picking tasks, but dealing with the Leeds Plasberg has been a particularly interesting operation. We've worked with local people as well as our partners at the Environment Agency and Leeds City Council to tackle the problem in a coordinated manner and ensure we can make a real difference to this part of the city."

"We're delighted that residents feel strongly enough about their local waterway to get involved in looking after it, and hope that their efforts will encourage others to take action on plastic pollution, after all, it's really easy to do by simply binning all your waste."

Jenny Barlow, Flood & Coastal Risk Management Officer at the Environment Agency, commented: "The plastic rubbish cleared from the River Aire was not only unsightly and harmful to local wildlife, in sufficient quantities it could have blocked outfalls and got caught in tree branches, restricting the flow of water and increasing the risk of flooding. This type of clean-up event helps to support our teams, who work hard behind the scenes to reduce flood risk to homes and businesses across the region every day."

"It also helps meet the aspirations of Defra's 25 year plan to minimise the waste we're all producing to improve the environment in which we live and work. We can all make small differences to help tackle the plastics problem, for example swapping single-use plastic water bottles and bags for re-usable ones to help to stop plastic rubbish ending up in our rivers and seas."

Councillor Lucinda Yeadon, Leeds City Council executive board member with responsibility for sustainability and the environment, added: "Thanks to the Canal & River Trust, the Environment Agency, our council officers and especially the local volunteers for taking part in this clean-up. The issue and concerns around the levels of plastic in our rivers, seas and waterways is one which is increasingly being recognised on a global scale, so we all have a responsibility to look after our environment by disposing of products properly and where possible recycling them. As a council we are working hard to raise awareness of the importance

Canal & River Trust, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK91BB

T: 0203 204 4514 E: press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk W: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk Twitter: [@CanalRiverTrust](https://twitter.com/CanalRiverTrust)

Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: First Floor North, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

of recycling and not littering or polluting our environment, so clean-up activities like this are very much welcomed but in the future hopefully will not be needed.”

Find out more about how the Canal & River Trust cares for the waterways and how you can get involved as a volunteer, at: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

ENDS

Photos attached show the clean-up taking place. More images and video footage available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1h9lcaHIOs9rYid-5YFxFHZg1Ez8oV2c4?usp=sharing>

For further information, images, and interviews, please contact:

Gemma Rathbone, National Press Officer

07557 256482

gemma.rathbone@canalrivertrust.org.uk

[@GemmaRathbone](https://twitter.com/GemmaRathbone)

Notes to editors:

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation’s third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites. We believe that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

Find out more about our work at: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

The **Environment Agency** is a non-departmental public body, established in 1996 and sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), with responsibilities to protect and improve the environment in England.

Within England we’re responsible for:

- regulating major industry and waste
- treatment of contaminated land
- water quality and resources
- fisheries
- inland river, estuary and harbour navigations
- conservation and ecology

We’re also responsible for managing the risk of flooding from main rivers, reservoirs, estuaries and the sea.

The best way to protect yourself from flooding is to know what to do in advance. You can download the Environment Agency’s free, simple flood plan at: <https://floodsdestroy.campaign.gov.uk/>

You can also check your risk of flooding and get the latest flood updates at <https://www.gov.uk/check-if-youre-at-risk-of-flooding>. Alternatively, call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow @EnvAgency and #floodaware on Twitter for the latest flood updates.