

MEANWOOD VALLEY

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY OVERVIEW

JULY 2022



A Meanwood Valley where all of our local neighbourhoods are connected with the wealth of natural history on our doorstep.

1. Connecting people to their natural heritage for the health and wellbeing of both.
2. Protecting and growing the precious and unique natural heritage of this area. In particular the native white-clawed crayfish and aiming to reintroduce key species such as water voles and great crested newts.
3. Celebrating the wealth of human heritage in the valley, in particular the hidden Henry Moore connection.

Connect Celebrate Grow

Contents

- **Introduction** – pp. 4
- **Involvement** – pp. 5
- **Background** – pp. 6
- **Location** – pp. 7
- **Community** – pp. 8
- **Activities and Destinations** – pp. 9
- **Heritage** – pp. 10
- **Connectivity and Access** – pp. 11
- **Sustainable Travel** – pp. 12
- **Urban Growth** – pp. 13
- **Health and Well-being** – pp. 14
- **Landscape Character** – pp. 15
- **Meanwood Beck** – pp. 16
- **Landscape Zones** – pp. 17
- **Ecology** – pp. 18
- **Habitat and Species** – pp. 19
- **Vision** – pp. 20
- **Aims** – pp. 21
- **Objectives** – pp. 22
- **Next Steps** – pp. 23

Introduction

What is Meanwood Valley?

The Meanwood valley is in Leeds in the north of England. Popular walking route 'The Meanwood Valley Trail' runs in the valley for most of this route.

It runs from the densely populated space near the city centre out to Golden Acre Park in a more rural setting. Through the centre runs a beck which has different names at different locations, this is a tributary of the river Aire.

It provides a much needed green corridor for wildlife and human recreation and wellbeing for the communities situated alongside it, and contains several popular spots which attract visitors from further afield.

What is a Landscape Strategy?

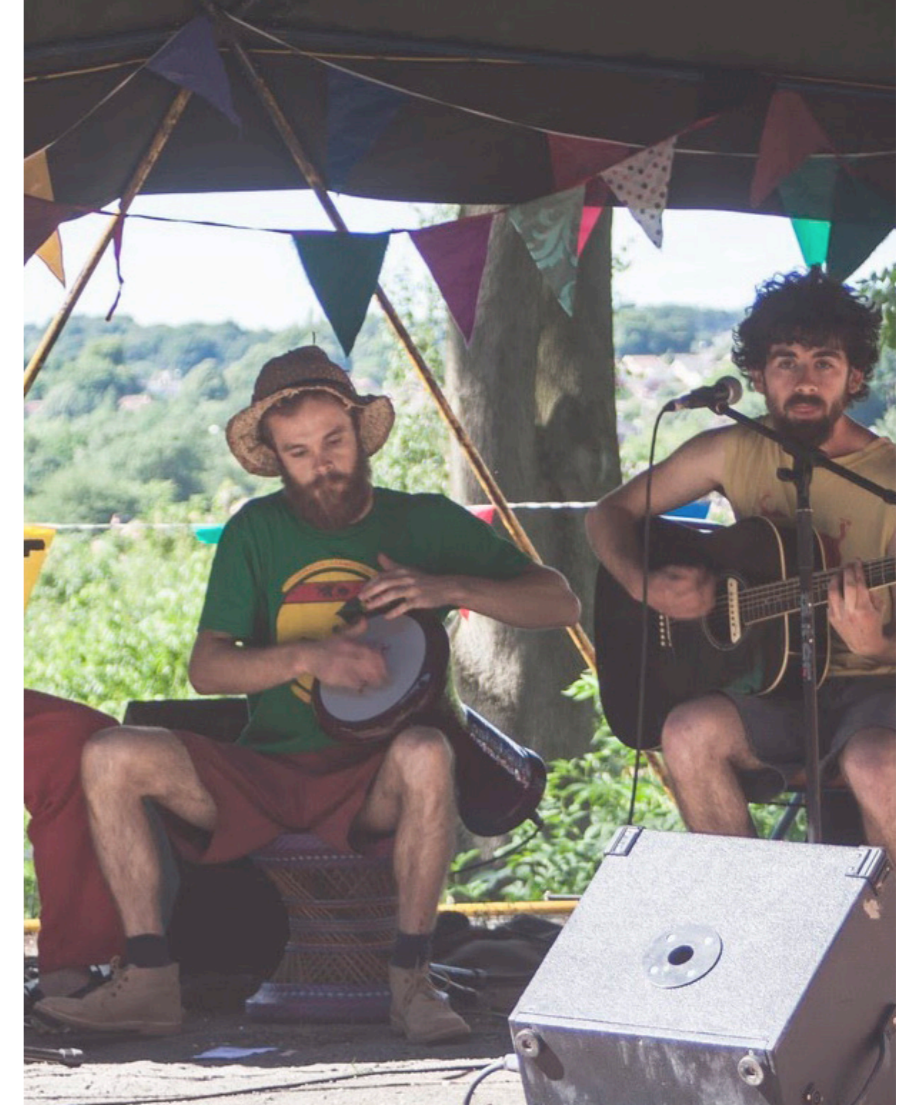
A Landscape Strategy is a document analysing a large area and creating a shared vision for the future. It's creation can be used to gain consensus between stakeholders with differing needs, desires and obligations to a space. It can be used as a tool for communication with the community and to gain funding and support for large scale projects.

It is an overview beginning by identifying opportunities and issues:

- Location
- Demographics
- Community use & ownership
- Landscape zones & character
- Heritage
- Connectivity
- Ecology

Before drawing out key themes and aims for the strategy to achieve.

The strategy is supported by additional documents which look in further detail and draw out plans for implementation.



Involvement

Who is Involved?

This Landscape Strategy had been commissioned by the community group Meanwood Valley partnership (MVP), using funding supplied by the National Lottery.

It was project managed & compiled by Lemon Balm, a local social enterprise which promotes connection between people and nature to promote the Health & Wellbeing of both.

Local community organisations Meanwood Valley Urban Farm and Woodhouse Ridge Action Group formed a steering group to begin to collate information and engage in consultation with the local community.

Additional key stakeholders offered support: Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, The Environment Agency & Leeds City Council.

The Community

This project has been undertaken on behalf of the community of Meanwood, a community of approximately 15 000 residents living within 3 miles of the city centre. A mixed and vibrant place with varied neighbourhoods including social housing, private rental homes and estates of privately owned properties. Based around a commercial centre with supermarkets, independent shops, cafes, bars and restaurants. Meanwood also has a busy community sector with a community centre, an urban farm and several church halls and sporting venues which host a variety of clubs, events and community cafes.

Co-ordinating Resources, Interests and Aims

This work was steered by a group of individuals representing a variety of local community groups:

Vanessa Brown - Interact, Church and Community Partnership

Adam Oglvie - Meanwood Valley Urban Farm

Neil Pentilow - Leeds City Council (LCC) Communities Team

Janet Mathews & Ron Baker - Meanwood Valley Partnership

Isabel Swift & Lewis Turner - Lemon Balm

Emerging Partnerships

Through this work partnerships began to emerge.

We were contacted by LCC Flood Alleviation team & The Environment Agency Live Streaming Leeds project and MVP began to chair a meeting called 'The Beck Network Group' in order to get all partners together in a virtual room to aid communication, share ideas and for MVP to act as a conduit to communicate with local people.



Background

The Story So Far...

The need for this project arose as a result of some work done in 2019-20 by MVP in partnership with Lemon Balm and other community organisations, to create a community-led 'Vision for Meanwood'. To see this piece of work, please visit <https://lovemeanwood.org.uk/>

The 'Vision for Meanwood' research involved speaking with over 400 people through face to face events and online feedback.

Extensive community mapping and workshop events with local people showed that the greenspace and the valley were loved and prized by much of the local community, but there were tensions which needed addressing including:

- Under-resourcing for maintenance
- Lack of communication between public agencies
- Poor communication with the public
- Tension between recreation and wildlife conservation
- Some communities near to the valley didn't know about it, or access it.

The Vision for Meanwood was launched in 2020, with Green Spaces and the valley in particular as priorities, and in 2021 MVP sought funding to develop this area which came out of the vision.

In 2018 Meanwood Valley Partnership, with LCC Rangers team gained 2 years of funding from The National Lottery Heritage fund to support community groups in volunteering to support the trail by funding a ranger to be employed. This project was extended by the council through area wellbeing funding for a further 6 months but this funding has also ended and the valley is back within the general remit of the ranger team for Leeds. There is a great foundation to work on, but the focus on the valley has waned.



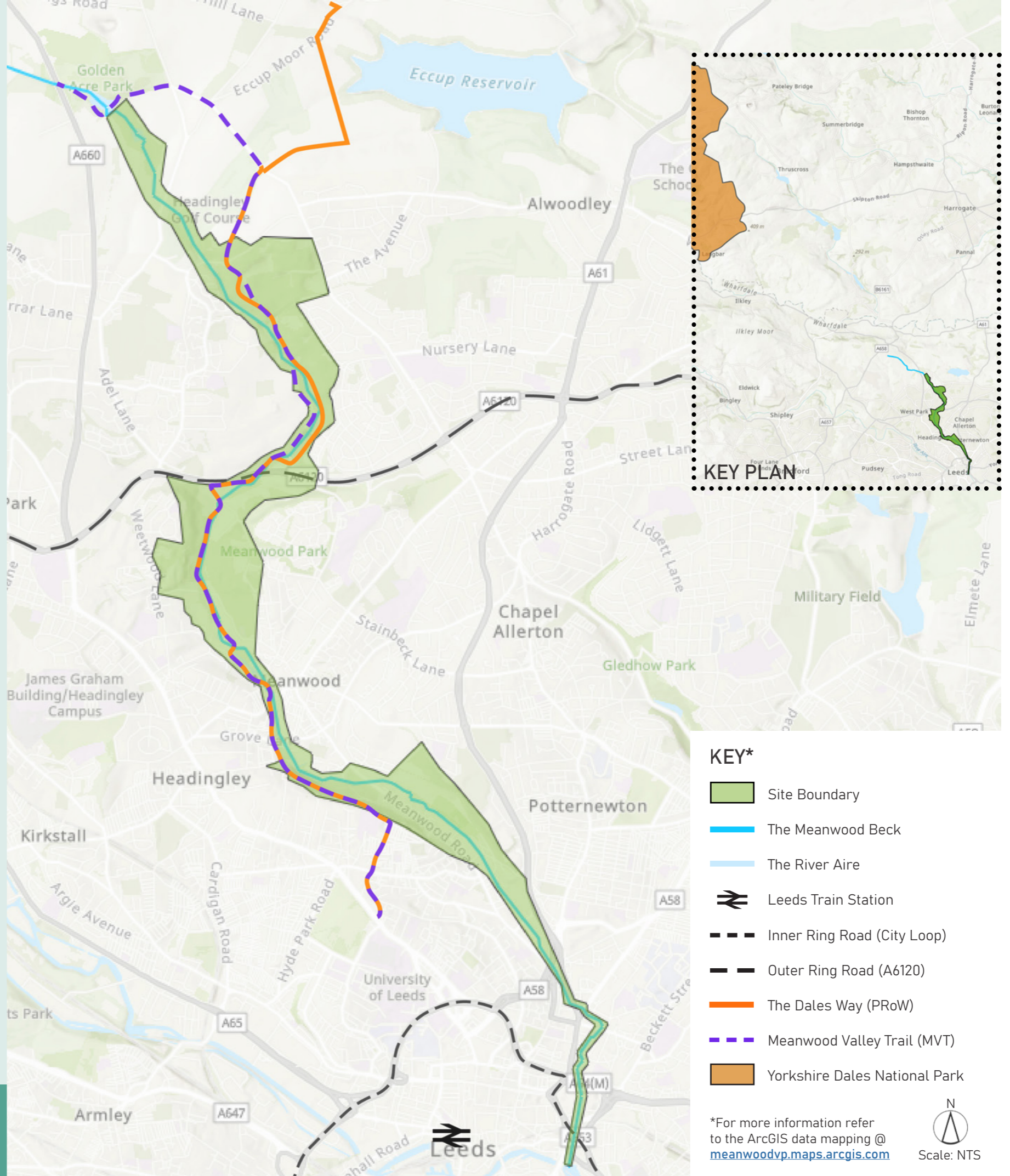
Location

Meanwood valley runs out of the centre of Leeds in a Northwesterly direction, through the areas of Mabgate, Sheepscar, Buslingthorpe, Meanwood, Alwoodley & Adel. Between Meanwood and Alwoodley it crosses the outer ring road. Leeds City Council curate a walking route called 'The Meanwood Valley Trail' which follows the route of the stream for much of the way from the city out to the park.

The stream is culverted from Buslingthorpe, and runs underground through the city centre, until it joins the river Aire at Leeds Dock.

Continuing northwesterly, it is only 19 miles to the Yorkshire Dales national Park, and it is possible to navigate on foot to join the Dales Way in Ilkley and walk from Leeds to the Yorkshire Dales.

Some of the land in the Meanwood Valley is owned and managed by Leeds City Council (LCC), some is in private ownership and some is unclear.



Electoral Wards

The valley runs through 7 different electoral wards:

- Little London & Woodhouse
- Headingley & Hyde park
- Chapel Allerton
- Weetwood
- Moortown
- Adel & Wharfedale &
- Alwoodley

"A rural, rugged and wild oasis at the heart of Leeds, and a corridor to leave the city without setting foot on tarmac or near traffic."

"Our family of four regularly walk the trail which is an amazing space."

Community Members

KEY*

- Site Boundary
- The Meanwood Beck
- The River Aire
- Leeds Train Station
- Inner Ring Road (City Loop)
- Outer Ring Road (A6120)
- The Dales Way (PRoW)
- Meanwood Valley Trail (MVT)
- Yorkshire Dales National Park

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com

Community

The Meanwood Valley is home to many neighbourhoods from where it joins the river Aire in the city centre out to the source, in semi-rural outer north west Leeds. They all have differing relationships with the green corridor.

The city centre is experiencing significant change, with many more areas of residential and mixed use developments occupying previously industrial areas. Inner city neighbourhoods in central Leeds are developing, but their access to the green corridor is limited. Here the green corridor is broken, and the water is hidden underground.

The beck and the valley are heavily developed and hidden through the neighbourhoods of Sheepscar and Buslingthorpe until the water and a steep wooded section of the valley emerges at Woodhouse Ridge, where commuters and recreational visitors from both sides of the valley enjoy immersion in green and interaction with nature. Meanwood is the neighbourhood where the beck runs alongside and through the heart of the retail and leisure hub of the urban community.

Travelling closer up towards the source, the valley the communities it travels through include Alwoodley and Adel where 'friends of' groups work alongside the Leeds City Council Rangers, to care for the valley.

Finally the valley travels up to Golden Acre Park, a visitor destination much loved by thousands of visitors from all over the city and further afield.

Many community groups love, use and care for the valley, some coordinated by LCC and some working independently in partnership with them.

Community Groups

- Woodhouse Ridge Action group
- Meanwood Valley Partnership
- Friends of Meanwood Park
- Woodhouse Ridge Fest
- Friends of Adel Woods
- Friends of Breary Marsh
- Grove Lane Orchard
- Monk Bridge Green and more...

"Are there also opportunities to add small plots anywhere for growing food or flowers?"

"I like the fact I can be surrounded by nature (insulated from the city) and see seasonal changes in the plants and trees, which I find calming and restorative. I notice this benefit to my mental health most often when walking the trail on the way to work."

Community Members



KEY*

- Meanwood Valley Trail (MVT)
- A Friends of Breary Marsh
- B Friends of Adel Woods
- C Friends of Meanwood Park
- D Meanwood Valley Partnership
- E Woodhouse Ridge Action Group
- F Woodhouse Ridge Fest

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com



Scale: NTS

Activities & Destinations

Meanwood Valley hosts a wide range of recreation activities. Rambling, dog walking, cycling, fishing, sports, bird watching, foraging, community events, birthday parties and quiet contemplation time are all activities that can happen on a daily basis.

There are also a number of **key recreational destinations** along the valley. These include:

- Meanwood Park
- Meanwood Valley Urban Farm
- Golden Acre Park

The various green spaces, woodland trails and points of interest serve the needs many surrounding communities and cater do all ages and backgrounds. The valley promotes an active and healthy lifestyle to its varied users.

Whilst the valley is a fantastic resource that brings people together and benefits the community in a number of ways, the increase in recreational activities is placing stress on the valley as a semi natural resource. Unrestricted access and unmanaged recreational use is beginning to compete with habitats and diversity. The erosion of woodland understorey, marginal planting, woodland and meadow areas at the urban fringe are adversely impacting upon diversity and contributing to siltation of the water course. This subsequently reduces water quality and contributes to flooding.

For recreation and nature to thrive in harmony, a strategic approach needs to be developed to safeguard areas, control access and to allow for regeneration to occur.

Issues

- **Increased population size and car use.**
- **Increase in recreational activities causing stress on existing infrastructure (i.e. car parks, toilets, paths etc).**
- **Unrestricted access.**
- **Need to safeguard areas with high biodiversity value.**

"I've heard from numerous sources that since the lockdowns loads more people are visiting the Meanwood Valley, which is great. The downside is that the car parks are full, local people are getting angry about parking on the roads and there seems to be a lot more litter, dog poo not in bins etc."

Isabel Swift, director of Lemon Balm



Heritage

The Meanwood Valley Trail has a wealth of heritage along its course. These include:

- Remains of former flax mills;
- Quarries;
- Private estates;
- Ornamental gardens; and
- Geological formations such as crags that have been identified as the locations of Roman forts and also documented as being the inspiration for some of Henry Moore's works.

The adjacent plan identifies some of the notable artifacts and historic 'Listed' assets (as designated by Historic England) that fall within, or immediately adjacent to the study area boundary.

These points of interest are largely hidden in the landscape and largely go unnoticed or unappreciated. Slowly the condition of historical items, or access to them and the opportunity to celebrate them is diminishing and the historical narrative fading.

Existing interpretation is inconsistent and absent in some places and in others in need of some maintenance. There are opportunities for an increased amount of interpretation to further convey the heritage of the valley and how it has served many bygone communities. Assets such as the Slabbering Baby and the Seven Arches Aqueduct convey the social habits, Victorian provisions and infrastructure and the demarcation of meeting places of communities from an industrial past.

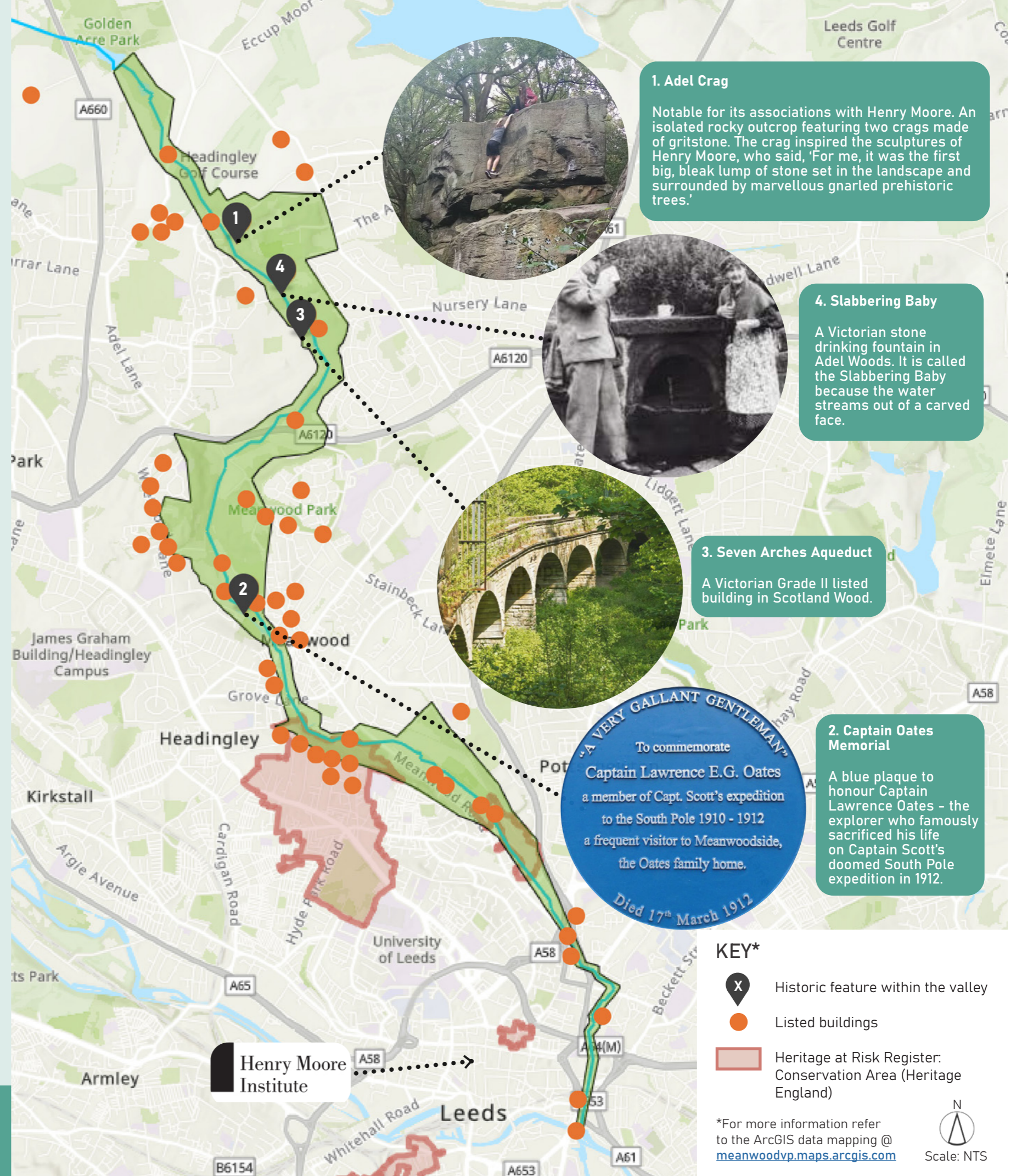
Issues

- **Inconsistent historical information interpretation.**
- **Accessibility of pedestrian routes leading to heritage assets / historical features.**
- **Inconsistent (and in some areas, confusing) wayfinding interpretation signage to guide you to heritage assets / historical features.**
- **Heritage assets in disrepair (e.g. the former Victorian Tearoom toilets) which could be utilised as a community facility.**

"There is a small part of the path just before the climb up to the slabbering baby where you cross some rocks, and after heavy rainfall it becomes a flowing stream."

"[I like the] village feel (Meanwood) and history of buildings."

Community Members



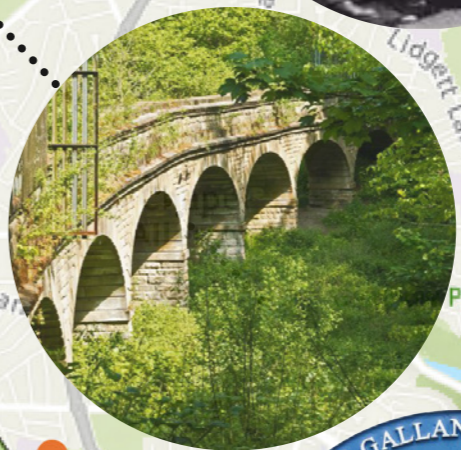
1. Adel Crag
Notable for its associations with Henry Moore. An isolated rocky outcrop featuring two crags made of gritstone. The crag inspired the sculptures of Henry Moore, who said, 'For me, it was the first big, bleak lump of stone set in the landscape and surrounded by marvellous gnarled prehistoric trees.'



4. Slabbering Baby
A Victorian stone drinking fountain in Adel Woods. It is called the Slabbering Baby because the water streams out of a carved face.



3. Seven Arches Aqueduct
A Victorian Grade II listed building in Scotland Wood.



2. Captain Oates Memorial
A blue plaque to honour Captain Lawrence Oates - the explorer who famously sacrificed his life on Captain Scott's doomed South Pole expedition in 1912.

To commemorate
Captain Lawrence E.G. Oates
a member of Capt. Scott's expedition
to the South Pole 1910 - 1912
a frequent visitor to Meanwoodside,
the Oates family home.
Died 17th March 1912

KEY*

- X Historic feature within the valley
- Listed buildings
- Heritage at Risk Register: Conservation Area (Heritage England)

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com Scale: NTS

Connectivity & Access

Meanwood Valley Trail is a recreational route that broadly follows Meanwood Beck. It provides a connectivity corridor that links a number of key destinations, including the Hollies, Meanwood Park, Scotland Wood and Adel wood.

An internal network of valley footpaths (some formal, others naturally occurring desire lines) dissect the valley allowing people to deviate from the beaten track and to also access the waters edge. A number of Public Right of Way (PRoW) connect with the trail which provide connections to both adjacent urban areas and links to the wider connection of footpaths and the broader open landscape.

Whilst the broad network of footpaths are frequent and provide good connections both to and through the valley, access is frequently compromised due to the waterlogged conditions. This is causing users to deviate from the footpath which is resulting in a number of issues. Pathways are eroding and increasing in scale due to users sidestepping waterlogged areas which in turn is eroding adjacent understory areas and contributing to a loss of vegetation and causing siltation. This issue is exacerbated by users (and dogs) deviating from the network of established pathways, forming many desire lines through vegetated areas.

There are many opportunities to upgrade footpath width in areas to respond to an increase in visitor numbers and to create safe passing places. Careful consideration should be given to the materiality to improve drainage, surface water run off and durability.

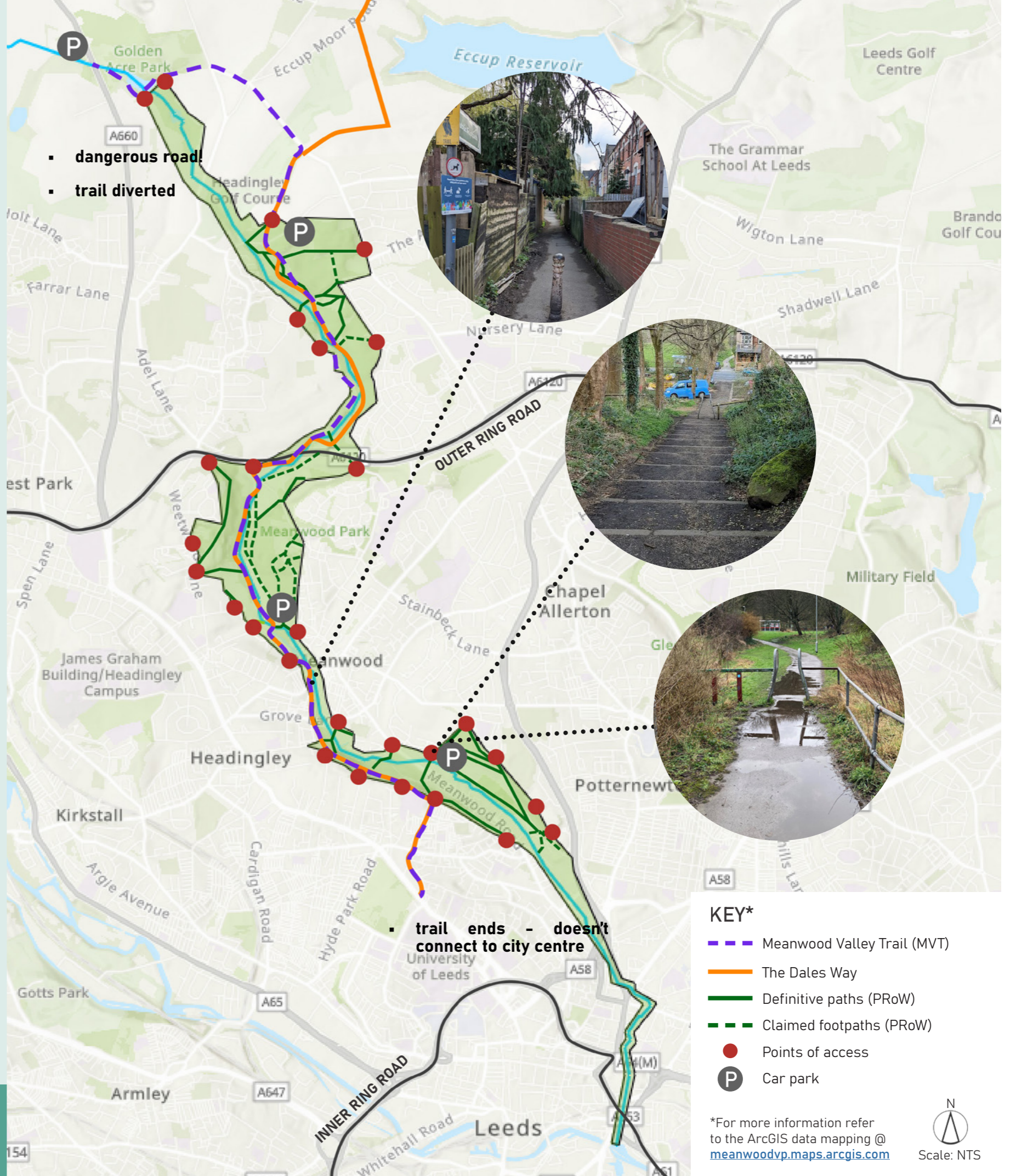
Issues

- Seasonal flooding of pathways.
- Erosion of pathways.
- Pedestrians deviating off-route due to flooded pathways and narrow width of pathways.
- Stepped and narrow access points of access onto Meanwood Valley Trail.
- No pedestrian access alongside Meanwood Beck north of Adel Wood and south of Buslingthorpe Lane due to ownership (section of private land) and canalisation of the beck.
- MVT ends at Woodhouse Moore - doesn't connect to the city centre!

"I would like better walking routes connecting Meanwood and Headingley - issue with the footpath at the side of the old cricket pitch being closed"

"The stretch alongside King lane southeast of five lane ends is unpleasant and dangerous because the path along the verge is very narrow and close to the busy carriageway."

Community Members



- dangerous road
- trail diverted



- trail ends - doesn't connect to city centre

KEY*

- Meanwood Valley Trail (MVT)
- The Dales Way
- Definitive paths (PRoW)
- - - Claimed footpaths (PRoW)
- Points of access
- P Car park

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com

Scale: NTS

Sustainable Travel

Sustainable connections stretch from Woodhouse Moor, through Meanwood Valley into the less developed and more open landscapes in the north. Those routes within the valley are often vehicle free, promoting safe, sustainable opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists and a valuable recreational asset for local families.

There are opportunities to extend the Meanwood Valley Trail route into Leeds City Centre to provide a key commuter route. Currently Sheepscar road junction presents a major physical barrier to pedestrians.

Generally, the condition of cycle paths within the valley is good. However, there are existing conflicts between both pedestrians and cyclists as the majority of pathways are too narrow to accommodate both. There is also an issue surrounding the erosion of pathways due to mountain bike activity which in turn is contributing to increased levels of siltation within the watercourse. There is potential for the modification of the existing footpaths to cater to both pedestrians and cyclists, but consideration should be taken to explore options to provide alternative dedicated cycle routes which may loop outside of the valley at points.

The bus network will be looked at in detail in the Heritage, Well-being and Inclusivity Plan.

MVP also hope to seek funding to promote behavioural change, encouraging people from Far Headingley and Weetwood who come to Meanwood for recreation and shopping to use corridor instead of driving.

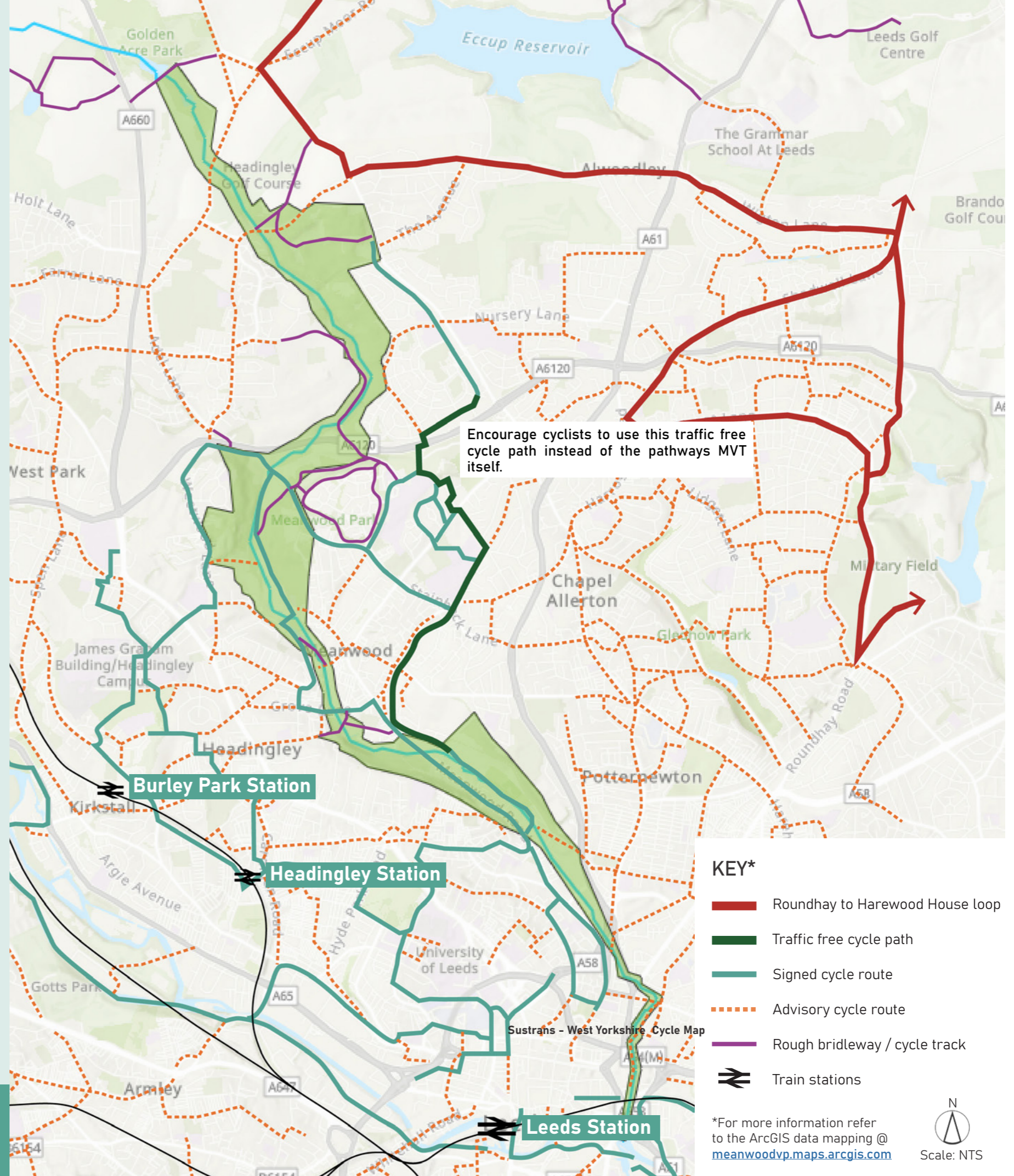
Issues

- Conflict between pedestrians and cyclists on shared paths.
- Cyclists causing path erosion.
- Footpaths too narrow in places for safe passing.
- Opportunity for the MVT to extend into Leeds city centre.
- Opportunity for corridor to form pedestrian commuting route.
- LCC travel maps on website not clear.

"This part of the trail (zone 4) is too narrow, muddy and uneven. Mountain bikers use it and are causing erosion in places and the narrow corners are not wide enough for multiple people."

"If I could commute through the trail I would, but it isn't part of my commuter route, but I would always chose to walk the trail if I was going somewhere from the route."

Community Members



KEY*

- Roundhay to Harewood House loop
- Traffic free cycle path
- Signed cycle route
- - - Advisory cycle route
- Rough bridleway / cycle track
- ⇄ Train stations

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com



Scale: NTS

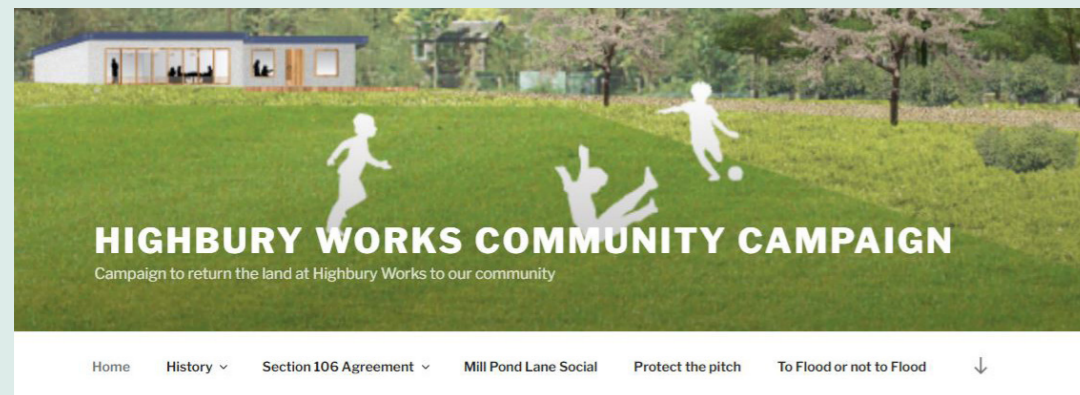
Urban Growth

Within the whole stretch of the Meanwood Valley there are several pinch points where residential and industrial development have narrowed the width of the valley.

One of the major pinch points is within Meanwood. As the historic plans to the right illustrate, Meanwood has undergone significant urban growth in the last 130 years which in turn has decreased the area of greenspace within the valley and contributed to the destruction and fragmentation of habitat.

Existing areas of greenfield land (which are designated as 'green infrastructure' within the Leeds Core Plan) adjacent to Grove Lane and the former Highbury Works cricket ground in Meanwood are currently subject to residential development planning applications which if granted, would reduce the width of the corridor.

This greenspace is more precious than ever and local people are working with Meanwood Valley Partnership to try to oppose further development, identify bits of land and attempt to purchase them to protect them from development:

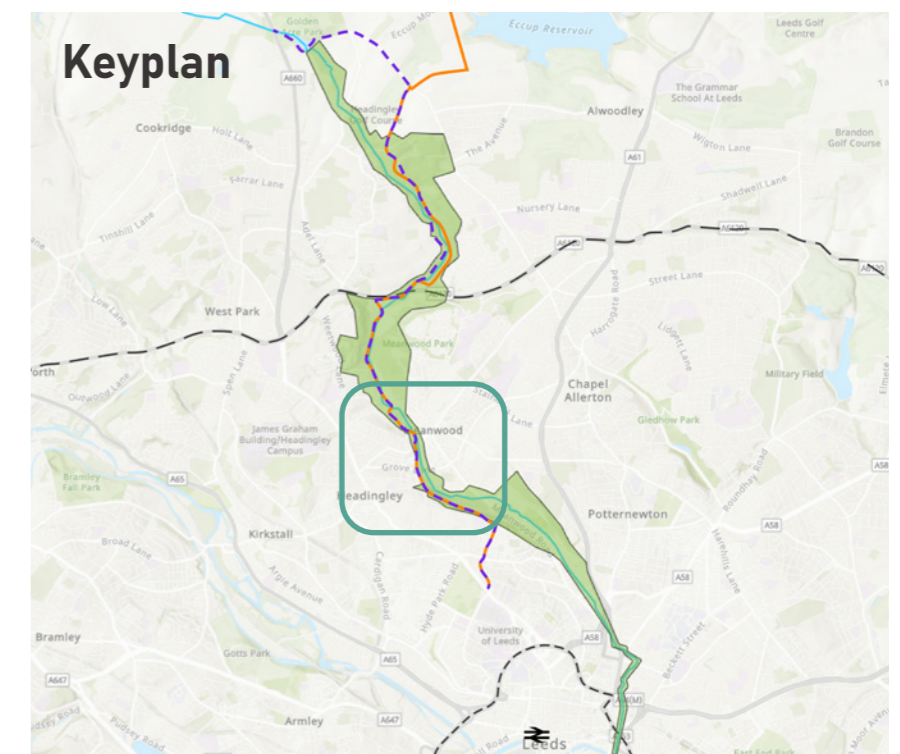
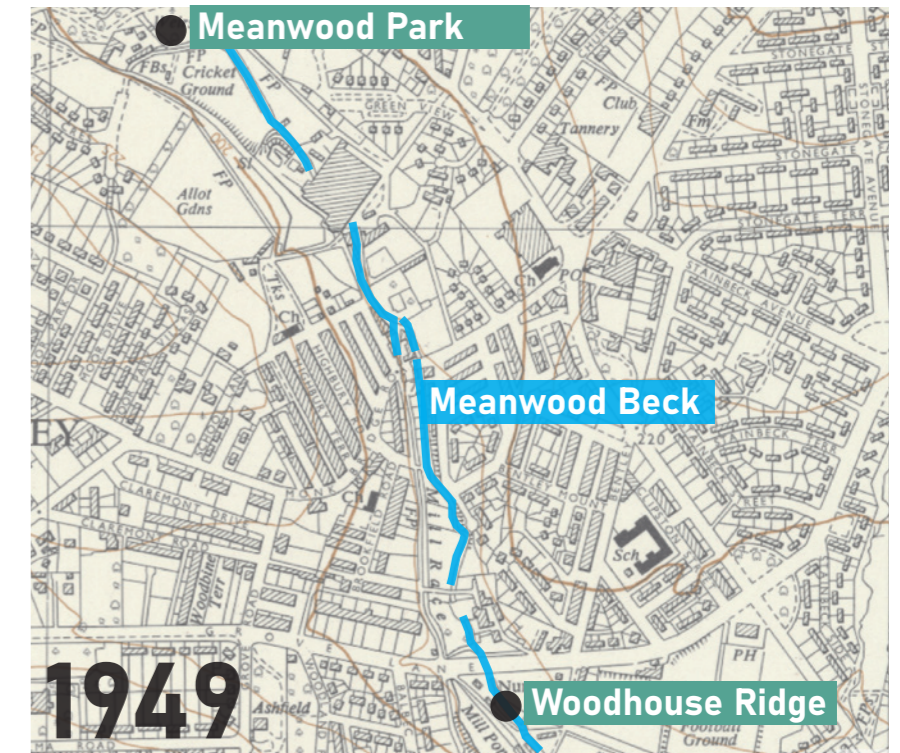
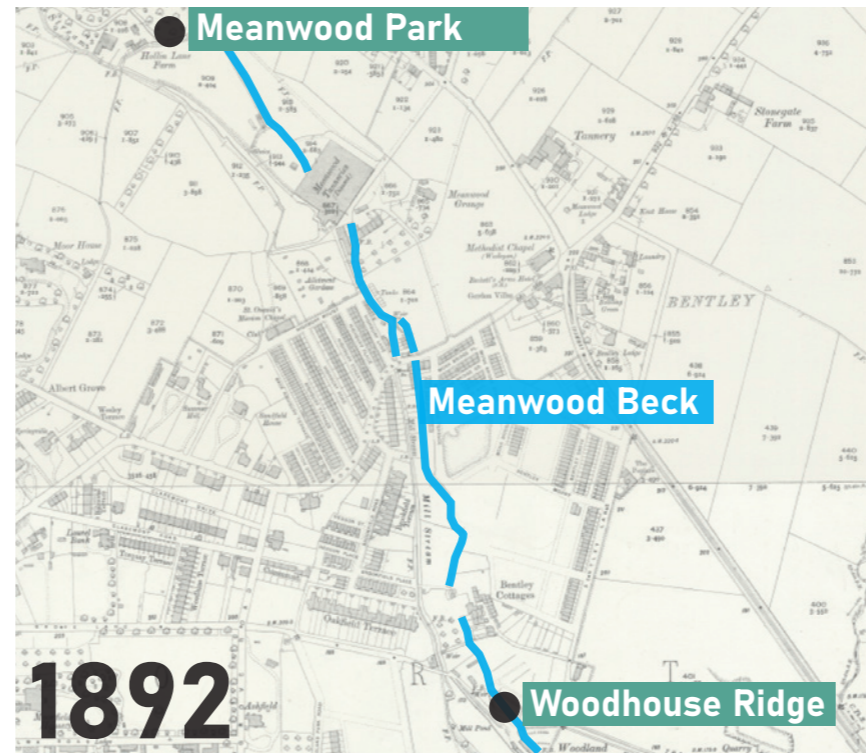


Issues

- Pressure of new development in greenfield land which form part of Meanwood Valley.
- Roads laterally 'cutting' through the valley, fragmenting habitat and ecosystems.

"I've worked in the Meanwood Valley for over 30 years now and have seen the loss of large areas of habitat, particularly in and around Meanwood. There used to be several ponds just near to Meanwood Road, some in the grounds of the Switchgear factory and other old mill ponds, but they've all gone now."

Robert Paige, Education Officer at Meanwood Valley Urban Farm



Health & Well-being

The communities living within and alongside the valley vary in terms of their socio-economic situation with some communities in the 10% most deprived in the country, to some in the 10% least deprived. Generally moving from the most deprived in the inner city getting less deprived moving out to semi-rural areas, with the exception of a pocket of high deprivation in Alwoodley.

Looking specifically at health deprivation, the pattern is largely similar to general deprivation.

It's now well established that access to green space and nature is beneficial to our mental and physical health.

The King's Fund cite 'Access to green space' and 'spatial planning' to allow ease of access to green spaces as 2 of the key things local authorities can do to improve public health. ('Improving the Public's Health' <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/improving-public-health>).

Poor health and wellbeing is linked to deprivation. Thus those in areas of higher deprivation are in greater need of access to these natural resources. Anecdotally we have found that communities with higher levels of deprivation in the Meanwood Valley are less likely to access the greenspace of the valley than those in areas of less deprivation and that some barriers exist to people easily accessing this valuable greenspace.

The areas which are most deprived are located where there are poorer access points into the valley with Sheepscar road junction creating a major physical barrier to people who live within Leeds City Centre, south of the inner ring road, discouraging them from walking to the start of the official Meanwood Valley Trail on Woodhouse Moore. There is also a correlation between the areas of most health deprivation being situated at points along the valley where the beck is not green and natural (either canalised or culverted), with a lack of vegetation, trees and associated greenspace. Access to greenspace is not located next to where people need it most...

Issues

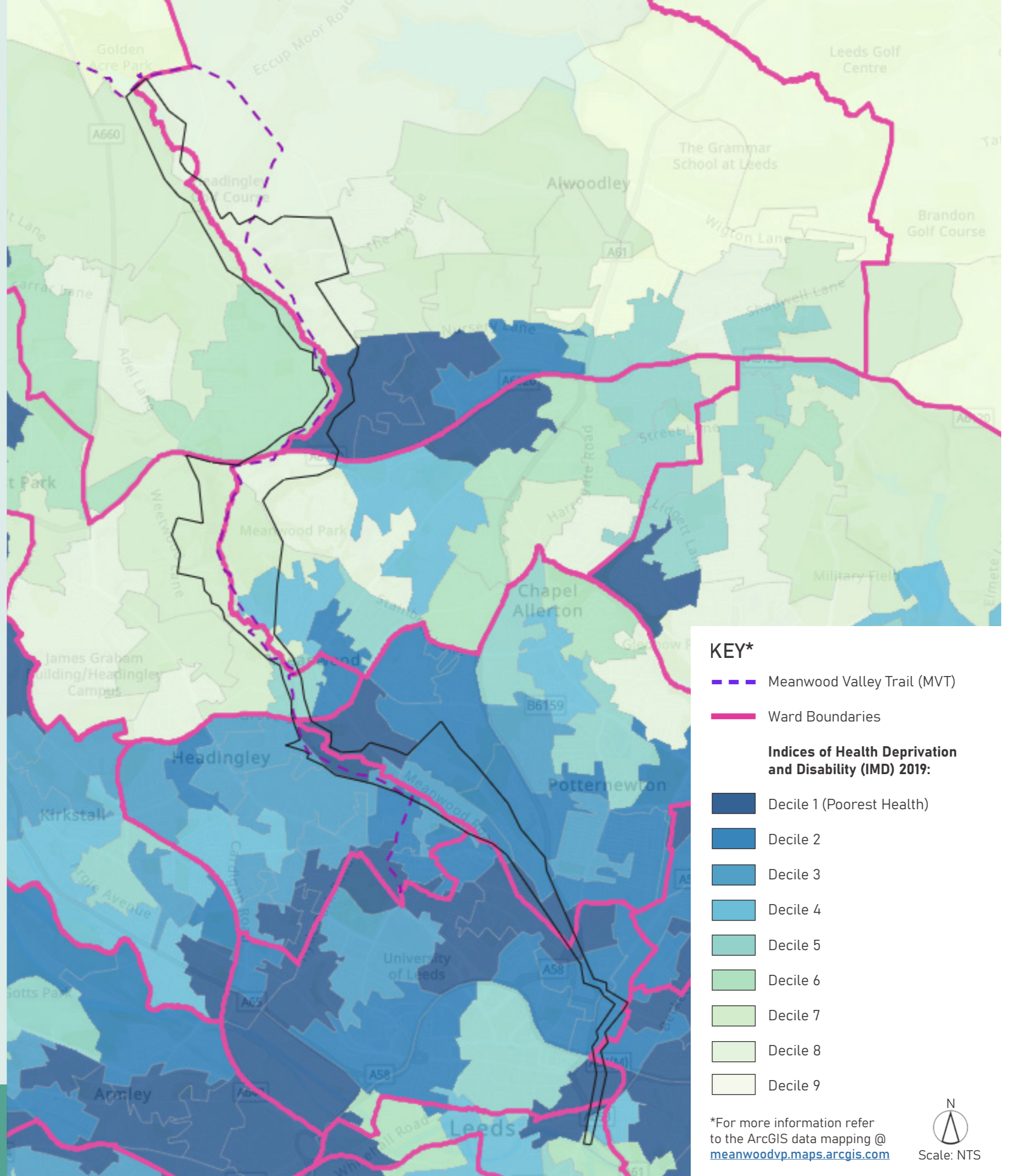
- **Visibility of access into the valley.**
- **Signage of routes and footpaths.**
- **Cultural norms around using greenspace for recreation.**
- **Dangerous road crossings limiting access.**

"Really nice walk that I didn't know about."

"Better public toilets - so many people use the park, and the toilets are awful, plus not in a obvious place."

"Good pedestrian access from roads but barriers across paths would limit wheelchair access."

Community Members



KEY*

- Meanwood Valley Trail (MVT)
 - Ward Boundaries
- Indices of Health Deprivation and Disability (IMD) 2019:**
- Decile 1 (Poorest Health)
 - Decile 2
 - Decile 3
 - Decile 4
 - Decile 5
 - Decile 6
 - Decile 7
 - Decile 8
 - Decile 9

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com



Landscape Character

Natural England describes a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) as “the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape. LCA documents identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas. They also show how the landscape is perceived, experienced and valued by people.”

Within the latest Leeds Landscape Character Assessment conducted in 1994, the Meanwood Valley corridor is situated within both character areas LCM12 (Meanwood Valley) and MGP4 (Eccup Plateau):

LCM12 Meanwood Valley: Steep sided, well wooded corridor with pockets of scrub and pasture forming a green patchwork in an otherwise built up environment. Urban influences include utility works, industrial and residential / urban areas.

MGP4 Eccup Plateau: Characterised by medium scale, generally intact fields of pasture grazed by sheep and cattle, isolated boundary trees and planted woodland strips alongside roads. Woodland occurs in small copses and as ribbons of seminatural cover along streams and becks.

Pressures arising from the valley being located within close proximity to the urban fringe are acknowledged as a force for change. These pressures include building development, recreational pressures, fly tipping and the growth of areas of horse grazing. Run down ancillary buildings and poorly managed / degrading structures also negatively influence character.

Preventing erosion and the degradation of the landscape arising from such pressures and retaining and enhancing the stream and river channel diversity and marginal vegetation are a key management strategy. These are also issues that have been identified by the local community as topics which need advancing in order to maintain and protect their green space.

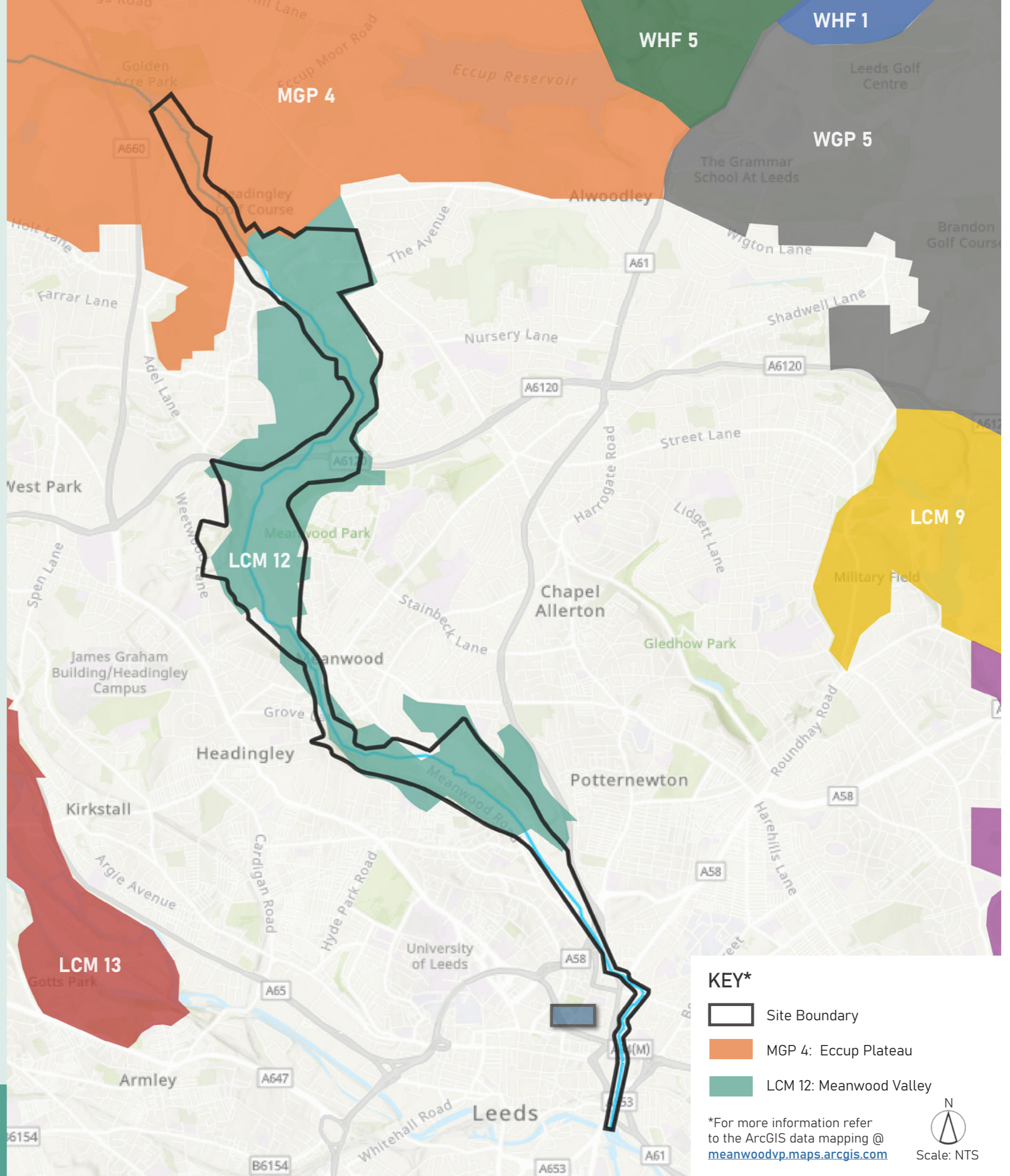
Issues

- Developmental and recreational pressure arising from proximity to the urban fringe and increasing residential populations (increased number of visitors / users).
- Erosion and degradation of the landscape within the valley and the watercourse itself (channel and marginal vegetation).

“It’s a great access point to countryside, and can make you feel like you are out of the city very quickly.”

“Lovely nature back road (zone 8).”

Community Members



KEY*

- Site Boundary
- MGP 4: Eccup Plateau
- LCM 12: Meanwood Valley

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com

Meanwood Beck

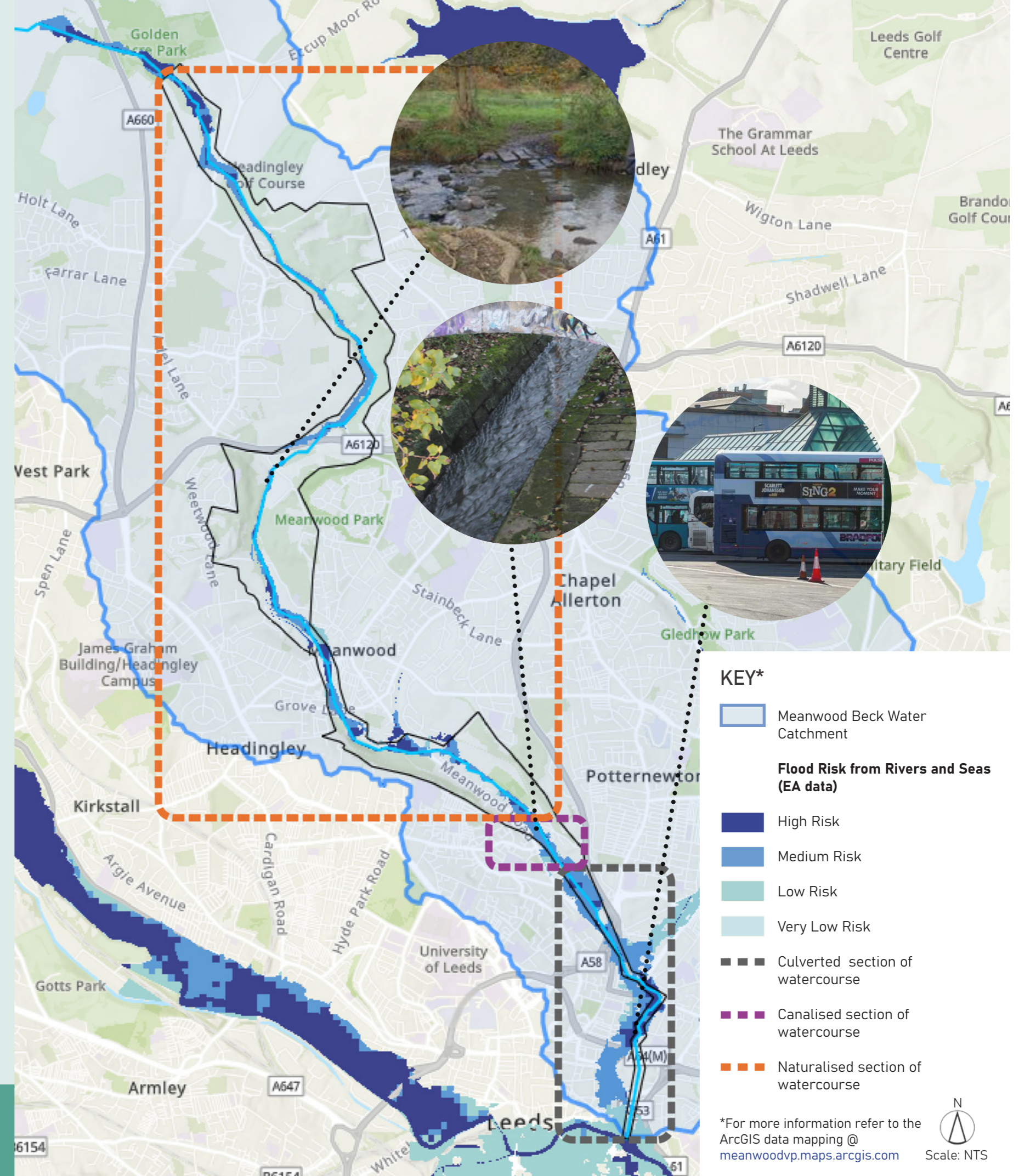
A stretch of the beck within the industrial area north of the inner ring road is canalised. Canalisation is the process of introducing weirs and locks and the construction of a narrow channel to control the natural meandering of a river through built up areas.

There is also a large stretch of the beck within industrial areas north of the inner ring road and within Leeds city centre itself, which are culverted. A culvert is a closed tunnel used to contain water under a road or buildings. This means that a section of Meanwood beck runs underneath Leeds bus station and various other buildings within Mabgate.

Areas subject to localised flooding along the course of the valley. LCC Flood Risk Management team have undertaken a strategic scoping exercise throughout the valley corridor to identify potential sites to implement flood alleviation works. This scoping exercise continues to progress with work estimated to begin in 2023.

High levels of siltation within the watercourse and large areas of eroded river bank. Siltation is when particles land on the riverbed. This makes the river shallower and changes the way the water moves. It also covers up the larger stones and rocks which are necessary for crayfish to hold onto in times of heavy rain so they don't get swept away, and also for tiny invertebrates to make their home. The invertebrates are food for crayfish and other wildlife. Siltation is a natural process, but it's being massively sped up by muddy paths and people and dogs wearing the banks of the beck down all along its route.

Many combined sewer overflows (CSOs) which discharge into the watercourse during periods of high rainfall. Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs): Locations where Yorkshire Water has a licence to allow sewers to overflow into Meanwood beck when the sewers are filled with rainwater.



Issues

- **Canalisation.**
- **Culverts.**
- **Siltation and river bank erosion.**
- **Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs).**
- **Localised flooding.**

"Pressure from water coming from above has burst the side eroding path. Could it be permanently reconnected to the beck and stepped ponds on way down. Spiral it to direct flow and narrow channel too."

"Not great habitat (in zone 6). Dead spiraling could narrow Chanel and improve habitat."

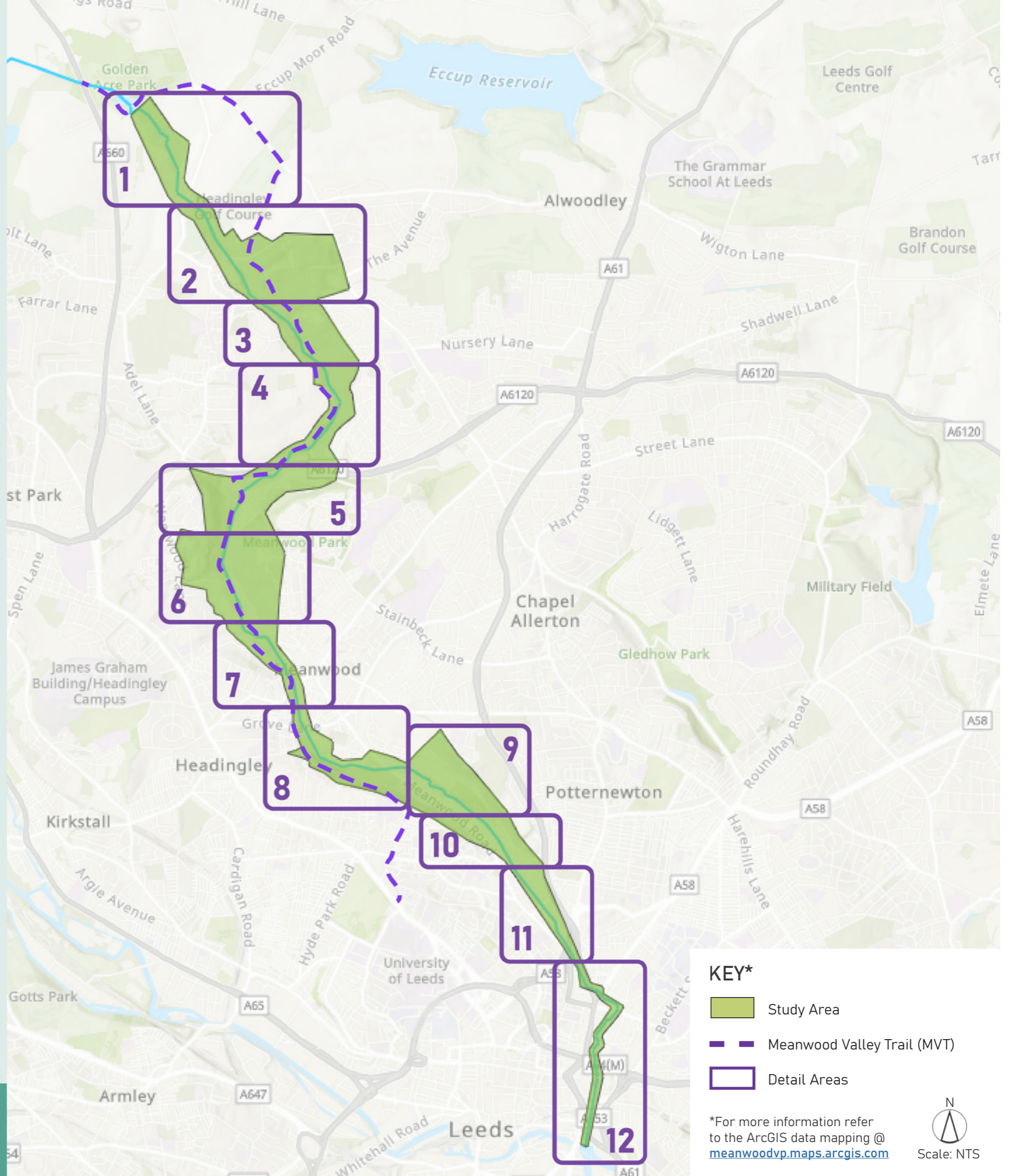
Community Members

Landscape Areas

Meanwood Valley has been divided into 12 areas, based on landscape character, land ownership and community groups, which have been used to develop a series of spatial maps that can be scrutinised in greater detail in subsequent studies and work stages.

The areas are defined as:

- 1. Adel Woods:** From Golden Acre Park to Eccup Lane. The beck leaves Adel Dam Nature Reserve travelling onto privately owned farm land. This area is cared for by Friends of Adel Woods.
- 2. Adel Crag:** From Eccup Lane through more privately owned farm land and a golf course to Stairfoot Lane. Beyond Stairfoot Lane the beck travels through more woods and links with sports fields and Alwoodley Green. This area is cared for by Friends of Adel Woods.
- 3. Upper Scotland Wood:** The woodland in this part of Scotland Wood is more recently established and the area contains several historic features.
- 4. Lower Scotland Wood:** This area is designated ancient woodland and goes down to the Ring Road where the beck travels under the road in a large culvert (pipe).
- 5. Meanwood Local Nature Reserve:** From the Ring Road to Meanwood Park. This area has a rich diversity of habitats. The area is cared for by Friends of Meanwood Park.
- 6. Meanwood Park:** This area is adjacent to 'The Hollies' and encompasses woodland and amenity mown grassland. It experiences the highest footfall of the whole of the valley. This area is cared for by Friends of Meanwood Park.
- 7. Meanwood:** At this point the corridor is at a pinch point with greenspace and diversity being heavily eroded by development.
- 8. Woodhouse Ridge:** A former Victorian private garden. At times steep sided woodland area with many paths. This area is cared for by the Woodhouse Ridge Action Group.
- 9. Meanwood Valley Urban Farm:** A working arable and livestock farm which is open to the public.
- 10. Sugarwell Hill:** Acid rich grassland and woodland, adjacent to the farm and leading down to Buslingthorpe.
- 11. Buslingthorpe & Sheepscar:** Here the beck goes into concrete channels and then underground in culverts.
- 12. City Centre (Eastside & South Bank):** The beck mainly travels through underground culverts through the city centre until it joins the River Aire at Leeds Docks.



"Ideally the trail route would link all the way to town. At the town centre side it ends and you have to cross or walk along some not especially nice roads. This might not be feasible I accept, but if that could be linked up with the outskirts of town then that would be ideal."

Community Members

KEY*

- Study Area
- Meanwood Valley Trail (MVT)
- Detail Areas

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com

Ecological Designations

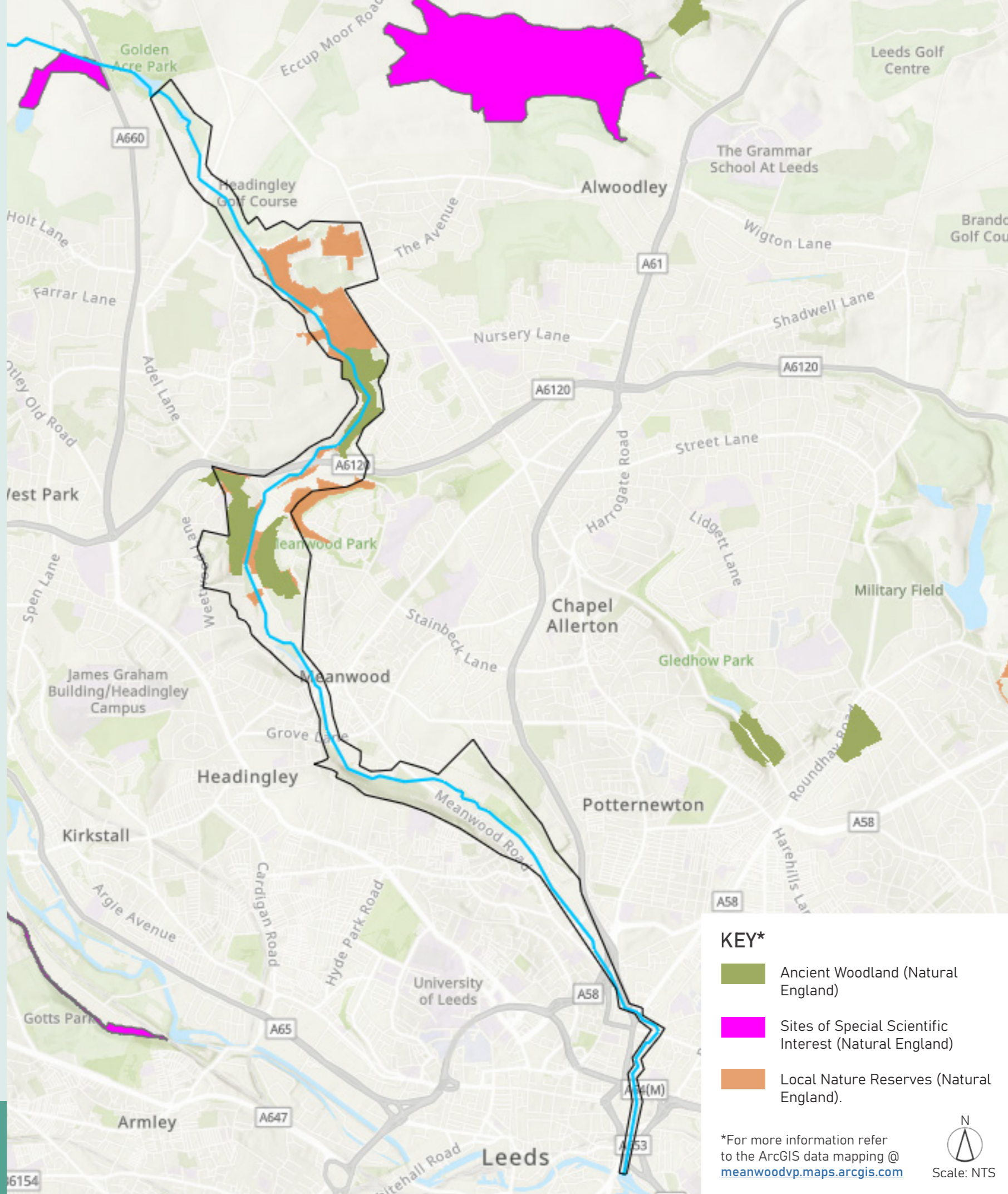
Meanwood Valley is host to a broad range of ecological assets. A water course, ponds, woodlands and meadows create a mosaic of habitats that support a broad range of notable species.

Large areas of deciduous woodland, (some partly designated as ancient woodland) are set on the steep valley sides, and focused around the watercourse and a series of ponds. Where canopy cover gives way, Lowland heathland and lowland meadow is established.

Substantial areas of parkland are situated along the route of the valley. These serve to provide large areas of open green spaces which provide a buffer between the wooded valley areas and dense urban areas of Meanwood and Adel.

Issues affecting habitats and biodiversity are largely focused around increasing urbanisation of adjacent areas and intensity of use. The conflicts between people and nature arises from an increase in use by people for recreation, which is slowly degrading habitats. The trail is used by an increasing number of people for walking their dogs which is also eroding habitat and the watercourse bank, adversely contributing to an increase in siltation and reduction in water quality.

Limiting access to certain areas to safeguard habitats (through fencing and defensive planting and providing alternative destination points) alongside changing the behaviour and habits of users (through signage and interpretation) needs to be prioritised to ensure ecological health and diversity.



Issues

- Intensity of recreational use.
- Increasing urbanisation of areas adjacent to the valley.
- Degradation and erosion of habitat and watercourse banks.
- Siltation of the watercourse and reduction in water quality.

"We need to keep some areas free of people for wildlife."

"Birdwatching on the way to work. Spotted 64 species last year. Some species seen - tree creeper, nuthatch, goldcrest, great spotted woodpecker, jay. There are info boards about the bats and similar."

Community Members

KEY*

- Ancient Woodland (Natural England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Natural England)
- Local Nature Reserves (Natural England).

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com

Habitats & Species

The valley supports an abundance of habitats through a broad structure of woodland, heath, meadow, watercourses and ponds. Natural England's Priority Habitats Inventory identifies the valley as containing the following priority habitats:

- Deciduous Woodland
- Lowland Meadows
- Additional habitats

This broad mosaic of habitats supports a diverse range of wildlife. West Yorkshire Ecology, members of the community and local ecologists have identified many notable species within the valley over the last 50 years. There has been a noticeable decrease in sightings in the last 10 years due to the decline of key habitats. Great Crested Newts and Water Voles are among some of the protected species which used to be present within the valley, but are no longer. White clawed crayfish are also a protected and endangered species which are currently present within Meanwood Beck, which is one of the few places in the UK where they are found.

Examples of notable species present within the valley:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Palmate Newt | • Lesser Spotted Woodpecker |
| • Mandarin | • Oystercatcher |
| • Common Sandpiper | • Herring Gull |
| • Goshawk | • Snipe |
| • White Clawed Crayfish | • Red Kite |

This initial survey work identified the need for a UK BAP Priority Habitat Survey to be undertaken.

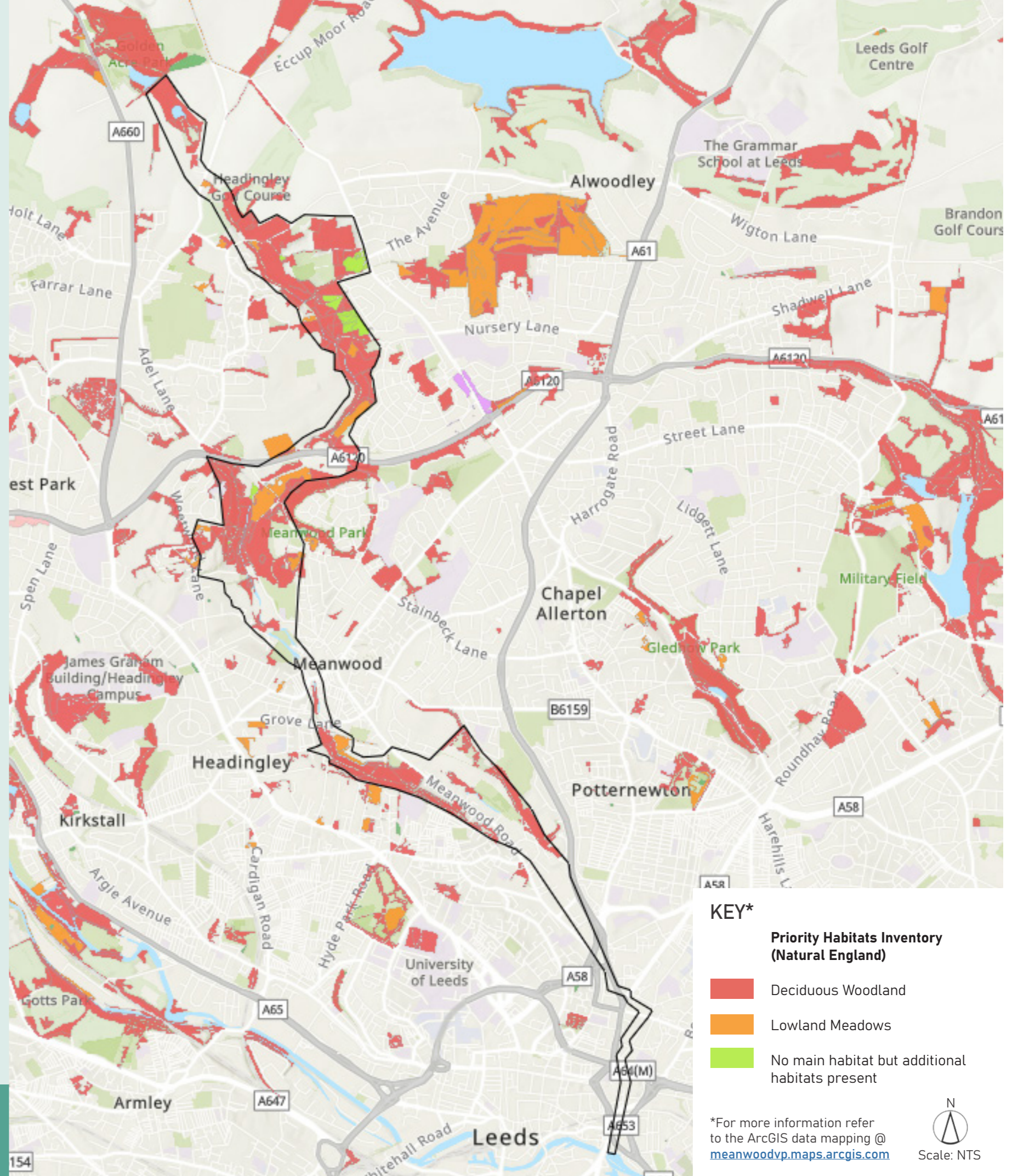
Issues

- Isolated, fragmented, narrow islands of habitat.
- Lack of a 'coherent and resilient ecological network' - Lawton Review.
- Since the 70s, rare and more at risk species have declined, in line with the deterioration of key habitats.
- Protected and endangered species habitats under threat (i.e. White Clawed Crayfish).

"I have walked in Meanwood Park daily for the last 27 years, and in the past I used to regularly see fish in the beck. Since the overflow tanks were put in by Yorkshire Water, the fish have disappeared."

"Potential signal crayfish plague spot. Good crossing point. Signage could improve. Check. Clean. Dry campaign."

Community Members



KEY*

Priority Habitats Inventory (Natural England)

- Deciduous Woodland
- Lowland Meadows
- No main habitat but additional habitats present

*For more information refer to the ArcGIS data mapping @ meanwoodvp.maps.arcgis.com



Vision

What do we want to achieve?

Vision

A Meanwood Valley where all of our local neighbourhoods are connected with the wealth of natural history on our doorstep.

1. Connecting people to their natural heritage for the health and wellbeing of both.
2. Protecting and growing the precious and unique natural heritage of this area. In particular the native white-clawed crayfish and aiming to reintroduce key species such as water voles and great crested newts.
3. Celebrating the wealth of human heritage in the valley, in particular the hidden Henry Moore connection.

Connect Celebrate Grow

Aims

A1: Heritage: Interpretation and promotion of assets to help reveal the historic narrative.

A2: Access & Legibility: Increasing legibility and navigation. Creating compliant walking loops to promote greater social inclusion.

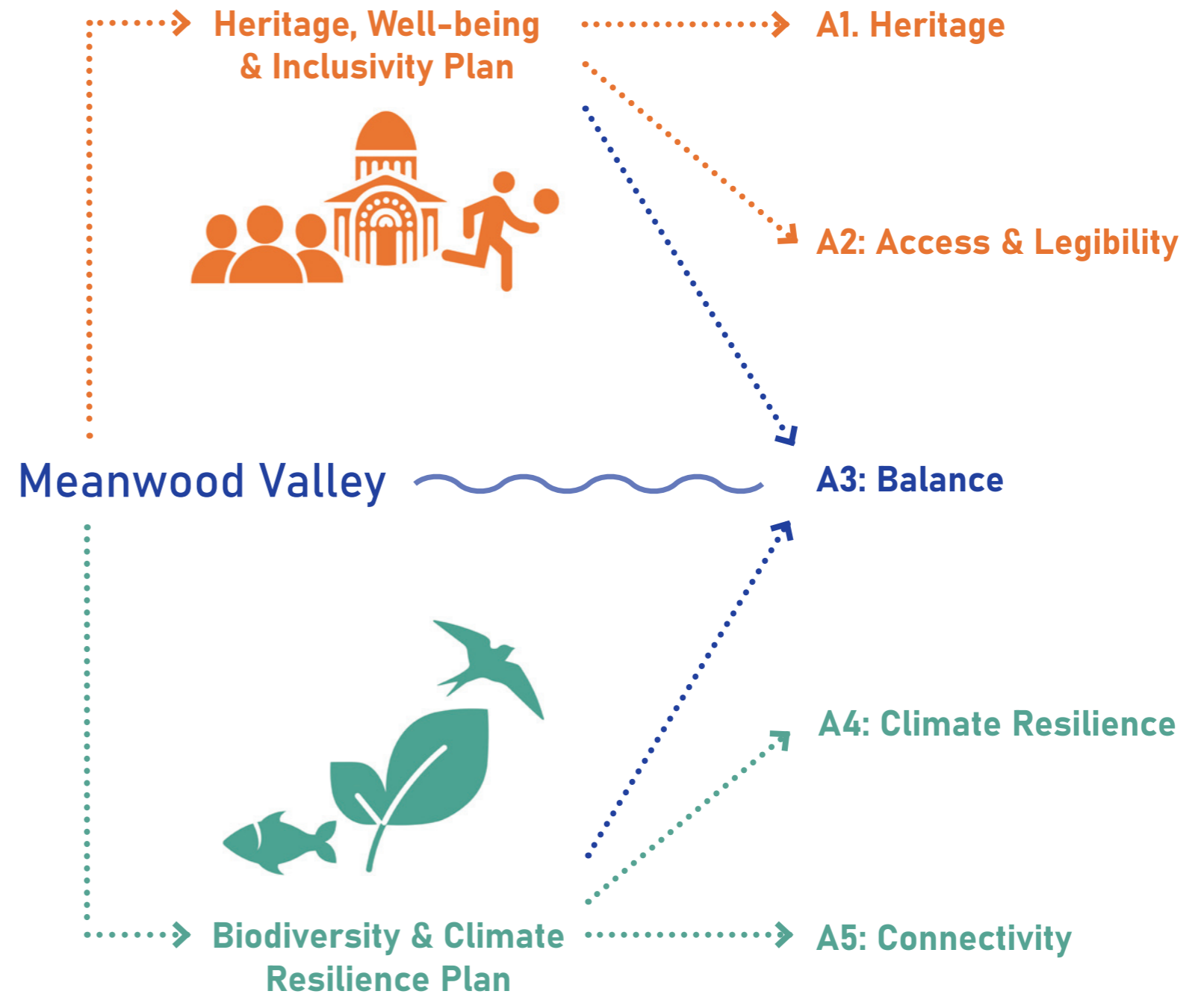
A3: Balance: Sharing the beck to establish a healthy balance between people and ecology.

A4: Climate Resilience: Working to mitigate flooding, increasing the potential for carbon capture, restoring habitats and increasing biodiversity.

A5: Connectivity: Linking the source & the city and linking habitats.

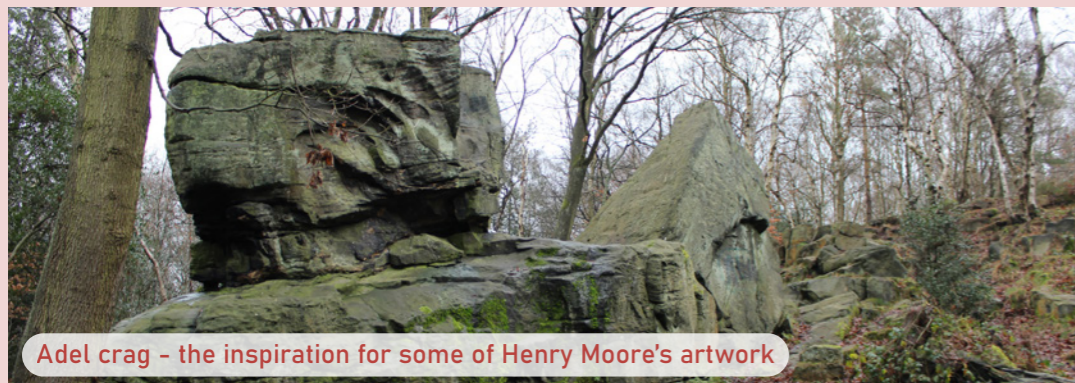
The aims will be explored in more detail in the following documents:

1. [Heritage, Well-being and Inclusivity Plan](#)
2. [Biodiversity and Climate Resilience Plan](#)
3. Toolkit



Aims

What do we want to achieve?



A1: Heritage

This strategy seeks to:

- Bring people closer to their natural heritage for the health and wellbeing of both.
- Protect the precious and unique natural heritage of this area. In particular the crayfish.
- Celebrate the wealth of human heritage in the valley, in particular the hidden Henry Moore connection.

A2: Access and Legibility

One of the interesting characteristics of the trail is its linearity. It transects a wide range of neighbourhoods, character areas and land owners. As such, it has a variety of pathways, routes and trails, which range from formal and designated Public Right of Way (PRoW) to informal desire lines.

Gaining knowledge of the current gateway and footpath locations, routing and conditions of can help to:

- Increase accessibility for all ages and abilities, ensuring that some footpaths are DDA compliant;
- Implement a wayfinding strategy and clear hierarchy of routes to increase legibility;
- Establish a programme of repairs to existing surfaces and drainage in locations that are inaccessible due to a lack of maintenance;
- Ensure gateways are safe and legible;
- Identify desire lines and dog runs and make necessary alterations to prevent the erosion of understorey planting and water course banking which is resulting in a loss of habitat and excessive silting; and
- Minimise conflicts between recreation and areas of wildlife and safeguard areas of ecological value by re-directing or stopping up footpaths.

By considering the above, Meanwood Valley can be utilised by a broader range of people for wider variety of recreational uses, whilst providing a degree of separation to helping to establish and safeguard areas of wildlife value.

A3: Balance

Extensive consultation with communities has confirmed that local people are informed of the need to strike a balance between recreation and nature. Communities no longer separate their activities and the natural world around them. They repeatedly voice concerns of the degrading impacts that their actions are having on habitats, water quality and general condition of the valley, and are informed to recognise that when one thing is out of balance it causes the entire organism to be weakened.

It is therefore imperative to develop a mechanism for collectively establishing and mapping the current baseline conditions to develop a greater understanding of the interrelationship between ecological and human activity within the valley. This will broadly include:

- Existing habitats;
- Wildlife species;
- General conditions / areas of degradation;
- Pollution / fly tipping;
- Access, routes & gateways;
- How people rely on the valley for recreation, contemplation, exercise and inspiration; and
- Common issues and conflicts.

The mechanism for capturing the baseline data needs to be designed to be useable, flexible and adaptable so that a variety of organisations, specialist consultants and members of the community are given the opportunity to collectively input information and observations. This will result in a multi layered data base of information that is inclusive, representative and comprehensive.

This approach will create a detailed picture of the valley. These layers can be cross referenced to draw a variety of conclusions, allowing informed decisions to be made that are co-ordinated and which stand a greater chance of meeting a variety of needs, safeguarding valuable assets and enhancing the ecological and recreation potential whilst minimising potential conflicts.

Aims

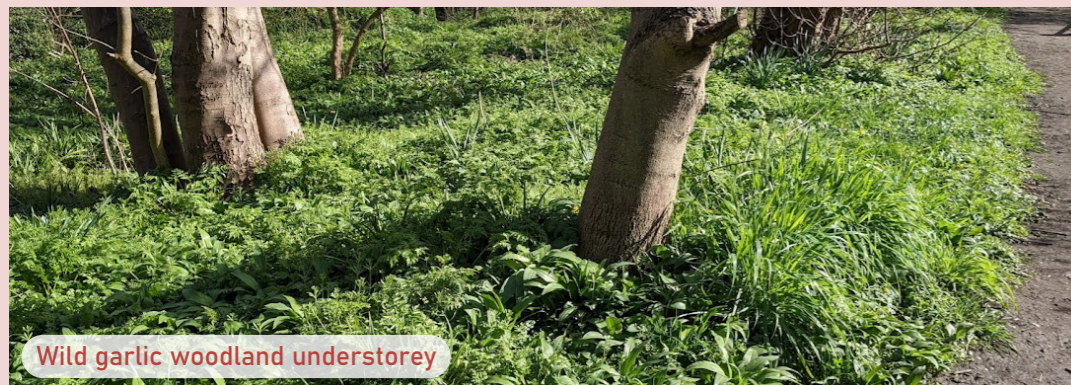
What do we want to achieve?



Naturally occurring leaky dam



Canalised section of the beck



Wild garlic woodland understorey



Poor quality woodland understorey

A4: Climate Resilience

Meanwood Valley is a complex network of natural and man made elements. The combination of climate change, urbanisation, and conflicts arising through the mixture of recreational uses has the potential to erode natural health, diversity and functionality. Some of the implications of this are:

- Loss of vegetation and habitat caused by erosion, vandalism and a changing climate.
- Loss of understorey planting and woodland structure caused by unrestricted access for recreational users.
- Increased amounts of silting through the water course which is contributing to blockages, flooding and negative impacts upon water quality.
- Threat to species such as crayfish, newts and otters.

The strategy therefore seeks to:

- Raise awareness and identify overlapping issues to help coordinate the existing wider programme of works being carried out by a variety of consultants and community groups throughout the valley.
- Promote a 'slow the flow' approach at every opportunity. This could include interventions such as leaky dams, tree planting in the catchment, small retention ponds created with bunds and educating residents as to how they can make positive steps by managing surface water run off within the curtilage of their own home.
- Woodland creation & rewilding to repair, create and link habitats. Increase the potential for carbon capture, make positive steps towards diversifying and future proofing as part of the climate emergency.
- Restore woodland layers where erosion has occurred over time to encourage greater biodiversity. As part of this project a Phase 1 biodiversity habitat survey has been commissioned and will further inform this strand of the strategy.

A5: Connectivity

Meanwood Valley form an extensive corridor, stretching from the inner city of Leeds, through the northern residential neighbourhoods to the open, rural areas beyond the north of the city's urban edge.

There are multiple opportunities to enhance the valley as an inter-connected green and blue corridor. These include:

- Connecting habitats through additional tree and shrub planting.
- Diversifying existing habitats with remedial works and enhancement planting.
- Diversifying amenity grassland to incorporate species rich meadow and grassland.
- Improve the water course by clearing blockages, removing fish passing barriers
- De culvert and re naturalise the beck
- Creation of new, semi natural flood alleviation schemes
- Increased coverage of street tree planting in urban areas and areas of industry.

Objectives & Next Steps

How will we do it?

Objectives

01: Partnerships: Continuing the beck network group of strategic partners and maintaining clear coordination and communication to follow the shared vision outlines in this document. We need to formalise our partnership agreement and clearly communicate working roles and responsibilities.

02: Funding: Seek significant funding for a 5-7 year program of implementation including creating employment and skills and training opportunities.

03: Communications Plan: Funding for a comprehensive, evidence based communications plan including schools visits, social media, posters and press releases to encourage behaviour change, increase awareness of the need to protect wildlife and foster local advocacy.

04: Maintainance: - A coordinated maintenance plan, sustainable income generation & volunteering strategy for maintaining the valley as a whole.

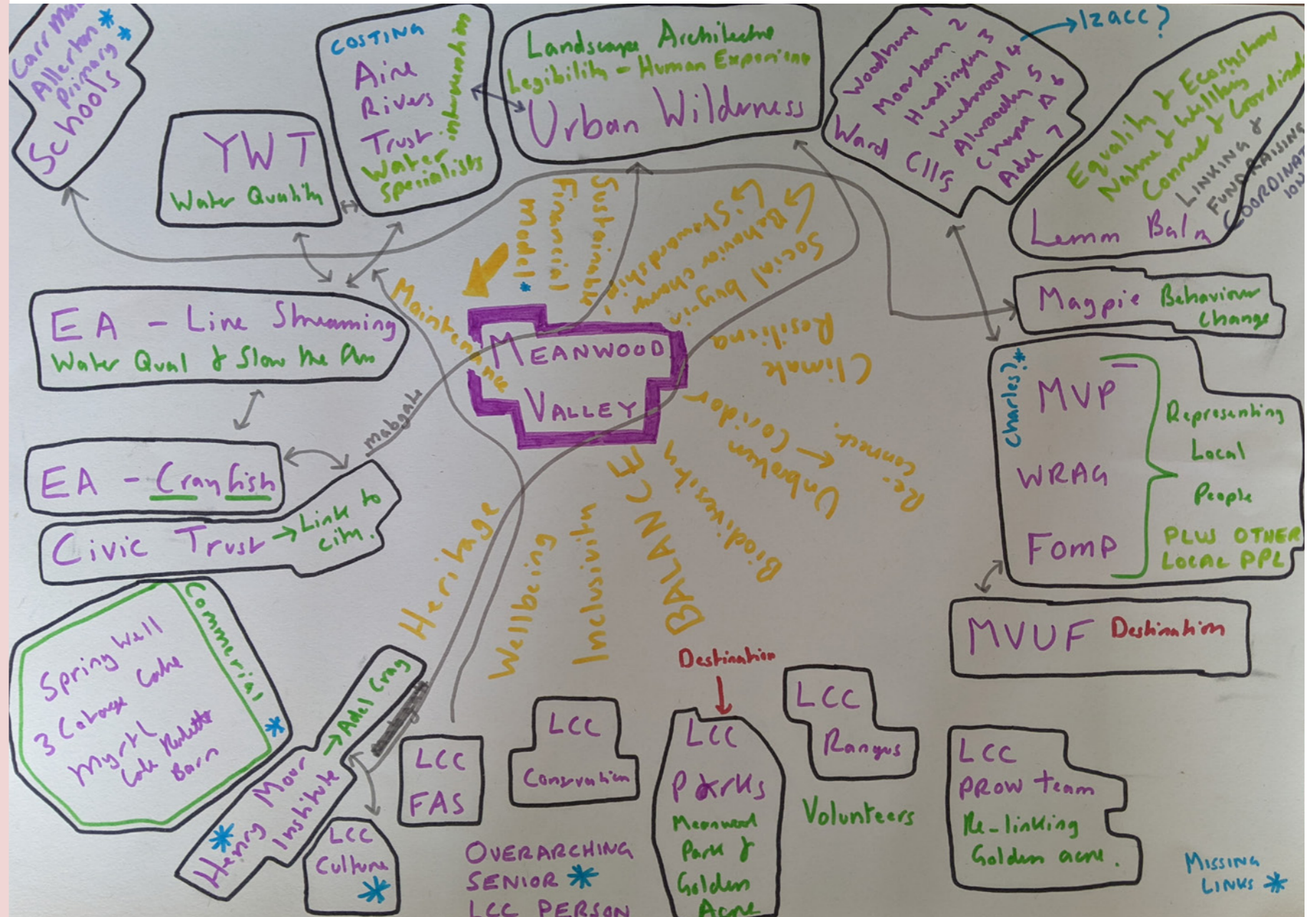
The Current Position: Following the Love Meanwood project, a steering group has been established to develop the aims of the landscape strategy for Meanwood Valley. The steering group is in regular dialogue and consultation with a broad range of local groups, partnerships and communities.

Strategic Partnerships: Following this report, our aims are to establish strategic partnerships with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust who are engaged in numerous monitoring and regeneration strategies throughout the valley, in addition to their work undertaken at Adel Dam. Also, Leeds City Council and The Environment Agency are currently undertaking feasibility studies throughout the valley to scope potential sites that can be adapted for flood alleviation mitigation. These types of schemes present a unique opportunity to align interests and aims to maximise a broader range of benefits.

Comprehensive Mapping: We propose to develop comprehensive mapping of the valley to gain greater understanding of the baseline conditions. Mapping is to be managed by the steering group, but is also to be made for public use. Mapping of habitats, formal designations, access and footpaths, heritage assets, condition of landscape and physical structures and items and existing and future works will convey the whole narrative of the valley in place, provide an evidence base for potential funding and help to co-ordinate workstreams.

Sister Documents: Two studies are proposed; Biodiversity & Climate Resilience Plan (responding to nature, resilience and water quality) and Heritage, wellbeing & Inclusivity Plan (responding to people, heritage, placemaking and access). The studies will establish the current conditions in greater detail to arrive at a series of co-ordinated interventions which collectively work to improve conditions.

Implementation: Develop a range of low, medium and complex detail designs for each specific intervention. Co-ordinate multi-disciplinary expertise with the work of strategic partners and community involvement.



Meanwood Valley Partnership Mind Map

MEANWOOD VALLEY
LANDSCAPE STRATEGY OVERVIEW
JULY 2022

