Homeowners and businesses in the centre of York face another day of mopping up after one of the worst spells of flooding in its history.

More than a month’s rain fell in 24 hours as torrential downpours and storms caused the River Ouse to burst its banks. River levels in York were the highest for 387 years as the Ouse reached a record high of 6.2 metres above normal.

Over a thousand properties were flooded and hundreds of people were forced to leave their homes. Villages to the south of York were also badly affected. Many people here have lost all their belongings, and councils have had to set up refugee centres at local schools and leisure centres.

Many roads were blocked and all rail services cancelled. Emergency services including lifeboats and coastguard helicopters helped rescue people trapped in buildings and on rooftops.

As people return to their homes, they are finding everything covered in a thick layer of foul-smelling mud. The clean-up operation will take weeks. Many people will not be back in their homes for months. Some businesses may never re-open.

Insurance experts are putting the cost at over £300 million but there are fears that many people will not be insured. The government has promised help to areas most in need.
For England and Wales, autumn 2012 was the wettest since records began in 1766. Major flooding affected large parts of the country. The area around York has always been liable to flood. In recent times, however, flooding has occurred more often and has been more serious than in the past. Many people blame human activity for this.

Activities

1. a. When did the flooding around York happen?
   b. Which river flows through York?
   c. Which three other rivers drain the area?
   d. Which settlements were affected by flooding?
   e. What are the names of the two upland areas?

2. Make a larger copy of drawing D and add six causes of the 2012 flood.

3. Describe the effects of flooding in York using the newspaper headlines shown in E.

4. Write a description of the flood scenes shown in photos A and B.

Summary

Floods can cause much damage and seriously affect people’s lives. There are usually several different causes of floods but some places are more at risk from floods than others.