

# ADAPTATION TO FLOODS: SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH FLEXIBILITY

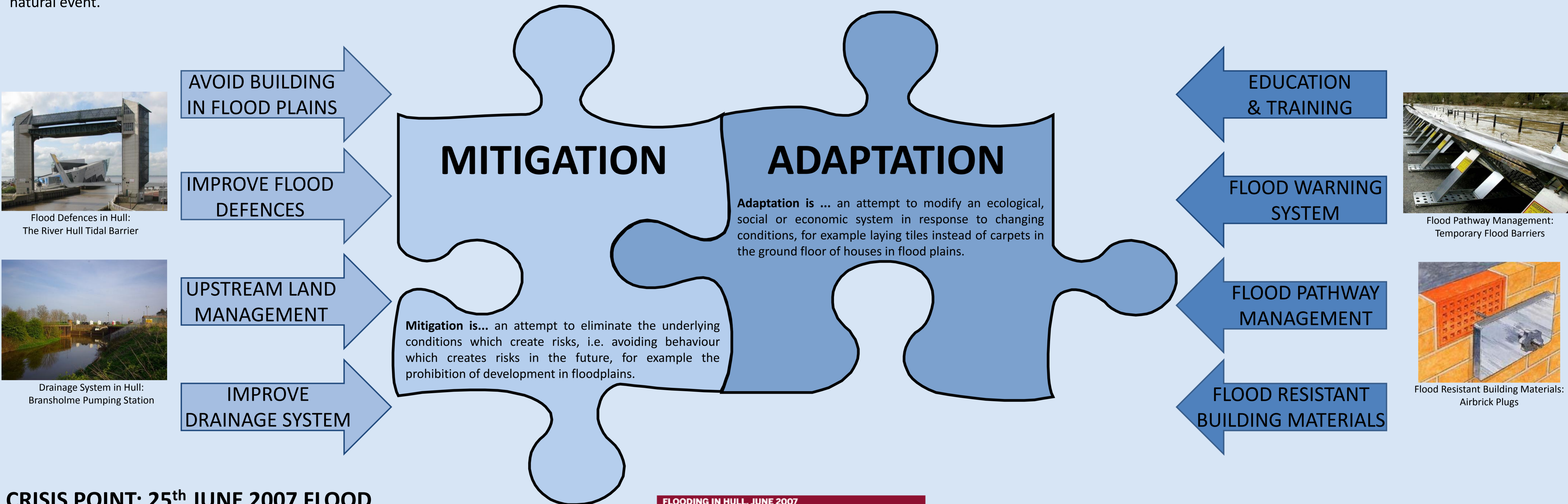
Rogers-Wright, A., Haughton, G., Coulthard, T. & Bankoff, G., The University of Hull.

## THE DAWNING OF A NEW ERA IN FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Previously in the climate change literature, attention has been focussed upon flood mitigation. Today, with the widespread acceptance of the science of climate change, a new era of flood governance is dawning; the age of sustainable flood risk management and adaptation. Adding adaptation to the arsenal of flood governance strategies is the key to sustaining many towns and cities in the UK as it allows society to act quickly in the event of an extreme natural event.

## FLOOD RISK IN HULL

The geographical location of Kingston-upon-Hull, a city built largely on reclaimed land, much of which is now below sea level, means that the flood risk is ever present; and given sea level rise and climate change is likely to get worse. Since the option of abandoning the city and moving to higher ground is unlikely to be popular or practical, society must adapt to reduce its vulnerability to flooding.



## CRISIS POINT: 25<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2007 FLOOD

The flood event in 2007 was a sharp reminder of the risks that are ever-increasing in the face of accelerating climatic changes. One of the worst affected areas by the flooding in England was Hull.

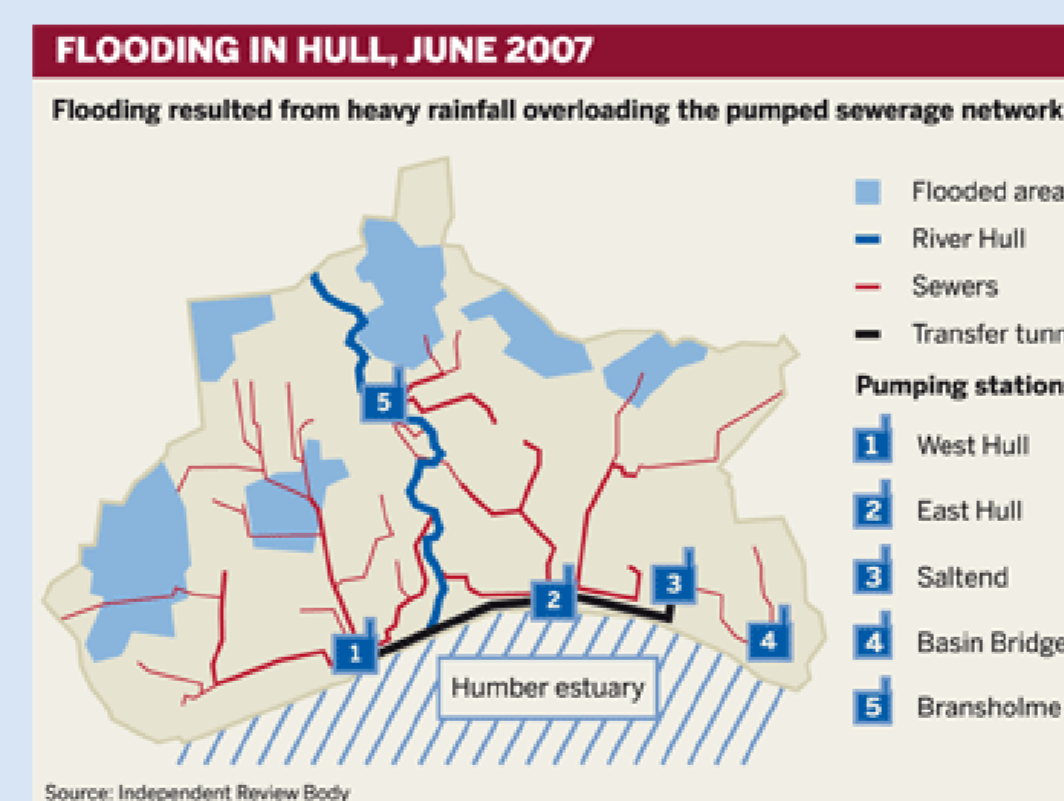
In the past, Hull has been affected by several types of flood risk:

- estuarine flooding from the Humber
- storm surges from the North Sea
- fluvial flooding from the River Hull

The risks posed by these hazards means that Hull City Council have been preparing strategies and emergency plans to deal with flooding for some time.

However, a new unforeseen hazard – pluvial (rainfall) flooding – affected Hull in 2007. The situation quickly turned into a disaster forcing 6300 people to move out of their homes. As a result, flood risk has catapulted to the top of the public agenda, putting pressure on decision-makers to make changes in the way that flood risk is managed in Hull.

Shock events such as this are leading stakeholders to consider adaptation strategies, which can be implemented immediately to reduce flood risk vulnerability. This provides another piece to help solve the flood risk management puzzle .



## THE CHANGING NATURE OF FLOOD GOVERNANCE

This research will examine Hull's flood governance policies before and after 2007 and investigate the reconfiguration of the institutions governing flood risks in Hull post-2007. The aim is to assess how flood governance changes incrementally over time and how this compares to the rapid changes which occur in the "windows of opportunity" presented by a post-crisis socio-political and economic environment.

The extent to which adaptation strategies have been adopted and the success of governance changes implemented since 2007 will be evaluated through questionnaires, followed up by in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders, including Hull City Council, the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water, the Highways Authorities, the Regional Development Agency, Natural England, Hull Community Wardens and land owners.

This PhD is being undertaken by **Alexia Rogers-Wright** in the University of Hull Geography Department.  
It is an ESRC CASE project with Hull City Council.  
Corresponding author: a.f.rogers-wright@2008.hull.ac.uk

**Supervised by:**  
Professor Graham Haughton  
Professor Tom Coulthard  
Professor Greg Bankoff

