

Reservoir Watch September 2025

Reservoir Group	July 2025 Holding	August 2025 Holding	September 2025 Holding	Change in August-September period	Minimum historical* September holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	89.70%	88.50%	86.40%	-2.1%	40% (2006)
Oxford & GU	41.50%	26.30%	23.40%	-2.9%	23.4% (2025)
GU South	63.10%	59.20%	49.90%	-9.3%	45.9% (2011)
GU North	21.80%	23.10%	24.80%	1.7%	23.2% (2011)
Lancaster Canal	92.50%	91.30%	86.60%	-4.7%	51.9% (2010)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	34.40%	26.90%	37.50%	10.6%	17.2% (2022)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	17.00%	12.80%	10.80%	-2.0%	10.8% (2025)
Caldon Canal	38.80%	33.00%	28.50%	-4.5%	28.5% (2025)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	52.70%	46.40%	48.50%	2.1%	17.6% (2013)
Chesterfield Canal	62.40%	51.40%	40.70%	-10.7%	23.9% (2023)
Grantham Canal	90.40%	90.30%	88.80%	-1.5%	74.2% (2014)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	76.50%	74.20%	66.10%	-8.1%	17.1% (2011)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	70.80%	63.20%	56.60%	-6.6%	50.2% (2001)

* for the purposes of this analysis, historical holdings cover 1998-2025 reservoir holding data, inclusive.

General Conditions

According to the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, August rainfall was below average for the UK despite being bookended by unsettled conditions. August concluded a hot, dry summer, the warmest June-August on record for the UK since 1884. Drought impacts were extensive across the UK with navigation heavily impacted by canal closures and restrictions, to an extent worse than the previous severe drought of 2022. Late rainfall in August increased totals but for the UK it was still 62% of average with England receiving less than half of the average (42%). Yorkshire and Severn-Trent regions all received less than a third of their respective averages. Summer (June-August) rainfall was below average for the UK (84%) with parts of central and eastern Britain receiving less than a third of average. It was the driest March-August period for Severn Trent, the second driest for Yorkshire and Wessex regions, and the third driest for England as a whole (notable drought

years include 1976 and 1995; all in a series from 1890). 2025 so far (January-August) was the driest for Yorkshire. Overall, river flows were below normal and notably low across the UK.

Soil moisture deficits reduced in areas with higher rainfall totals, month-end deficits remained high across central and eastern areas. Groundwater levels fell across the UK with exceptionally low levels in some southern and eastern boreholes but remained above normal in north Wales and central England.

The latest Hydrological Outlook suggests that normal to above normal autumn flows in the north-west but continued below normal flows across southern and eastern areas. The beginning of September experienced some rainfall that eased pressures on many sectors, including navigation. Sustained rainfall and unsettled weather will be required to replenish water resources and reverse the deficits established in 2025.

The Met Office rainfall anomaly graphs and maps can be viewed at:

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/uk-temperature-rainfall-and-sunshine-anomaly-graphs>

https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/pub/data/weather/uk/climate/anomacts/2025/8/2025_8_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

The Trust's Water Resources

Due to the recent rainfall at the end of August and the beginning of September, we have seen some recovery in some reservoir groups, especially the Leeds & Liverpool. However, as we are still in boating season and the significant impact of the drought is minimising the recovery of reservoir holdings across the network. We can still expect some modest further decreases in reservoir holdings for the next few weeks before transitioning into our refill stage. Other reasons that reservoir holdings are low, is that some reservoirs within a group are still having engineering works taking place that require the reservoir level to be maintained at less than full capacity (i.e. held down). Examples of this include Toddbrook Reservoir (Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canal group) which is still kept at -12m below Top Water Level following the spillway incident in summer 2019, and it will remain at this level until the £multi-million project to construct a new spillway is completed, hopefully for 2026. Several of the reservoirs in the Leeds & Liverpool and Huddersfield Narrow Canal group are also being held down for investigation or engineering works. The Trusts Reservoir, Project Management and Water Management teams liaise closely to manage the implications of all of these works on water supplies for the canal network, given the potential impacts on boating customers. The situation for the canal network is worse than the 2022 drought event (which was previously the most severe drought experienced for a generation in terms of impact on navigation) and there have been concerns with the prospects for maintaining water supplies for many canals due to the continued lack of rain and dwindling reservoir holdings, as this report shows. There are, however, many parts of the network that are holding up well, in the face of the dry conditions.

As always, the Water Management Team will continue to monitor all reservoir holdings during the coming months and work closely with operational staff to ensure water resources are deployed efficiently. The drought conditions in. Given the changing situation, boaters are strongly advised to subscribe to email notifications of any waterway restrictions or closures at: [Notices and stoppages | Canal & River Trust](#)

Issued by:

Water Management Team, Canal & River Trust
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Reservoir data presented is from the week ending Monday 15th September unless stated, along with data from the nearest comparable date in August and September.

Annex 1 – Canal & River Trust reservoir groups

Group name	Reservoirs within group
Kennet & Avon Canal	Crofton [<i>principally a spring-fed reservoir, and its yield is therefore greater than the storage volume indicates</i>]
Oxford & GU	Boddington, Wormleighton, Clattercote, Naseby, Sulby, Welford, Drayton & Daventry
GU South	Startopsend, Wilstone, Marsworth & Tringford
GU North	Saddington
Lancaster Canal	Killington
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	Rishton, Barrowford, Upper & Lower Foulridge, Slipper Hill, Whitemoor & Winterburn
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canal	Sutton, Bosley, Toddbrook & Combs
Caldon Canal	Rudyard, Stanley & Knypersley
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	Sparth, Slaithwaite & Diggle
Chesterfield Canal	Harthill & Pebley
Grantham Canal	Knipton & Denton
Birmingham Canal Navigations	Windmill Pool, Terry's Pool, Engine Pool, Cofton, Upper Bittell, Rotton Park & Chasewater
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	Belvide, Gailey Upper, Gailey Lower & Calf Heath