

Reservoir Watch May 2025

Reservoir Group	March 2025 Holding	April 2025 Holding	May 2025 Holding	Change in April-May period	Minimum historical* May holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	99.90%	99.90%	99.90%	0.0%	50.5% (2011)
Oxford & GU	98.20%	94.20%	85.00%	-9.2%	75.9% (2011)
GU South	75.50%	74.00%	67.90%	-6.1%	69.7% (2025)
GU North	99.90%	89.80%	86.40%	-3.4%	71.6% (2011)
Lancaster Canal	88.80%	85.40%	72.90%	-12.5%	72.9% (2025)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	68.20%	57.50%	39.00%	-18.5%	39.0% (2025)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	62.40%	53.30%	40.20%	-13.1%	38.6% (2022)
Caldon Canal	75.10%	67.70%	57.60%	-10.1%	57.6% (2025)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	80.70%	79.60%	78.30%	-1.3%	74.9% (2020)
Chesterfield Canal	100.00%	100.00%	92.10%	-7.9%	29.9% (2024)
Grantham Canal	74.20%	91.80%	91.80%	0.0%	91.8% (2025)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	98.80%	94.50%	90.20%	-4.3%	35.7% (2011)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	92.20%	88.40%	85.70%	-2.7%	72.3% (2011)

* 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, April was overall a dry and warm month. It was the third warmest April for the UK in a series from 1884. Rainfall was 56% of the average for the UK, with less than 30% of average across the north and east. More specifically, Yorkshire experienced less than a fifth of the average. Whilst most regions in England received less than half of average April rainfall, Wales saw more moderate totals, and south-west England was a wet outlier (144% of average). The two-month rainfall totals were also below average resulting in the driest March-April for the UK since 1974 (49% of average). Many regions in the north-east saw the driest November-April in 50 years or more. River flows were below normal or exceptionally low across the UK. Record low April mean flows were found mainly in northern England. Flows in many catchments were half the April average or less, with some less than a quarter of the average.

Across the UK, soils dried considerably in April across much of the UK. Average March-April soil moisture deficits for Great Britain were the third highest. Groundwater levels generally continued to decline with most levels in the normal range to below normal.

The Hydrological Outlook suggests that without appreciable late spring rainfall, summer will most likely commence with low river flows, with potential for environmental impacts and pressure on water resources. The beginning of May has been extremely dry across the UK, meaning that there is the possibility of below normal or lower flows will persist into the summer in many areas.

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/2025/4/2025_4_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

The Trust's Water Resources

We are currently in the main period of the boating season, this means we are drawing down our reservoirs. The decreases in our reservoir group holdings can be attributed to the increased usage of our reservoir stocks as well as the especially dry weather conditions that have occurred over the past few months. Currently, five reservoir groups are currently at their lowest historical holding (data since 1998). The main reason that reservoir holdings are low is that some reservoirs within a group have 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. Several of the reservoirs in the Leeds & Liverpool and Huddersfield Narrow Canal group are being held down for investigation or engineering works, leading to the former group being at the lowest holding for this month of the year, for the period of record which began in 1998 for this report. 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.

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 prolonged dry weather in recent months is very notable in its severity at such an early point in the year and has led to the Trust reluctantly imposing restrictions and some canal closures to prolong the available resources. Boaters are 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
22 May 2025

Reservoir data presented is from the week ending Monday 12th May unless stated, along with data from the nearest comparable date in April and May.

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