

Reservoir Group	November 2025 Holding	December 2025 Holding	January 2026 Holding	Change in December-January period	Minimum historical* January holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	74.50%	90.40%	96.40%	6.0%	59.8% (2013)
Oxford & GU	38.70%	74.40%	88.90%	14.5%	31.9% (2012)
GU South	48.50%	53.20%	63.80%	10.6%	41.6% (2012)
GU North	41.30%	90.60%	100.00%	9.4%	26.1% (2012)
Lancaster Canal	98.20%	100%	98.20%	-1.8%	96% (2025)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	80.10%	92.30%	88.40%	-3.9%	75.3% (2004)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	46.40%	61.60%	65.10%	3.5%	42.9% (2022)
Caldon Canal	56.10%	81.40%	79.10%	-2.3%	72.1% (2019)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	69.70%	44.10%	53.70%	9.6%	21.2% (2014)
Chesterfield Canal	58.40%	92.70%	100.00%	7.3%	36.5% (2023)
Grantham Canal	93.00%	96.80%	99.10%	2.3%	81.3% (2012)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	68.80%	76.20%	78.40%	2.2%	23.2% (2012)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	63.80%	70.10%	82.60%	12.5%	50.4% (2024)

* for the purposes of this analysis, historical holdings cover 1998-2026 reservoir holding data, inclusive.

General Conditions

According to the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, December was a warm and wet month. It rounds off the warmest year on record in the Central England Temperature series (from 1659). Overall, rainfall was average for December (101%), however, there were spatial differences, with long-term deficits persisting in south-east England (three-quarters of average). England and Wales both registered 115% of average. For 2025, much of the UK registered less than 90% of average rainfall. River flows reflected the spatial trend, with monthly mean flows generally above normal across England, but south-east England had below average flows.

December rainfall meant Soil Moisture Deficits were minimal and although soils wetted, some regions remained drier than average. Most COSMOS-UK sites were drier than normal to

exceptionally low. Groundwater levels varied across the UK, with most levels in the normal range or above. Parts of eastern England and south Wales, levels plateaued or started to decline.

The latest Hydrological Outlook suggests that normal to below normal river flows and groundwater levels will persist in south east England over the next three months, while north-western parts of the UK, flows are expected to be in the normal range to above normal over the next three months. Rainfall over the remaining winter months will be important for determining spring/summer water resources situation, especially in the south-east of England.

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/2025/12/2025_12_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

The Trust's Water Resources

We are now halfway through the typical refill stage of our reservoirs and following a wet December there are still increases in holding for most of our reservoir groups. Despite the recent rainfall, some of our reservoir group holdings are still low and have decreased slightly over the last month, this is because 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 in 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 lack of reservoir refill is not yet a cause of significant concern and all waterways have reopened to navigation following drought closures. Canal demands are also typically very modest through winter period, and many parts of the network have a "stoppages" taking place, involving planned winter engineering works.

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 to maximise refill where possible. 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
26 January 2026

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

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	Startopend, 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