Reservoir Watch March 2025

Reservoir Group	January 2025 Holding	February 2025 Holding	March 2025 Holding	Change in February-March period	Minimum historical* March holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	99.90%	99.90%	99.90%	0.0%	64.3% (2014)
Oxford & GU	98.20%	98.20%	98.20%	0.0%	51.6% (2012)
GU South	79.90%	73.90%	75.50%	1.6%	64.1% (2012)
GU North	99.90%	99.90%	99.90%	0.0%	40.2% (2012)
Lancaster Canal	96.00%	92.20%	88.80%	-3.4%	88.8% (2025)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	83.80%	78.60%	68.20%	-10.4%	68.2% (2025)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	70.60%	69.10%	62.40%	-6.7%	41.8% (2022)
Caldon Canal	81.90%	83.90%	75.10%	-8.8%	75.1% (2025)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	60.90%	72.60%	80.70%	8.1%	25.8% (2014)
Chesterfield Canal	86.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.0%	27.8% (2023)
Grantham Canal	91.80%	92.60%	74.20%	-18.4%	74.2% (2025)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	98.20%	99.60%	98.80%	-0.8%	37.2% (2012)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	97.30%	94.40%	92.20%	-2.2%	71.2% (2024)

** for the purposes of this analysis, historical holdings cover 1998-2024 reservoir holding data, inclusive.*

General Conditions

According to the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, February was dominated by dry conditions for most of the month, which was a contrast to the recent wet weather. As a result of this, all regions received below average rainfall except those in southern England. Overall, the total UK rainfall was 76% of average. Northern England was especially dry with less than 60% of average recorded in North West England and Yorkshire regions and less that 70% of average North East Scotland and Severn Trent regions. Only Thames and Wessex regions registered above average February rainfall. Winter (December-February) rainfall was 90% of average at the national scale, with some areas of northern England receiving less than 70% of average. Contrastingly, Thames and Wessex regions received almost 125% of average rainfall over the last year. River flows were generally in the normal range, with exceptionally low to below normal flows across northern areas.

Despite the drier conditions, soils at COSMOS-UK sites were generally wetter than normal to notably wet in February. Groundwater levels were generally in the normal range to above normal, with exceptionally high levels across multiple aquifers in England and Wales.

The current Outlook suggests that due to the high pressure established at the beginning of March, there is a higher likelihood of below normal flows across north-east Britain over the next three months. Additionally, regions that received below average rainfall during the Winter, the continuation of dry conditions may start to cause stress for water resources as we enter Spring.

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/2025/2/2025_2_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

The Trust's Water Resources

Within the next couple of weeks, we will be seeing increased boating across the network, which means that we will be starting the drawdown of our reservoirs to meet increased demands for water. During February, we received below average rainfall across the UK, this has resulted in some of our reservoir groups not reaching a higher holding. Additionally, there are other reasons why some reservoir groups have not achieved a greater holding, the primary reason 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. For the Chesterfield Reservoir group, Harthill Reservoir has now refilled following a period of drawdown for construction of the new spillway. 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, 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.

Boaters are advised to subscribe to email notifications of any waterway restrictions or closures at: http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices.

Issued by:
Water Management Team, Canal & River Trust
28 March 2025

Reservoir data presented is from the week ending Monday 24th March unless stated, along with data from the nearest comparable date in February and March.

Annex 1 – Canal & River Trust reservoir groups

Group name	Reservoirs within group
Kennet & Avon Canal	Crofton [*principally a spring-fed reservoir, and its yield is therefore greater than the storage volume indicates*]
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