Reservoir Watch October 2026

Reservoir Group	August 2026 Holding	September 2026 Holding	October 2026 Holding	Change in September - October period	Minimum historical* October holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	79.50%	81.00%	79.1%	-1.9%	30.3% (2009)
Oxford & GU	32.30%	28.40%	24.5%	-3.9%	24% (2025)
GU South	59.00%	56.80%	51.4%	-5.4%	37.3% (2011)
GU North	22.10%	24.90%	22.4%	-2.5%	13.8% (2011)
Lancaster Canal	56.40%	45.90%	58.4%	13.5%	58.4% (2026)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	40.00%	37.20%	45.2%	8.0%	25.2% (2003)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	30.50%	27.30%	24.7%	-2.6%	16.7% (2003)
Caldon Canal	47.10%	43.40%	38.6%	-4.8%	29.7% (2022)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	16.60%	36.10%	39.5%	3.4%	21.5% (2013)
Chesterfield Canal	53.80%	44.90%	37.1%	-7.8%	28.2% (2023)
Grantham Canal	85.70%	81.10%	75%	-6.1%	71.8% (2014)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	52.00%	57.30%	57.9%	0.6%	14.5% (2011)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	58.70%	55.20%	51.7%	-3.5%	51.1% (2026)

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

General Conditions

Information on River flows and rainfall.

September brought a temporary relief to the drought that had affected the UK all summer of 2026Due to unsettled weather, it delivered a near-average rainfall for the UK. Despite this, mainly Scotland and Northern Ireland received this rainfall, with much of England remaining drier than average. Most rivers in England and Wales were recording below normal to exceptionally low flows, despite the near average rainfall. The rainfall was brought on by westerly weather patterns with low pressure bringing rainfall. Despite this and further rainfall brought in by Atlantic fronts, the rainfall for September was still below average (65%) across England, with the areas being the Yorkshire, Anglian and Thames region. River flows responded to the rainfall, with many in the North and West of England responding to the rainfall while others in the Southeast remain severely depressed.

Exceptionally low flows were recorded across many English rivers, including the Coquet, Wensum and Thames. A new record was set on the River Tone for September mean flow.

Soil moisture and Groundwater

Soil moisture has increased responding to changing conditions, but deficits continue across much of England with SMD's remaining above average for much of England and Wales. Levels in the Chalk were predominantly in the normal range to notably low and continued to decline across much of England. In the Jurassic limestones, levels continued to recede seasonally, with levels in Magnesian Limestone continuing to slowly recede but remain within the normal range. Levels in the Carboniferous Limestone were close to record lows in South Wales, although short lived rainfall temporarily relieved recessions. Levels in the Permo-Triassic sandstones declined but generally remained within the normal range. Upper Greensand remained above normal despite declining and Fell Sandstones remained in normal range. In the Devonian sandstones, some levels stabilised and showed limited recovery following September rainfall, but specifically Easter Lathrisk continued to recede and remained notably low.

Summary of 3-month prediction and outlook

With some regions seeing recovery since the rainfall arriving in September and early October, regions which faced a more severe drought will continue to need above average rainfall to recover over the next three months, especially the South-East of England. Forecasts favour wetter than-average conditions over the next three months, but the Hydrological Outlook indicates river flows and groundwater levels in parts of south-east England are likely to remain below normal.

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/2026/9/2026_9_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

Trusts water resources and boating season based on reservoir levels and hydrological situation.
Around this time of year, we would typically be transitioning from the drawdown period to the refill stage. We already have seen some welcome recovery in some of our reservoir groups, including the Leeds & Liverpool Lancaster and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. Despite the UK receiving unsettled conditions in September, the drought has impacted reservoir groups causing them to be lower than usual. In some reservoir groups drought conditions have been exacerbated by ongoing engineering works to reservoirs (where reductions in water level are required to undertake those works). Examples of this include Toddbrook Reservoir (Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canal group) which was held down following the spillway incident in summer 2019. A phased refill has commenced in recent months (the reservoir is now around 32% full), and our engineers are monitoring the reservoir dam carefully as the water levels increase. 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 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 to maximise refill where possible. Given the rapidly changing situation, boaters are strongly advised to subscribe to email notifications of any waterway restrictions or closures at: Notices and stoppages | Canal & River Trust

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Reservoir data presented is from the week ending Monday 12th October 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 [*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