

Reservoir Watch August 2026

Reservoir Group	June 2026 Holding	July 2026 Holding	August 2026 Holding	Change in July-August period	Minimum historical* August holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	98.80%	83.40%	79.50%	-3.9%	10.1% (2004)
Oxford & GU	77.40%	55.80%	32.30%	-23.5%	24.2% (2025)
GU South	81.00%	72.30%	59.00%	-13.3%	50.9% (2025)
GU North	53.10%	25.80%	22.10%	-3.7%	22.1% (2026)
Lancaster Canal	84.60%	77.80%	56.40%	-21.4%	35.4% (2018)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	82.90%	65.60%	40.00%	-25.6%	17.9% (2022)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	58.00%	45.50%	30.50%	-15.0%	12.2% (2025)
Caldon Canal	74.90%	58.50%	47.10%	-11.4%	31.7% (2025)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	43.90%	21.00%	16.60%	-4.4%	16.6% (2026)
Chesterfield Canal	94.20%	75.50%	53.80%	-21.7%	26.5% (2023)
Grantham Canal	99.60%	95.40%	85.70%	-9.7%	76.9% (2006)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	69.60%	60.90%	52.00%	-8.9%	19.9% (2011)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	82.80%	76.60%	58.70%	-17.9%	56% (2010)

* 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, July was unprecedented in terms of aridity. It was the driest July and fifth driest of any month in the England & Wales rainfall series extending from 1766. It was also the second hottest July on record for England. Total UK rainfall was around a third of average, with Wales registering 9% and England 10% of average. July monthly mean flows were generally below normal to exceptionally low across most of the UK.

Soil moisture continued to decline across the COSMOS-UK Network, with record low soil moisture levels recorded at 13 sites across England. Soil moisture deficits (SMDs) remained exceptional for the third month in a row, with the end of July SMDs in southeast England comparable with exceptional drought years (e.g. 1976, 1990, 1995). While groundwater levels continued along typical seasonal recessions, the residual effect of the preceding wet winter has generally kept levels higher than may be expected given the exceptional aridity.

Following a wet winter, water resources were healthy in early spring, but the situation deteriorated rapidly throughout the past few months with high temperatures accelerating evaporation which is then compounded with the sustained rainfall deficits. While the wet winter has supported the public water supply position (compared to last year and other major droughts like 1976), further deterioration is likely. August began with further hot weather and no sign of rainfall in the most affected areas. The latest Hydrological Outlook indicates that there will be a continuation of below normal to exceptionally low flows across England and Wales. The Met Office UK 3-month Outlook (issued 27th July 2026) indicates an increased likelihood (1.5x chance) of a dry August to October period. Temperatures are also expected to be above average, with a 2.3x chance of a warm three-month period, particularly during August and early September. Continued warm conditions are likely to increase evaporation, limiting the benefit of rainfall that does occur.

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/2026/7/2026_7_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

The Trust's Water Resources

We are now in the second half of the main boating season and worsening drought conditions have led to continued decreases across our reservoir group holdings. Restrictions and closures resulting from the drought are in place at locations across the network. 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 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, later in 2026. A phased refill has commenced in recent weeks, 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 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 August 2026

Reservoir data presented is from the week ending Monday 17th August unless stated, along with data from the nearest comparable date in June and July.

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