

Reservoir Watch April 2025

Reservoir Group	February 2025 Holding	March 2025 Holding	April 2025 Holding	Change in March-April period	Minimum historical* April holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	99.90%	99.90%	99.90%	0.0%	59.1% (2012)
Oxford & GU	98.20%	98.20%	94.20%	-4.0%	58.2% (2012)
GU South	73.90%	75.50%	74.00%	-1.5%	61.8% (2012)
GU North	99.90%	99.90%	89.80%	-10.1%	44.3% (2012)
Lancaster Canal	92.20%	88.80%	85.40%	-3.4%	85.4% (2025)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	78.60%	68.20%	57.50%	-10.7%	57.5% (2025)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	69.10%	62.40%	53.30%	-9.1%	43.9% (2022)
Caldon Canal	83.90%	75.10%	67.70%	-7.4%	67.7% (2025)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	72.60%	80.70%	79.60%	-1.1%	61.9% (2021)
Chesterfield Canal	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.0%	27.5% (2023)
Grantham Canal	92.60%	74.20%	91.80%	0.0%	91.8% (2025)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	99.60%	98.80%	94.50%	-4.3%	39% (2012)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	94.40%	92.20%	88.40%	-3.8%	76% (2002)

* 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, March was a continuation of the high pressure and warmer than average conditions experienced in February. Rainfall was below average for all regions, resulting in the UK recording less than half the average for March (43%). For England and Wales, this was even less with averages of 25% and 23% respectively. Wales recorded its second driest March (after 1944), while England recorded its fourth driest March, both in records since 1890. Overall, the period October-March registered 79% of average for the UK. Over the past 12 months, rainfall was below average in northern and western Britain. River flows were below normal or lower across most of the UK. Many rivers in northern and western areas registered exceptionally low flows, some of which were the lowest average March flows on record.

Groundwater levels generally declined, and soil moisture deficits began to appear in England and Wales, with the Wessex and Southern regions recording the driest March soils in records since 1961.

The current Outlook suggests that there will be below normal river flows for most areas over the next three months. A continuation of the dry conditions in the north and west may cause concern regarding water resources over the coming months.

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/2025/3/2025_3_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

The Trust's Water Resources

Now we have entered the boating season, this means we have started the drawdown of our reservoirs. Therefore, 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. Additionally, there are several reservoir groups that have not been completely refilled during the winter months. The main 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. 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.

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
22 April 2025

Reservoir data presented is from the week ending Monday 14th April 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 [<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