

Reservoir Group	July 2026 Holding	August 2026 Holding	September 2026 Holding	Change in August - September period	Minimum historical* September holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	83.40%	79.50%	81.00%	1.5%	40% (2006)
Oxford & GU	55.80%	32.30%	28.40%	-3.9%	23.8% (2025)
GU South	72.30%	59.00%	56.80%	-2.2%	45.9% (2011)
GU North	25.80%	22.10%	24.90%	2.8%	23.2% (2011)
Lancaster Canal	77.80%	56.40%	45.90%	-10.5%	45.1% (2026)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	65.60%	40.00%	37.20%	-2.8%	17.2% (2022)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	45.50%	30.50%	27.30%	-3.2%	10.8% (2025)
Caldon Canal	58.50%	47.10%	43.40%	-3.7%	28.5% (2025)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	21.00%	16.60%	36.10%	19.5%	17.6% (2013)
Chesterfield Canal	75.50%	53.80%	44.90%	-8.9%	23.9% (2023)
Grantham Canal	95.40%	85.70%	81.10%	-4.6%	74.2% (2014)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	60.90%	52.00%	57.30%	5.3%	17.1% (2011)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	76.60%	58.70%	55.20%	-3.5%	50.2% (2001)

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

General Conditions

Information on River flows and rainfall.

According to the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, August was overall a hot and dry month, however this was slightly alleviated by the rain which arrived at the end of the month. A large heatwave impacted England and Wales between the 10th-14th August. Total August river flows and rainfall were both below average, with some areas in England being below two-thirds of the average rainfall. The rainfall was brought on by frontal incursions which arrived on the 15th, bringing cooler weather and thunderstorms, leading to some areas in the north dealing with surface water flooding. Despite this and further rainfall brought in by Atlantic fronts, the rainfall for august was still below average (81%) across England and Wales apart from a band from the Mersey to North Yorkshire and North Norfolk coasts. River flows at the first half of the month retained the declining pattern but experienced some recovery later in the month. Several catchments in East Anglia and South Wales

exhibited prolonged periods of consecutive daily flow minima throughout August. A new record was set on the Wye, and exceptionally low flows have been recorded around East Anglia, the Thames, the Hampshire Avon and in parts of Wales and Devon.

Soil moisture and Groundwater

Despite the rainfall at the end of the month, soil moisture at many COSMOS-UK sites remained below capacity, with some still retaining their exceptional dryness such as in East Anglia and Southeast England. Groundwater sites continued to recede, with most sites in between the normal range to notably low, dependent on the geology of the region, as those areas with Carboniferous limestone responded quickly to the rain compared to other geological regions due to their karstic aquifers.

Summary of 3-month prediction and outlook

Despite the rain at month end and into the start of September, the drought established by low rainfall in spring and summer will take consistent heavy rainfall to recover. The hydrological outlook indicates that the majority of the country will be restored to normal or above normal river flows elsewhere, however the south and southeast will likely continue to experience low river flows. Unfortunately the soil only made a short-term recovery and more prolonged rainfall is needed to ensure a widespread recovery across the COSMOS network. The 3-month outlook indicates that below normal flows are going to continue through Autumn in Southeast England, however for northern and western areas September flows are likely to be in the normal range but normal to above normal for the autumn, while groundwater levels are likely to be normal to below in September before tending towards 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/2026/8/2026_8_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

Trusts water resources and boating season based on reservoir levels and hydrological situation.

We are now towards the end of the main boating season, which means in the next few weeks we would expect to be transitioning from the drawdown period to the refill period. Due to the rainfall we have seen some recovery in the reservoir groups and this is meant that canal closures have been alleviated and restrictions lifted. Because of the drought, some of the reservoir groups have been 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 weeks (the reservoir is now around 23% 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](#)

Issued by:

Water Management Team, Canal & River Trust

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Reservoir data presented is from the week ending Monday 14th September unless stated, along with data from the nearest comparable date in July and August.

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

