Reservoir Watch November 2026

Reservoir Group	September 2026 Holding	October 2026 Holding	November 2026 Holding	Change in October – November period	Minimum historical* November holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	81.00%	79.1%	82.9%	3.8%	30.5% (2009)
Oxford & GU	28.40%	24.5%	24.1%	-0.4%	21.3% (2011)
GU South	56.80%	51.4%	47.6%	-3.8%	32.3% (2001)
GU North	24.90%	22.4%	12.3%	-10.1%	12.3% (2026)
Lancaster Canal	45.90%	58.4%	77.5%	18.1%	61.8 (2009)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	37.20%	45.2%	58.6%	13.4%	17.6% (2003)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	27.30%	24.7%	30.4%	5.7%	24.1% (2003)
Caldon Canal	43.40%	38.6%	42.8%	4.2%	29.1% (2003)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	36.10%	39.5%	35.3%	-4.2%	33.6% (2013)
Chesterfield Canal	44.90%	37.1%	37.7%	0.6%	37.7 (2026)
Grantham Canal	81.10%	75%	80.7%	5.7%	73.2% (2014)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	57.30%	57.9%	63.2%	5.3%	15.1% (2011)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	55.20%	51.7%	54.6%	2.9%	50.3% (2023)

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

General Conditions

Information on River flows and rainfall.

October brought in respite from the prolonged dry weather, with the UK experiencing 113% of average rainfall. Despite this some parts of the Welsh border and north-east England remain drier than average. This rainfall was brought on by two storms arriving in quick succession of each other following high pressure conditions. Storm Austen caused very high rainfall in Southern England and Wales, specifically Wessex recorded exceptionally high rainfall, with 126% average rainfall recorded in the area. while Storm Boleo impacted North-West England. Unfortunately, this wet weather has yet to compensate for the dry summer as since June, England has recorded only 77% and Wales 79% of average rainfall. River flows were varied across England and Wales, with the start of the

month recording well below average. However, by the end of October, flows in many rivers were higher compared with flows measured in the end of September. Most rivers followed this pattern across the country. October flows were in the normal range or above in Northern England, with flows elsewhere recording either normal to notably low with some catchments recording exceptionally low flows including the Coln and the Wensum. New record lows were recorded in the Yorkshire Derwent and Erch all in the last 52 years.

Soil moisture and Groundwater

October rainfall reduced soil moisture deficits across the UK. Most sites recorded on COSMOS had returned to normal levels, but some persisted at sites in Southern England. Groundwater levels in the Chalk were in the normal range to low and continued to decline across much of England. In the Jurassic Limestones levels were low, but rose in sites like Ampney Crucis. The magnesian limestone continued a slow recession but remained in the normal range. The carboniferous limestone recovered from low levels during October. In the Permo-Triassic sandstones, groundwater levels continued to fall, ending in the normal range. Despite this, at Skirwith, levels remained below normal, while Weir Farm continued to record above normal levels following substantial recharge over recent years. In the Upper Greensand, levels at Lime Kiln Way and in the Fell Sandstone at Royalty Observatory continued to decline but remained above normal and in the normal range, respectively. In the Devonian sandstones, levels at Feddan Junction continued to stabilise but other areas showed limited recovery and remained notably low.

Summary of 3-month prediction and outlook

Despite the storms bringing some much-needed rainfall, below normal flows are likely to persist in groundwater dominated catchments in South East England, however, elsewhere flows are likely to be in the normal range or above. Without this continued substantial rainfall however, pressures on water resources are likely to continue into next year.

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/2026/10/2026_10_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

Trusts water resources and boating season based on reservoir levels and hydrological situation.
We are now a month into the typical reservoir refill season. We have seen some recovery in some of our reservoir groups due to the heavy rainfall from the two storms arriving in the UK this month. Unfortunately, however, some of our reservoir holdings are low because of engineering works taking place that require the reservoir level to be maintained at less than full capacity and going through a controlled refill. Examples of this include Toddbrook Reservoir undergoing controlled refill and Combs reservoir is being held down at 10% until the end of November, meaning the maximum holding of the Peak Forest & Macclesfield group is 58%. Several of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal reservoirs are held down and the groups maximum potential for refill is currently 86%. Further works at Harthill means the Chesterfield group is being held down until next summer. 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. The recent recovery for a number of our reservoir groups now means that for the most, levels are now no longer at their lowest position on record for this time of year. Whilst there has been continued improvement in the overall situation for the Trust's navigations, some reservoirs remain less responsive to recent rainfall. We are currently undertaking our planned "winter works programme" of essential maintenance and repairs across the network. In addition to the planned works the Trust is investing an additional £1.3million in additional works designed to increase resilience to a continued drought.

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 16th November unless stated, along with data from the nearest comparable date in September and October.

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