

Reservoir Watch August 2025

| Reservoir Group | June 2025 Holding | July 2025 Holding | August 2025 Holding | Change in July-August period | Minimum historical* August holding (Year) |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Kennet & Avon Canal | 100.00% | 89.70% | 88.50% | -1.2% | 25.8% (2012) |
| Oxford & GU | 64.20% | 41.50% | 26.30% | -15.2% | 26.3% (2025) |
| GU South | 66.10% | 63.10% | 59.20% | -3.9% | 52.9% (2025) |
| GU North | 31.10% | 21.80% | 23.10% | 1.3% | 23.1% (2025) |
| Lancaster Canal | 78.30% | 92.50% | 91.30% | -1.2% | 30% (2018) |
| Leeds & Liverpool Canal | 40.90% | 34.40% | 26.90% | -7.5% | 19.8% (2022) |
| Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals | 26.90% | 17.00% | 12.80% | -4.2% | 12.8% (2025) |
| Caldon Canal | 48.60% | 38.80% | 33.00% | -5.8% | 33% (2025) |
| Huddersfield Narrow Canal | 70.50% | 52.70% | 46.40% | -6.3% | 36.9% (2018) |
| Chesterfield Canal | 79.80% | 62.40% | 51.40% | -11.0% | 26.9% (2023) |
| Grantham Canal | 91.20% | 90.40% | 90.30% | -0.1% | 82.1% (2006) |
| Birmingham Canal Navigations | 83.90% | 76.50% | 74.20% | -2.3% | 21.8% (2011) |
| Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union | 82.00% | 70.80% | 63.20% | -7.6% | 58.2% (2010) |

* 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, July was overall a warm month but was frequently unsettled with localised heavy rain. High temperatures that occurred during the month contributed to the fifth warmest July for the UK (in a series from 1890). For each month so far in 2025, apart from June, rainfall was below average for the UK as a whole. Total July rainfall was 90% of average, with deficits in Wales and the south west (30-70% of average). Wales, and the south-west were the driest (<60% of average) and the South experienced the wettest (134% of average). The summer months so far (June-July) saw above average rainfall for north-west regions (>120% of average), whilst deficits remained across all regions across the March-July period, making this comparable with notable drought years 1976 and 2022 (73% of average rainfall for the UK). River flows remained above average in the north-west, but elsewhere many were below normal or low.

Soil moisture deficits remained high in central and southern England. Groundwater levels continued to decline, with most within the normal to low range.

The hydrological outlook stages that for August-October, below normal flows are likely to persist in many regions, particularly in south Wales and central and southern England. Above average rainfall is needed in the autumn months to ease pressures on water resources.

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/2025/7/2025_7_Rainfall_Anomaly_1991-2020.gif

The Trust's Water Resources

We are currently in the main period of the boating season, this means we are drawing down our reservoirs. 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. Currently, five reservoir groups are at their lowest historical holding (data since 1998). One of the reasons that reservoir holdings are low 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 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 of these works on water supplies for the canal network, given the potential impacts on boating customers. The current situation for the canal network is arguably worse than at this point in the 2022 drought event (which was previously the most severe drought experienced for a generation in terms of impact on navigation) and there are concerns with the prospects for maintaining water supplies for a growing number of canals due to the continued lack of rain and dwindling reservoir holdings, as this report shows. There are, however, many parts of the network that are holding up well, in the face of the dry conditions.

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. The drought conditions in. 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
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Reservoir data presented is from the week ending Monday 11th August 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 |