

## Water management FAQs

### Navigation Restrictions on Chesterfield Canal

#### **When will the restrictions be in place?**

Canal & River Trust is planning to temporarily restrict navigation opportunities along a 6 mile stretch of Chesterfield Canal until further notice due to low water levels.

#### **Where are the navigation restrictions?**

The closure will be from Shireoaks Marina (just upstream from Lock 42) all the way to the summit (the end of the current extent of navigation). This will be monitored closely.

#### **Why are there navigation restrictions?**

Enabling boats to cruise our waterways during the most popular boating months (Mar-Oct) is a top priority for our charity. Despite the hard work and continued efforts of our operational and water management teams during these unprecedented times to manage water levels for this busy period, we have taken the decision to restrict navigation along part of the canal. There are three contributing factors:

- 1) Despite recent rainfall, the first half of the year has have been exceptionally dry. Chesterfield Canal relies on a regular supply of rainfall to replenish its resources.
- 2) There has been a significant increase in boat movements along the canal since lockdown restrictions were lifted.
- 3) Feeder reservoirs Pebley and Harthill were not able to operate at peak capacity during 2020 due to vital important engineering inspections being carried out. As of August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the reservoir capacity for the canal was at 35%. It is predicted that the reservoir will be at the critical level (20%) within four weeks at the current rate of use, unless there is significant rainfall.

#### **Why is this section being restricted?**

By restricting this 6 mile section we can keep the rest of the canal running as normal.

Norwood Tunnel is the end of the at the navigable section of the canal, and while it is a disappointment for boaters wishing to reach the summit, this section causes the least impact and saves the most water. Below lock 42 there are alternative water sources such as the River Ryton which feeds the lower reaches.

This is the first time the Trust has had to restrict navigation on the Chesterfield Canal.

### **What's the current water resources position on Chesterfield Canal?**

The reservoir holding for the canal is currently at 35%. This spring was the driest and sunniest on record and Chesterfield Canal relies on a regular supply of rainfall to replenish its resources during the main boating season.

This is coupled with the fact that key reservoirs were not able to operate at peak capacity due to drawdown necessary for vital inspections at Pebley and Harthill reservoirs. maintenance works. This draw down, along with the continued low rainfall means that the boating season started with less water than needed for unrestricted movement. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact, with a significant increase in boat movements since lockdown restrictions were lifted.

### **Current lock flight closures?**

Turnerwood lock flight is affected.

### **How do you conserve water by closing off part of the navigation?**

To conserve as much water as possible during the closure, all flights have been padlocked closed and the gates ashed up to reduce leakage. (To prevent unauthorised access through vandalism, measures may be taken to make the locks inoperable.)

While the closure will prevent use of the Turnerwood Lock Flight, cruising between the locks remains available and the towpaths are open for the local community to use in line with Government guidance.

Please follow all guidance relating to Coronavirus when using the canals and towpaths until further notice. Up to date information on this can be found on this link:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/safety-on-our-waterways/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-boating-faqs>

### **What will happen when it rains?**

The Trust will continue to monitor the water levels closely and if it rains sufficiently, we may be able to remove this navigation restriction.

### **Will the towpaths remain open?**

Towpaths will remain open and people should follow Government coronavirus guidance with regards to social distancing. Please share the space and be considerate to other towpath users. Cyclists are asked to slow down and give way to pedestrians.

### **How can boaters help to save water?**

Boaters have an important role to play in efficient water management by reporting any leaks and keeping cruising to a minimum. We would appeal to all canal users to be vigilant and report any acts of misuse or vandalism.

### **What is the potential ecological impact of low rainfall?**

Careful management of our precious water resources is vital. We need to maintain a minimal level of flow in the canal to protect fish and other wildlife and prevent the water from becoming stagnant. Low reservoir and canal levels, coupled with higher temperatures in summer months, can cause problems such as algal blooms and low oxygen levels in the water. In extreme cases, we may intervene to save distressed fish with large scale fish rescues.

20% capacity is the critical level for safety of the fish in the reservoir, so the Trust is starting dissolved oxygen level monitoring now to ensure safety of the fish.

### **Day-to-day water management**

#### **Why don't you fix all the leaks?**

The majority of water lost from man-made canals is through leakage via the canal bed and banks. Much of today's current waterway navigation network consists of clay-lined canals which are more than 200 years old. These are not 100% watertight and it would be impractical to fix every leak. However, the Trust is committed to identifying and repairing any significant problems.

Measures will be taken to minimise leakage on locks.

#### **Do restrictions simply concentrate the same lock usage (and hence water use) into a shorter period?**

No, our experience shows that where we've implemented similar restrictions in the past, we've subsequently seen decreases in total lock usage. However, the water resource savings do vary across different canals and between years.

#### **Where can I find out about the water resource situation?**

The Trust's website is a great source of information on the latest water resource position and any boating advice/restrictions. Our water management team produces a monthly [reservoir watch](#) on the site, which gives details of reservoir holdings across the network. Or you can contact your local office to subscribe to notifications in a particular area.

#### **What are you doing to ensure water restrictions or stoppages aren't needed in the future?**

We are responding an ever-increasing series of dry months along our network and take a strategic approach to managing future water resources. Our water management team is

responsible for assessing the resilience of water supply and advising the business on the potential impact of proposed canal developments (e.g. new marinas) and investment required to supplement water resources. The Trust reserves the right to object to or decline canal development proposals on the basis that they may have an unacceptable impact on the existing water supply. Unfortunately, we can never give absolute assurances to our customers about having enough water to get through every drought, regardless of the extent, duration and severity but we will do whatever we can to keep as much of the network as possible open.

**20 August 2020 updated.**