

Reservoir Group	March 2021 holding	April 2021 holding	May 2021 holding	Change in April-May period	Minimum historical* May holding (Year)
Kennet & Avon Canal	90.6%	92.4%	93.0%	0.6%	77.6% (2013)
Oxford & GU	97.3%	91.3%	90.9%	-0.4%	76.4% (2011)
GU South	83.8%	86.7%	89.1%	2.4%	73.6% (2012)
GU North	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	75.4% (2011)
Lancaster Canal	100.0%	97.4%	96.0%	-1.4%	73.6% (2017)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	91.0%	82.1%	79.4%	-2.7%	65.9% (2009)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canals	71.8%	61.4%	62.0%	0.6%	62.0% (2021)
Caldon Canal	92.3%	85.4%	85.6%	0.2%	77.2% (2013)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	65.3%	60.6%	71.3%**	10.7%	73.3% (2020)
Chesterfield Canal	51.8%	57.2%	65.1%	7.9%	54.5% (2020)
Grantham Canal	99.7%	93.3%	95.1%	1.8%	95.1% (2021)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	93.0%	92.7%	94.4%	1.7%	36.0% (2011)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	98.4%	92.7%	90.8%**	-1.9%	72.3% (2011)

* for the purposes of this analysis, historical holdings cover 1998-2021 reservoir holding data, inclusive.

** Data from week ending Monday 10 May.

General Conditions

According to the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, April was exceptionally sunny, dry and cool for the time of year. It was both the sunniest and frostiest April on record for the UK since 1960 and 1919, respectively, and the driest April in the UK since 1980, with only 29% of the long-term average for rainfall. Substantial areas of both eastern and southern England recorded little appreciable rainfall. As a result, soil moisture deficits increased across the UK causing substantially drier soils for the time of year. River flows were below normal or lower across most of England and Wales after receding throughout the month, and even fell to exceptionally low in south-west England. Groundwater levels decreased in all aquifers due to the lack of recharge across the UK however levels remain in the normal range or above. Similarly, reservoir stocks fell but totals have remained near average across England and Wales. Low flows had given a slightly tentative outlook for late spring and summer, however substantial rainfall across the UK during the first fortnight of May will likely reduce some of these concerns for water resources.

The Met Office rainfall anomaly graphs and maps can be viewed at:

https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/pub/data/weather/uk/climate/anomalygraphs/2021/2021_Rainfall_Anomaly_1981-2010.gif

https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/pub/data/weather/uk/climate/anomacts/2021/4/2021_4_Rainfall_Anomaly_1981-2010.gif

The Trust's Water Resources

With the main boating season underway, nine of the 13 reservoir groups have a holding of above 80%, with seven of these above 90%. One is at 100% holding.

In the south, all reservoir groups have again recorded fairly stable holdings with three out of five actually showing small increases. The Grand Union North has remained at 100% holding. Only the Oxford and Grand Union group saw a decrease in holding of -0.4% since April. This is due to continued works in the interest of safety being undertaken at Sulby reservoir, impacting on the neighbouring Welford reservoir, and causing both to be drawn down to facilitate the works.

The effect of the recent wet weather since the start of May seems to already be apparent in the North, with five of the nine reservoir groups recording an increase in holding. It is especially pleasing to see a large increase in holding of 10.7% in the Huddersfield Narrow Canal group, despite Slaithwaite continuing to be held down for engineering reasons. The Chesterfield Canal group also recorded a large increase of 7.9%, however its holding remains low due to ongoing engineering works at Harthill, also affecting Pebley, which requires both reservoirs to be held down. As the boating season has commenced with the relaxation of Covid-19 lockdown measures, reservoirs have entered the drawdown stage with their supply being used to feed the canals, explaining the decreases in the remaining three northern reservoir groups. The decrease in Leeds & Liverpool group holding (-2.7%) is due in part to ongoing engineering works requiring certain reservoirs to be held down.

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
21 May 2021

Reservoir data presented is from the week ending Monday 17 May unless stated, along with data from the nearest comparable date in March and April.

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	Startopend, 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