

Reservoir Watch August 2018

Reservoir group	June 2018 holding	July 2018 holding	Aug 2018 holding	Change in July-Aug period	Minimum historical* Aug holding (Year(s))
Kennet & Avon Canal	82.2%	81.9%	82.0%	+0.1%	43.4% (2004)
Oxford & GU	90.8%	71.2%	54.0%	-17.2%	38.6% (2011)
GU South	95.6%	91.2%	80.6%	-10.6%	60.2% (2011)
GU North	85.9%	69.2%	56.9%	-12.3%	24.8% (2011)
Lancaster Canal	76.2%	50.6%	30.0%	-20.6%	30.0% (2018)
Leeds & Liverpool Canal	59.7%	34.9%	23.1%	-11.8%	23.1% (2010 and 2018)
Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canal	67.9%	50.8%	36.5%	-14.3%	36.5% (2018)
Caldon Canal	74.8%	61.1%	48.6%	-12.5%	48.6% (2018)
Huddersfield Narrow Canal	65.1%	42.0%	35.8%	-6.2%	35.8% (2018)
Chesterfield Canal	98.6%	90.7%	77.9%	-12.8%	61.4% (2005)
Grantham Canal	99.9%	95.5%	93.1%	-2.4%	82.1% (2006)
Birmingham Canal Navigations	71.5%	59.8%	53.5%	-6.3%	22.0% (2011)
Staffs & Worcs, Shropshire Union	91.6%	87.0%	85.5%	-1.5%	58.2% (2010)

* for the purposes of this analysis, historical holdings cover 1998-2018 reservoir holding data, inclusive.

According to the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, July was a summery month notable for extended periods of hot, sunny and dry weather across the UK. It was the third hottest July in the Central England Temperature series (from 1659) and for the summer so far (June-July), it was the third driest and second hottest for England and Wales in a series dating back to 1910. Many regions registered less than two-thirds of average rainfall with parts of central and southern England receiving less than 30% of average. For the summer so far (June-July), rainfall deficits were more pronounced; the majority of England and Wales received less than half the average with less than 30% in large parts of southern England. All regions of southern England received around a third of average or less; it was the second driest June-July for Anglian, Thames and Wessex regions. For the UK, July soil moisture deficits (SMDs) were the third highest in a series dating back to 1961. Mean river flows were generally low to notably low and many catchments recorded less than a third of the July average. Groundwater levels generally remained in the normal range. The three month period May-July saw only 56% of LTA rainfall in the north-west, which has a return period of between 1 in 60 and 1 in 90 years, highlighting the intensity of the meteorological drought being experienced.

The water resources outlook for the remainder of 2018 is dependent on the replenishment of surface water resources which will be determined by the timing and magnitude of autumn/winter rainfall.

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

https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/pub/data/weather/uk/climate/anomalygraphs/2018/2018_Rainfall_Anomaly_1981-2010.gif

https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/pub/data/weather/uk/climate/anomacts/2018/7/2018_7_Rainfall_Anomaly_1981-2010.gif

For the third successive month, eight of our 12 reservoir groups saw double-digit reductions (ranging from -11.8% to -20.6%); symptomatic of the ongoing (and exceptionally) dry conditions we are experiencing. That July was the third hottest on record, undoubtedly increased demands for canal water, not least surface water evaporation, necessitating additional reservoir feeds to replenish pound levels for navigation. The onset, intensity and geographical extent of the drought conditions have been dramatic, given that at the start of the main boating season, the vast majority of reservoir groups were full, or very close to full.

Of the 12 reservoir groups that dropped by double-figures, holdings in four (namely the Lancaster Canal, Peak Forest & Macclesfield Canal, Caldon Canal and Leeds & Liverpool Canal groups) are now at a historical low for the time of year based on our records dating back nearly two decades. Coincidentally for the lattermost, the current percentage holding is identical to that observed in 2010 (year of the last previous canal closure). With the school summer holidays well under way (incontrovertibly the peak period for canal water demand) and the dry weather likely to continue into the autumn, arrangements are being put into place to lessen disruptions to boaters and waterside businesses. As such, localised overnight lock restrictions have been implemented to minimise water loss at key pounds and lock flights. Difficult decisions have also been taken to temporarily close sections of the network severely affected by the dry spell. Please refer to the [National Closure Map](#) on the Trust's website to keep abreast of all the measures currently in place, along with Frequently Asked Questions. The recent wet interludes experienced have not had an appreciable impact on the overall water resources position.

Boaters are urged to conserve water resources by sharing locks (where feasible), ensuring lock paddles are closed properly post use, and reporting any water problems immediately to the nearest local waterway office (or via www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us to find the Waterway you should notify). This is part of our THRIFT campaign, which is in effect nationwide, given the prolonged dry weather.

Boaters are advised to sign up for email notifications of any waterway restrictions or closures at: <http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices>

Issued by:

Water Management Team, Canal & River Trust
17 August 2018

Reservoir data presented is from the week ending **Monday 13 August** unless stated, along with data from the nearest comparable date in June and July.

Annex 1 – Canal & River Trust reservoir groups

Group name	Reservoirs within group
Kennet & Avon Canal	Crofton [<i>this is a principally 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