

Press release: Environment Agency responds to impacts of dry weather

The Environment Agency has stepped up its incident response to tackle the impacts of continued dry weather, following the driest June since 1925.

Record-breaking temperatures and very low rainfall throughout May, June and much of July is taking its toll on the environment, with wildlife suffering as river levels drop. EA teams have responded to 44 significant environmental incidents since the end of June including moorland fires, algal blooms, dry boreholes, low river flows and fish rescues.

The National Drought Group (NDG), chaired by Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency convened today (Monday 23 July) to discuss the operational approach to managing water supplies and review preparation for the pressures ahead.

The group is made up of 30 organisations including water companies, regulators and environmental groups. During the meeting, water companies explained how they were implementing activity set out in their drought plans and increasing efforts to reduce leakage.

NDG members set out how they had stepped up activity on all fronts and urged everyone to reduce water use and wastage to conserve supplies and protect the environment.

See the NDG's full position statement [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive Environment Agency said:

The water that comes from the tap is taken from our rivers and reservoirs and the amount we use has a direct effect on people and the environment around us.

As we prepare for drought in the North West and dry weather continues around the country, we have stepped up our response to minimise wastage and tackle the impacts of low river flows on wildlife.

We all have a part to play to protect this precious resource. I expect water companies to step up their efforts to ensure supplies are well-managed and people at home should use water wisely.

The lack of rain has led to a rapid decline in reservoir levels in the North West. The EA is preparing for drought in the region and United Utilities have announced a hosepipe ban affecting 7 million people from early August. The company have applied for 2 drought permits and 1 drought order across Cumbria, which the EA are now considering. The company is preparing a further

3 drought permits to be submitted before the end of July.

Dry weather is also affecting a number of sectors, notably agriculture with concerns about water supplies needed for irrigation and potentially lower yields. The EA is meeting with affected groups to provide practical advice about conserving water and planning for drought, should the dry weather continue.

Further action the EA is taking includes:

- Frequent river monitoring and 50% increase in incident response for this time of year – mostly associated with extreme hot weather and prolonged dry conditions.
- Working closely with water companies to ensure they are following drought plans and implementing actions in a timely way.
- Robust regulation including increasing the number of inspections for businesses abstracting water to ensure compliance with licences.
- Operating strategic water transfers to help maintain river flows.
- Moving staff to affected areas to deal with increasing demand for incident response and regulatory work.
- Leading by example – from late July, not cleaning EA fleet vehicles or office windows to avoid unnecessary water usage.

Around the country, water companies have enough water to maintain supplies if resources are managed properly and if the public use water wisely but a dry end to the summer and dry autumn could see the risk of restrictions and further environmental impacts spread across the country.

Reducing the amount of water we use helps protect the environment and conserves supplies during extended periods of dry weather. There are a number of ways the public can use water wisely including:

- Avoid using sprinklers, use hosepipes sparingly and don't water your lawn – it will recover quickly when rain returns
- Ditch the paddling pool and head to the beach – [find your nearest bathing water](#)
- Water plants after 9pm – the water is less likely to evaporate
- Fit a water butt, so when the rain comes you'll have stored water for your garden
- Take a shorter shower
- Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth
- Always put full loads in your washing machine and dishwasher

You can find more water saving tips at [waterwise](#)

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News story: National Drought Group – Chairman's statement

The National Drought Group (NDG), chaired by the Environment Agency's Chief Executive, brings together government departments, water companies, environmental groups and others to coordinate action to maintain water supplies and manage the other risks associated with drought. The NDG convened today (Monday 23 July) to assess the present situation and coordinate plans for the weeks ahead.

We are in a continuing period of prolonged hot and dry weather. June 2018 was the driest June since 1925, with a rainfall total for England of only 15 mm.

One water company, United Utilities, has announced its intention to impose a hosepipe ban ("Temporary Use Ban") in parts of the North West from 5 August. The other water companies do not currently intend to introduce hosepipe bans, and there is no threat to essential public water supplies. But continued dry weather into autumn could see the risk of some further restrictions and further environmental impacts across the country. Action we are taking

The water companies, the Environment Agency and others are taking action to reduce the risk of further water restrictions and to ensure that water users and the environment itself continue to get the water they need. Participants agreed to step up their activity on all fronts.

The water companies are stepping up action to sustain a reliable water supply to their customers. They:

- Have put additional resources in place to do so.
 - Are implementing their contingency drought plans as appropriate.
 - Are actively advising customers on water efficiency and offering free water saving devices.
 - Are stepping up their efforts to find and fix leaks to protect supplies and help reduce the risk of further hosepipe bans
 - Are taking a range of other steps to sustain supply, including water trading between companies and additional measures to keep farmers and other customers supplied with a particular focus on vulnerable customers
- The Environment Agency is
- Actively monitoring the weather, water situation and the environment, analysing the prospects and sharing its analysis with others.
 - Working with the water companies to ensure they are following their drought plans and implementing actions in a timely way.
 - Working with businesses, farmers and others who abstract water under licence from the EA to manage down demand and protect the environment, using its regulatory powers as necessary.
 - Stepping up engagement to encourage the public and others to cut down on non-essential water use.
 - Operating water transfers such as the Shropshire Groundwater Scheme to help maintain river flows for water supply and the environment.

- Stepping up its incident response to ensure the environment is protected – responding to 50% more hot weather incidents, including fish kills.
- Moving its operations to higher alert status and increasing staff resources to support its own work and those of partners in affected areas.
- Leading by example: EA fleet vehicles and office windows will not be cleaned to avoid unnecessary water usage.

Other partners

- The National Farmers Union (NFU) and farmers are working closely with the EA, Internal Drainage Boards, water companies and Defra to manage the situation and sustain farming production, including through water trading and abstraction restrictions that are now in place in some catchments.
- The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) have produced top tips for farmers on coping with drought and heat.
- The Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) are closing some navigations to save water, providing information to boat users on the situation and asking them to consider sharing locks where possible – as they always do in summer.
- The Angling Trust have distributed guidance to their members on fishery management during hot and dry weather. Anglers can report any fish in distress to the Environment Agency hotline on 0800 80 70 60.
- Other partners are taking action to preserve water supplies, sustain economic and leisure activity and protect as far as possible the environment, rivers, lakes and wildlife.

Advice to the public

Please use water wisely. Prolonged dry weather and localised drought is not unusual. Water companies plan for periods of exceptionally low rainfall. There is enough water for all if water resources are managed properly. All of us can play a role. We encourage everyone to follow the advice of their water company and use water wisely. This will help protect the environment and the economy, and reduce the risk of further water restrictions.

Enhanced coordination and next NDG meeting

The NDG agreed to step up coordination between its members to maintain a common assessment of the situation and ensure the closest possible cooperation to address the current challenges; and agreed to meet again on 29 August.

[News story: National Drought Group –](#)

Chairman's statement

The National Drought Group (NDG), chaired by the Environment Agency's Chief Executive, brings together government departments, water companies, environmental groups and others to coordinate action to maintain water supplies and manage the other risks associated with drought. The NDG convened today (Monday 23 July) to assess the present situation and coordinate plans for the weeks ahead.

The present situation and the prospects

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Action we are taking

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Water companies

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- Are implementing their contingency drought plans as appropriate.
- Are actively advising customers on water efficiency and offering free water saving devices.
- Are stepping up their efforts to find and fix leaks to protect supplies and help reduce the risk of further hosepipe bans
- Are taking a range of other steps to sustain supply, including water trading between companies and additional measures to keep farmers and other customers supplied with a particular focus on vulnerable customers.

The Environment Agency is:

- Actively monitoring the weather, water situation and the environment, analysing the prospects and sharing its analysis with others.
- Working with the water companies to ensure they are following their drought plans and implementing actions in a timely way.
- Working with businesses, farmers and others who abstract water under

licence from the EA to manage down demand and protect the environment, using its regulatory powers as necessary.

- Stepping up engagement to encourage the public and others to cut down on non-essential water use.
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Press release: Liam Fox launches consultations on UK's trading future outside of EU

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox launches the UK government's first ever public consultations on new trade agreements.

People across the UK will have their say on prospective new agreements with the USA, Australia, New Zealand and on the UK's potential membership of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership today (Sunday, 22 July).

In a historic moment for the country, the 14-week consultations will allow the public to have a say on what trade will look like with some of the largest and fastest growing economies in the world. People will be invited to share their views on which areas matter to them most as well as any concerns they have.

The consultations, which are available online now show determination to make the most of the UK's ability to set its own trade policy for the first time in 40 years.

The prospect of a future trade agreement will be one of the subjects discussed by Dr Fox with senior trade officials including US Trade Representative, Robert Lighthizer in the USA on Tuesday (24 July). The International Trade Secretary will also raise the issue of the recent imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from the EU, calling instead for a multilateral solution to global issues of overcapacity.

He will meet US Commerce Secretary, Wilbur Ross in Washington DC where he will also make a speech at think tank, the Heritage Foundation.

The visit will also build on the work of the UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group, launched by Dr Fox and Lighthizer in Washington last summer, which held its fourth official-level meeting in London last week. The working group is already taking steps to strengthen trade and investment ties now including supporting industry agreements on mutual recognition of qualifications, cooperation on science and technology and launching a joint SME dialogue to share best practice and boost exports.

He will then fly to San Francisco where he will address the British American Business Council and meet companies including Facebook, IT company Oracle who employ 5,000 people in the UK and American film and TV production company, LucasFilm.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

For the first time in over 40 years, the UK will be able to determine who we trade with and the public will have a say on the terms of these trading agreements.

This is a hugely historic moment for the British people who voted to leave the European Union and take back control and the government is delivering exactly that on trade.

We are seeking to put the UK at the heart of the world's fastest growing regions agreements like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). It's also why I'm making the case for a trade deal with our single largest trading partner the USA and will continue do the same with the New Zealand and Australia.

The launch of public consultations follows Dr Fox's statement to Parliament on Monday, where he set out the government's approach to a transparent and inclusive UK trade policy which takes in the views of MPs, devolved governments, businesses, civil society groups and consumers.

If the UK were to join CPTPP, it would be the second largest economy in the group, and CPTPP's coverage of global GDP would increase to around 17%.

The agreement reduces 95% of tariffs along with other barriers to trade among its 11 members, including Canada, Japan and Singapore.

The 11 existing members of CPTPP accounted for £82 billion of UK trade in 2016, more than the Netherlands, France or China. The economies of existing members are diverse, spanning a region which is a driving force of global economic growth. Many, including Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore have been growing substantially over the last 5 years, growth which the IMF projects will continue in the near future.

The US is the UK's single largest trading partner, accounting for £100 billion of UK annual exports and supporting millions of UK jobs.

UK exports to Australia and New Zealand, 2 of the UK's closest allies, are growing at 14.8% and 16.8% respectively, a faster pace than our global average.