# UK drought prompts unusual extra Bank Holiday to encourage rain



Areas across the UK grappling with severe drought conditions are set to receive an extra Bank Holiday, a move aimed at encouraging rainfall and replenishing local reservoirs and aquifers, as confirmed by the Environment Agency. This unusual initiative comes at a time when certain regions, particularly in Wales and the South of England, have reported the driest weather since records began. Historically, it seems that torrential rainfalls tend to coincide with Bank Holiday weekends, prompting the agency to entertain the idea that such holidays might coax rain clouds into delivering much-needed precipitation.

An Environment Agency representative remarked, “The UK has had the driest winter and spring on record, and this is directly linked to an absence of Bank Holidays. Providing hard-working families with an extra holiday is the only way to guarantee the UK will get a thorough soaking.” With the impending school summer holidays also factored in, there is a whimsical belief that rain clouds somehow detect these times of increased human activity and decide to unleash their waterworks. This light-hearted perspective, however, masks serious underlying concerns about the sustainability of water resources in the UK.

The water crisis is worsening; England and Wales are currently experiencing their driest year since 1997, with rainfall plummeting to just 225mm by mid-May—29% below the average. Reports indicate significantly diminished river flows across the nation, especially in northern regions, where several sites recorded their lowest-ever April flows. The Environment Agency has issued medium drought risk warnings, indicating that water usage restrictions, including hosepipe bans, may soon be necessary. Farmers and water companies are already bracing for impact, urging the public to conserve water as reservoir levels dip to concerning lows.

Some water companies, such as Yorkshire Water and Severn Trent, claim that infrastructure improvements will help avert shortages, while others are not so optimistic. Thames Water's CEO warns that while supply will continue, restrictions might be unavoidable if rain does not materialise soon. The ongoing dry spell has intensified concerns regarding the availability of water for agricultural needs, with many farmers resorting to early irrigation practices despite some areas still having decent groundwater reserves.

Adding to the complexity of the situation, Southern Water is exploring extreme measures, including importing water from Norwegian fjords, as the UK’s water infrastructure continues to show signs of strain. With no new reservoirs built in over three decades, and significant water loss due to aging infrastructure, the potential for drought-related crisis looms large, compelling authorities to consider drastic options to safeguard water supplies. These plans may ultimately result in customers bearing the costs through increased bills, adding another layer of tension to the ongoing water debate.

As England moves closer to what could be a difficult summer, the government is convening the National Drought Group to strategise against shortfalls. Reservoir levels, already precariously low, hover at an alarming average of around 84%, down from 90% compared to the same time the previous year. The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management warns that without significant rainfall, conditions reminiscent of past drought events could resurface.

In this precarious landscape, the charm associated with Bank Holidays meets the urgent necessity for sustainable water management. While the light-hearted notion of a guaranteed downpour may capture public imagination, the stark reality is that the UK faces a potentially catastrophic water crisis, necessitating serious conversations about conservation, infrastructure investment, and responsible usage, rather than whimsical forecasts of rain brought forth by a calendar date.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.newsbiscuit.com/post/drought-hit-areas-to-receive-extra-bank-holiday)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.newsbiscuit.com/post/drought-hit-areas-to-receive-extra-bank-holiday), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/8e69c305-8f22-4052-817d-5397f107d8c8)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/news/water-companies-warn-of-potential-hosepipe-bans-soon), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/67f2383b-9bcd-4afa-a842-27bc5580ecaa)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/06/england-faces-drought-summer-reservoir-water-levels-dwindle), [[6]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-05-07/englands-driest-start-to-spring-in-69-years-raises-risk-of-summer-drought)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.newsbiscuit.com/post/drought-hit-areas-to-receive-extra-bank-holiday> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/8e69c305-8f22-4052-817d-5397f107d8c8> - England and Wales are experiencing their driest year since 1997, with only 225mm of rainfall recorded by mid-May 2025—29% below average—making it the seventh-driest year since 1931. The Environment Agency's latest report highlights significantly reduced river flows, particularly in northern regions, where six sites logged their lowest-ever April flows. The agency has issued a medium drought risk warning and anticipates potential water usage restrictions, such as hosepipe bans. Reservoirs remain around 84% full, but levels are notably low in the North East and North West, which have seen their driest start to a year since 1929. Farmers are increasingly concerned, with early irrigation underway in some areas despite good groundwater reserves. Water companies like Yorkshire Water, United Utilities, and Severn Trent are preparing for possible shortages. Thames Water's CEO affirmed that supply would continue but cautioned that usage restrictions may be necessary depending on future rainfall. The report links recent dry conditions to climate change, predicting more frequent summer droughts in the coming decades.
3. <https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/news/water-companies-warn-of-potential-hosepipe-bans-soon> - As the UK faces its driest spring since 1956, several water companies are warning of potential hosepipe bans due to persistently low rainfall and decreasing reservoir levels. Companies such as Northumbrian Water are considering Temporary Use Bans (TUBs), while Welsh Water reports slightly lower water levels but no immediate concerns. Conversely, water providers like Severn Trent, Anglian Water, and Thames Water remain confident that restrictions can be avoided, citing significant infrastructure investments and proactive water management. National water storage is currently at 84%, a decline from 90% in April 2022, particularly affecting northern regions. The Met Office forecasts average rainfall and possibly higher temperatures from May to July. Despite the varied outlooks, all water companies are urging customers to conserve water and avoid waste. Water UK offers advice on efficient water usage which can help mitigate water shortages and reduce household bills. For the most accurate and relevant updates, consumers are encouraged to consult their local water supplier’s website.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/67f2383b-9bcd-4afa-a842-27bc5580ecaa> - Southern Water, which serves 4.7 million customers in the UK, is exploring plans to import water from Norwegian fjords through a private supplier, Extreme Drought Resilience Service, in response to potential supply shortages and drought. This measure is a contingency plan and costs would be covered by customers' bills. The UK's water infrastructure is aging and insufficient, with significant water loss due to leaks and no new reservoirs built in over three decades. The initiative comes as the sector regulator, Ofwat, has agreed to allow Southern Water to raise bills by 44% over the next five years. Other measures by Southern Water include building a new reservoir in collaboration with Portsmouth Water, developing water recycling plants and contributing to the Abingdon reservoir project. Importing water faces challenges such as high transportation costs, processing needs, and environmental checks. However, it could be more economical than desalination if used sparingly. The urgency for such strategies is highlighted by Southern Water's reliance on groundwater, which causes environmental damage and increases drought vulnerability.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/06/england-faces-drought-summer-reservoir-water-levels-dwindle> - England is heading towards a drought this summer unless there is significant rainfall soon, as reservoir water levels dwindle. The government will on Wednesday convene the National Drought Group of water companies, farming groups and other experts to prepare for what is expected to be a dry summer with potential water shortages. Scotland has already sounded the alarm over drought in the coming months, issuing an “early warning” of water scarcity in April. No reservoirs have been built in England for more than 30 years, which leaves the country particularly vulnerable to drought. Reservoir levels are lower than they should be after parts of the country had their driest spring on record, and if the dry weather continues as predicted there may be water shortages leading to hosepipe bans and potentially other forms of rationing. To avert a drought, there would need to be rainfall at levels last seen in 2012, when record-breaking deluges caused floods across the country, according to the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management. A spokesperson for CIWEM said: “Rainfall totals across much of the British Isles have been low since the start of 2025. This has reduced the amount of recharge and refill possible in groundwater and reservoir resources over the 2024-25 winter, and left water resources below the levels companies would like to see at the start of the spring/summer seasons. The data shows that at present 2025 rainfall is similar to levels last seen in drought events of the last 20 years. United Utilities has particularly low reservoir levels. The regional total is at 71% of capacity, and Haweswater reservoir is already depleted to 62.3%. At this time of year, they are usually up to 98% full. When water supplies run low, companies rely on abstraction from local rivers. However, river flows are far below average for the time of year, with almost every river catchment in the UK well below normal. Some areas had the lowest October to March flows since records for those places began in 1958, according to UKCEH. Dr Chris White, a reader in engineering for extremes, and head of the Centre for Water, Environment, Sustainability and Public Health at the University of Strathclyde, said the low river flows and reservoir levels were clear indicators of the problem and warned hosepipe bans were likely.
6. <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-05-07/englands-driest-start-to-spring-in-69-years-raises-risk-of-summer-drought> - England could be facing a summer drought after suffering its driest start to spring in 69 years, with reservoirs low and farmers struggling to grow crops. Water companies are under pressure to cut leaks and help customers save water, as the Environment Agency warns of a “medium” risk of drought this summer. While no hosepipe bans are currently planned, the agency said restrictions could be introduced in the coming months if dry conditions continue. The warning comes ahead of a meeting of the government’s national drought group on Wednesday, involving ministers, officials, water firms and environmental groups. What is 'weather whiplash' and is the sunny spell set to stay? Region's hot, dry spring raises fears among farmers England has had its driest start to spring since 1956, with just half the usual rainfall recorded in April and only a quarter in March. Met Office figures show April was also the sunniest on record for the UK. Reservoir levels in England now average 84% full, down from 90% at the same time in the drought year of 2022.