

London Drought Report 02 – September 2026

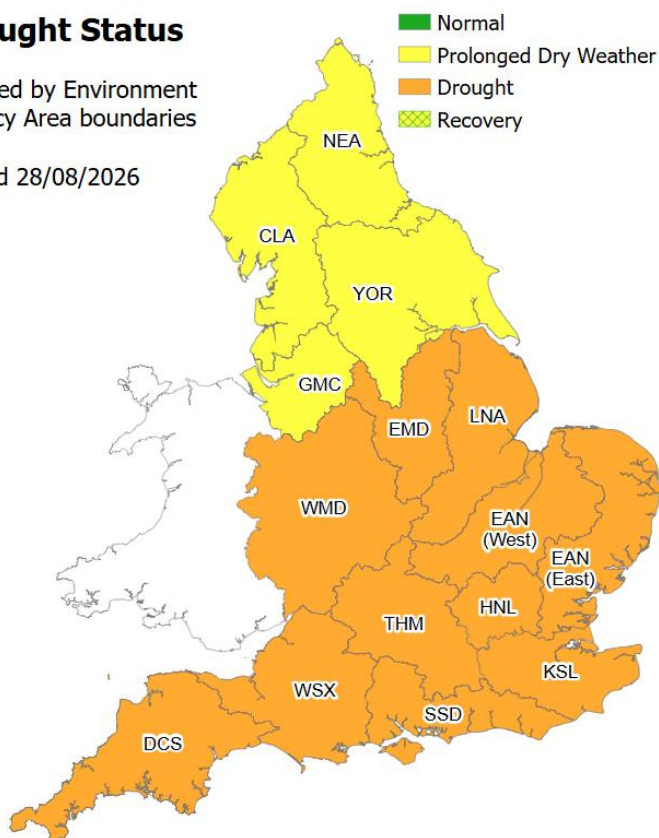
1 Current Situation - Drought

Following a very hot, dry summer and England's driest July for 190 years, most of England (71.3%) is now experiencing a flash drought, which can develop rapidly as a result of very low rainfall and high temperatures. London remains in drought alongside much of southern and central England. August brought some welcome rainfall across London following the exceptionally dry conditions experienced during July. However, rainfall totals remained well below average across the region and were insufficient to significantly reduce the accumulated rainfall deficit. Dry conditions continue to place pressure on water resources and the wider environment across London.

Drought Status

Mapped by Environment
Agency Area boundaries

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Figure 1: Current drought status of Environment Agency areas on 28 August 2026

Rainfall

Rainfall across London catchments ranged from 26% to 48% of the long-term average for the month. The lowest rainfall totals were recorded in central and western parts of London, where rainfall was exceptionally low at around 26% of average. Elsewhere, rainfall was generally between 32% and 48% of the long-term average, remaining notably low to below normal across the capital. While some rainfall was received in August, it was still a significantly drier than average month across the capital, with drought conditions continuing across the region.

River flow, reservoir storage and groundwater

River flows across London remain exceptionally low despite some rainfall in August. Most river flow monitoring sites recorded exceptionally low flows, with many rivers flowing at less than 60% of their

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long-term average for the month and some below 30% of average. Only one site recorded notably low flows. The August rainfall was insufficient to produce a significant recovery in river flow conditions across the capital.

Groundwater levels outside London continued to decline during August, as would normally be expected at this time of year. These groundwater resources gradually recharge and support the groundwater used within London, making them an important source of water. Groundwater is generally more resilient during the early stages of drought. Whilst falling groundwater levels are typical during the summer months, according to latest figures, some groundwater resources are currently below average for the time of year.

The River Thames plays a key role in London's water supply by supporting the Lower Thames Reservoir Group. During August, flows on the River Thames at Kingston were exceptionally low for the time of year, reflecting the continued dry conditions across the wider Thames catchment.

Reservoir storage continued to decrease throughout August. Storage in the Lee Valley reservoir group fell to 70% of capacity – below normal, while the Lower Thames reservoir group dropped to 58% of capacity – notably low. Both reservoir groups are at notably low levels for the time of year.

Environmental incidents

Environmental impacts associated with drought continue to be observed across London. Reports of fish in distress and fish mortality have been received during the month, with low water levels, elevated water temperatures and reduced oxygen levels increasing pressure on aquatic environments. Algal blooms have also been reported across the area, including a significant blue-green algae bloom on the lower non-tidal River Thames between Sunbury and Teddington. While recent cooler weather and rainfall appear to have improved conditions and algae levels are beginning to decrease, the bloom continues to pose risks to human health, animals and the wider environment. Overall, impacts remain localised but continue to highlight the pressure that prolonged dry weather is placing on rivers, lakes and other water-dependent habitats across London.

2 Forward Look

The Met Office three-month outlook indicates that temperatures are most likely to be around average for the time of year, although the likelihood of warmer than average conditions remains higher than that of cooler than average conditions. Rainfall is also most likely to be around average overall, with a slightly greater likelihood of wetter than average conditions during the autumn period. The latter part of the autumn is considered the most likely period to experience wetter and windier weather.

Whilst autumn is now more likely to be wetter than average, sustained and widespread rainfall over an extended period would be required to significantly improve river flows, groundwater resources and reservoir storage across London. Short periods of rainfall should not be considered an indication that drought conditions are over, as recovery of water resources across the wider Thames catchment can take many months. As a result, drought impacts may persist through the autumn and potentially into the winter period if sufficient recharge does not occur.

While drought conditions continue, the risk of flooding remains. Wetter and more unsettled weather later in the autumn could increase the likelihood of localised flooding impacts. The Environment Agency continues to monitor both drought and flood risks and are prepared to respond to both risks concurrently. Drought and flooding are not mutually exclusive hazards, and periods of heavy rainfall can occur while underlying drought conditions persist.

3 Current actions by water companies and the Environment Agency

- The Environment Agency has escalated its internal drought response arrangements and increased monitoring of river flows, groundwater levels and environmental impacts across London, publishing monthly [water situation reports](#).
- The Environment Agency is working with local fisheries, councils and the Canal & River Trust, including advising on reducing the impact of low oxygen levels in water and controlling algae.
- The Environment Agency continues to respond to environmental incidents, including impacts on rivers, ecosystems, and water-dependent habitats.
- The Environment Agency works closely with water companies to review their drought plan options and existing licensing arrangements. This includes regular meetings, exchange of flow & groundwater data and the coordinated management of the River Thames to support the replenishment of London's water supply reservoirs.
- Water companies and the Environment Agency are working together to understand drought risks and impacts and identify mitigation measures to reduce adverse impacts on the environment.
- Water companies continue to implement drought measures in line with their drought plans, including Temporary Use Bans where applicable and ongoing water-efficiency campaigns.

4 Water Company Situation

Droughts affect all water companies differently, depending on the types of sources they utilise to supply water, their region and geography. The current situation for all the water companies which serve London is provided in the table below, links are also provided to the water company drought plans.

Water Company	Drought Level	Reservoir Storage	Groundwater Levels	Actions	Next steps
Thames Water	2	61%	Normal – Below Normal	Temporary Use Ban in place from 23/07/2026; Continued water saving messaging	Ongoing monitoring as per Drought Plan West Berkshire Groundwater scheme implemented from Monday 17th Aug
SES Water	1	Bough Beach: 56%	Below Normal- Notably Low	No plans for restrictions this year	Ongoing monitoring as per Drought Plan
Affinity	BAU		Levels are just above average	Temporary Use Ban in place from 10/07/2026 in our central region	Ongoing monitoring as per Drought Plan
Essex & Suffolk Water	2	Hanningfield: 47%	Below average for	Temporary Use Ban (TUB) in place since 3/8/2026.	Continued monitoring of position and

		(average 72%) Abberton: 52% (average 67%)	the time of year.	Continued water efficiency messaging out to customers. Further priority and additional crews acquired to tackle leakage / bursts.	resource in line with the ESW Statutory Drought Management Plan.
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5 What can the Partnership do?

The [London Drought Response Framework](#) has been activated and is currently operating at Drought level. London partnership activities should be in line with drought response measures as stated in Section 3.3 of the framework. To complement this, the following actions can be taken:

- Familiarise yourself with the [London Drought Response Framework](#), particularly the risks associated with drought.
- Use water wisely – consider all water use and possible opportunities to use less (e.g. fix leaking taps/cisterns) because every small amount saved can contribute to a significant cumulative effect.
- Engage communications teams in sharing consistent water efficiency and drought awareness messages through internal and external channels.
- Maintain awareness of the increased wildfire risk associated with prolonged dry conditions, particularly in areas of open land and vegetation.
- Review business continuity arrangements and consider any potential impacts of prolonged dry weather on critical assets and infrastructure.
- Report any environmental incidents, such as very low river/lake levels or fish in distress, to the Environment Agency's 24-hour hotline on **0800 80 70 60**.
- Report any impacts on your organisation / sector by exception to the London Resilience Unit.

6 Useful Resources

The resources below provide further information and practical guidance to support organisations and communities in understanding, preparing for and responding to drought.

- [What is drought?](#) explains what drought is, how it develops, the impacts it can have on people and the environment, and the actions being taken to manage drought conditions.
- For further hydrological information, please see the [water situation reports](#) for 'Kent and South London' and 'Hertfordshire and North London'.
- For a full explanation of how drought is managed in England, please see: [Drought: how it is managed in England - GOV.UK](#)
- [Let's Save Water](#) provides practical advice and resources to help households, businesses and organisations reduce water use and improve water efficiency.
- Ideas on how to save water can be found at: [Waters Worth Saving UK](#) The website includes simple water-saving tips and guidance for homes, schools and workplaces.
- [Why do we have temporary use \(hosepipe\) bans during a drought?](#) explains why restrictions are introduced, how they help protect water supplies and the environment, and what activities are affected.

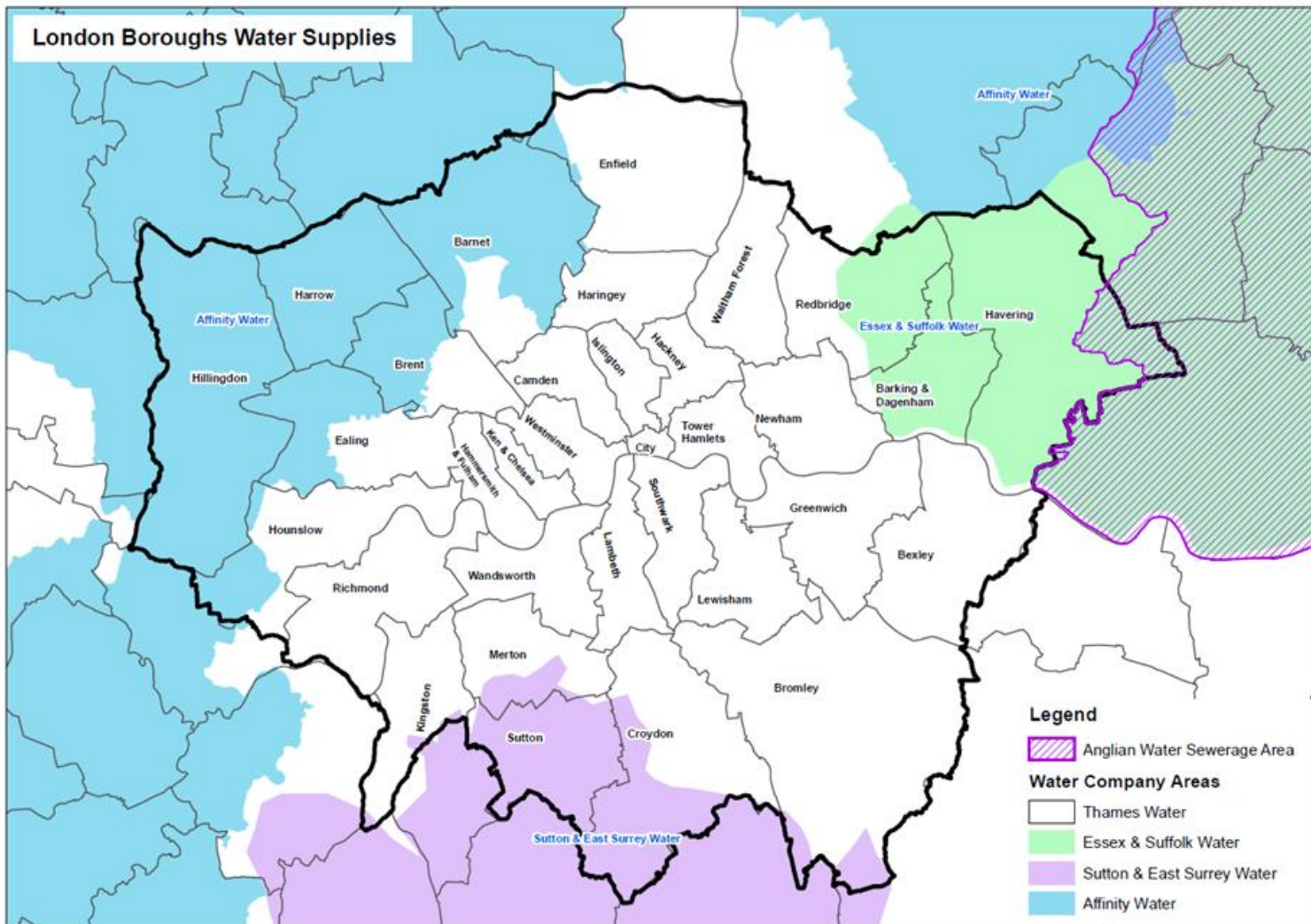
- [Check if you need a licence to abstract water](#) provides guidance on when a licence is required to take water from rivers, streams, lakes, canals, reservoirs or groundwater sources, and explains the exemptions that may apply.
- [Thames Water Temporary Hosepipe Ban](#) provides information on current restrictions, exemptions, frequently asked questions, and practical advice on how customers can reduce water use during drought conditions.

7 Further Information

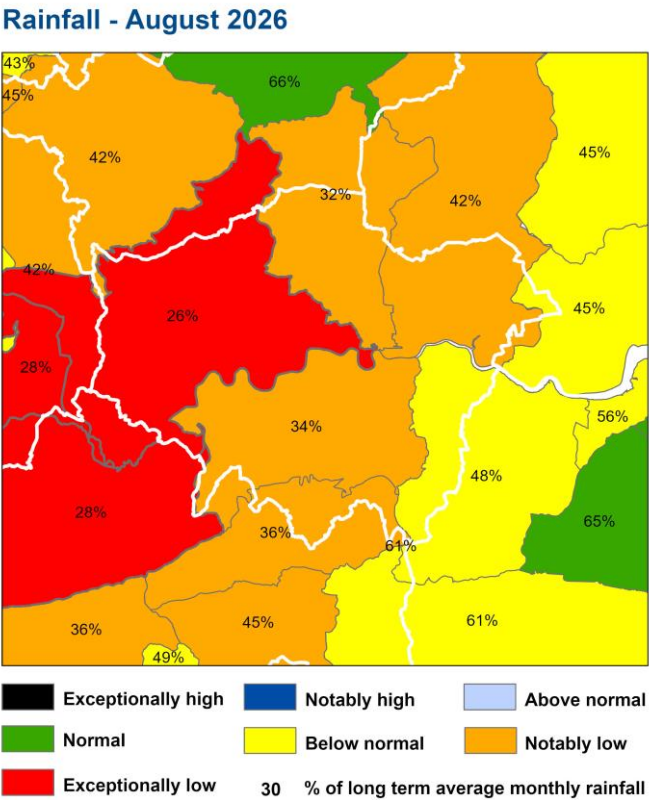
- For queries relating to drought management in London, please contact the London Area Incident Planning team AreaIncidentTeam.London@environment-agency.gov.uk.
- For information relating specifically to your Borough, please contact your local BRF representative.

8 Maps

7.1 Greater London Water Supplies Map



7.2 Rainfall across London during August 2026, shown as a percentage of the long-term average for the month.



7.2 River flow status across London for August 2026.

