

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](#)