

# All of England's South West region now in drought

- Public and businesses in drought affected areas urged to use water wisely as the dry summer impacts the environment.

The Environment Agency has today agreed that all of the South West of England is now in drought following some of the driest conditions in nearly 90 years.

Bristol, Somerset, Dorset, south Gloucestershire and parts of Wiltshire (referred to in the Environment Agency as the Wessex area) have all today moved to drought status. Earlier this month Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were also declared to be in a drought.

The triggers used to confirm today's move to drought status for the area include the hydrological position (including rainfall, river flows, groundwater levels, reservoir levels, and the dryness of soils), as well as the impacts these conditions have on the environment and abstractions. While the area has had some rainfall over the last 2 weeks, this has not been sufficient to compensate for the long dry period in recent months, but by waiting until now to declare a drought, it has given our response team time to consider the effects of the rainfall.

This change in status to drought is a change in categorisation, indicating the impact prolonged dry weather is having primarily on the environment and in addition on water resources. Essential water supplies are safe, but Defra and the Environment Agency are urging water companies to continue with their precautionary planning to protect essential supplies in the event of a dry autumn.

In the Wessex area, the effects of drought are resulting in low river flows impacting the environment in and around rivers. So, we will work with companies and individuals who have abstraction licences allowing them to take water from rivers and groundwater boreholes, and with the public, to try to lower demand and therefore reduce the impact on the environment.

While there is an important role for people to sustainably manage their usage, Government expects water companies to act to reduce leakage and fix leaking pipes as quickly as possible and take wider action alongside government policy.

Chris Paul, the Environment Agency's area drought lead, said:

Despite some heavy rain over the past 2 weeks, it has not been enough to refill our rivers and aquifers.

River levels across our Wessex area are exceptionally low – many showing the lowest flows on record. This places incredible strain on local wildlife and this is why we are moving to drought status.

We are prioritising our local operations to minimise impacts on the environment.

Action being taken across the area includes additional monitoring of the effects of the dry weather on rivers and responding to environmental emergencies, such as rescuing stranded fish, wherever possible. We will also be ensuring people and companies who have water abstraction licences only operate within the terms of their licence and taking legal action against those who fail to comply or against anyone who abstracts water without a licence.

The [Environment Agency's water situation national report for July](#) provides a picture of the rainfall, soil moisture deficit, river flows, groundwater levels and reservoir levels over the last month. The report highlights that it was the driest July across England since 1935, with monthly rainfall totals for the majority of river catchments classed as exceptionally low for the time of year.

There have been 5 consecutive months of below average rainfall across all geographic regions in England and above average temperatures. River flows, groundwater levels and reservoir stocks all decreased during July.

With Wessex now declaring a drought, 11 of the 14 Environment Agency areas in England are now in drought status.

## Notes to editors

The Environment Agency uses 4 stages to describe and manage drought conditions:

- Prolonged dry weather
- Drought
- Severe drought
- Recovering drought

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## [jHub Fellowship Scheme: "It's a completely different area to work in."](#)

You might assume that to work in the jHub, experience in technology is a requirement. After all, a huge amount of what this unique and fascinating team does is centred on the procurement and distribution of state-of-the-art technology to the front line of Defence. However, although helpful, it's not necessarily the be all and end all. Don't believe us? Just ask John, S02 Innovation Scout in jHub X:

The exposure to technology isn't something I had experience within my previous role.

Before working in the jHub, John was an Infantry Commander, a world away from his current role in the jHub. And although it took some time to adjust, he has relished his introduction to technology:

It's anything from the digital aspects to modern warfare soldier systems which is super interesting, and I think really applicable going forward in my career.

Like with those around him, John makes a point of acknowledging the chance to work with those with different backgrounds and expertise as being particularly significant in the appeal of the jHub:

I have the opportunity to work with specialists and people with a variety of different backgrounds whether that's Data scientists, UES Programmers even legal aspects. It's not something I would have been able to do in my previous role.

All these backgrounds are the cogs in the jHub machine and contribute to their overall mission, but John explains:

The ability to make a difference, quickly, especially in the jHub X-Team is fantastic. We have such an operational drive, and we can go identify a problem, go straight to industry to develop a solution and then get it straight into the hands of the users.

And, despite this being clearly satisfying in its own right, it's the being able to see and understand the process in a different light that that excites John:

Seeing this process from a capability procurement side is fascinating and quite rare.

If jHub's status as a unique defence office was still in question, John points out a couple of additional factors to tip the scale heavily in its favour:

It's a completely different area to work in than you would find in other areas of Defence. The style of leadership is one of a kind but so is the breadth and variety of different areas you get to work in.

And where better to finish than with this:

It's a fantastic opportunity and I would definitely recommend it to anyone who is thinking of coming into this space.

You can find more information about working for the jHub and their new Innovation Fellowship by reading the [Innovation Fellowship Launches](#) article.

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## [Work begins on first major broadband upgrade under £5 billion Project Gigabit](#)

- New data shows lightning-fast gigabit broadband now available for 70% of UK homes and businesses
- Prime Minister visits Dorset as first Project Gigabit contract awarded, putting more than 7,000 hard-to-reach properties in the digital fast lane by 2025
- Coverage has soared from seven per cent in 2019, meaning nearly 20m premises connected since the Prime Minister took office

**The Prime Minister has announced a lightning-fast broadband boost for homes and businesses in rural Dorset, as new data shows gigabit broadband now available for 70% of UK homes and businesses.**

It comes as work kicks off on the first major contract under the government's £5 billion Project Gigabit – the biggest broadband roll out in British history.

New data to be published by independent website [ThinkBroadband](#), shows 7 in 10 UK properties can access the fastest and most reliable internet connections needed for families and businesses to take full advantage of revolutionary new advances in technology in the coming decades.

This represents a meteoric rise since Prime Minister Boris Johnson took office in 2019 when gigabit coverage stood at just 7%, demonstrating levelling up in action with a total of nearly 20 million premises connected since then and turbocharged progress by industry towards the government's target of 85% coverage by 2025.

In the last five months alone, one million premises have been connected to gigabit networks, a tremendous achievement given the first million premises took more than eight years to connect. The rate at which gigabit-capable internet connections are installed has increased threefold, with companies like Wessex Internet connecting premises at a rate of one every seven

seconds.

The Prime Minister is in North Dorset today to see plans and preparations for how more than 7,000 hard-to-reach premises struggling with slow speeds will be connected under a £6 million contract awarded by the government to Wessex Internet. The first home will be connected by the end of the year, with an expected completion date for all by 2025. The project will cover the rural outskirts of towns, villages and hamlets across the region from Sherborne to Verwood and Shaftesbury to Blandford Forum.

The signing marks the start of a flurry of Project Gigabit delivery contracts to be awarded over the coming months. As part of the programme, the government has already launched procurements totalling over £690 million aiming to cover up to 498,000 premises, with work due to begin to connect hard-to-reach areas in Cornwall, Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, and several areas across north east England before the end of the year.

Project Gigabit is the government's record £5 billion scheme to bring the fastest, most reliable broadband to areas considered too difficult or expensive to connect under the broadband industry's commercial plans. Government funding will complement industry investment to ensure that these harder to reach areas benefit from the same gigabit broadband as the rest of the country, enabling businesses to grow by using digital technology to boost their productivity and giving people living in more remote areas better access to good jobs.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

"From Sherbourne to Stirling, lightning-fast broadband is levelling up towns and villages across the country.

"In just three years we have increased the coverage of gigabit broadband from seven per cent of households to 70%, and I am proud that today more than 20 million households, businesses and organisations are able to tap into rapid and reliable internet, unleashing their potential, creating opportunities and driving growth across the country."

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

"Today we enter an exciting new phase of our £5 billion Project Gigabit digital connectivity programme by signing our first major contract in Dorset. Thousands of hard-to-reach homes and businesses in the region will get access to faster connections and join the 20 million properties we've helped connect over the last three years.

"The benefits of better broadband connectivity cannot be underestimated and this work will mean those living in rural areas can enjoy 21st century speeds in the home and workplace, making their lives easier and more productive"

Gigabit broadband can provide speeds of more than 1,000 megabits per second, more than thirty times faster than copper-based superfast broadband, which is currently available to 97 per cent of UK premises. While superfast is fast enough for most people's needs today, gigabit-capable connections will

provide the speeds and reliability Britain needs for decades into the future.

Entire families will be able stream movies, TV and video games in high quality 4K and 8K definition onto multiple devices at the same time with no slowdowns in speed. It will underpin revolutionary new technologies such as Virtual and Augmented Reality and more internet-connected appliances in the home and the workplace to make our lives easier and more productive.

It will enable anyone to start-up and run a business of any size from even the most remote areas of the UK.

More than 740,000 premises have been connected through government funding so far, mainly through extending the government's Superfast programme to provide gigabit-capable connections, the [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#) and initiatives to put public services in the digital fast lane by connecting hospitals, GP surgeries, libraries and other public buildings.

Today's announcement for Dorset is the first large-scale scheme under Project Gigabit to deliver gigabit connections to a regional area en-masse. Millions of rural homes and businesses across the UK are in line for an upgrade thanks to dozens of these multi-million pound contracts, making Project Gigabit one of the largest national infrastructure projects of recent times.

The announcement follows the confirmation last [month](#) that hundreds of thousands of pupils living in the countryside will enjoy lessons powered by better digital connections as the government invests to level up internet access for up to 3,000 rural primary schools, with an £82 million investment to help an estimated half a million primary school children.

Now the contract in Dorset has been awarded, the government will work with Wessex Internet and the local authority to begin planning the construction of the gigabit-capable network, with spades set to enter the ground in the coming weeks.

Today's news follows the announcement of plans to connect more than 2,600 hard-to-reach premises in Scotland to gigabit speeds as part of a £36 million investment with the Scottish Government. The expansion of the R100 network includes a £16 million boost from Project Gigabit.

The latest Project Gigabit quarterly update from Building Digital UK (BDUK), an Executive Agency of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, details the progress being made to roll out gigabit broadband across the UK and will be published later this week.

Hector Gibson Fleming, CEO of Wessex Internet, said:

"We're thrilled to have been awarded the first contract under the government's £5 billion Project Gigabit programme.

"As a business based in North Dorset, our priority has always been to bring fast, reliable broadband to rural communities overlooked by other providers. We believe passionately that rural areas must have access to gigabit-capable connectivity and the exciting benefits it brings for homes, businesses and

communities.

“Over the last four years, we have connected thousands of homes and businesses across the South West to full fibre broadband and are excited to accelerate our roll out further with this new contract.”

Cllr Jill Haynes, Dorset Council’s portfolio holder for Corporate Development and Transformation, said:

“This significant government investment in Dorset is great news for communities and businesses that would otherwise have been left behind as the country moves to gigabit-capable broadband.

“Good broadband connection has never been more important as we rebuild the economy after the pandemic.

“We look forward to working with Wessex Internet and the government on this exciting development in technology, which will greatly benefit some of the most rural parts of our county.”

Andrew Ferguson, Editor of thinkbroadband, said:

“With seven out of 10 premises now able to order a gigabit option and over half of those are actually future proof full fibre shows that the UK broadband market is generally delivering on its rollout targets.

“Of course at a time when many people are looking for savings on their household bills buying a gigabit service is going to seem a luxury but one of the advantages of full fibre is you can enjoy the improved reliability even when buying the entry level services and even an entry level Fibre to the Premise (FTTP) product will be faster than an old partial fibre service where speeds are impacted by distance to the cabinet.”

**ENDS**

Notes to editors

- The Project Gigabit Summer Update includes details of the positive impact of the government’s broadband voucher scheme on businesses and communities.
- The current £210 million government [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#) (GBVS) provides a grant of up to £1,500 for residents and up to £3,500 for businesses towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband networks in communities. It enables households and businesses to club together to increase the total subsidy of a project to cover most or all of the costs for installation to eligible areas. To date, more than 110,000 premises are now able to access a gigabit-capable broadband connection thanks to this scheme.

- The Summer Update also highlights the results of a recent BDUK survey of over 1,700 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that had received gigabit-capable broadband through the government's broadband voucher schemes between 2017 and 2021. More than 80% of the SMEs surveyed reported an increase in productivity as a result of their upgraded connection, with the majority using improved connectivity to access digital tools such as cloud storage, video conferencing, high volume file data transfer and accounting services.
- Around 40% of businesses also reported that they were able to reduce business travel and gain new customers as a result of the connection, and nearly half are adopting more flexible working and business practices.
- Critically, 70% of businesses say the upgrade helped them to adapt and continue to do business during the pandemic.

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## [COP26 President to attend the G20 Climate and Environment Ministerial in Indonesia](#)

Press release

Alok Sharma will attend the G20 Environment Ministerial in Bali, Indonesia



- The COP26 President will lead the UK delegation at the G20 Climate and Environment Ministerial in Bali
- Mr Sharma will continue to urge G20 countries to honour their commitments and revisit their 2030 emission reduction targets this year
- He will also meet key Indonesian ministers as the UK Presidency continues to progress implementation of the Glasgow Climate Pact



COP26 President Alok Sharma will travel to Bali from 30 August-1 September to lead the UK delegation attending the G20. The visit is a critical opportunity to engage with G20 Climate Ministers to maintain momentum and drive action on climate, environment and biodiversity ahead of COP27.

He will use the climate sessions to lobby G20 countries to move faster to limit global temperature increase to below 1.5 degrees. The COP26 President will push for climate action through emission reductions this decade, noting that accelerating energy transitions and building net zero green sectors is crucial to long-term economic security and sustainable development.

Mr Sharma will continue to reiterate that current global crises relating to Vladimir Putin's illegal, unprovoked and barbaric invasion of Ukraine and rises in the cost of living should increase G20 countries' determination to accelerate the shift to renewables and deliver on the Glasgow Climate Pact.

### **Alok Sharma, COP26 President said:**

The current energy crisis has demonstrated the vulnerability of countries relying on fossil fuels controlled by hostile actors.

If Countries don't want the risk of being held to ransom they should do all they can to achieve domestic energy security as fast as possible.

Climate security has become synonymous with energy security and the chronic threat of climate change is not going away.

He added: "Some Countries have already come forward with great ambition but the science clearly shows our window to act is closing rapidly. Now is the time for the G20 to step up and deliver on the commitments made in the Glasgow Climate Pact."

The COP President will also meet with Indonesian Ministers to welcome the country's ongoing work to enhance its climate ambitions, encourage them to submit a 1.5C aligned Nationally Determined Contribution as soon as possible, and to place climate action and energy transition as a central aspect of their G20 Presidency.

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[\*\*Philippine 2050 Pathway Calculator –\*\*](#)

# Expression of Interest

The UK government is supporting the Philippine government through the Department of Energy (DOE) to develop its own version of the 2050 Pathway Calculator (2050 Calculator) with Mott MacDonald as the delivery partner.

The 2050 Calculator will be used as a tool to engage experts, policy makers, senior officials, politicians, and the public on how the Philippine energy sector's GHG emissions could be reduced over time and on the benefits, costs, and trade-offs of different scenarios/possible pathways. It will bring real scientific evidence into the debate around energy issues and, in turn, will inform decision-making.

With its own version of this transparent, interactive tool of energy and emissions model, the DOE will improve its long-term energy strategies and ultimately, the assessment of mitigation actions and targets through increased engagement of senior officials, politicians, experts, academics, and the general public in determining different feasible and credible low-carbon and net zero pathways.

The local consultants fulfilling the following requirements may apply:

- At least 15 years' experience in climate change-related work; with specific expertise in energy and climate mitigation work in the Philippines
- In-depth technical work on NDC development process and leading the delivery of database and modelling outputs
- Proven experience in leading the project coordination involving international organizations, cross national government agencies and wider range of stakeholders

Applicants who fulfil the required qualifications can send email to the Delegated Procurement Officer [Wolansa.Deneke@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Wolansa.Deneke@fcdo.gov.uk) copying [Rexor.Amancio@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Rexor.Amancio@fcdo.gov.uk), [Jacqueline.MielSoliguin@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Jacqueline.MielSoliguin@fcdo.gov.uk), and [Josephine.Orense@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Josephine.Orense@fcdo.gov.uk) to express interest from 29 August – 2 September.

Shortlisted candidates will be able to access the full "Invitation to tender" pack which includes, 9 A. ITT Covering Letter, 9 B. ITT Instruction, 9 C. Terms of Reference and 9 D. ITT Volume 3 Commercial Proforma.

The British Embassy in Manila will follow a two-stage contracting process for this particular exercise. That is short-listing the Expressions of Interest based on the above criteria and then assessment of Technical and Commercial bids based on the pre-established Technical, Value for Money and Commercial assessment criteria, which will be obtained from the full ITT pack.

Separate Technical and Commercial bids should be sent electronically to [Wolansa.Deneke@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Wolansa.Deneke@fcdo.gov.uk) copying [Rexor.Amancio@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Rexor.Amancio@fcdo.gov.uk), [Jacqueline.MielSoliguin@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Jacqueline.MielSoliguin@fcdo.gov.uk), and [Josephine.Orense@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:Josephine.Orense@fcdo.gov.uk).

British Embassy Manila reserves the right not to award any contract.

Deadline for submission of bids will be on 14 September 2022. Late applications will not be considered.