

Update on Drought Conditions and Water Resource Pressures in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire

Many of you will already have received cessation notices where these conditions form part of your abstraction licence. Given the continued pressures on water resources across Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire, we wanted to provide an update on the current situation and outline the potential need for further action later in the season.

On 10 August 2026, the Environment Agency formally declared drought status across the area due to persistently low water levels in surface water catchments and lack of any significant rainfall in the medium-term forecast. Water resources have been under increasing pressure following an unprecedented period of dry weather, with the area having been in Prolonged Dry Weather Status since 20 July.

As we move through the summer period, we are encouraging everyone to be aware of the impacts that drought can have on the environment, agriculture, businesses, and local communities.

The primary mechanism for managing abstraction during periods of low water availability remains the conditions attached to individual abstraction licences, and we urge all abstractors to be familiar with their licence conditions and regularly check the [Hydrology Data Explorer](#) to compare current flows and levels against specified thresholds at the appropriate monitoring station. This will allow licence holders to prepare and plan for the likelihood of receiving a notice to stop or reduce abstraction. However, should the situation deteriorate further, and if abstraction-related impacts cannot be adequately managed through existing licence controls, there may be a need to consider wider restrictions through a formal cessation order under the powers available to us under Section 57 of the Water Resources Act 1991. Such measures will only ever be considered as a last resort.

For abstractors whose licences do not contain cessation conditions, we are asking that voluntary reductions in abstraction are considered wherever possible. Early voluntary action can help reduce pressures on rivers and groundwater supplies and may lessen the need for more formal restrictions later in the season. To support a fair

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and proportionate approach to any future restrictions, we are also asking abstractors to share details of their anticipated irrigation schedules and water requirements for the remainder of the growing season, based on current cropping plans. This information can be provided to LNcorrespondence@environment-agency.gov.uk

Understanding likely demand across affected catchments will help the Environment Agency assess pressures on available resources and ensure that any future measures are applied as fairly and consistently as possible. Where such information is unavailable, it may be necessary to introduce stricter abstraction controls or consider implementing Section 57 restrictions earlier than would otherwise be required.

We recognise the significant challenges that drought conditions can pose for the agricultural sector and will continue to engage closely with the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and other stakeholder groups to ensure that abstractors are kept updated on the situation as much as possible. We will continue to monitor conditions closely and will provide further updates should the situation change. We appreciate the cooperation and support of abstractors, land managers, businesses, and communities as we work together to protect water resources and the environment during this period of increased pressure.

If you have any non-urgent questions, please contact me using this email address. LNcorrespondence@environment-agency.gov.uk

If you would prefer a call back, please include a contact number, and we will arrange for the most appropriate member of our team to get in touch.

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