



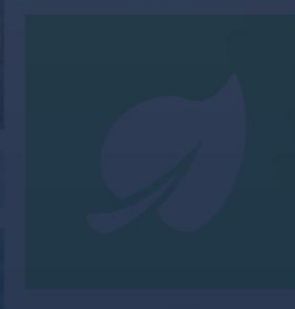
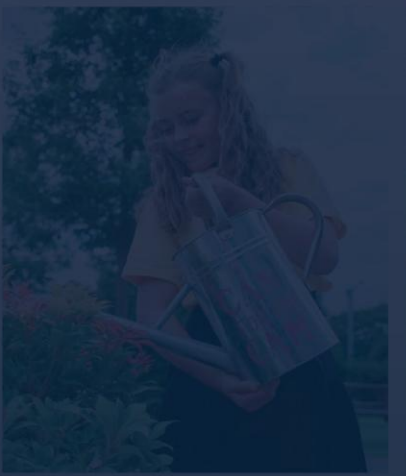
Cambridge Water



South Staffs Water



To help create a world where essential services and infrastructure deliver for customers, clients and our planet



Cambridge Water 2025 Drought Review

March 2026

South Staffordshire Water PLC

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Overview

The spring of 2025 was the driest on record, and the summer was the hottest on record (Met Office), with several heatwaves declared. On 1st of July 2025 the Environment Agency declared a Prolonged Dry Weather status, moving Cambridge Water (CWC) into Level 1 of the drought plan. This period of hot weather and high demand, which was higher than the long-term average for the past five years, peaking at 109.9 MI/d on the 30th June, resulted in a more challenging year than average for our water resources situation across the CWC supply area.

Due to the sources of raw water supply in Cambridge being groundwater they are resilient to increasing temperatures (much more so than surface water, seen in the South Staffs Region). This meant that the impacts of prolonged dry weather in 2025 were slower to show themselves in the groundwater levels. However, as winter rainfall in 2024-2025 was 65% of the LTA, and total rainfall for the year was 62%, borehole levels declined more than usual. There was a slow cumulative effect on groundwater levels, causing levels to be lower than average. Our drought triggers based on groundwater levels and river flows meant that our drought plan status passed the environmental stress trigger from May.

Figures 1 and 2 below show the impact of the dry and warm year on SMD and both average and peak demands compared to more normal years, and figure 3 compares the rainfall

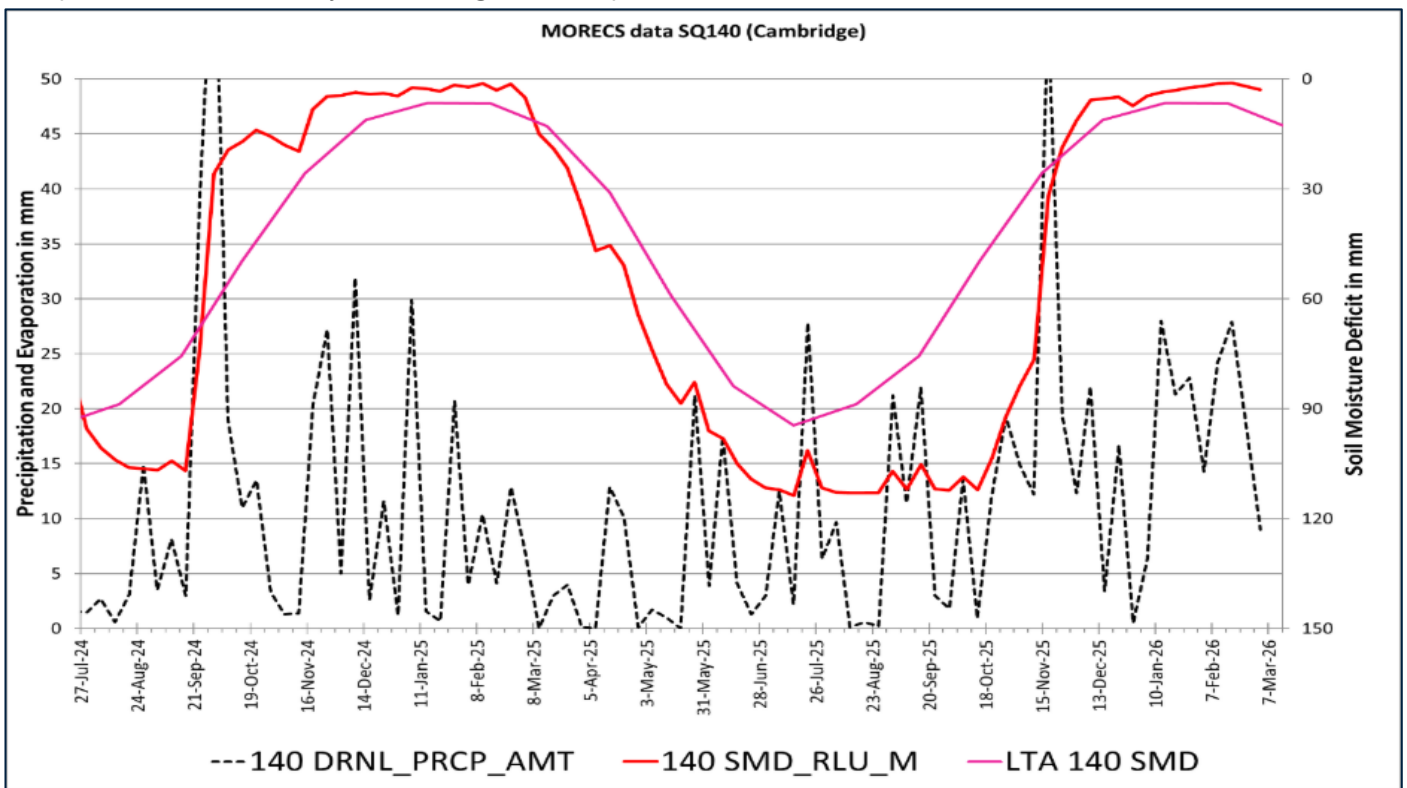


Figure 1. Soil Moisture Deficit (SMD) VS LTA SMD, and Effective Precipitation

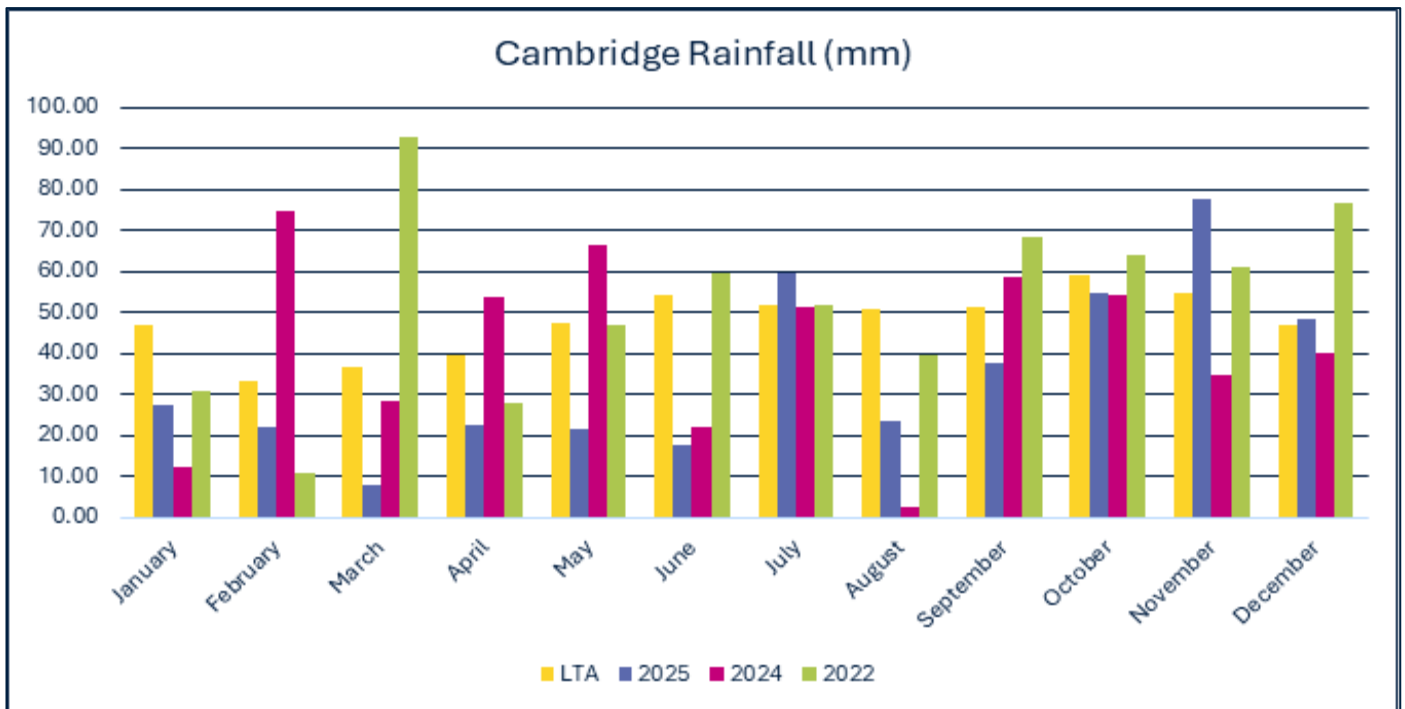


Figure 2. 2022-2025 Demand compared to a 5 year average in the Cambridge Region 2025

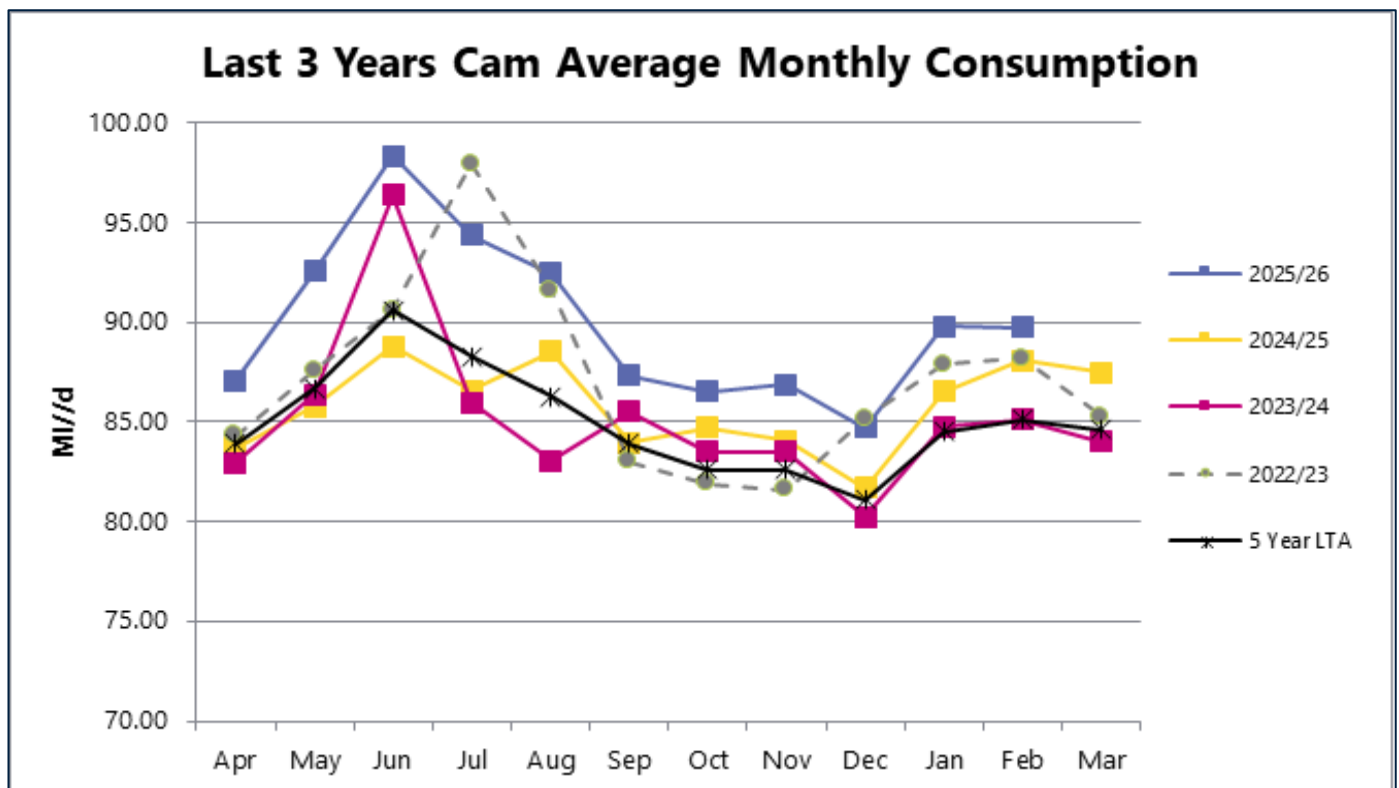


Figure 3. Long Term Average Rainfall in Cambridge compared to rainfall in 2025, and other selected years (mm).

Response

Fortnightly formalised Cambridge Drought Management meetings began on the 7th of July, swiftly responding to the drop into Level 1 (in addition to Duty Manager meetings, detailed below). These meetings were used to discuss the current drought plan action level, and any actions which needed to be taken in response. During these meetings there were internal updates on the outage status of our sites and return to service plans. There was a temporary halt put on any planned outages.

As well as these fortnightly drought management meetings the regular twice weekly Duty Manager meetings discussed the current demand/supply risk analysed against a Red/Amber/Green status (RAG), as per the Summer Action planning status levels. If the risk status was Red then these meetings increased in frequency to at least daily, or twice daily if required. These were enacted to keep all operational and planning areas of the business updated (Production, development services, capital works, communications and water resources) on the actions being taken to reduce risk. This is business as usual practice during periods of high demand.

In February following investment in asset modifications we brought a large site back into service, this provided an additional 7.5ML/d reducing pressure on other sources and the supply/demand balance. As well as this large site we brought back in a smaller site providing 2ML/d, which helped to increase our daily output.

Our updated draft drought plan due to be published in 2026 for consultation will consider any other options to add resilience to our supply network. We continue to plan each year for both summer and winter high demand (due to freeze thaw events) through our summer and winter action plans, regardless of drought status. When appropriate, this can also trigger the forming of a dedicated incident team with specialist members to respond to extreme weather events.

Communication

After an internal review of how the company managed the drought of 2025, several communications areas were highlighted.

Communication with customers

The timeliness of the communication with our customers has been suggested by the Environment Agency as an area for improvement. The updates sent to customers could have been sent out earlier in the year to highlight water saving strategies, and therefore customers would have been more prepared in summer when the messaging ramped up in urgency.

During our review of the drought of 2022 we highlighted the need for convenient 'off the shelf' water saving and drought information packages that could be rolled out to customers across our region. The communications strategy we currently have worked well, however comms were being developed as required rather than being prewritten and ready to go. The updated comms plan in the next Drought Plan will provide further detail on this.

Our email communication to customers can be either a service email, which can go to all customers we have email addresses for, or a marketing email which customers can opt out for. During 2025 there was a delay whilst we sought advice to confirm whether the emails outlining our current position, including water saving strategies and

tips on efficiency were deemed as marketing. This limited us earlier in the year as the dry weather extended to only contacting those customers who had agreed to marketing information. We have now agreed that current water resources situation falls under service update and can be sent to all customers.

During the later emails, we included a link for customers to feedback their thoughts on our engagement. We received a range of responses but the majority of customers who responded found the contents of emails either excellent or good, see figure 4 below.

Monitoring the open rate of our email engagement, this ranged between 51-58%, meaning 30.5-50k customers opened the emails. The email titled "Our water resources are under pressure 🌧️" received the most opens, which indicates an urgent tone invites engagement. During the later emails, we included a link for customers to feedback their thoughts on our engagement. We received a range of responses but many customers who responded found the contents of emails either excellent or good, see figure 4 below.

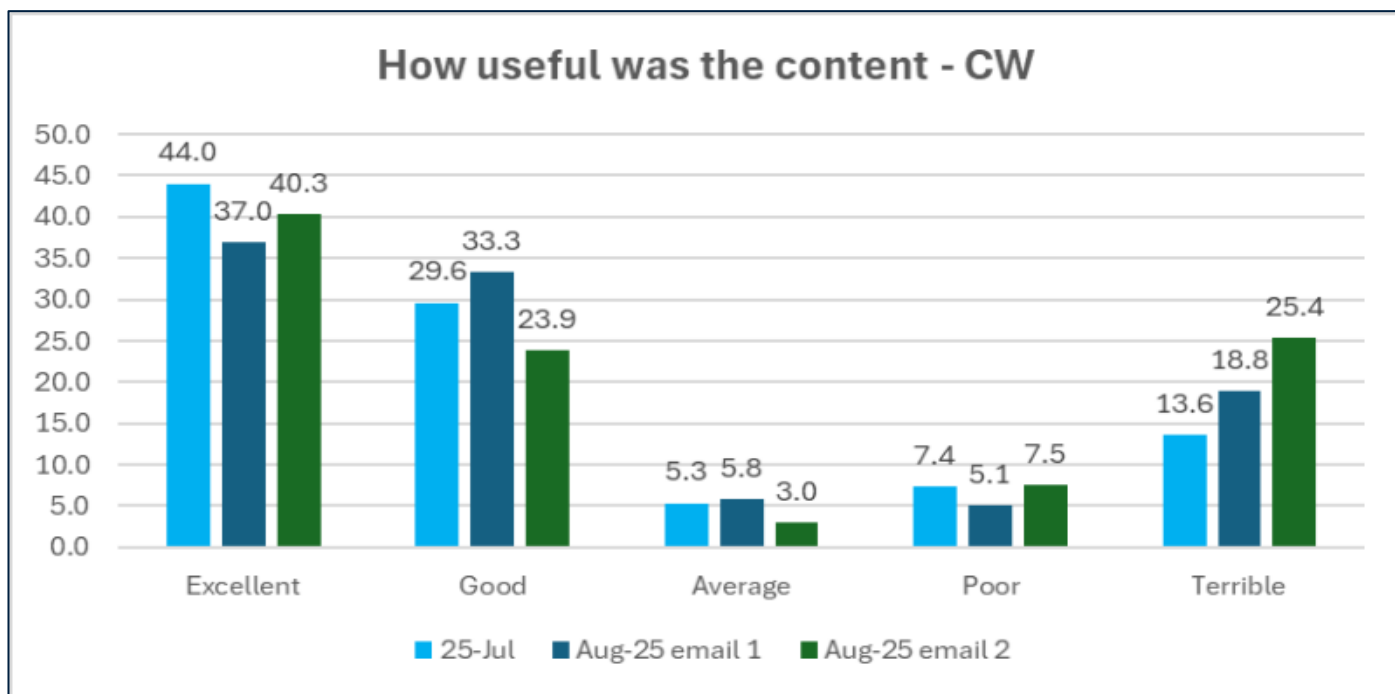


Figure 4. Feedback on content of water efficiency emails

We have taken some key takeaways from the feedback following our email campaigns, these include:

- Ensure we have up to date FAQ with responses to the main challenges being raised by customers.
- Enhance our communication about work with NHH customers to encourage their reduced demand.
- Tailor communication with customers on the PSR register.
- Provide more visuals and videos to engage those that prefer that communication style.

We continue looking at how to connect to more customers through different media forms, other than email. This year we sponsored the weather segment on Heart Radio for eight weeks, commencing on the 14th of July, which reached more than a million people. We also sponsored our posts on Facebook and Instagram to target areas. Posts were in a range of styles such as one-off photos and key messages, digital stories and video messages from

staff. We did a series of three boosted posts that followed the journey of “what we are doing” about leaks, “how customers can use water wisely” and “how we monitor our supplies”. On average, these three posts reached 106,523.

In November we ran a water butt competition through Facebook and promoted via emails to raises awareness of water usage, this was hugely successful with almost 400 entrants.

As using emails and text messages are both relatively easy and effective means of directly contacting customers, our customer and communication team are seeking to increase and maximise the coverage of this information over the customer base. To increase our coverage, we need to encourage more customers to set up online accounts, this is a question our call agents ask all contacts, as well as it being something we will be promote during annual billing.

Communication with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders

Environment Agency

We regularly engage with the Environment Agency throughout the year, and we increased this during the drought period in 2025. We participated in meetings to discuss drought at all levels with varying frequency. The most regular meeting was a weekly meeting with local EA team members, followed by a weekly summary email to a wider distribution list. Additionally, there were monthly meetings with the EA regional water resources leads, bi-monthly EA/CWC director level meetings and CEO/EA meetings. We also attended the EA's National Drought Group meetings, which were held monthly, and a separate CEO level NDG meeting.

A proposal would be to look at a cascade system, where there are fewer meetings with fewer attendees, but there is an easy to circulate information and notes pack. This was raised after the drought of 2022, and although it seems steps were taken reduce information being repeated (including broadening the circulation of the Water Resources weekly update email). This would require support from the Environment Agency and agreement at all levels, but there are still some improvements here which could be made to improve the relationship between the Environment Agency and Cambridge Water.

Other stakeholders

Following on from the recommendations raised in the National Drought Group after the 2022 drought we include regular communications with NAVs, Anglian Water and Affinity Water to ensure that our messaging was aligned where practicable. Water Resources East also formed a drought group that met monthly to collectively inform other wider stakeholder groups, such as irrigators and agriculture.

As well as regular meetings with our regulators, we also attended a monthly retailer's group to outline our current situation.

Conclusion

In summary, Cambridge Water's response to the 2025 drought was appropriate for the situation, however in a future drought there are some areas that could be improved on. We have identified some internal improvements regarding timing of communications with customers. The integral relationship with the Environment Agency can be improved as well, making process more efficient, although this will take work on both sides to implement.

Overall, communication both with internal teams and external stakeholders were good. Our water resources management ensured that our SDB was not at risk even with unprecedented peak demands and aal of our environmental support was in place to protect the environment from drought impacts.

These are the key actions we have identified that we need to continue in future droughts:

- Continue the close working of different departments, and clear communication between them.
- Convene the executive level team and run as incident mode at appropriate point in drought.
- Engage with customers through a range of methods to ensure broad reach.
- Continue to utilise the weekly EA update email to inform across the teams.
- Continue to be transparent on position and actions with stakeholders through meetings and forums.

After this review of the summer of 2025, we have created the following recommendations that will improve our response to a drought when it next occurs:

- Make customers aware off water saving strategies earlier in the year, so that they are not surprised when messaging ramps up during warmer months.
- Consider preparing of 'off the shelf' water efficiency tips to roll out to customers if appropriate.
- Increase the proportion of customers providing email addresses to enable a greater reach for future drought communications.
- Continue to work with the Environment Agency on how we can most efficiently communicate with them, and avoid meetings being repeated.
- Focus on ensuring we have maximum capacity available at start of spring/summer.



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