

Keeping the taps running.

In March 2020 the Environment Agency published something called a National Framework that describes the means by which it intends to make sure that our water needs are met in the future.

We have an increasing population and there are additional demands on water resources from agriculture and industry. The combined effects of increasing water needs and climate changes that bring droughts, are raising the risks of water shortages. Added to that, there are more frequent periods of excessive rainfall leading to flooding. Whatever your views may be on the state of the domestic water industry since privatisation, the priority has to be investment to avoid future difficulties.

Any plan for preserving resources has to include measures to reduce wastage and demand, whilst improving the storage. Our local water suppliers at South West Water have developed their own plans for the period between 2025 and 2030. In February 2023, South West Water merged with Bristol Water, with all assets and responsibilities transferring to South West Water.

They are investing in new treatment works, reservoirs and want to tackle obsolete lead pipe issues and ensure clean and reliable water supplies for all of its customers.

- Upgrading one third of water treatment works in Devon and Cornwall
- Reducing leakages on the networks to less than 10% overall and 4% in customer properties
- Connect all of the strategic reservoirs in a new water grid
- Invest in new large reservoirs, beginning with the Cheddar 2 project.

One of the projects that have been talked about for a considerable period of time is the construction of a second reservoir at nearby Cheddar. Another, is the creation of a new reservoir in the Mendip Hills, using the Torr Quarry.



The existing Cheddar reservoir in Somerset was constructed by Sir Robert McAlpine in the 1930s for Bristol Water. One of the biggest issues is the length of time it takes to get a reservoir scheme going.

Planning submissions for the Cheddar Two reservoir project was made in November 2022 some six years after the plans were scrapped. The Cheddar 2 reservoir development will include treatment works and a connection to Bickham Moor where there will be a new water treatment works to supply the area south of

Warminster in Dorset from a new reservoir at Chalbury.

Bristol Water previously planned for Cheddar 2 to have a capacity of 6 Million cubic metres (Mm3), roughly similar in size to the existing Cheddar reservoir and it is planned to be in operational use in 2032-33. South West Water anticipates that its overall plan will drive investment into the local economy, creating around 2,000 new jobs.

The Mendip Quarries scheme involves repurposing the quarry after quarrying operations have been completed, and using the site to provide raw water storage, augmented by water abstracted from

the River Avon. Mineral extraction is expected to be completed in 2040, and the studies have shown that it has a large potential storage volume and beneficial geological setting.

When completed, the Torr Reservoir would fill naturally with groundwater; however the rate of recharge would be too slow to ensure the reservoir could be used as a water resource for public water supply. It is therefore proposed to augment the refilling of the reservoir with water abstracted from the River Avon, downstream of Bath.

These projects are becoming linked on a wider scale. For some time there have been concerns about the viability of some of our historic river systems, especially those arising in areas where ground water reserves are critically low. April 2025 was another dry month for much of England, with just 51% of long term average (LTA) rainfall being received for the country as a whole. The Upper Dorset Stour Chalk river in south-west England is currently classed as below normal for the time of year. Part of the Torr reservoir scheme will be to pipe water to the head of the Stour at critical times to maintain its flow.



The map shows how the various schemes may act together to help with preservation of water supplies around the region. Progress with the projects is overseen by the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development. (RAPID) All of these plans have to include measures to prevent the transfer of invasive non-natural species of plants and animals to other areas.

Peter Smith June 2025

[Business plan 2025-30 | South West Water](#)

[South West Water restores plans for Cheddar 2 reservoir in Bristol | New Civil Engineer](#)

[Water situation: April 2025 summary - GOV.UK](#)

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