Severe drought in East Devon
Briefing for town and parish councils | October 2026

Current situation

The Environment Agency has declared a severe drought across parts of Devon and Cornwell, including East Devon. Exceptionally dry weather and the hottest summer on record have placed significant pressure on water resources, with some reservoirs at critically low levels. Recent rainfall has helped, but has not been enough to secure a sustained recovery.

As of 26/10/26, Wimbleball Reservoir was reported to be at 14% capacity. It remains uncertain how quickly water resources will recover or whether further restrictions will be needed. Recent rainfall is very welcome but the EA have stated we need at least 120% of our usual rainfall to replenish supplies.

Emergency planners are using a reasonable worst case scenario to support preparedness This is a planning assumption, not a forecast.

What South West Water is doing

South West Water says its priority is to maintain safe supplies to homes, hospitals, schools and businesses while reducing demand. Measures outlined include:

A hosepipe ban is in place.

Transferring around three million litres of water a day from areas under less pressure to those most affected.

Recruiting around 40 additional leakage technicians and repairing an average of 440 leaks each week.

Supporting more than 250 household leak repairs and carrying out almost 800 household water-efficiency audits.

Working with 85 high-volume business users to reduce consumption.

Exploring operational changes, water transfers, and treatment capacity improvements, subject to regulatory approval.

South West Water has also applied for a Non-Essential Use Ban, which would extend restrictions to certain commercial activities. Government approval had not been granted at the time of writing.

Key message

East Devon is experiencing severe drought conditions. Please use water carefully and follow the latest advice and restrictions from South West Water. There is no major incident declaration, but agencies are preparing prudently in case the situation deteriorates.

Official information can be found as follows

South West Water: severe drought

South West Water: saving water

South West Water: Non-Essential Use Ban information

If anyone wishes more information on this announcement, or cannot access links above please do not hesitate to contact me as below

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