

Drought hydrology: 50 years since 1976

Wednesday 17 June 2026, 10:00 - 17:00 BST

Institution of Civil Engineers, One Great George Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 3AA. United Kingdom

Agenda

Aim of the day:	
Sessions will address climate drivers, planning, and public engagement, before turning to future drought risks and emerging challenges. Through discussion and reflection, the conference aims to identify priorities, strengthen cross-sector collaboration, and inform strategies for securing sustainable water resources.	
Arrivals from 9:30	
10:00	Welcome
10:00-10:05	Introduction – Dr Robert Bradburne, Chief Scientist, Environment Agency
10:05-10:25	Keynote Address: Philip Duffy, CEO, Environment Agency
10:25	Session 1 – 1976 in focus
10:25-10:35	Dr Glenn Watts UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), 1976 – the great drought?
10:35-10:45	Dr Anna Murgatroyd, Newcastle University – 1976 to 2026: what’s changed?
Break 10:45 to 11:10	
11:10	Session 2 – Water Resource management
11:10-11:30	Helen Wakeham, Environment Agency – The water supply challenge
11:30-11:50	Dr Geoff Darch, Anglian Water Services – Water resources planning with 50 years of climate change
11:50-12:10	Jamie Hannaford, UKCEH – Science to support drought preparedness: from next season to next century
12:10-12:20	Questions
12:20-12:50	‘In conversation’ with Professor Dame Angela McLean, Government Chief Scientific Adviser
Lunch 12:50 to 14:00	
14:00	Session 3 – Drought; a socio-environmental problem?
14:00-14:20	Prof David Hannah, University of Birmingham – Getting into hot water: drought and heatwave impacts on river temperature
14:20-14:40	Prof Rachel Stubbington, Nottingham Trent University – When the river runs dry: the impacts of drought on UK freshwater ecosystems
14:40-15:00	Andrew Ball, HR Wallingford on behalf of UK Water Industry Research (UKWIR) – Temporary Use Bans: a reality check
15:00-15:20	Dr Kevin Collins, Open University – 1976 and All This: changing social attitudes and expectations to drought in England and Wales
15:20-15:30	Questions
Break 15:30 to 16:00	
16:00	Session 4 – Discussion and reflections
16:00-16:20	Jean Spencer, Chair of National Framework for Water Resources – Reflections on a career in water resources
16:20-16:40	International perspective – Video recording of interview with guest speakers from nations that were also affected by the 1976 drought
16:40-16:55	Discussion
16:55	Closing Remarks
16:55-17:00	Summing up, Dr Robert Bradburne, Chief Scientist, Environment Agency
Departures from 17:00 onwards	