



**middle level
commissioners**

Middle Level System – Holme Fen Fire and Water Levels

Update: 21/08/2026

www.middlelevel.gov.uk

The Middle Level Commissioners have been proudly managing water levels in the Fens since 1862.

The pressures on our 190km of strategic waterways caused by the drought conditions and the additional requirements for water to help tackle the major fire incident at Holme Fen are unprecedented and severe. We are very close to a critical tipping point in terms of the water levels in our system.

There has been no demonstrable abstraction from our system for farming irrigation since 27th July 2026. Rainfall and cooler temperatures this last week have greatly assisted the fire crews that remain on site at Holme Fen and the situation is generally improving.

- We continue to assist and are fully engaged in multi-agency meetings.
- We continue to facilitate Homewood & District IDB to take water from our system and supported them with additional pumping equipment to enable this. *Holme Fen is within Holmewood & District IDB's area, and their watercourse networks run to and through Holme Fen.*
- Local farmers and operatives at the IDB have continued to work tirelessly to facilitate the transfer of water to make it available for the fire service.
- The Environment Agency has been able to mobilise their fleet of National Resilience high volume pumps to Dog in a Doublet sluice and are currently over pumping water from the tidal Nene back into the Lower Nene when salinity levels and water quality are suitable. This action has, over the last three days, been successful and raised water levels in the Lower Nene sufficiently allowing navigation to be reopened between Orton Lock and Dog in a Doublet.
- We continue to operate our key structures that facilitate water transfer accordingly, namely Stanground Lock, Horsey Toll, Ashline Lock bypass and the gravity slacker at Bevill's Leam Pumping Station.
- Water levels in the Middle Level system have now stabilised and are slowly recovering to a point that the suspension of navigation west of Lodes End Lock has been lifted from midday, 21st August 2026
- Water levels in Bevills and St Germans ponds have been equalised to provide additional resilience of water supply to the Holme Fen fire site.

Prognosis:

- We anticipate the water levels will be reasonable to navigate this weekend (22nd & 23rd August) boaters should do so with caution.
- Given their perched status from our main system, Well Creek and King's Dyke (Stanground to Ashine Lock) are resilient to the current pressures and water levels remain reasonably stable.
- All boaters should adjust the slack in their mooring ropes to prepare for the potential of fluctuating levels. We have advised our two offline marinas to continue to monitor water levels closely for the next few days
- If boaters choose to navigate on our main system, they do so at their own risk. Vessels have different drafts, and some of our waterways are deeper than others.
- The MLC water levels have now generally stabilised and are slowly recovering. Aquatic weed growth is at its seasonal peak throughout the MLC system. With thunderstorms and flash storms possible during the next week or so, we remain aware of the possibility of low D.O (Dissolved Oxygen) levels in our watercourses which in certain circumstances can lead to fish deaths. If we do experience these conditions in the coming days, we may need to suspend our own weed clearing activities
- Anglers and fishing clubs should be mindful that with lower levels the likelihood of fish distress increases as dissolved oxygen levels worsen.

The situation will remain under review with an update provided if there is a demonstrable change to this position.

Environmental incidents that may occur as water levels drop should be reported to the Environment Agency on their incident hotline 0800 807060

Further information about us and our water resources role:

- <https://youtu.be/-dR0dzdOXsS>
- <https://middlelevel.gov.uk/our-operations/water-resources/>

Please note we are a small public authority with no communications team and no formal or funded role in responding to civil contingencies.

We will continue to play our part assisting the Fire Service to get the water they need to tackle the Holme Fen fire. We will continue to work collaboratively with colleagues at the EA and the Holmewood & District IDB.

Our system is now showing positive signs of recovery and water levels are slowly rising back towards more normal summertime operating parameters. Our water level management focus will be on continuing the water level recovery to maintain navigation.

Jonathan Fenn – Head of Water Level Management

21st August 2026