

Editorial

We are surely all now aware that the UK is entering a new era of building large reservoirs, but are we, as a profession, ready to accept the challenge of producing these massive projects to time and budget?

Quentin Shaw, an Honorary Vice-President of ICOLD, gives his views in a briefing note (Shaw, 2026). His note is based on many years' experience of major dam construction overseas, and he has observed, during recent years, significant increases in cost escalation and programme slippages. He identifies a number of reasons for this in his note. But do you agree? Are there other reasons? What can we do about it? Why not write in and let me know your thoughts?

Our second briefing note is again very relevant for those involved in the planning, design and construction of large new reservoirs, although it is also relevant for those involved in refurbishment works at dams and reservoirs. The note by Welbank and Jobbins (2026) introduces a new publication by Natural England which gives design principles for fitting reservoirs into the local landscape of the area where they are to be constructed. The note gives an outline of what the guidance contains and indicates how it might be used.

From reservoirs yet to be built to a cautionary tale concerning a reservoir that flooded adjacent land, leading the landowner to file a claim against the reservoir owner. Charles (2026) gives the background to this well-known court case, which went up to the House of Lords before finally being settled. The ruling on liability was influenced by two major dam disasters of the time, one of which occurred during the lengthy legal process. The paper very usefully clarifies the differences between 'fault liability' and 'strict liability' in relation to dams and reservoirs.

We all want to avoid any failure, regardless of who may be liable, which is why we have processes to assess the risk to safety of our dams and reservoirs. One of these processes is given in the RARS guidance (EA, 2013), which was developed primarily for reservoirs which hold water all year round. Bullock and Gill (2026) have identified parts of the guidance where processes need to be

amended to suit flood detention reservoirs, which may remain dry for very long periods, and then suddenly fill, but may only hold water for a brief period during a flood event. This paper is based on a paper and presentation given by Devon Bullock as a finalist in the 2025 BDS Prize competition for Young Professionals.

Spillways often need to be upgraded to provide increased capacity to ensure the safety of our dams. Another finalist in the 2025 BDS Prize competition for Young Professionals, Anida Zeqirllari, has produced a paper showing, with case studies, a number of different ways in which increased spillway capacity may be achieved using fixed crest overflows (Zeqirllari, 2026). The advantages and disadvantages of each type are listed, with the case studies ranging from very small structures to large and complex ones.

Do you have any comments or discussion on the papers or briefing notes in this issue? If so, please do send them in and we will aim to include them in a subsequent issue. And as always, you are invited to share your interesting projects or innovations through this journal. Do contact the Editor, Andrew Pepper, on atpec@peppernet.org or editor@britishdams.org for any help or guidance you may need with submitting papers, notes or similar.

REFERENCES

- Bullock D and Gill C (2026) Developing a workbook and user guide to apply tier 2 RARS to EA flood detention reservoirs. *Dams and Reservoirs* 36(2): 46–53, [10.1680/jdare.26.00302](https://doi.org/10.1680/jdare.26.00302).
- Charles JA (2026) Perspective on strict liability for consequences of reservoir failure: *Rylands v. Fletcher*. *Dams and Reservoirs* 36(2): 37–45, [10.1680/jdare.26.00320](https://doi.org/10.1680/jdare.26.00320).
- EA (2013) *Guide to Risk Assessment for Reservoir Safety Management. Volume 1: Guide (Report SC090001/R1)*. Environment Agency, Bristol UK.
- Shaw Q (2026) Briefing: Is the UK adequately prepared to construct new dams? *Dams and Reservoirs* 36(2): 28–32, [10.1680/jdare.26.00317](https://doi.org/10.1680/jdare.26.00317).
- Welbank J and Jobbins J (2026) Briefing: Reservoirs in the landscape: design principles. *Dams and Reservoirs* 36(2): 33–36, [10.1680/jdare.26.00506](https://doi.org/10.1680/jdare.26.00506).
- Zeqirllari A (2026) Retrofitting overflow weirs to safely pass extreme floods at UK reservoirs. *Dams and Reservoirs* 36(2): 54–61, [10.1680/jdare.26.00303](https://doi.org/10.1680/jdare.26.00303).