

Hydrological Summary

for the *United Kingdom*

General

January was unsettled with successive low pressure systems bringing wind, rain and snow, leading to pluvial and fluvial flooding. Rainfall was above average across Northern Ireland and eastern and southern Britain but below average elsewhere. January mean flows were in the normal range to below normal for western Scotland and northwest and southeast England. In contrast, flows were notably to exceptionally high at some rivers in eastern Scotland, Northern Ireland and southern England. Groundwater levels rose across much of the UK, reflecting sustained recharge following the wet conditions of recent months. Modest recoveries were observed though below normal levels remained in East Anglia and parts of central and northern Scotland. Reservoir stocks rose and were near average for England & Wales: some impoundments went from deficits to near or above average (e.g. Bewl, Ardingly and Wimbleball) whilst stocks fell at Farmoor (11% below average) and remained 12% below at Grafham. A wet January aided drought recovery, with parts of Essex exiting drought status on the 22nd, marking the first time since May 2025 with no English region in drought. Wet conditions persisted into early February with parts of eastern Scotland receiving more than twice the average monthly rainfall in the first two weeks. Saturated soils and a three-month Hydrological Outlook that favours above normal flows for eastern Scotland and southern England means flood risk remains elevated.

Rainfall

January began with an Arctic air mass from the north bringing wintery weather to high ground. Storm 'Goretti' on the 8th heralded the start of an unsettled month, bringing widespread snow to Wales and western England and the first red wind warning of 2026 for southwest England, which caused power and water outages for 24,000 properties in Cornwall. Thereafter, a series of low-pressure systems formed to the southwest of the UK sustained the unsettled conditions. Heavy rainfall impacted eastern Scotland on 21st-22nd, followed by storm 'Ingrid' bringing strong winds and heavy rain for Northern Ireland and southwest England on 23rd-24th. At month end, storm 'Chandra' brought further heavy rain across eastern Scotland, Northern Ireland and southwest England (e.g. 115.1mm at White Barrow, Devon and 114.8mm at Katesbridge, Northern Ireland on 26th/27th) with widespread transport disruption and property flooding. January rainfall was 117% of average for the UK. Totals were above average across eastern Scotland, Northern Ireland and central and southern England but below average elsewhere. Northern Ireland and the South West region of England registered their wettest January on record (both over 170%) and among the top five wettest in regions across southern England (all in records since 1890). The North East region of Scotland recorded its fourth wettest January since 1890, whilst the Highland region saw below average rainfall (58%). Rainfall since the autumn was above average for all regions apart from the Highland region and continued a string of wetter than average months for Northern Ireland since September. It was the wettest September-January for Northern Ireland, and among the top five wettest for Wales and the South West region of England (all in series from 1890).

River Flows

River flows started January below average following a dry end to December. Flows in central and southern England responded to the rainfall associated with storm 'Goretti' on the 9th. Daily flows across eastern Scotland, Northern Ireland and southern England peaked well above average due to unsettled weather from the 11th and rainfall associated with storms 'Ingrid' and 'Chandra', remaining above average at month-end. By the 28th, a severe flood warning was issued on the Lower Stour, with over 300 flood warnings and alerts in force across eastern Scotland and England. A major incident was declared at the Somerset Levels due to high water levels and properties flooded. The Lagan, Stour and Otter all recorded their highest January peak flows on record between 26th-28th (all in series of at least 48 years) while the Lymington and Piddle recorded their

highest peak flow of any month on the 27th in series from 1977 and 1964, respectively. January mean flows were normal to below normal in northwest England and western Scotland, with notably low flows on the Oykel. Elsewhere, flows were above to exceptionally high. A new January maximum was registered on the Tone (in a series from 1961), with rivers in eastern Scotland (e.g. Deveron, Ythan), Northern Ireland (e.g. Annacloy) and southern England (e.g. Stour, Sussex Ouse) all recording more than twice their average. Mean flows since the autumn (September-January) were notably low in northwest Scotland but widely above average across Northern Ireland, northern and southwest England. Correspondingly, outflows for Northern Ireland for September-January were the fifth highest (in a series since 1980). The Annacloy, Tywi, Tawe and Kenwyn all registered their highest September-January flows (in records of at least 45 years).

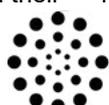
Soil Moisture and Groundwater

January rainfall led to widespread soil moisture recovery, with most COSMOS-UK sites recording normal to above normal levels. In the Chalk, most boreholes recorded marked recoveries. Groundwater levels reached exceptionally high in Northern Ireland and along the south and south west coast of England, resulting in new January maxima at Ashton Farm and West Woodyates Manor (in a series from 1976 and 1942, respectively). Persistent groundwater flooding was reported in Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire. In East Yorkshire, levels remained above normal, though Wetwang declined from notably high, whilst at Dalton Holme they remained stable. Across East Anglia and parts of southeast England, levels plateaued within the below normal to normal range. In the Jurassic Oolites, levels at New Red Lion and Ampney Crucis rose sharply to exceptionally high conditions. Levels in the Magnesian Limestone continued to recover, with Aycliffe and Brick House Farm in the above normal range. The Carboniferous Limestone showed contrasting behaviour. Levels rebounded and returned Greenfield Garage to above normal, whilst levels at Alstonfield dipped but remained notably high. In the Permo Triassic sandstones, levels plateaued or fell in south Scotland and Cumbria amid localised below average rainfall, but increased elsewhere. Bussels No. 7a reached a new 55 year January maximum. The Upper Greensand at Lime Kiln Way rose to exceptionally high, while the Fell Sandstone at Royalty Observatory stayed within the normal range. In the Devonian sandstones, levels continued to recover but remained below normal to notably low.

January 2026



National Hydrological
Monitoring Programme



UKCEH



British
Geological
Survey

Rainfall



Rainfall accumulations and return period estimates

Percentages are from the 1991-2020 average.

Region	Rainfall	Jan 2026	Dec25 – Jan26		Sep25 – Jan26		May25 – Jan26		Feb25 – Jan26	
				RP		RP		RP		RP
United Kingdom	mm	143	272		675		938		1088	
	%	117	110	2-5	116	10-20	104	2-5	94	2-5
England	mm	124	230		550		725		820	
	%	150	132	8-12	130	20-30	106	2-5	95	2-5
Scotland	mm	155	308		790		1185		1412	
	%	87	88	2-5	98	2-5	98	2-5	90	2-5
Wales	mm	176	378		973		1264		1448	
	%	113	115	2-5	128	20-30	111	5-10	100	2-5
Northern Ireland	mm	196	297		746		1053		1236	
	%	170	126	10-15	133	>100	117	15-25	107	8-12
England & Wales	mm	131	250		608		798		906	
	%	141	128	8-12	130	20-30	107	2-5	96	2-5
North West	mm	101	274		816		1184		1301	
	%	80	101	2-5	127	20-35	118	10-15	102	2-5
Northumbria	mm	106	186		535		729		805	
	%	128	106	2-5	124	15-25	102	2-5	89	2-5
Severn-Trent	mm	110	205		513		655		729	
	%	153	135	8-12	137	25-40	104	2-5	92	2-5
Yorkshire	mm	98	195		556		723		796	
	%	124	116	2-5	135	20-35	106	2-5	92	2-5
Anglian	mm	82	137		350		473		535	
	%	156	126	5-10	122	5-10	94	2-5	86	5-10
Thames	mm	121	202		429		555		642	
	%	168	140	8-12	121	5-10	97	2-5	89	2-5
Southern	mm	168	266		540		698		796	
	%	192	148	15-25	125	8-12	108	2-5	98	2-5
Wessex	mm	177	316		622		759		875	
	%	187	163	40-60	135	15-25	107	2-5	97	2-5
South West	mm	252	459		911		1149		1381	
	%	182	160	>100	139	30-50	118	8-12	111	5-10
Welsh	mm	173	370		940		1216		1396	
	%	117	118	5-10	129	20-35	111	5-10	100	2-5
Highland	mm	128	292		832		1295		1574	
	%	58	68	2-5	86	2-5	92	2-5	85	2-5
North East	mm	177	256		553		778		899	
	%	175	127	8-12	107	2-5	93	2-5	85	5-10
Tay	mm	239	394		791		1125		1330	
	%	145	126	5-10	112	5-10	104	2-5	96	2-5
Forth	mm	111	246		623		925		1092	
	%	81	92	2-5	101	2-5	96	2-5	88	2-5
Tweed	mm	112	219		552		833		947	
	%	105	98	2-5	104	2-5	98	2-5	88	2-5
Solway	mm	161	360		923		1357		1565	
	%	96	104	2-5	115	10-15	111	8-12	100	2-5
Clyde	mm	166	360		980		1483		1761	
	%	77	84	2-5	100	2-5	102	2-5	93	2-5

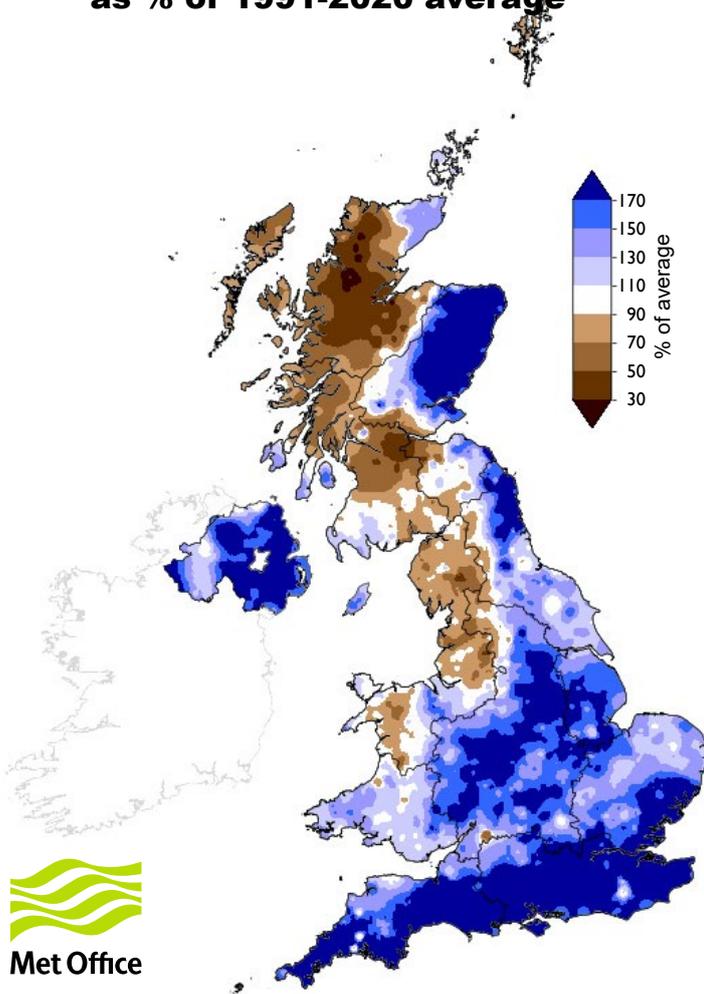
% = percentage of 1991-2020 average

RP = Return period

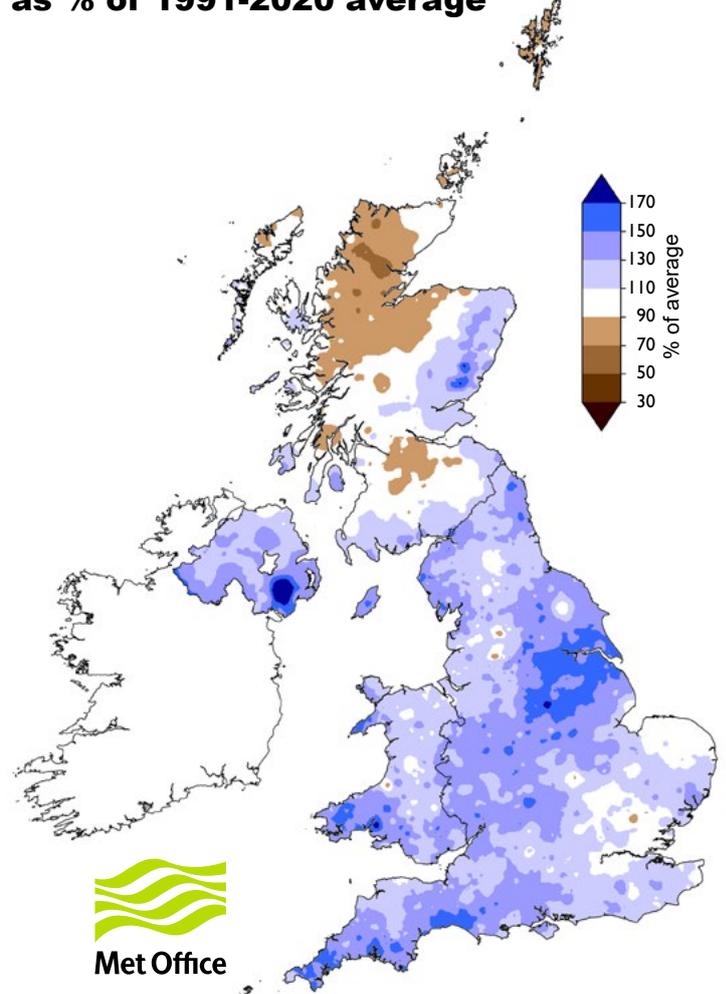
Important note: Figures in the above table may be quoted provided their source is acknowledged. Where appropriate, specific mention must be made of the uncertainties associated with the return period estimates. The RP estimates are based on data provided by the Met Office and reflect climatic variability since 1890; they also assume a stable climate. The quoted RPs relate to the specific timespans only; for the same timespans, but beginning in any month the RPs would be substantially shorter. The timespans featured do not purport to represent the critical periods for any particular water resource management zone. For hydrological or water resources assessments of drought severity, river flows and/or groundwater levels normally provide a better guide than return periods based on regional rainfall totals. Note that precipitation totals in winter months may be underestimated due to snowfall undercatch. All monthly rainfall totals since January 2025 are provisional. Source: Data from HadUK-Grid dataset at 1km resolution v1.3.1.0.

Rainfall

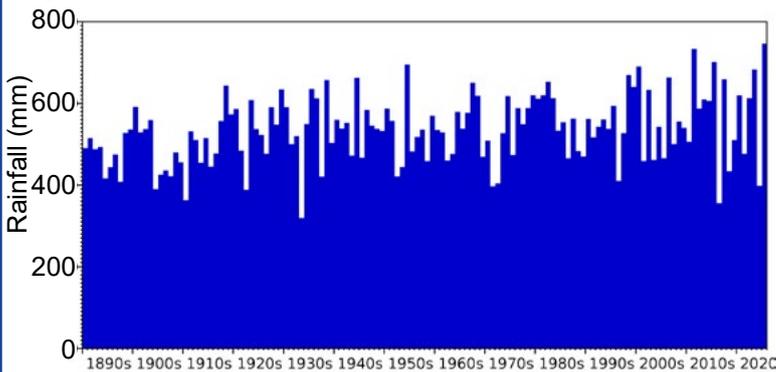
**January 2026 rainfall
as % of 1991-2020 average**



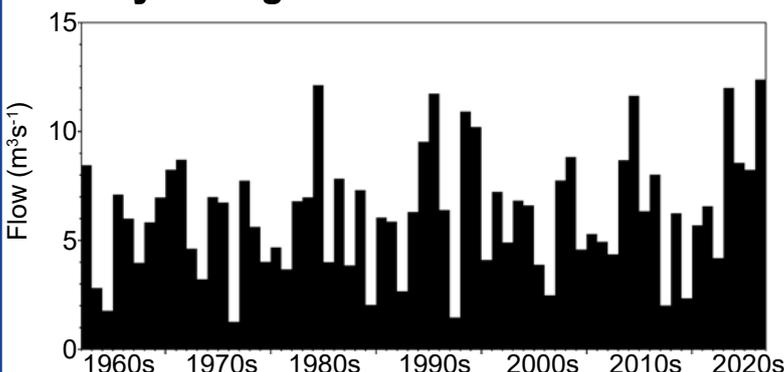
**September 2025 - January 2026 rainfall
as % of 1991-2020 average**



September - January rainfall for Northern Ireland



January average flows on the Tone



UK Hydrological Outlook

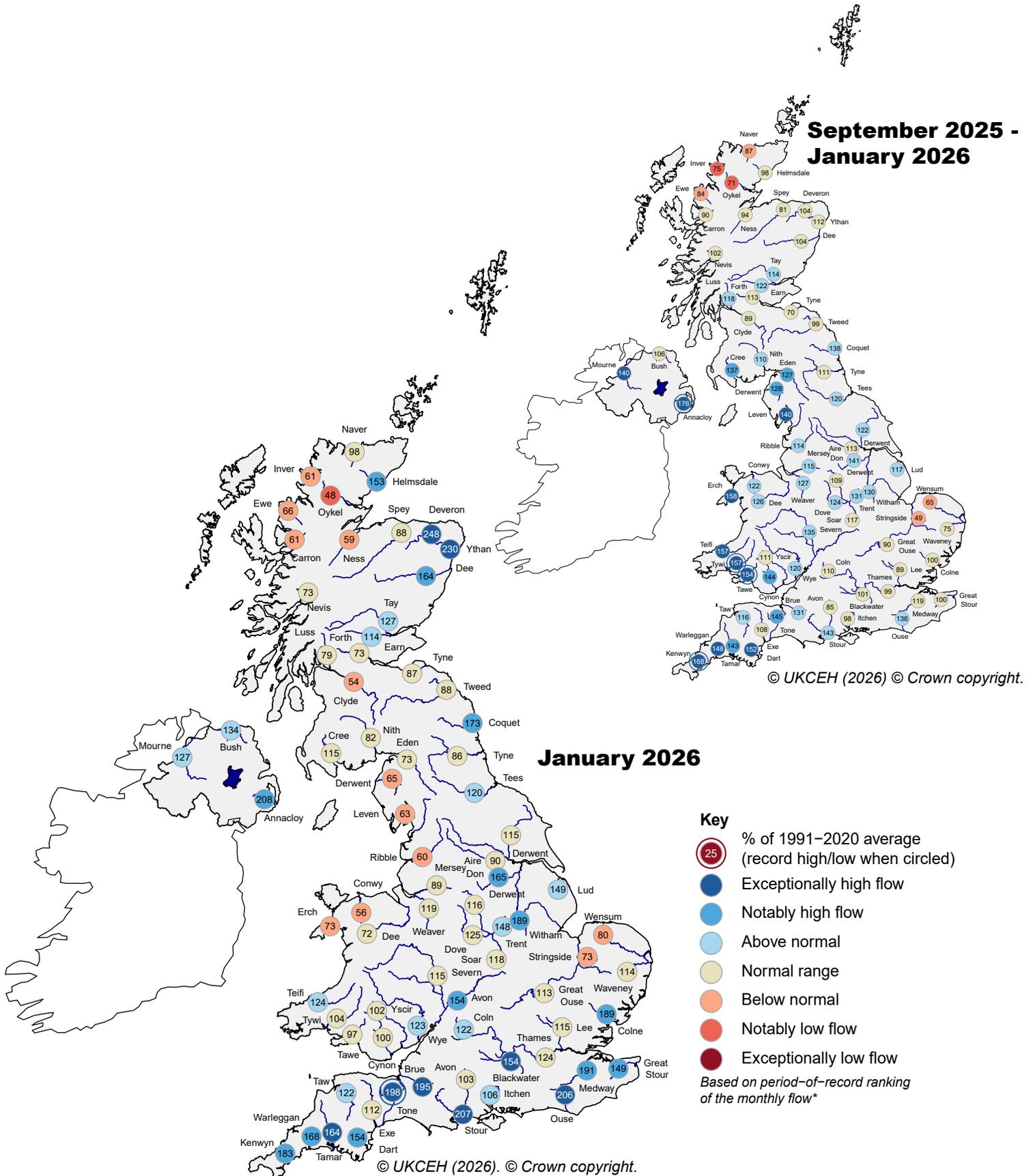
The Hydrological Outlook provides an insight into future hydrological conditions across the UK. Specifically it describes likely trajectories for river flows and groundwater levels on a monthly basis, with particular focus on the next three months.

The complete version of the Hydrological Outlook UK can be found at: www.hydoutuk.net/latest-outlook/

Period: from February 2026
Issued: 05.02.2026
using data to the end of January 2026

The outlook for February is for above normal to notably high river flows across eastern Scotland and southern England. Elsewhere, river flows and groundwater levels in the normal range are most likely. Above normal flows and groundwater levels in eastern Scotland and southern England are likely to persist through the February-April period. For the rest of the UK, normal flows are likely to predominate over the next three months, with normal to above normal groundwater levels.

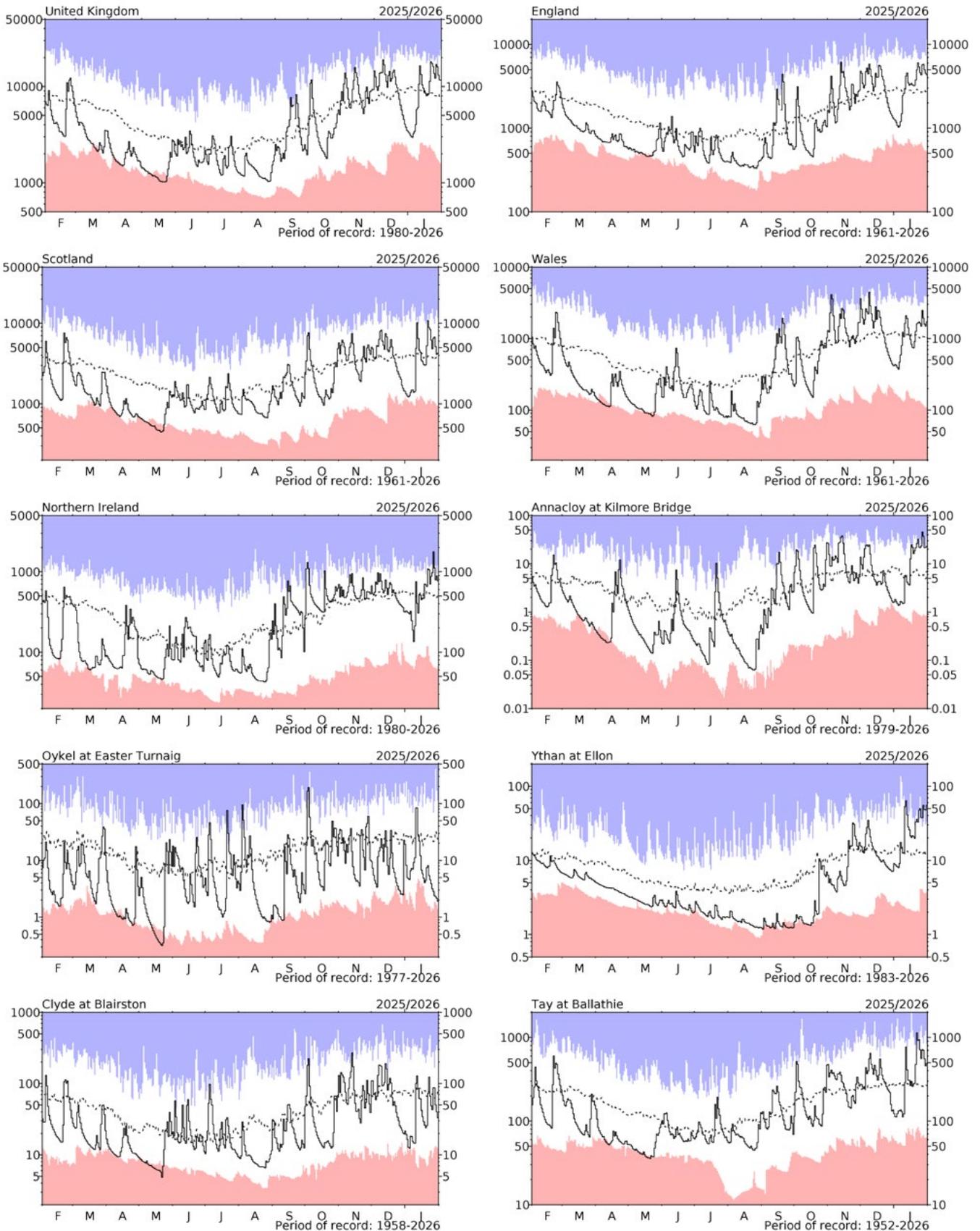
River flow



River flows

*Comparisons based on percentage flows alone can be misleading. A given percentage flow can represent extreme drought conditions in permeable catchments where flow patterns are relatively stable but be well within the normal range in impermeable catchments where the natural variation in flows is much greater. The categories of the spots are based on the full period-of-record data whereas the percentages are based on the 1991-2020 averaging period for consistency between rainfall and river flows. Percentages may be omitted where flows are under review.

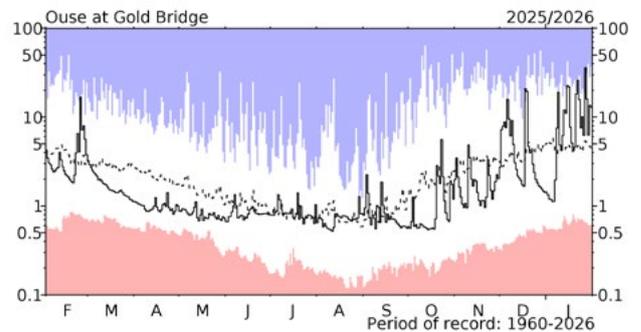
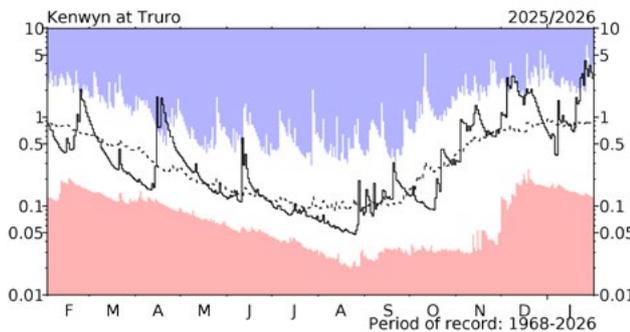
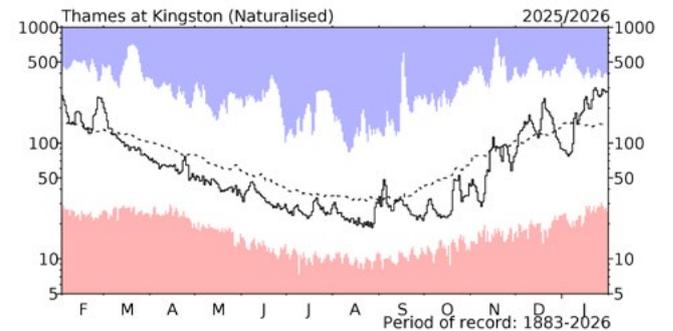
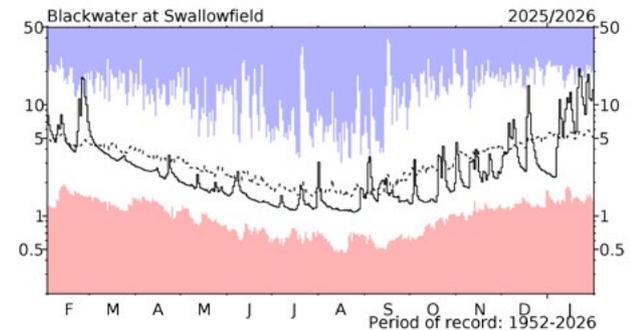
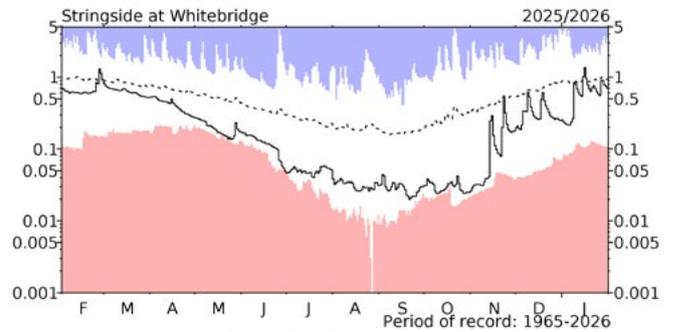
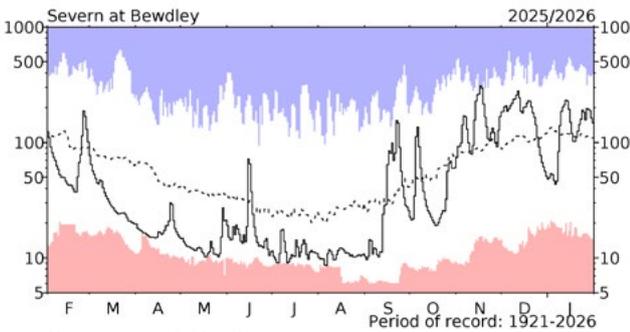
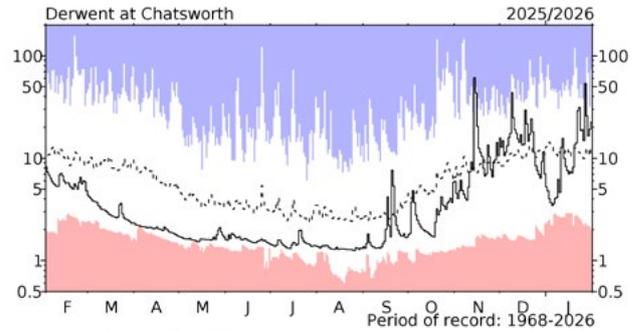
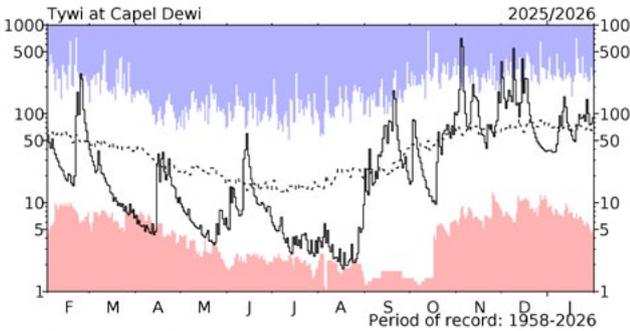
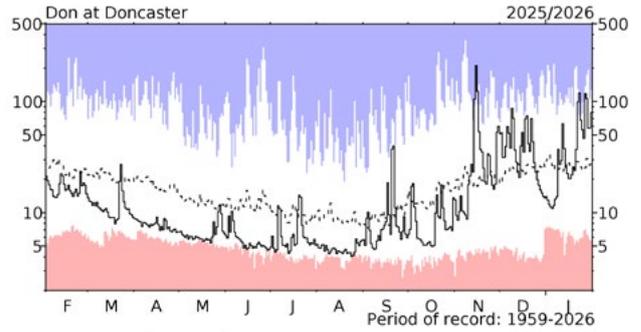
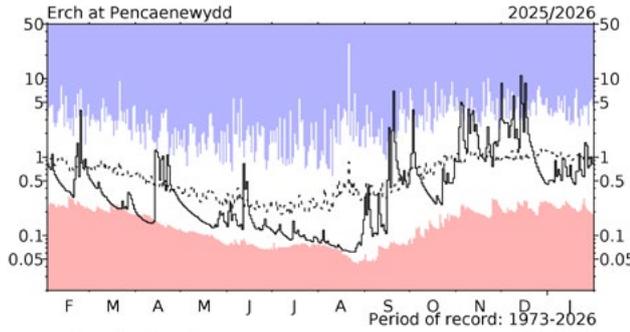
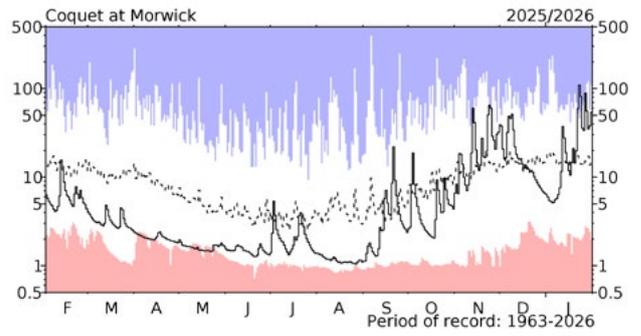
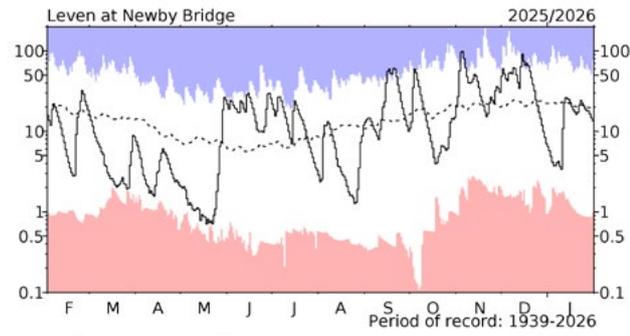
River flow



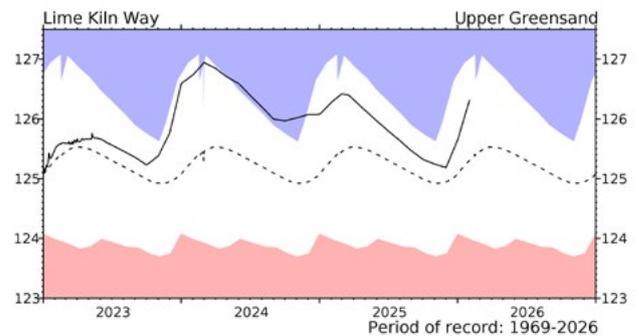
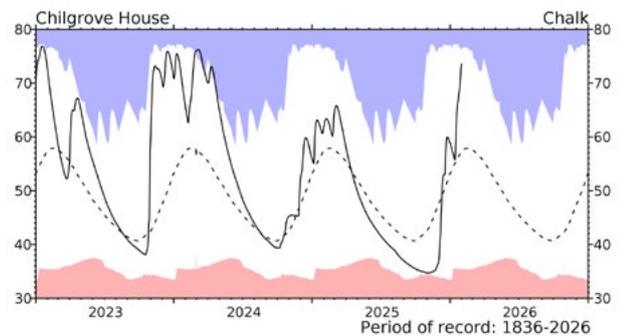
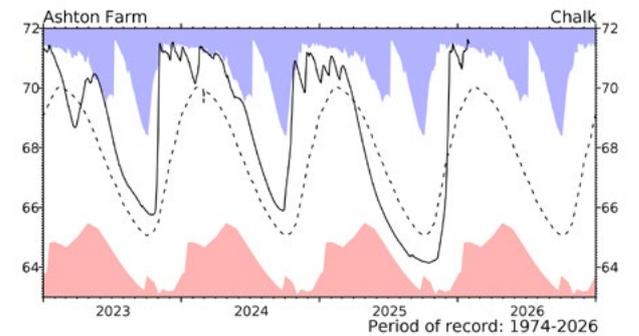
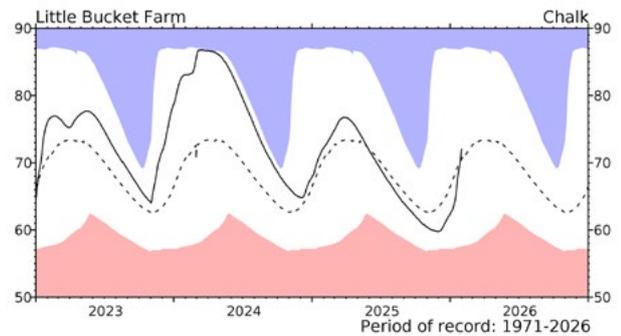
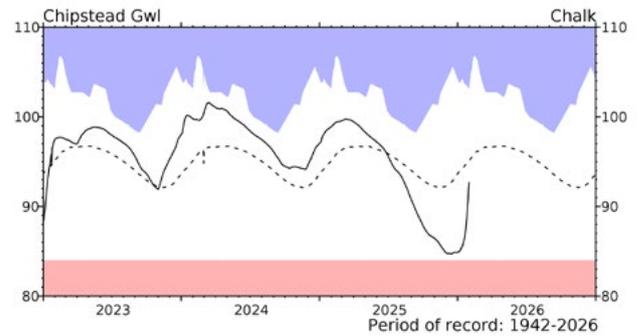
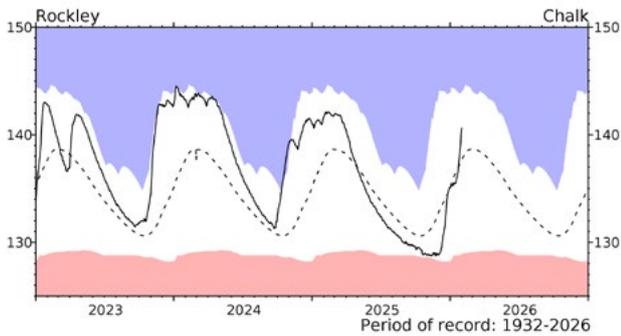
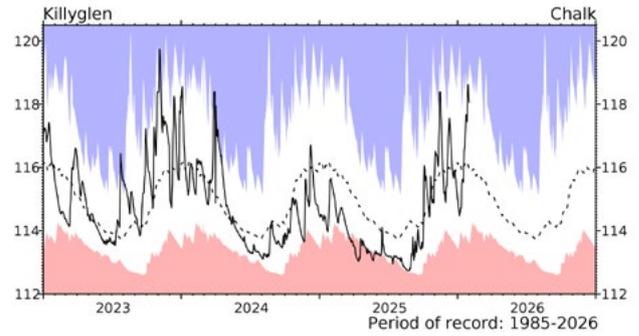
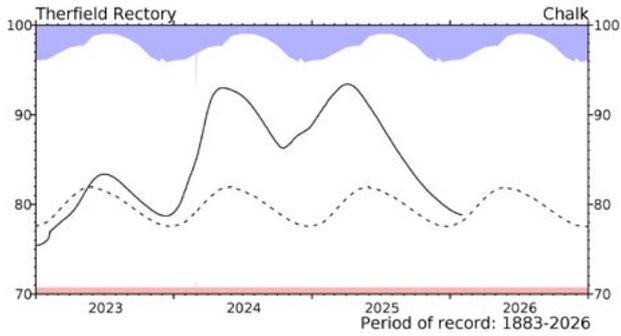
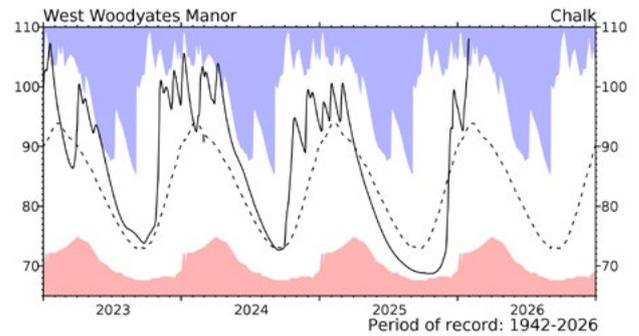
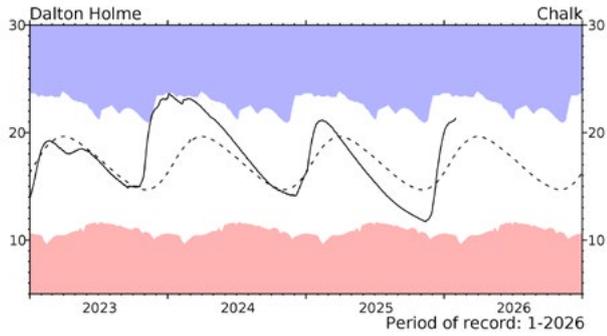
River flow hydrographs

*The river flow hydrographs show the daily mean flows (measured in m^3s^{-1}) together with the maximum and minimum daily flows prior to February 2025 (shown by the shaded areas). Daily flows falling outside the maximum/minimum range are indicated where the bold trace enters the shaded areas. The dashed line represents the period-of-record average daily flow.

River flow

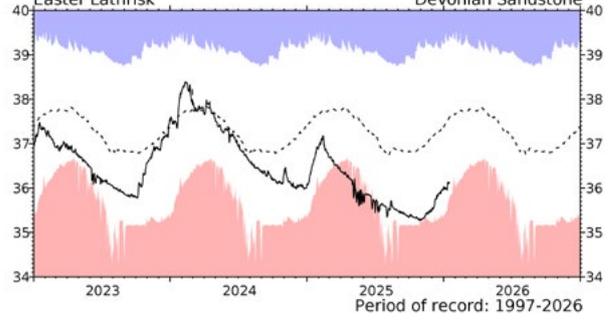
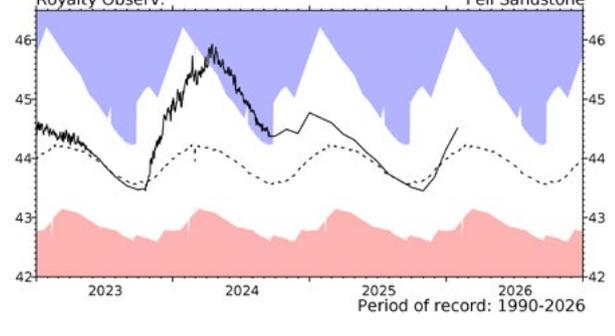
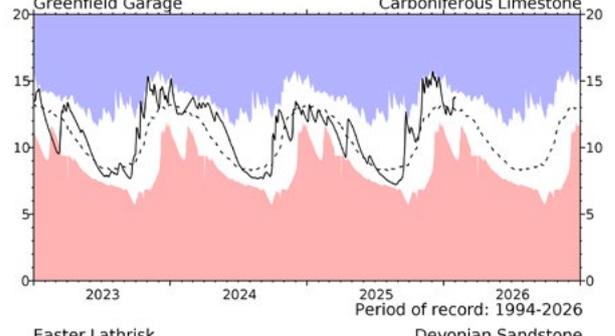
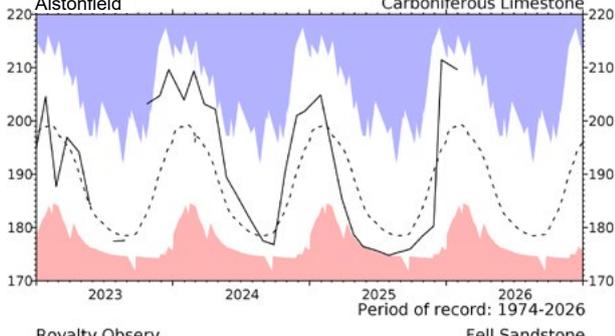
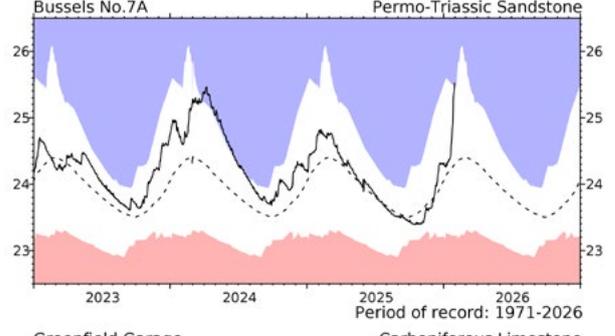
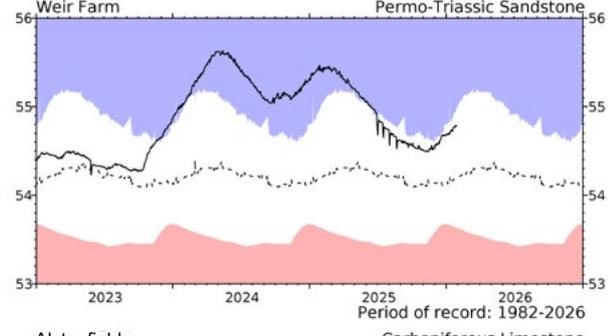
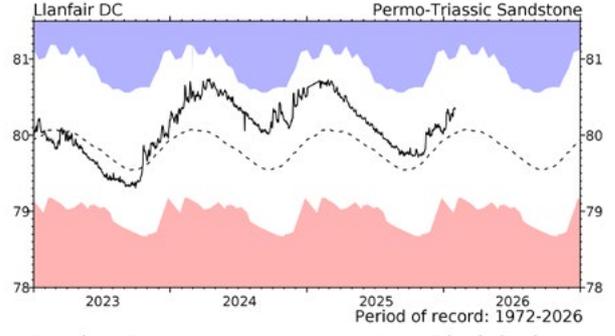
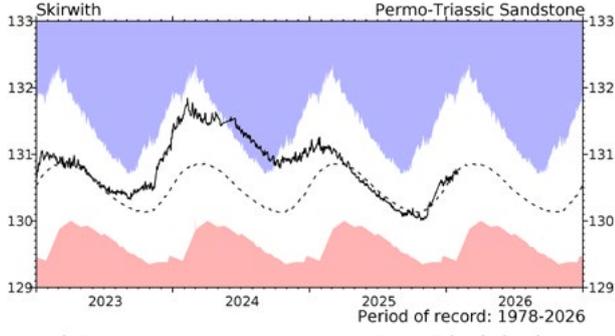
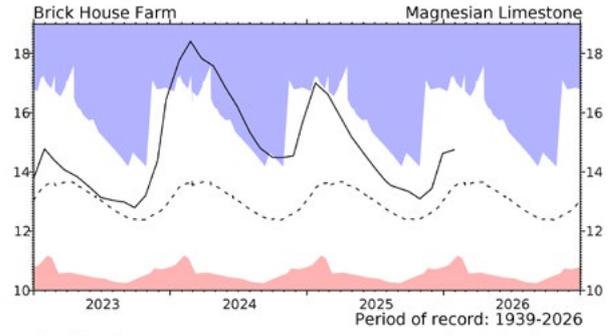
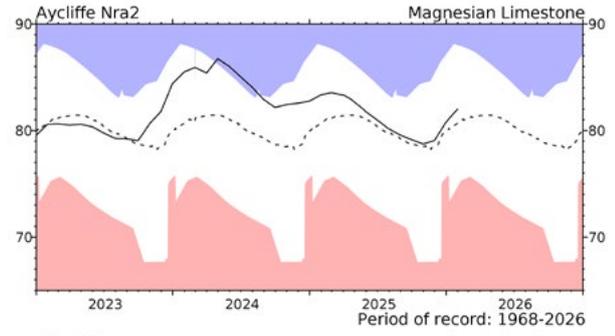
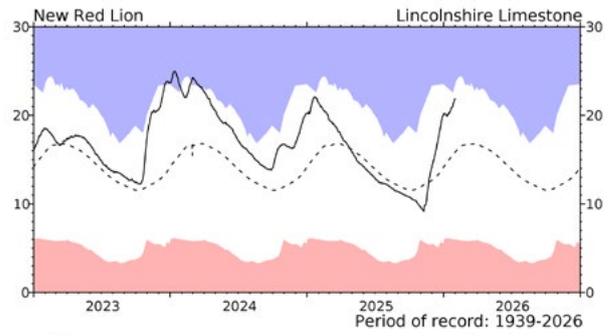
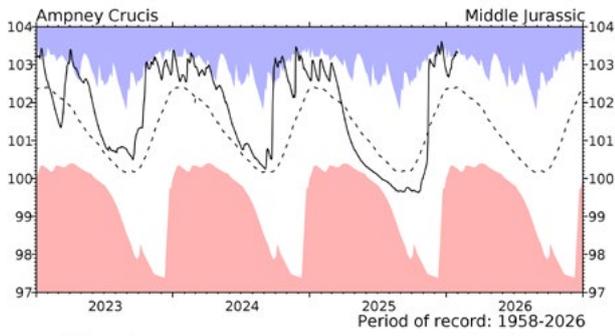


Groundwater

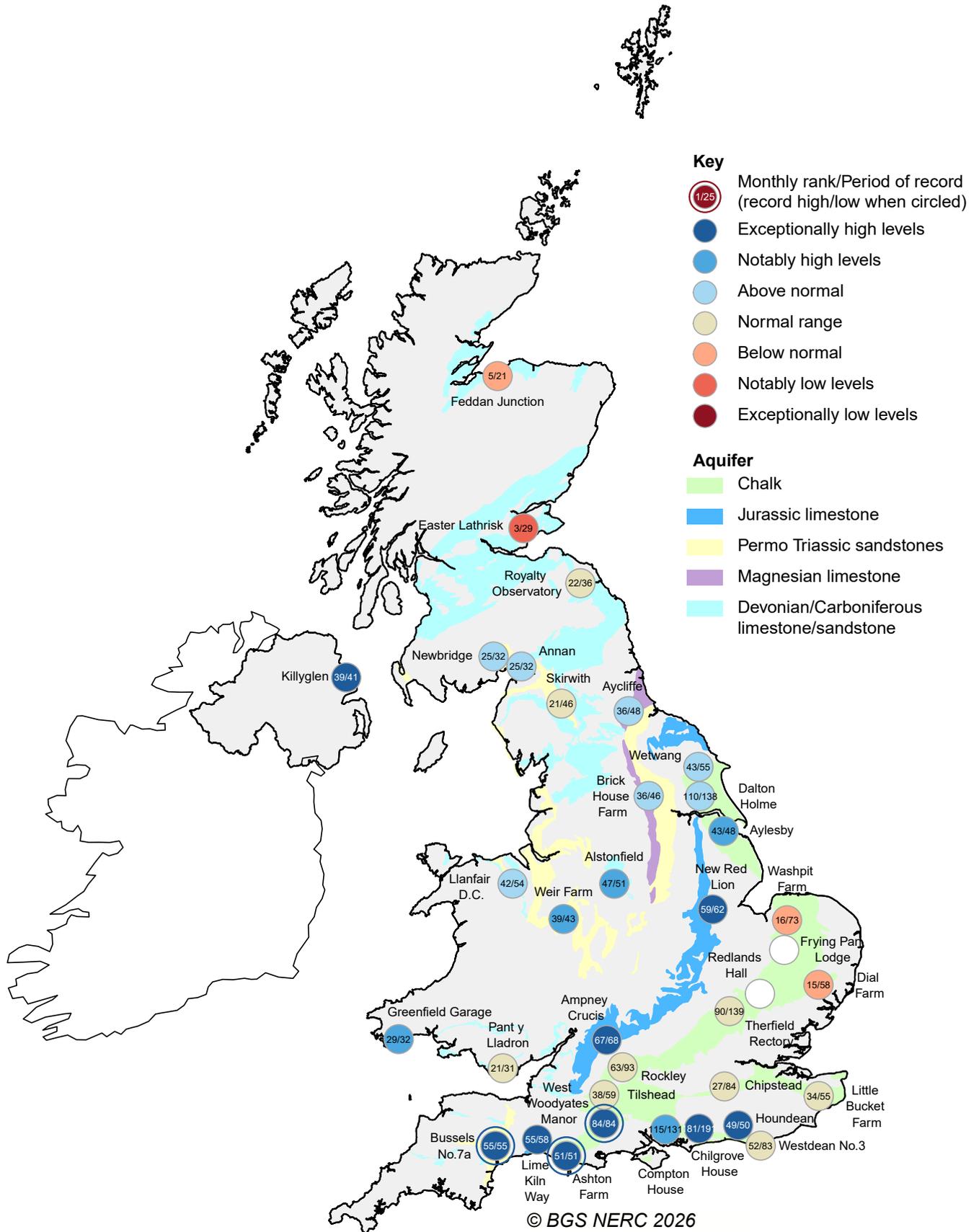


Groundwater levels (measured in metres above ordnance datum) normally rise and fall with the seasons, reaching a peak in the spring following replenishment through the winter (when evaporation losses are low and soil moist). They decline through the summer and early autumn. This seasonal variation is much reduced when the aquifer is confined below overlying impermeable strata. The monthly mean and the highest and lowest levels recorded for each month are calculated with data from the start of the record to the end of 2022. Note that most groundwater levels are not measured continuously and, for some index wells, the greater frequency of contemporary measurements may, in itself, contribute to an increased range of variation.

Groundwater



Groundwater

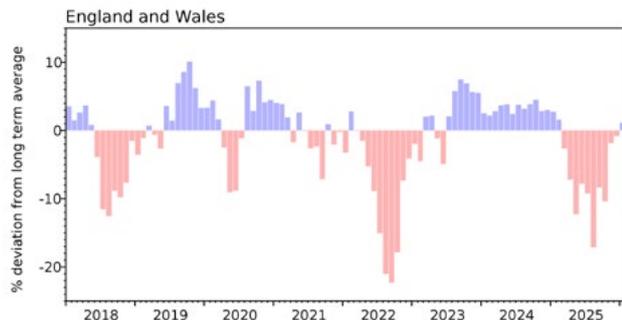


Groundwater levels - January 2026

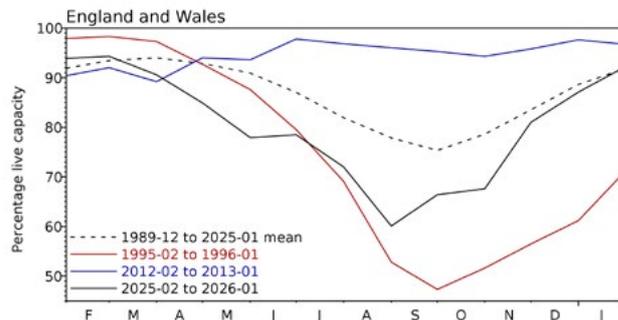
The calculation of ranking has been modified from that used in summaries published prior to October 2012. It is now based on a comparison between the most recent level and levels for the same date during previous years of record. Where appropriate, levels for earlier years may have been interpolated. The rankings are designed as a qualitative indicator, and ranks at extreme levels, and when levels are changing rapidly, need to be interpreted with caution.

Reservoirs

Guide to the variation in overall reservoir stocks for England and Wales



Comparison between overall reservoir stocks for England and Wales in recent years



Percentage live capacity of selected reservoirs at end of month

Area	Reservoir	Capacity (MI)	2025 Nov	2025 Dec	2026 Jan	Jan Anom.	Min Jan	Year* of min	2025 Jan	Diff 26-25
North West	N Command Zone •	124929	85	88	87	-5	63	1996	88	0
	Vyrnwy	55146	100	100	100	6	45	1996	97	3
Northumbrian	Teesdale •	87936	94	94	100	7	51	1996	98	2
	Kielder (199175)		91	84	91	-2	82	2019	88	3
Severn-Trent	Clywedog	49936	82	84	87	-2	62	1996	93	-6
	Derwent Valley •	46692	91	98	100	5	15	1996	99	1
Yorkshire	Washburn •	23373	86	91	96	6	34	1996	97	-1
	Bradford Supply •	40942	82	88	100	6	33	1996	100	0
Anglian	Grafham (55490)		69	71	74	-12	67	1998	94	-20
	Rutland (116580)		68	81	92	5	68	1997	100	-8
Thames	London •	202828	73	86	88	-3	70	1997	95	-7
	Farmoor •	13822	93	97	80	-11	72	2001	92	-11
Southern	Bewl	31000	43	60	82	0	37	2006	88	-6
	Ardingly	4685	44	78	100	7	41	2012	100	0
Wessex	Clatworthy	5662	73	100	100	4	62	1989	100	0
	Bristol •	(38666)	57	90	100	12	58	1992	99	1
South West	Colliford	28540	52	66	80	-3	47	2023	85	-5
	Roadford	34500	71	84	97	14	30	1996	100	-3
	Wimbleball	21320	45	75	100	9	58	2017	96	4
	Stithians	4967	57	90	100	10	38	1992	91	9
Welsh	Celyn & Brenig •	131155	85	90	90	-4	61	1996	84	6
	Brienne	62140	100	100	100	2	84	1997	100	0
	Big Five •	69762	77	88	97	3	67	1997	98	-1
	Elan Valley •	99106	91	96	100	2	73	1996	100	0
Scotland(E)	Edinburgh/Mid-Lothian •	97223	84	89	94	0	72	1999	93	1
	East Lothian •	9317	89	100	100	1	68	1990	100	0
Scotland(W)	Loch Katrine •	110326	97	98	98	4	85	2000	100	-2
	Daer	22494	95	92	100	3	87	2024	92	8
	Loch Thom	10721	100	96	100	2	90	2020	100	0
Northern	Total*	56800	96	98	100	7	74	2017	92	8
Ireland	Silent Valley •	20634	100	100	100	10	46	2002	95	5

() figures in parentheses relate to gross storage

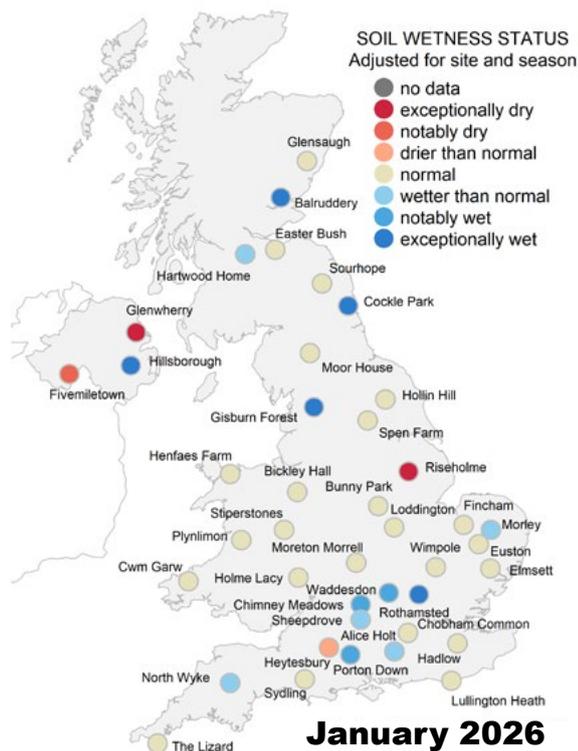
• denotes reservoir groups

*last occurrence

+ excludes Lough Neagh

Details of the individual reservoirs in each of the groupings listed above are available on request. The percentages given in the Average and Minimum storage columns relate to the 1988-2012 period except for West of Scotland and Northern Ireland where data commence in the mid-1990s. In some gravity-fed reservoirs (e.g. Clywedog) stocks are kept below capacity during the winter to provide scope for flood attenuation purposes. Monthly figures may be artificially low due to routine maintenance or turbidity effects in feeder rivers.

Soil Moisture



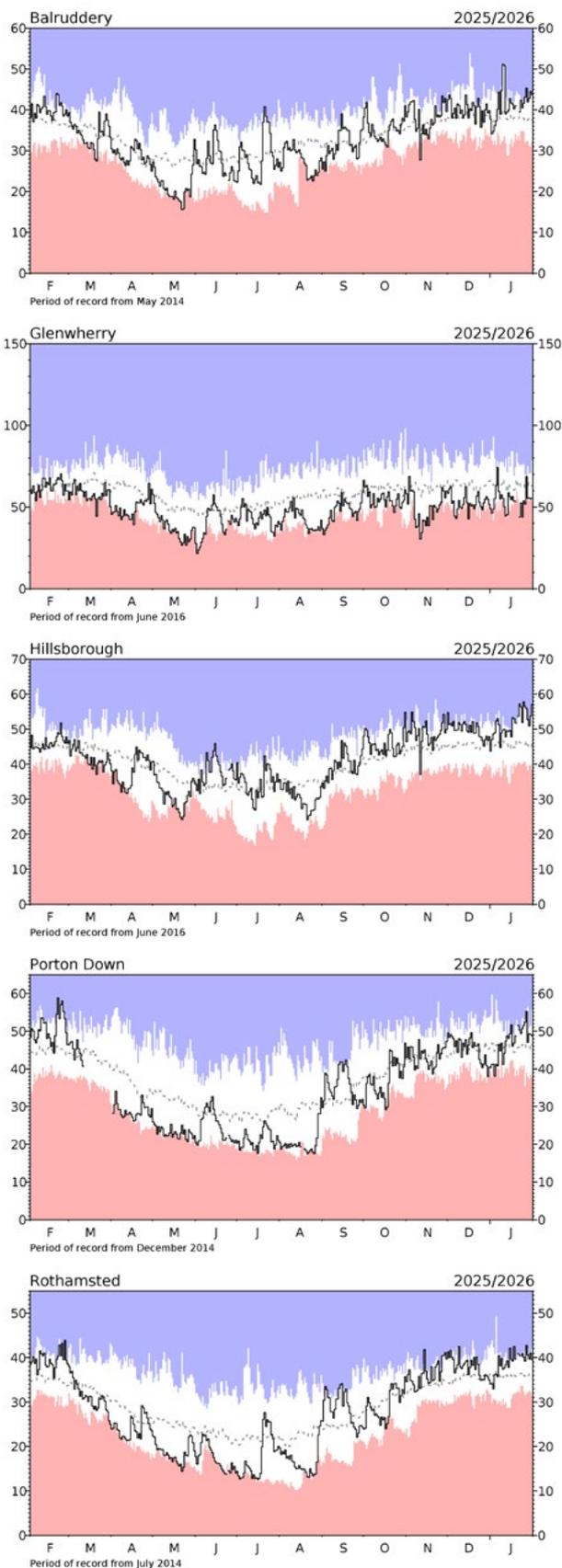
Daily mean soil moisture status at COSMOS-UK sites on the last day of the month 31 January 2026. Soil wetness categories are adjusted for site specific characteristics, i.e. taking account of the possible range of soil wetness at each site, determined through period-of-record data and hindcast modelling. Where no data are available on the last day of the month, these are shown by grey dots.

By the end of the month, soil moisture at most COSMOS-UK sites was above field capacity, with only five sites slightly below it. At some sites, values from the neutron sensors were influenced by a solar event on the 20th (e.g. Glenwherry, Lullington, Moorhouse, Sourhope, Spen Farm), but this data has been removed. By the end of the month, soil moisture at most sites was either normal for the time of year or slightly wetter than usual after a dry end to December. The wettest sites by the end of the month were in Northern Ireland, Scotland and the south (e.g. Balruddery, Hillsborough, Porton Down, Rothamsted). Soils across the COSMOS-UK network have 'wetter up' towards the end of the month, and only a couple of sites remain drier than usual for the time of year (e.g. Glenwherry, Riseholme).

Overall, higher-than-average rainfall in many regions has led to a soil moisture recovery at most COSMOS-UK sites.

Soil moisture data

These data are from UKCEH's COSMOS-UK network. The time series graphs show volumetric water content as a percentage in black together with the maximum and minimum daily values for the period-of-record of the sites. The dashed line represents the period-of-record mean VWC. For more information visit cosmos.ceh.ac.uk.



NHMP

The National Hydrological Monitoring Programme (NHMP) was started in 1988 and is undertaken jointly by the [UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology](#) (UKCEH) and the [British Geological Survey](#) (BGS). The NHMP aims to provide an authoritative voice on hydrological conditions throughout the UK, to place them in a historical context and, over time, identify and interpret any emerging hydrological trends. Hydrological analysis and interpretation within the Programme is based on the data holdings of the [National River Flow Archive](#) (NRFA; maintained by UKCEH) and [National Groundwater Level Archive](#) (NGLA; maintained by BGS), including rainfall, river flows, borehole levels, and reservoir stocks.

The Hydrological Summary is supported by the Natural Environment Research Council award number NE/Y006208/1 as part of the NC-UK programme delivering National Capability.

Data Sources

The NHMP depends on the active cooperation of many data suppliers. This cooperation is gratefully acknowledged. A location map of all sites used in the Hydrological Summary can be found on the [NHMP website](#). River flow and groundwater level data are provided by the Environment Agency (EA), Natural Resources Wales - Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru (NRW), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and, for Northern Ireland, the Department for Infrastructure - Rivers and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. In all cases the data are subject to revision following validation (high flow and low flow data in particular may be subject to significant revision).

Details of reservoir stocks are provided by the Water Service Companies, the EA, Scottish Water and Northern Ireland Water.

The Hydrological Summary and other NHMP outputs may also refer to and/or map soil moisture data for the UK. These data are provided by the Meteorological Office Rainfall and Evaporation Calculation System (MORECS). MORECS provides estimates of monthly soil moisture deficit in the form of averages over 40 x 40 km grid squares over Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The monthly time series of data extends back to 1961.

Rainfall data are provided by the Met Office. To allow better spatial differentiation the rainfall data for Britain are presented for the regional divisions of the precursor organisations of the EA, NRW and SEPA. The areal rainfall figures have been produced by the Met Office National Climate Information Centre (NCIC), and are based on the HadUK-Grid 1km resolution gridded data from rain gauges. The majority of the full rain gauge network across the UK is operated by the EA, NRW, SEPA and Northern Ireland Water; supplementary rain gauges are operated by the Met Office. The Met Office NCIC monthly rainfall series extend back to 1836 and form

the official source of UK areal rainfall statistics which have been adopted by the NHMP. The gridding technique used is described in Hollis, 2019 available at <https://doi.org/10.1002/gdj3.78>

Long-term averages are based on the period 1991-2020 and are derived from the monthly areal series.

The regional figures for the current month in the hydrological summaries are based on a limited rain gauge network so these (and the associated return periods) should be regarded as a guide only.

The monthly rainfall figures are provided by the Met Office NCIC and are Crown Copyright and may not be passed on to, or published by, any unauthorised person or organisation. These are provisional totals calculated from a sub set of Met Office registered gauges and will be subject to change once data from the complete network of Met Office registered gauges has been quality assured and gridded within the annual process of updating the HadUK-Grid dataset.

For further details on rainfall or MORECS data, please contact the Met Office:

Tel: 0370 900 0100

Email: enquiries@metoffice.gov.uk

Enquiries

Enquiries should be directed to the NHMP:

Tel: 01491 692599

Email: nhmp@ceh.ac.uk

A full catalogue of past Hydrological Summaries can be accessed and downloaded at:

<http://nrfa.ceh.ac.uk/monthly-hydrological-summary-uk>

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