

Hydrological Summary

for the *United Kingdom*

General

February was another notably wet month, with rain-bearing systems often stalling over the UK during the first half of the month, enhancing rainfall totals across many regions. In the latter half, the UK experienced more typical westerlies, maintaining the unsettled weather. Rainfall for the UK was above average, but with pronounced regional contrasts. Much of England, Wales and Northern Ireland recorded above average totals, while Scotland, particularly the north and west, was notably dry. River flows were predominantly in the normal range to above, with several responsive catchments in eastern Scotland and south-west England registering record February flows. In contrast, some catchments in north-west Scotland registered notably low flows. Groundwater levels rose across much of the UK, reflecting the wet conditions, with exceptionally high levels widespread across southern England, although some Chalk and Jurassic Oolite boreholes began to show the first signs of recession. Reservoir stocks mostly rose or remained stable through February, with substantial increases at some impoundments (e.g. Farmoor +19%, Bewl +12%). Although positive anomalies were relatively small at the national scale, some individual reservoirs (e.g. Grafham), remained 9% below average. The UK Hydrological Outlook indicates an increased likelihood of above normal flows across southern and central England through the spring, with normal flows favoured elsewhere. Consequently, the risk of localised flooding remains elevated in parts of southern England. Overall water resources are generally in a healthy state as we move into spring; however, northern Scotland continues to show an increased risk of water scarcity, following a notably dry winter.

Rainfall

February saw a continuation of the unsettled and frequently wet conditions that characterised January. During the first half of the month, prolonged rainfall affected many areas, as a south-shifted jet stream repeatedly directed Atlantic frontal systems across the UK and cold air over Scandinavia slowed their eastward progression. Impacts were felt early, on the 3rd, the A379 coastal road between Torcross and Slapton (Devon) broke up following ongoing storm damage and further heavy rainfall. On the 5th, persistent rain affecting much of the UK contributed to a new national February daily rainfall record for Northern Ireland, with 140mm recorded at Trassey Slievenaman (County Down). During the second half of February, a more typical westerly regime became established, bringing further frontal rainfall, particularly across northern and western areas, while southern regions experienced drier and milder interludes before additional bands of rain arrived later in the month. For the UK overall, February rainfall totalled 123% of average. Southern and central England were particularly wet, with large areas receiving more than twice the long-term average; Severn Trent region recorded its fifth wettest February since 1890. Similar above average February totals were recorded in parts of eastern Scotland and Northern Ireland. North-west Britain was a notable exception, with rainfall close to or below average; parts of the Highlands and Speyside received less than half of the February average. Over winter (December-February), the South West and Wessex regions both recorded their second wettest winter on record (series from 1890). Conversely, in parts of northern Scotland, less than half the average winter rainfall was recorded. Since the autumn (September-February), Northern Ireland experienced its wettest such period on record.

River Flows

River flows entered February generally above average, following the wet conditions in January. Many responsive catchments reacted rapidly to further rainfall early in the month. Sustained rainfall on the 8/9th triggered high flows across eastern Scotland, with the Ythan, Scottish Don, and Bervie all registering their second highest February peak flows in series of at least 42 years. In southern England, the Lymington recorded its highest February peak flow (in a series since 1976). Recessions were established during drier interludes mid-month; however, high flows returned across parts of England later in the month, and at month-end the Soar recorded its second highest peak flow of any month (in a series since 1971). Monthly mean flows were predominantly in the above normal to exceptionally high range across the UK, with the Deveron, Ythan, Dorset Stour, and Kenwyn registering

record February mean flows (all in records spanning more than four decades). Particularly strong runoff responses were evident on the Ythan, Soar, Warwickshire Avon and Dorset Stour, whose monthly mean flows exceeded three times the February average. In marked contrast, persistent rainfall deficits in north-west Scotland were reflected in notably suppressed flows. February mean flows were less than half of average in the Inver and Ness, and less than a third of average on the Ewe. Winter (December-February) mean flows displayed a similar spatial pattern, with record winter flows recorded in eastern Scotland and south-west England (e.g. Ythan, Dart, Tone). Over the September-February period, exceptionally persistent wet conditions contributed to record flows on the Annacloy, Tawe and Kenwyn. In Northern Ireland, outflows for the same period were the second highest on record, in a series beginning in 1980, underscoring the sustained hydrological impacts of the wet autumn and winter.

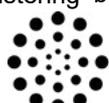
Soil Moisture and Groundwater

Soils remained in the normal to above normal range at most COSMOS-UK sites, and Soil Moisture Deficits across the UK were ameliorated. In the Chalk, groundwater levels increased across southern England and levels at most sites were exceptionally high; however, some boreholes began to plateau or drop from January's record levels. In East Anglia and south-east England, levels increased and were typically within the normal range, although at Frying Pan Lodge they remained notably low. In East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, levels increased to notably and exceptionally high, though at Wetwang and Dalton Holme, levels also showed signs of decline; at Aylesby, this resulted in a new end-of-February maximum (in a series of 48 years). Levels at Killyglen decreased to the normal range. In the Jurassic Oolite at Ampney Crucis, groundwater levels increased slightly before beginning to decline but remained exceptionally high. Levels in the Magnesian Limestone continued to increase, rising rapidly at Brick House Farm into the exceptionally high range. The Carboniferous Limestone continued to show contrasting behaviour, with levels continuing to increase at Greenfield Garage and Pant y Lladron to exceptionally and notably high levels, whereas at Alstonfield, levels continued to plateau. In the Permo-Triassic sandstones, levels remained stable in Scotland and Cumbria yet increased elsewhere. Levels in the Upper Greensand at Lime Kiln Way continued to rise, remaining exceptionally high. In the Fell Sandstone at Royalty Observatory, levels continued to increase, reaching above normal conditions. In the Devonian sandstone at Feddan Junction, levels remained stable and below normal.

February 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	Feb 2026	Jan26 – Feb26		Dec25 – Feb26		Sep25 – Feb26		Mar25 – Feb26	
				RP		RP		RP		RP
United Kingdom	mm	119	261		390		794		1134	
	%	123	120	8-12	114	5-10	117	20-30	98	2-5
England	mm	113	237		342		663		881	
	%	170	159	30-50	143	20-30	136	30-50	102	2-5
Scotland	mm	117	272		425		907		1426	
	%	83	85	2-5	86	2-5	96	2-5	91	2-5
Wales	mm	163	338		541		1135		1520	
	%	135	123	5-10	121	5-10	129	25-40	105	2-5
Northern Ireland	mm	119	315		416		865		1284	
	%	130	153	40-60	127	15-25	133	>>100	111	15-25
England & Wales	mm	119	251		369		727		968	
	%	162	151	20-30	138	15-25	134	30-50	103	2-5
North West	mm	116	217		390		932		1355	
	%	110	94	2-5	103	2-5	124	30-50	106	5-10
Northumbria	mm	94	200		281		629		861	
	%	133	130	8-12	114	5-10	126	20-30	95	2-5
Severn-Trent	mm	124	234		329		638		815	
	%	215	181	50-80	157	30-50	147	50-80	102	2-5
Yorkshire	mm	99	197		293		654		858	
	%	143	133	5-10	124	5-10	136	25-40	99	2-5
Anglian	mm	77	160		214		427		577	
	%	183	168	30-50	142	10-20	130	10-20	92	2-5
Thames	mm	101	221		303		529		685	
	%	190	177	40-60	153	20-30	130	10-20	95	2-5
Southern	mm	118	287		384		659		851	
	%	187	190	80-120	158	25-40	133	10-20	104	2-5
Wessex	mm	142	319		458		764		942	
	%	207	195	>100	175	70-100	144	30-50	105	2-5
South West	mm	191	443		650		1102		1466	
	%	179	181	70-100	165	70-100	144	60-90	117	10-20
Welsh	mm	159	332		529		1099		1467	
	%	139	126	5-10	124	5-10	131	30-50	105	2-5
Highland	mm	112	240		404		944		1568	
	%	64	61	2-5	66	2-5	83	2-5	84	2-5
North East	mm	99	276		354		652		946	
	%	124	153	30-50	126	10-15	109	5-10	89	2-5
Tay	mm	131	370		525		922		1352	
	%	109	130	8-12	121	5-10	111	5-10	97	2-5
Forth	mm	103	214		349		726		1118	
	%	96	88	2-5	93	2-5	101	2-5	90	2-5
Tweed	mm	91	203		310		643		976	
	%	102	103	2-5	99	2-5	104	5-10	90	2-5
Solway	mm	120	281		480		1043		1572	
	%	89	93	2-5	100	2-5	111	10-15	100	2-5
Clyde	mm	138	304		498		1117		1772	
	%	80	78	2-5	83	2-5	97	2-5	94	2-5

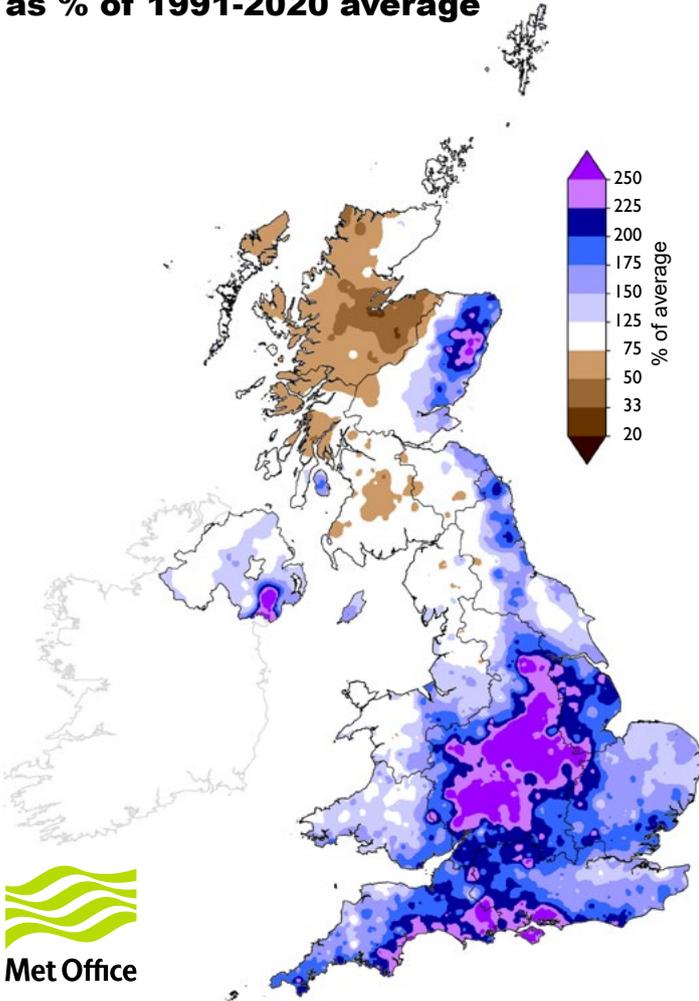
% = percentage of 1991-2020 average

RP = Return period

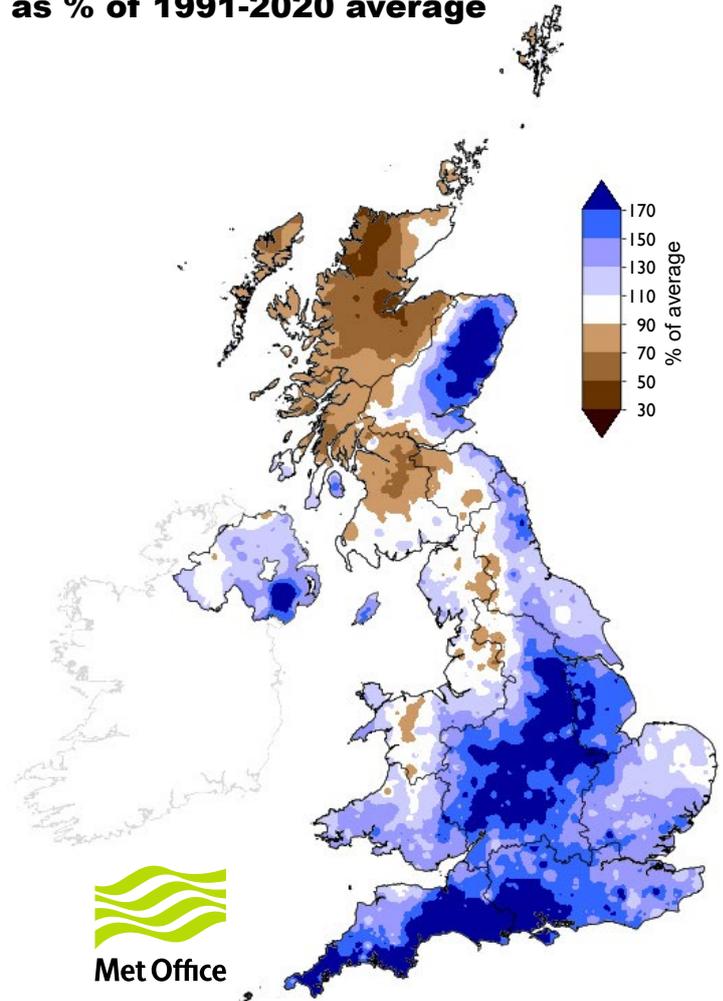
Important note: Figures in the above table may be quoted provided their source is acknowledged. Where appropriate, specific mention must be made of the uncertainties associated with the return period estimates. The RP estimates are based on data provided by the Met Office and reflect climatic variability 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

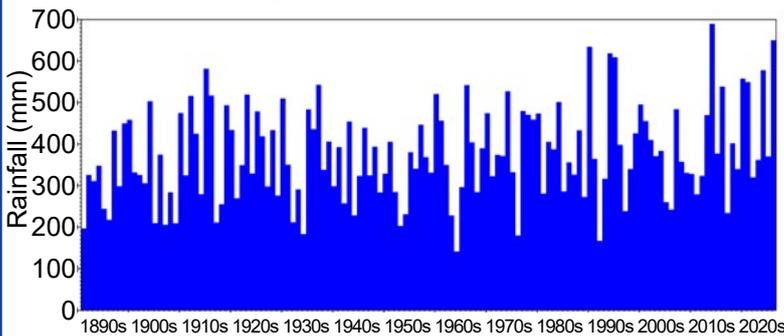
February 2026 rainfall as % of 1991-2020 average



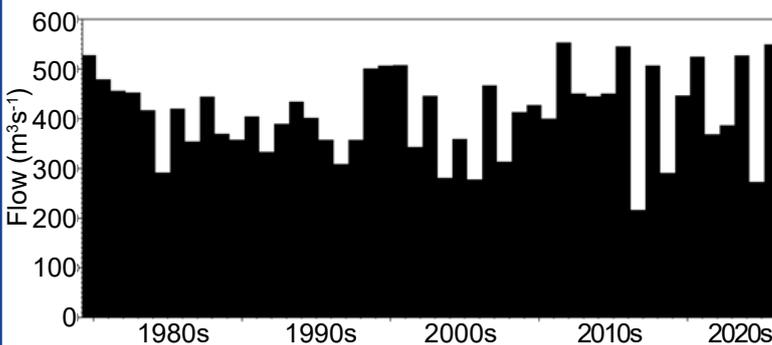
December 2025 - February 2026 rainfall as % of 1991-2020 average



Winter (December - February) rainfall for South West England



September - February mean outflows for Northern Ireland



UK Hydrological Outlook

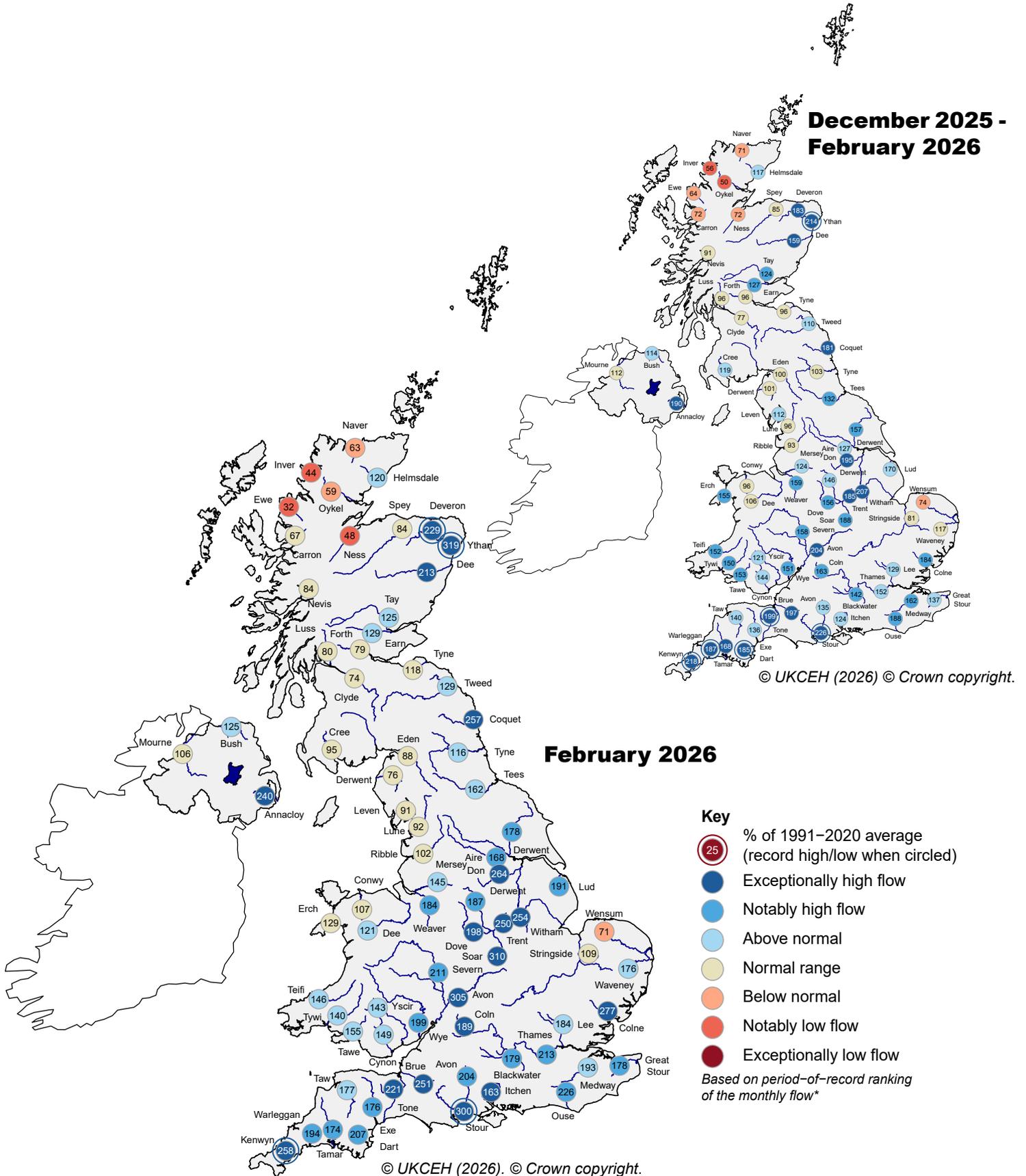
The Hydrological Outlook provides an insight into future hydrological conditions across the UK. Specifically it describes likely trajectories for river flows and groundwater levels on a monthly basis, with particular focus on the next three months.

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

Period: from March 2026
Issued: 09.03.2026
using data to the end of February 2026

The outlook for March is for above normal river flows and groundwater levels across parts of southern and central England. River flows and groundwater levels elsewhere are likely to be normal to above normal for March. Over the March-May period, above normal river flows and groundwater levels are likely in southern and central England. Across the rest of the UK, river flows are likely to be in the normal range and groundwater levels are likely to remain normal to above normal throughout Spring.

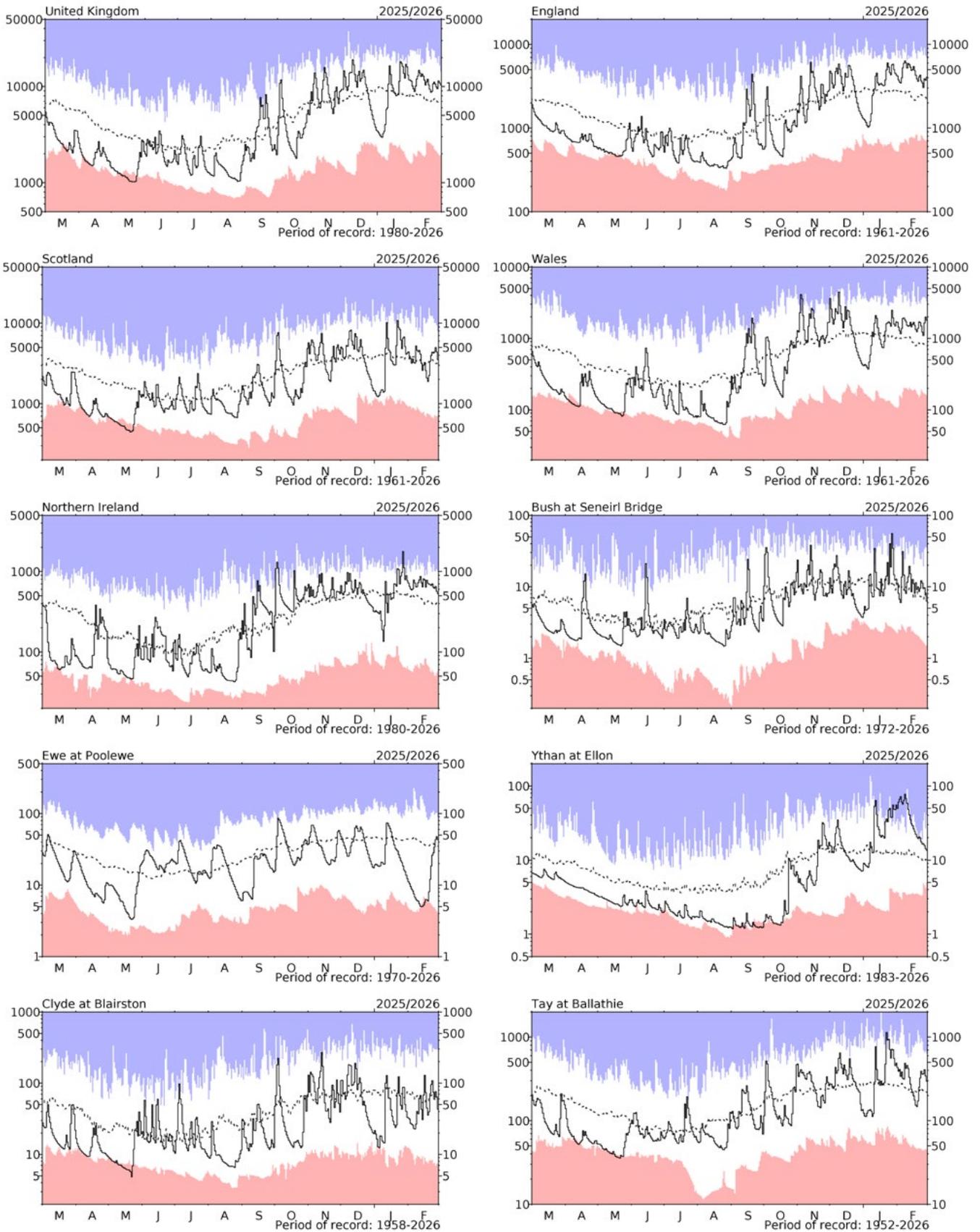
River flow



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.

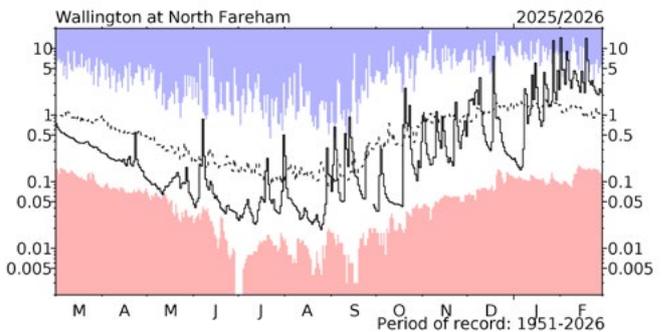
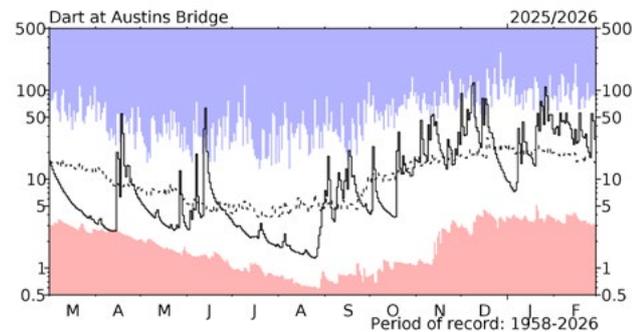
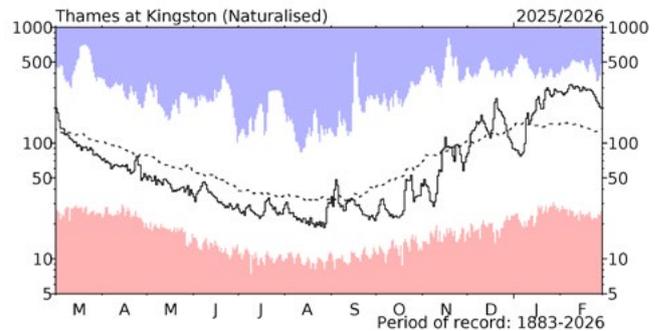
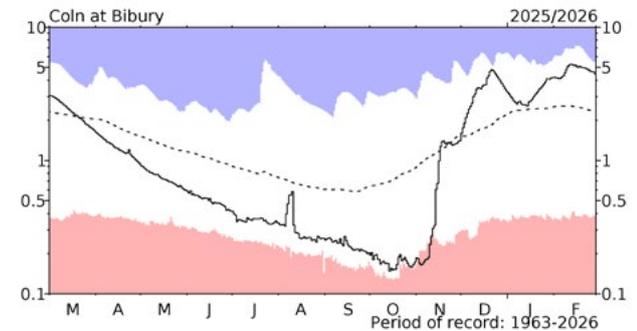
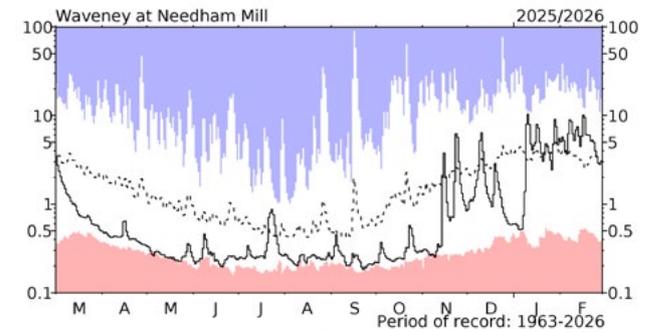
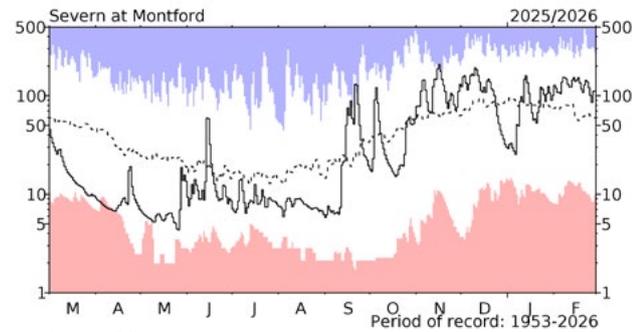
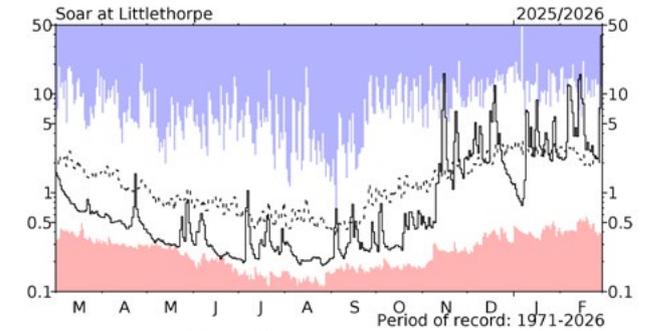
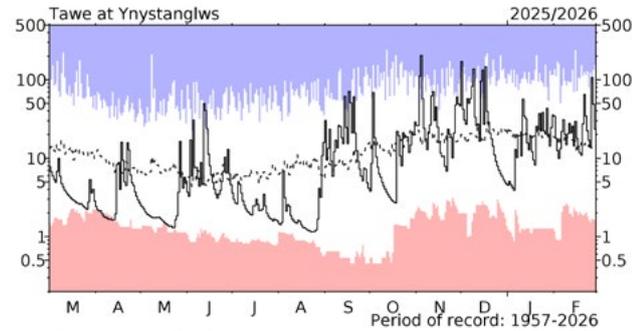
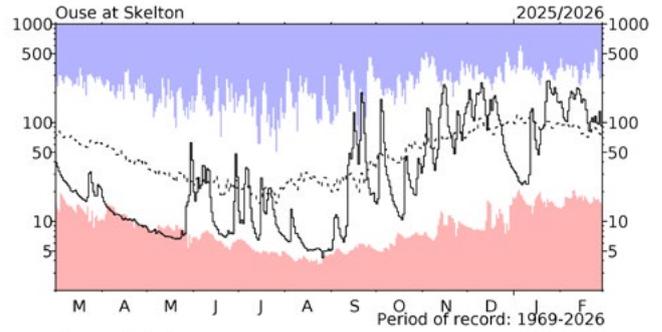
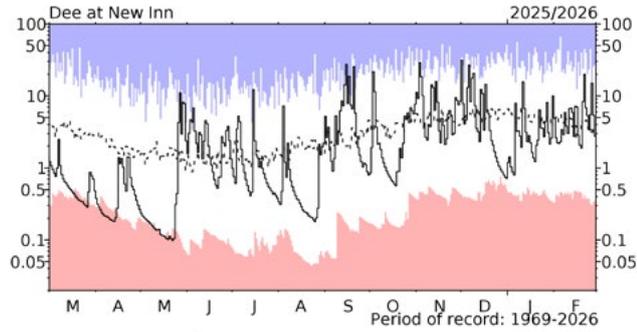
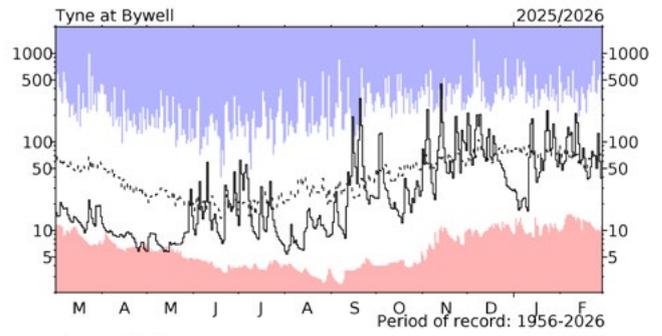
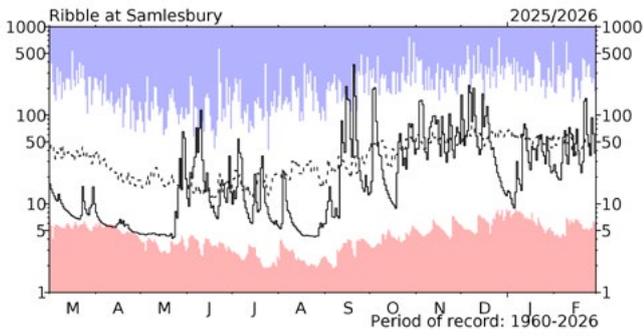
River flow



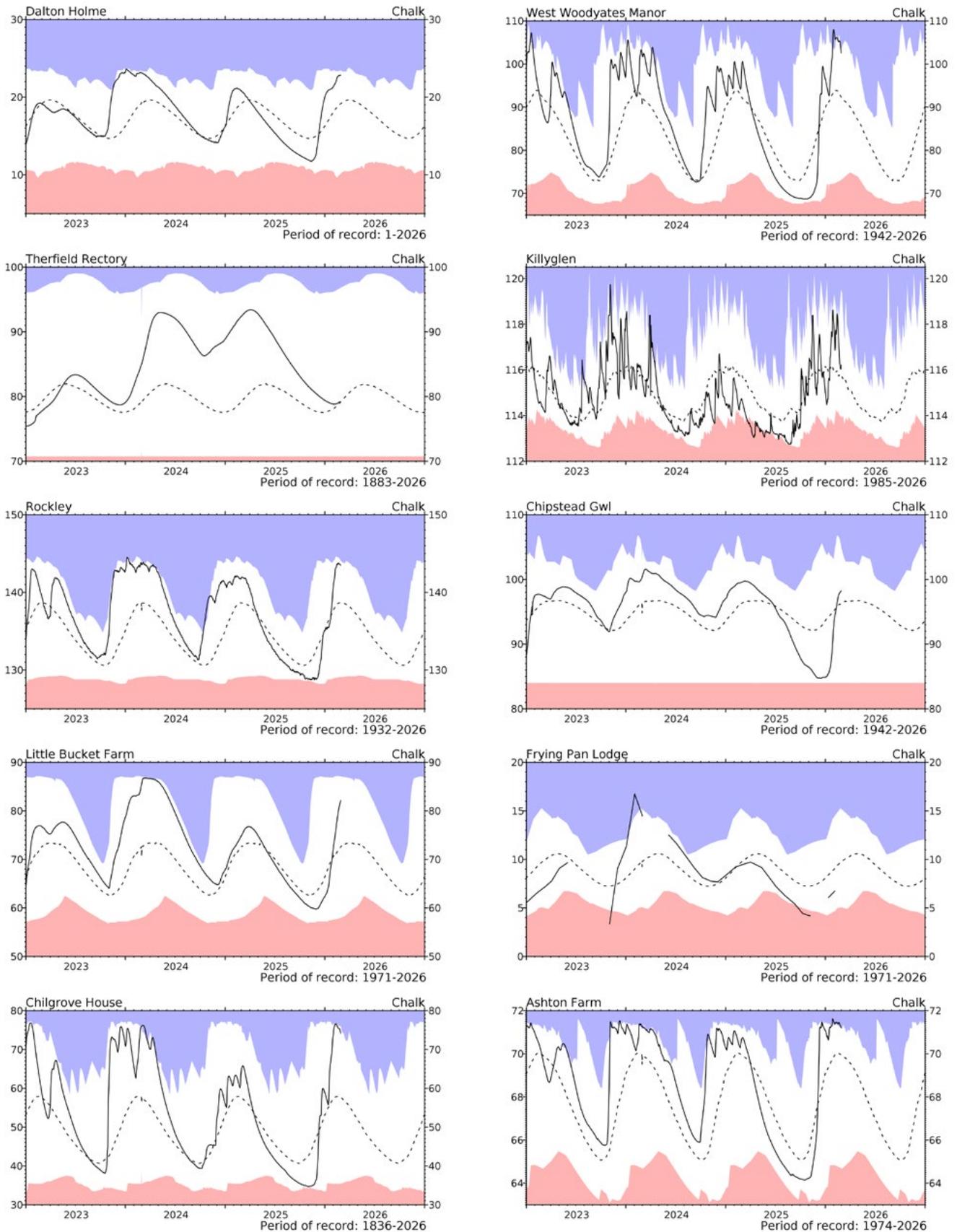
River flow hydrographs

*The river flow hydrographs show the daily mean flows (measured in m^3s^{-1}) together with the maximum and minimum daily flows prior to March 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

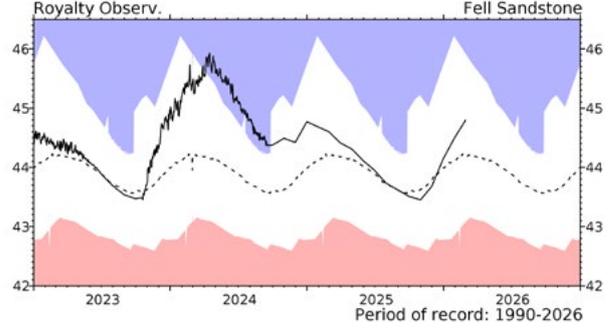
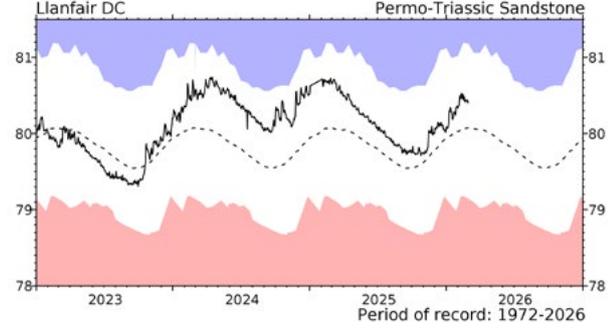
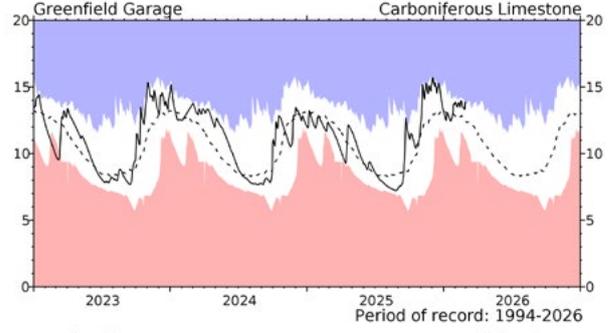
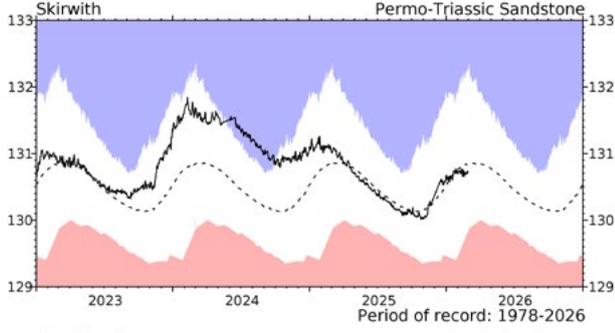
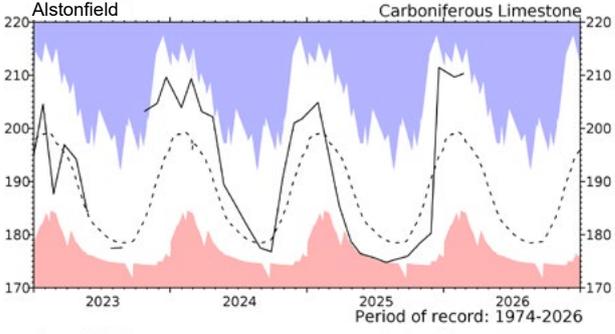
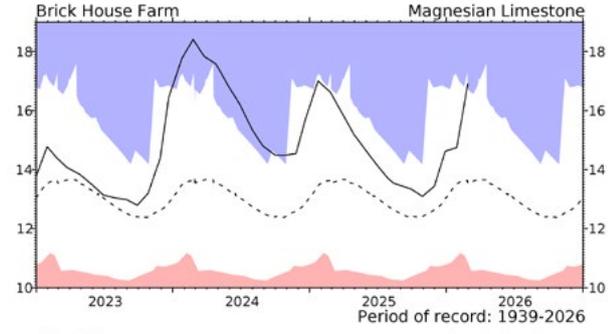
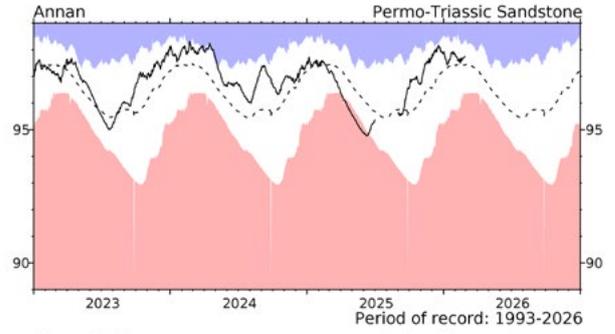
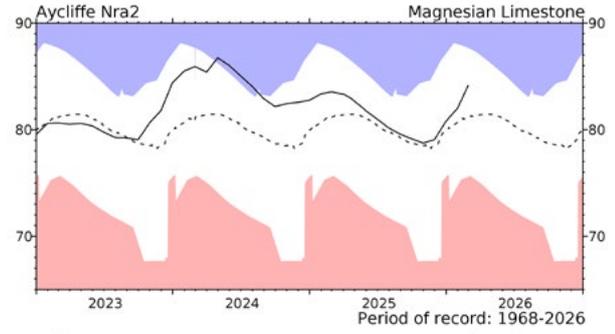
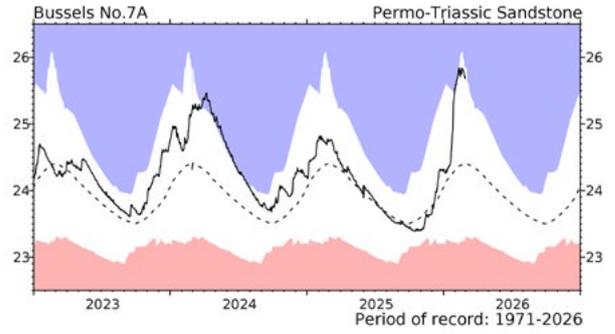
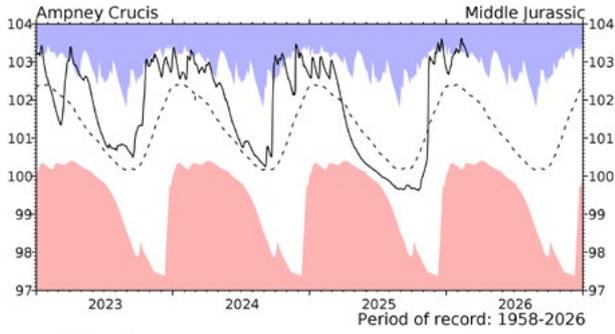
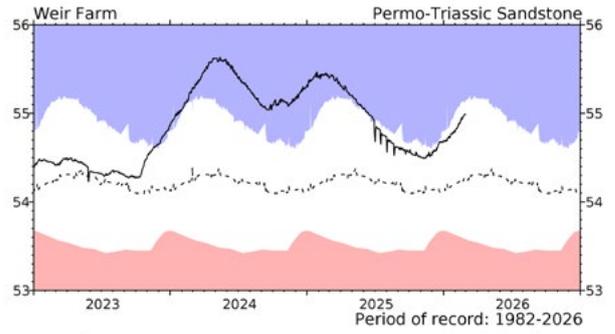
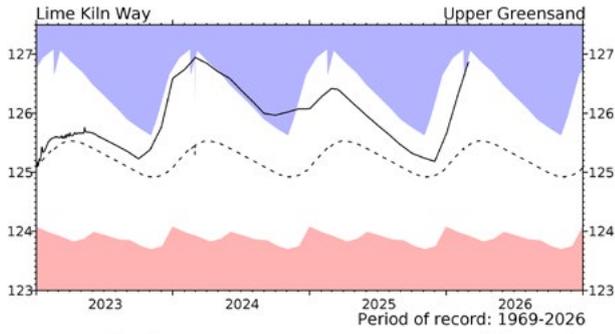


Groundwater

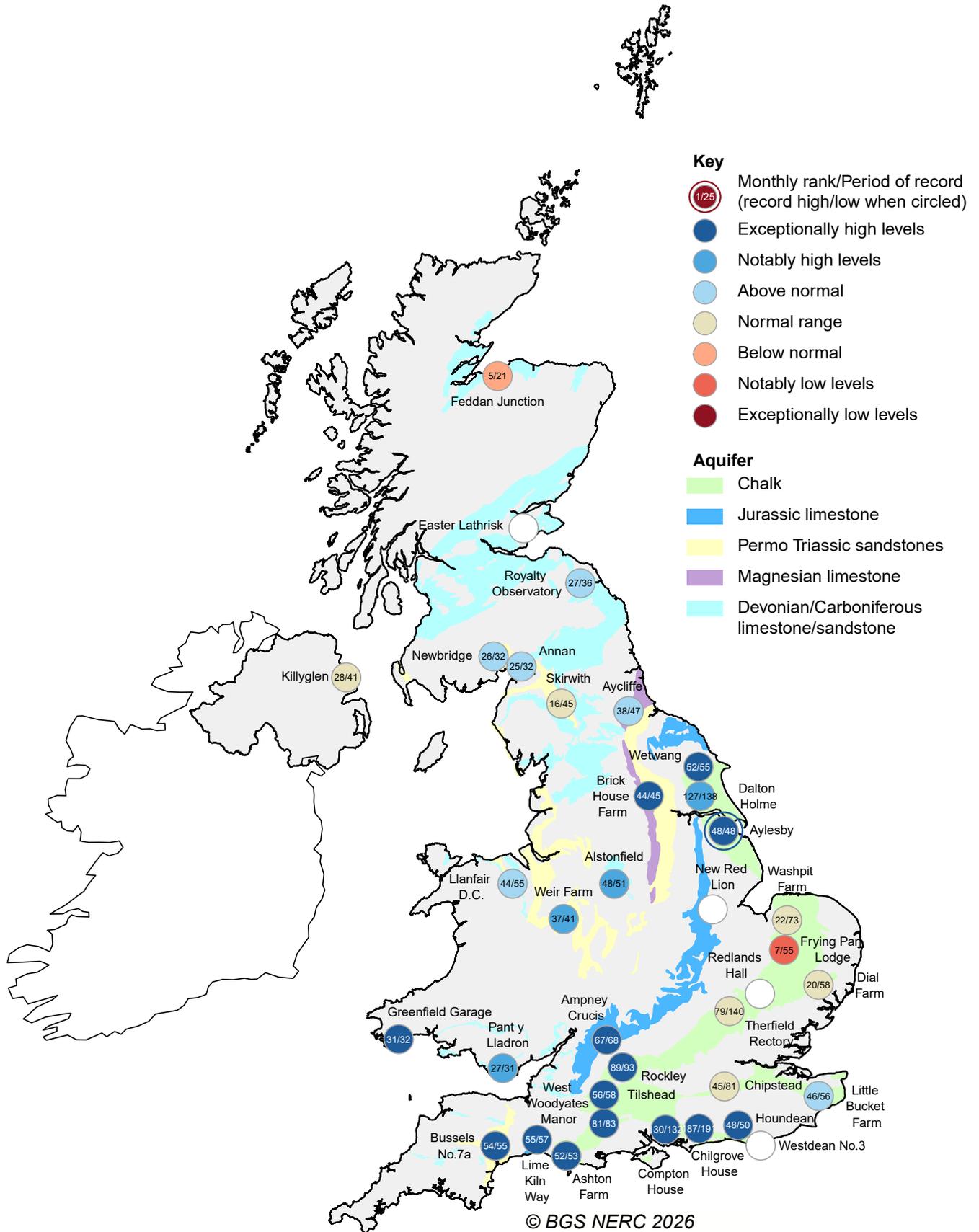


Groundwater levels (measured in metres above ordnance datum) normally rise and fall with the seasons, reaching a peak in the spring following replenishment through the winter (when evaporation losses are low and soil moist). They decline through the summer and early autumn. This seasonal variation is 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

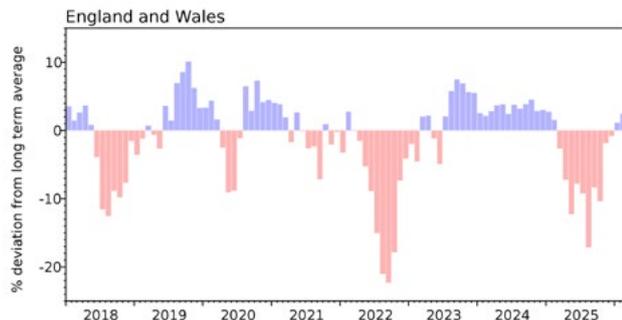


Groundwater levels - February 2026

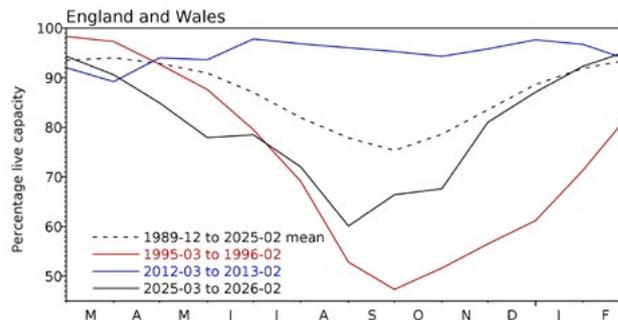
The calculation of ranking has been modified from that used in summaries published prior to October 2012. It is now based on a comparison between the most recent level and levels for the same date during previous years of record. Where appropriate, levels for earlier years may have been interpolated. 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 Dec	2026 Jan	2026 Feb	Feb Anom.	Min Feb	Year* of min	2025 Feb	Diff 26-25
North West	N Command Zone •	124929	88	87	93	0	78	1996	93	0
	Vyrnwy	55146	100	100	100	5	59	1996	100	0
Northumbrian	Teesdale •	87936	94	100	100	7	72	1996	96	4
	Kielder (199175)		84	91	93	0	81	1993	89	4
Severn-Trent	Clywedog	49936	84	87	94	2	77	1996	95	-1
	Derwent Valley •	46692	98	100	100	4	46	1996	94	6
Yorkshire	Washburn •	23373	91	96	99	6	53	1996	95	5
	Bradford Supply •	40942	88	100	100	5	53	1996	98	1
Anglian	Grafham (55490)		71	74	79	-9	72	1997	95	-16
	Rutland (116580)		81	92	97	8	71	2012	93	4
Thames	London •	202828	86	88	90	-3	83	1988	94	-4
	Farmoor •	13822	97	80	99	6	64	1991	88	11
Southern	Bewl	31000	60	82	94	7	40	2012	91	3
	Ardingly	4685	78	100	100	3	46	2012	100	0
Wessex	Clatworthy	5662	100	100	100	2	82	1992	100	0
	Bristol • (38666)		90	100	100	7	65	1992	100	0
South West	Colliford	28540	66	80	90	4	49	2023	89	1
	Roadford	34500	84	97	100	15	35	1996	100	0
	Wimbleball	21320	75	100	100	4	72	1996	100	0
	Stithians	4967	90	100	100	6	45	1992	100	0
Welsh	Celyn & Brenig •	131155	90	90	94	-3	69	1996	87	7
	Brienne	62140	100	100	100	2	89	2023	100	0
	Big Five •	69762	88	97	100	4	85	1988	100	0
	Elan Valley •	99106	96	100	100	2	88	1993	100	0
Scotland(E)	Edinburgh/Mid-Lothian •	97223	89	94	97	1	73	1999	95	2
	East Lothian •	9317	100	100	99	0	91	1990	100	-1
Scotland(W)	Loch Katrine •	110326	98	98	97	1	76	2010	100	-3
	Daer	22494	92	100	100	2	88	2024	92	8
	Loch Thom	10721	96	100	100	1	90	2004	100	0
Northern	Total*	56800	98	100	98	6	81	2004	93	5
Ireland	Silent Valley •	20634	100	100	100	10	57	2002	99	1

() figures in parentheses relate to gross storage

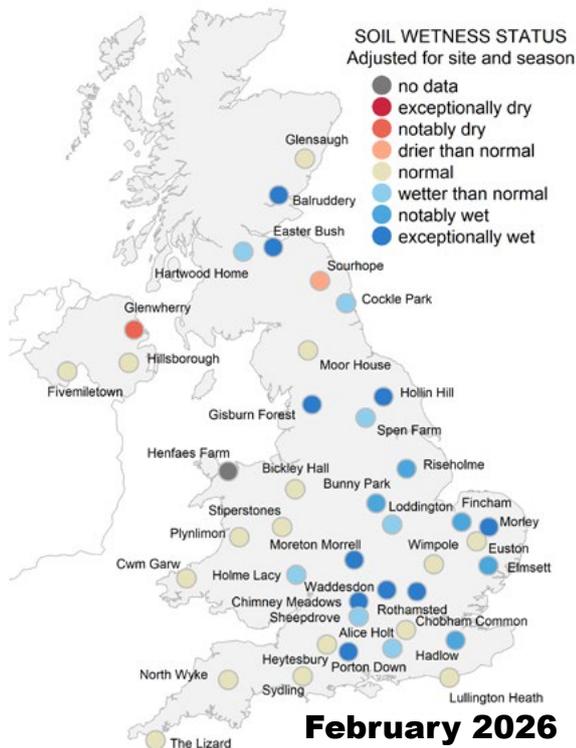
• denotes reservoir groups

*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



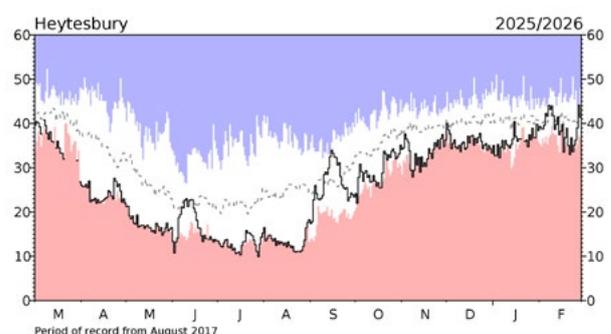
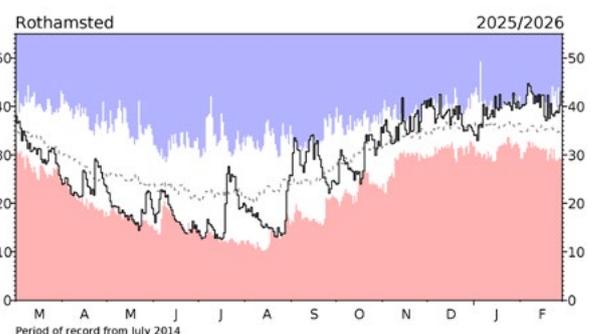
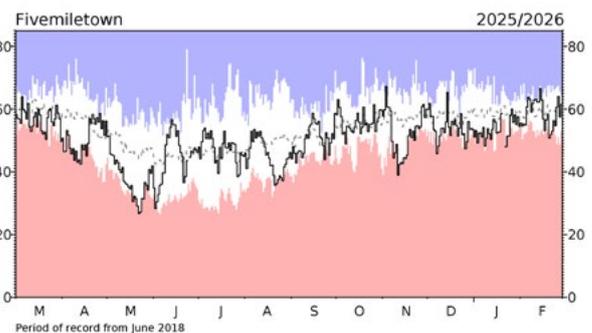
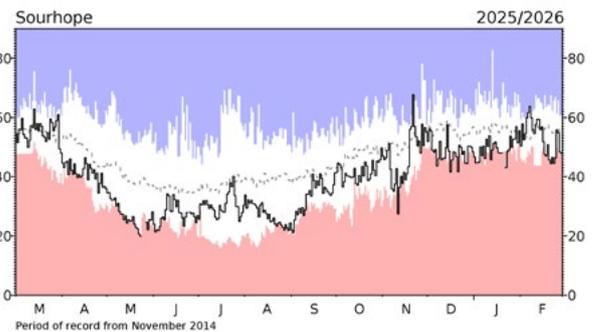
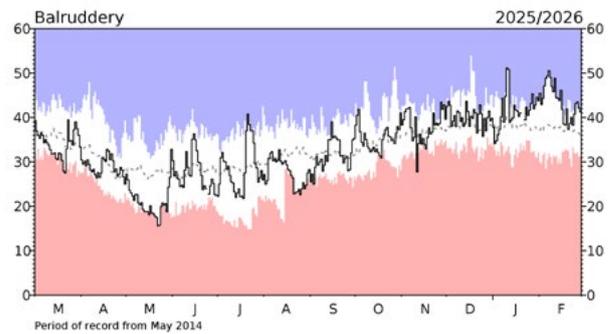
Daily mean soil moisture status at COSMOS-UK sites on the last day of the month 31 January 2026. Soil wetness categories are adjusted for site specific characteristics, i.e. taking account of the possible range of soil wetness at each site, determined through period-of-record data and hindcast modelling.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

Soil moisture remained high across the network, with many sites retaining the wet conditions established in January or becoming wetter. In England, sites in the south and the Midlands (e.g. Heytesbury, Lullington, Riseholme, and Rothamsted) all recorded stable or increasing wetness, consistent with the above-average rainfall England received during the month. In Northern Ireland, Fivemiletown similarly saw increased wetness, reflecting the above-average rainfall across that region. Scotland and the border region presented a more mixed picture, where the slightly drier February kept most sites stable. Sourhope and Glenwherry are exceptions, recording soil moisture below field capacity by the end of the month.

Overall, soil moisture across the COSMOS-UK network is high due to the sustained wet conditions that have characterised much of the last couple of months.

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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