

Soil moisture on 30 April 2026 (see back page for explanatory comments).

April carried on the trend seen in March, with increasingly warm weather and significantly below average precipitation across England and Wales leading to many sites throughout the Midlands and South becoming dry.

The UK saw its seventh warmest April on record, and significant regional variation in precipitation rates, with England and Wales dropping significantly to 33% of average rainfall for the month, and Scotland seeing above average (108%) rainfall, in part due to Storm Dave at the beginning of the month. The driest areas including the South-East which saw just 11% of average rainfall, and Central England which saw 23% of average.

The drying trend this month is highlighted by the majority of sites across the network, and all sites in the Midlands and the South now sit at “well below field capacity” or “dry”, with three locations – Euston, Holme Lacy and Lullington – recording their driest ever soil moisture for April. Scotland and Northern Ireland saw limited drying, and maintained similar levels to last month, with sites such as Glensaugh, Balruddery, and Glenwherry seeing very similar soil moisture levels to the end of March.

Significantly below average precipitation across England and Wales saw a continuation of the drying trend that began in March, accelerating the drying of most sites in stark contrast to the very wet beginning of this year. Current trends point to further drying of soil across the network if precipitation rates do not increase.

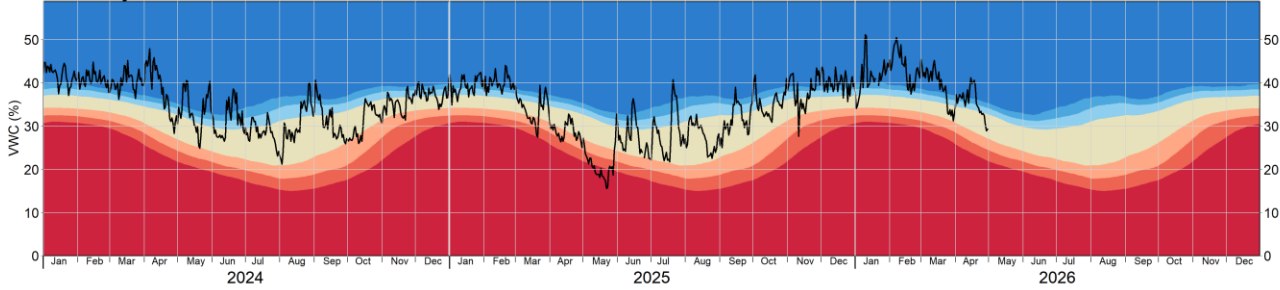
Network news

The planned preventative maintenance season continues at pace, alongside our logger upgrade campaign, with site visits across the network this month to Spen Farm, Gisburn Forest, Loddington, Moreton Morrell, Hollin Hill, Stiperstones, and Bickley Hall.

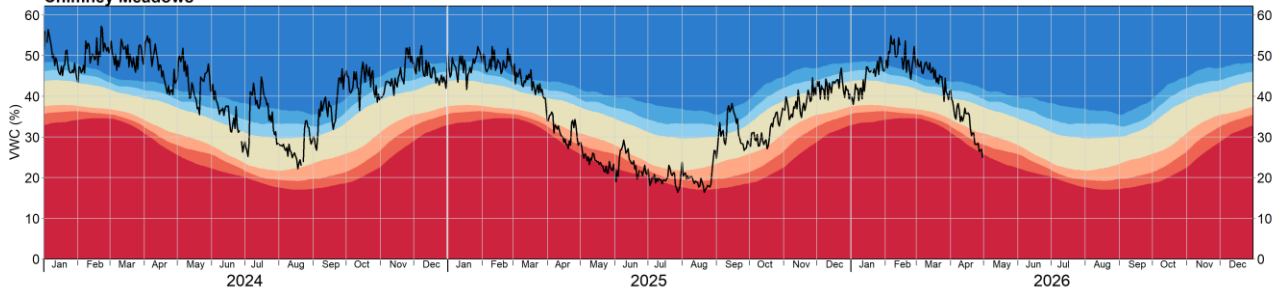
To note, our site at Gisburn had issues this month and only collected soil moisture data over a short period of time, and therefore the value for the site on the figures above is likely inaccurate.



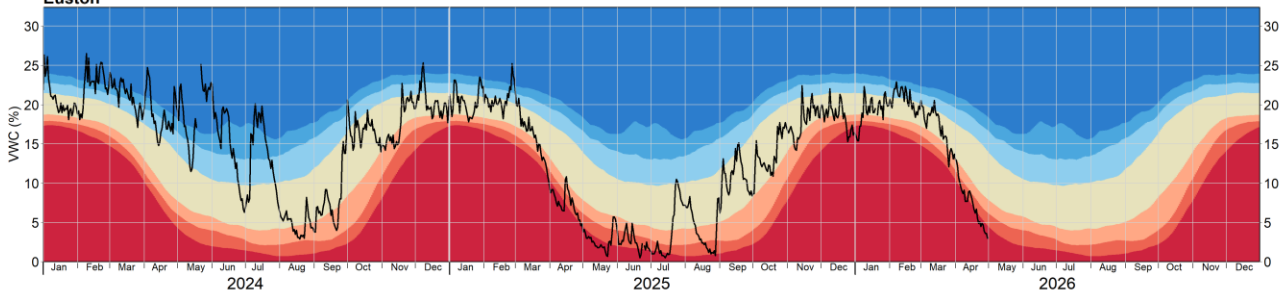
Balruddery



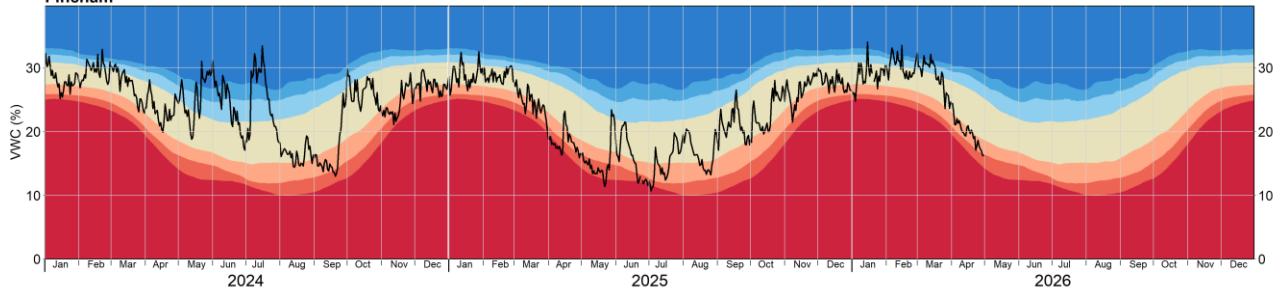
Chimney Meadows



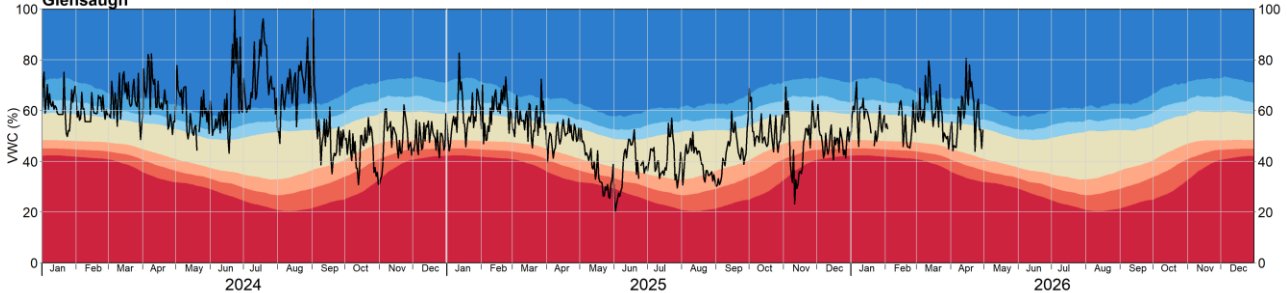
Euston

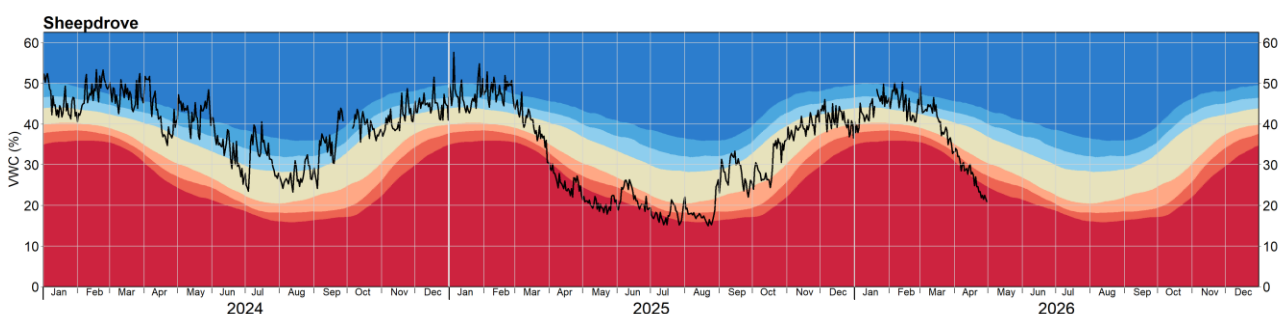
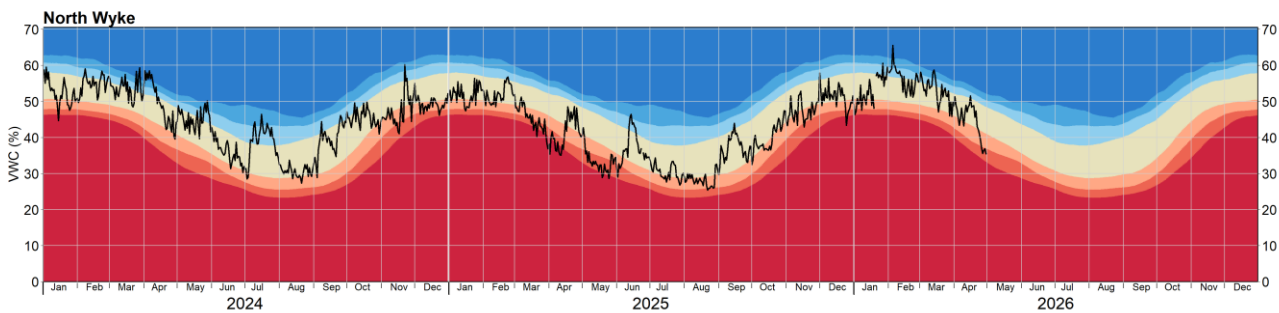
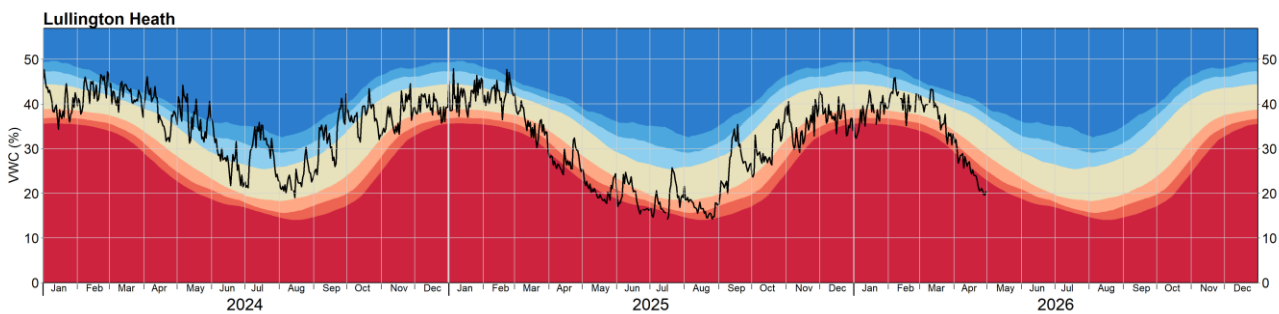
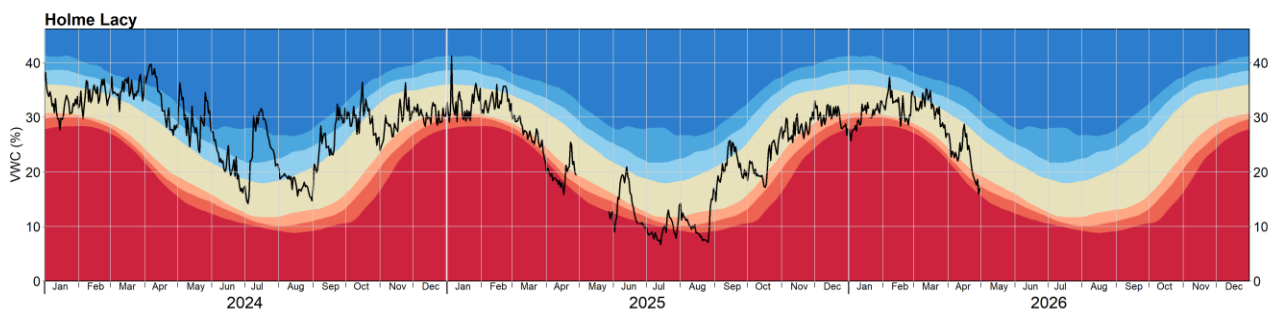
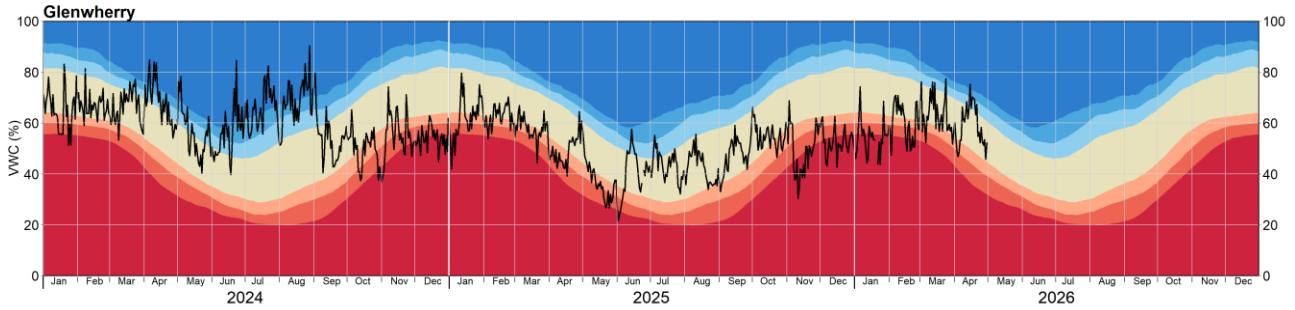


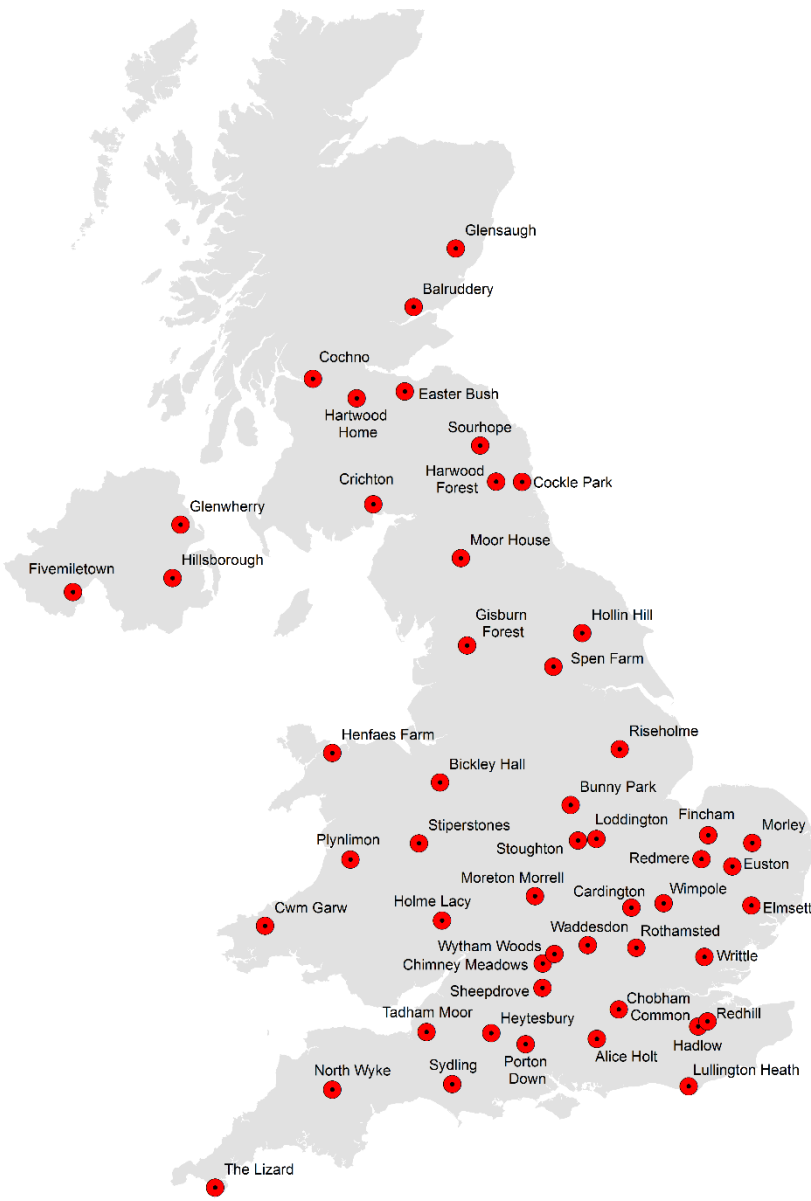
Fincham



Glensaugh







About the maps on page 1: The maps show daily mean soil moisture on the last day of the month. Colours indicate wetness as in the legends.

The map on the left shows wetness as the volumetric water content (VWC) of the soil which is constrained by soil type, i.e. some soils are able to hold more water than others as indicated by the shape of the symbol.

The map on the right presents soil wetness adjusted for site specific characteristics, i.e. taking account of the possible range of soil wetness at each site. Field capacity (FC) is a key point in this range. When soil moisture is below FC soil moisture is said to be in deficit, i.e. there is a (positive) soil moisture deficit (SMD).

Grey shaded areas on these two maps represent principal aquifers.

About the graphs on pages 2 and 3: The black line shows VWC. The coloured bands indicate how VWC compares to historical variability for the site and time of year.

- exceptionally dry
- notably dry
- drier than normal
- normal
- wetter than normal
- notably wet
- exceptionally wet

About soil moisture: Soil moisture varies in the short term (hours to days) with rainfall and as water drains through the soil. Longer term variation is driven by the seasonal difference between rainfall and evaporation. Thus soil moisture decreases in the summer when evaporation exceeds rainfall but increases when this is reversed. In most winters under UK conditions, soil moisture reaches a relatively constant value, known as the field capacity. Field capacity is a measure of how much water the soil can hold against gravity and is strongly dependent on the soil type. Soils are expected to be around field capacity after being wetted to above field capacity and the excess water (e.g. from macropores) has drained away under gravity, which can take several days after heavy rain, to reach a near steady state. Differences in soil type and weather patterns cause variations in soil moisture between sites including when the soil returns to field capacity in autumn/winter and when soil moisture decreases in the spring/summer.

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