Hydrological Summary *for the United Kingdom*

April 2026

General

While April was characteristically changeable and Scotland saw above average rainfall it was a dry month overall. The UK registered 77% of average April rainfall but England received only 38%, and parts of the south and east were significantly drier. April also saw above average sunshine and, despite some wintry interludes, was warm, 1.1°C above the typical April average temperature. England and Wales both registered their sixth warmest Aprils on record, in a series from 1884, although April 2025 was warmer. Away from Scotland, the dry April follows a below average March, with the spring of 2026 so far standing in stark contrast to the very wet autumn/winter of 2025-2026. The warm and persistently dry weather triggered steep declines in soil moisture, bringing concerns for agriculture and heightened fire risk (the final week saw wildfires reported in parts of Scotland, Northern Ireland and upland Wales, e.g. the Elan valley). River flows also receded, with below normal April flows in many southern and eastern catchments. While there were slight decreases in some reservoirs, stocks remained close to average at most impoundments and above average at the national scale. Groundwater levels generally continued to decline during April, but levels remained in the normal range across most of the Chalk aquifer and mostly normal or above normal elsewhere. Early May saw largely dry weather and continued river flow recessions. The latest UK Hydrological Outlook indicates current below normal flows in southern and central England are likely to persist and without significant late spring rainfall could continue into summer.

Rainfall

The opening days of April were unsettled, culminating in the passage of storm 'Dave' on the 4th/5th. The storm bought high winds, with an amber warning in the north-west and widespread power disruption, and snowfall to the Scottish Highlands, but only modest rainfall totals (e.g. 30mm in parts of north-west Scotland). While there were more settled and warmer anticyclonic interludes (Kew Gardens recorded 26.6°C on the 8th) a largely unsettled theme continued through to mid-month, with further frontal incursions bringing occasionally heavy (and sometimes wintry) showers, especially to the north. Most southern and eastern areas received little appreciable rainfall other than frontal showers on the 12th/13th and convective rainfall on the 27th. From around the 18th, anticyclonic conditions became established and dominated the final weeks, bringing widespread dry weather across all areas, accompanied by well-above-average temperatures from the 23rd. For April as a whole, England was very dry, with 38% of the typical rainfall, and exceptionally so in the south and east – Thames and Southern regions received 8mm (16% and 15% of average, respectively) while Anglian received only 5mm (12% of average and the fourth driest in a series from 1890). In contrast, Scotland saw 117% of average, it's fourth wettest April on record (in a series from 1890), while Tay region received 135% of average. Totals for spring so far (March-April) show a similar pattern: Anglian region registered its fourth driest March-April while the Highland region registered its sixth wettest (both in series from 1890). Longer-term accumulations were generally near- or above-average across the country, reflecting the wet autumn and winter.

River Flows

Early April saw flows rise in many responsive rivers in north-west Britain, triggered by storm 'Dave' and other frontal episodes, leading to numerous flood warnings, particularly in Scotland. On the 4th the Luss Water registered its fourth highest April peak flow (in a record from 1976) while on the 5th, the Earn (eastern Scotland) registered its highest April peak flow (in a record from 1952). Thereafter, while there were further modest responses mid-month, most northern and western rivers saw recessions become established, with steep declines over the last two weeks. Elsewhere, most rivers receded throughout April, with many lowland catchments seeing a continuation of longer-term seasonal declines established in late February/early March. Average flows for April were mostly above normal in western Scotland and notably high in several catchments (exceptionally so in the Ness, which registered 148% of average), whereas flows across much of northern England, Wales and Northern Ireland were in the normal range. In eastern Scotland and northeast England flows were in the normal range or below, while below normal flows were prevalent across southern England, East Anglia and parts of the Midlands and Yorkshire. The Waveney registered its fifth lowest April flow (in a record from 1964), but some groundwater-fed catchments saw near- or above-average flows (e.g. the Itchen and the Lud), bolstered by the wet winter. Similarly, despite the dry spring so far for many areas, accumulated river flows for March-April were typically unexceptional thanks to the residual effect of the late winter rainfall.

Soil Moisture and Groundwater

While soil moisture levels declined everywhere in the dry and warm conditions in late April, they typically remained normal or above normal at COSMOS-UK stations in the north and west. However, levels declined steeply in south-east England and were exceptionally low at month-end, with substantial soil moisture deficits. Correspondingly, in the Chalk of southern England, groundwater levels continued to decline, with the majority reaching the normal range from previously above normal levels. In East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, levels in the Chalk continued to decrease, and were in the normal range to below normal. Contrastingly, in East Anglia levels increased or plateaued but remained in the normal range. At Killyglen, levels fluctuated but increased to within the normal range. In the Jurassic limestones, levels continued to decline to the normal and above normal range at Ampney Crucis and New Red Lion, respectively. In the Magnesian Limestone levels decreased, falling to above normal conditions at Brick House Farm but remaining notably high at Aycliffe. In the Carboniferous Limestone levels decreased substantially, with levels at Pant y Lladron falling to a record low for the end of April (in a record from 1995). Levels in the Permo-Triassic sandstones, Bussels No 7a transitioned from notably high to above normal, while at Newbridge and Skirwith, despite the slight decline, levels remained in the notably high and normal ranges, respectively. In the Upper Greensand at Lime Kiln Way levels continued to decrease but remained exceptionally high. Groundwater levels in the Fell Sandstone decreased, ranging from notably low to above normal. In the Devonian sandstone at Feddan Junction, levels increased in early April before declining, but remained in the normal range.

National Hydrological Monitoring Programme | UKCEH | BGS British Geological Survey

Rainfall

Rainfall accumulations and return period estimates

Percentages are from the 1991-2020 average.

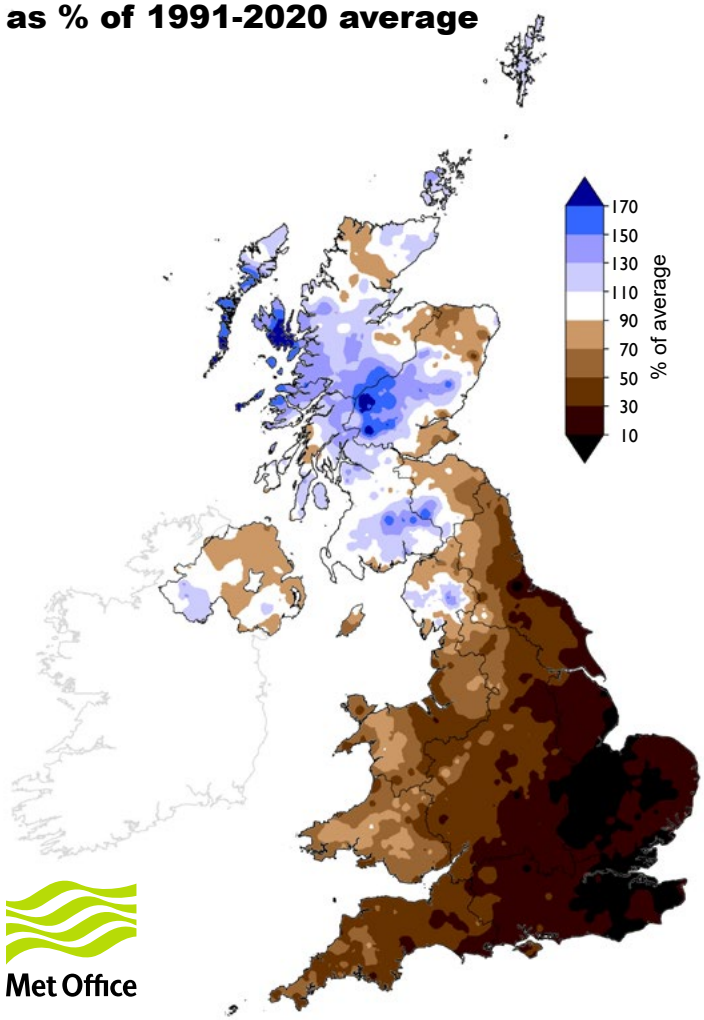
Region	Rainfall	Apr 2026	Mar26 – Apr26	RP	Nov25 – Apr26	RP	Aug25 – Apr26	RP	May25 – Apr26	RP
United Kingdom	mm	**55**	142		694		994		1198	
	%	**77**	90	2-5	111	10-15	107	5-10	104	5-10
England	mm	**21**	70		549		764		907	
	%	**38**	61	5-10	123	10-20	113	5-10	105	2-5
Scotland	mm	**109**	257		862		1264		1559	
	%	**117**	118	5-10	99	2-5	98	2-5	99	2-5
Wales	mm	**56**	151		950		1353		1577	
	%	**63**	79	2-5	119	10-15	115	8-12	108	5-10
Northern Ireland	mm	**68**	150		715		1082		1323	
	%	**92**	93	2-5	117	30-50	119	>>100	115	30-50
England & Wales	mm	**26**	81		604		844		999	
	%	**43**	65	5-10	122	10-20	113	5-10	106	2-5
North West	mm	**56**	180		783		1173		1480	
	%	**78**	111	2-5	117	10-20	115	15-25	116	15-25
Northumbria	mm	**33**	97		534		753		921	
	%	**54**	79	2-5	115	8-12	107	5-10	102	2-5
Severn-Trent	mm	**22**	65		538		724		844	
	%	**40**	59	5-10	135	25-40	119	8-12	106	2-5
Yorkshire	mm	**25**	81		531		757		903	
	%	**43**	69	2-5	120	8-12	113	5-10	104	2-5
Anglian	mm	**5**	29		351		475		580	
	%	**12**	36	25-40	119	5-10	101	2-5	93	2-5
Thames	mm	**8**	36		433		594		692	
	%	**16**	37	15-25	116	5-10	105	2-5	96	2-5
Southern	mm	**8**	38		502		729		854	
	%	**15**	37	15-25	113	5-10	111	2-5	105	2-5
Wessex	mm	**19**	53		642		854		954	
	%	**32**	43	10-20	131	15-25	118	5-10	106	2-5
South West	mm	**35**	96		931		1259		1436	
	%	**45**	57	5-10	131	25-40	123	15-25	115	8-12
Welsh	mm	**53**	143		923		1306		1518	
	%	**62**	77	2-5	120	10-20	116	10-15	109	5-10
Highland	mm	**132**	346		941		1414		1754	
	%	**120**	131	10-20	88	2-5	92	2-5	95	2-5
North East	mm	**69**	125		597		820		1001	
	%	**98**	87	2-5	111	5-10	99	2-5	95	2-5
Tay	mm	**111**	223		898		1228		1479	
	%	**135**	118	5-10	117	10-15	110	8-12	107	5-10
Forth	mm	**77**	173		693		967		1201	
	%	**109**	104	2-5	104	5-10	98	2-5	97	2-5
Tweed	mm	**65**	156		621		838		1080	
	%	**96**	107	2-5	109	5-10	98	2-5	100	2-5
Solway	mm	**105**	247		952		1398		1723	
	%	**114**	116	5-10	111	10-15	110	10-20	110	10-20
Clyde	mm	**123**	290		1009		1537		1911	
	%	**116**	113	5-10	96	2-5	99	2-5	101	5-10

% = percentage of 1991-2020 average *RP = Return period*

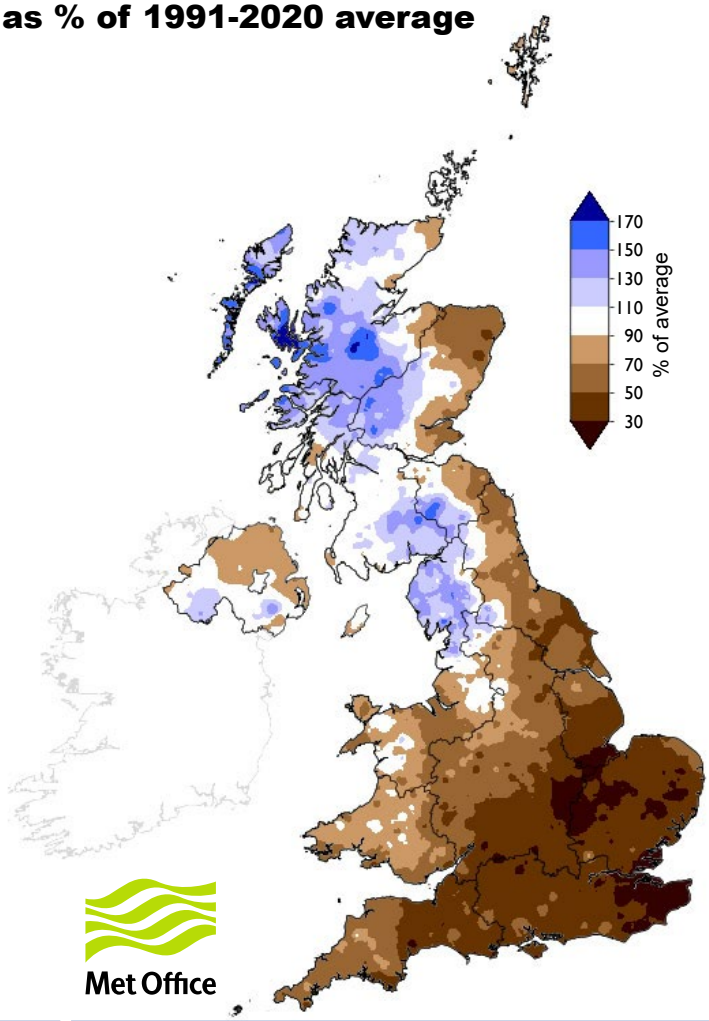
Important note: Figures in the above table may be quoted provided their source is acknowledged. Where appropriate, specific mention must be made of the uncertainties associated with the return period estimates. The RP estimates are based on data provided by the Met Office and reflect climatic variability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

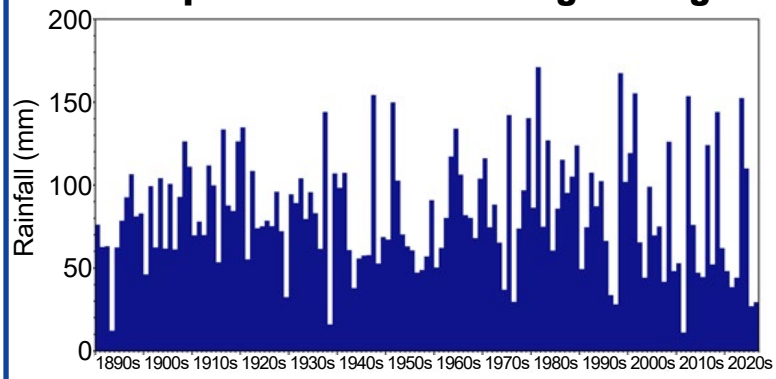
April 2026 rainfall as % of 1991-2020 average



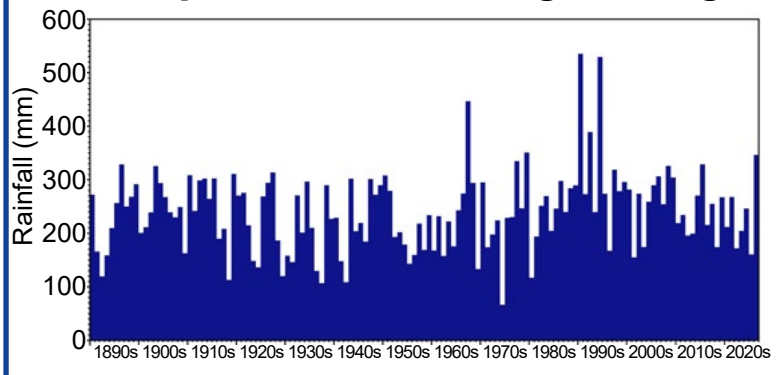
March 2026 - April 2026 rainfall as % of 1991-2020 average



March - April rainfall for the Anglian region



March - April rainfall for the Highland region



UK Hydrological Outlook

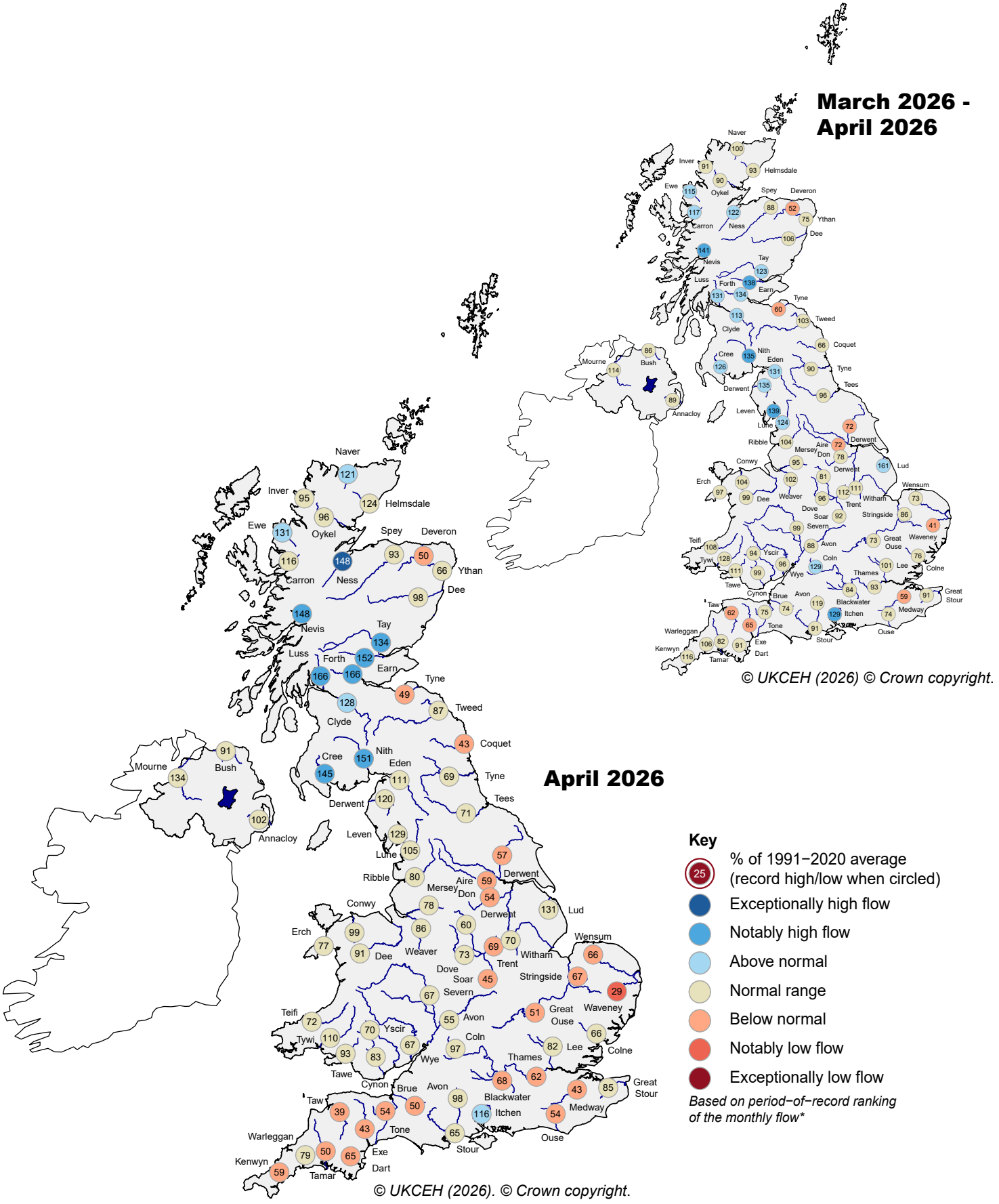
The Hydrological Outlook provides an insight into future hydrological conditions across the UK. Specifically it describes likely trajectories for river flows and groundwater levels on a monthly basis, with particular focus on the next three months.

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

Period: from May 2026
Issued: 11.05.2026
using data to the end of April 2026

The outlook for May is for below normal to notably low river flows across central southern England, normal to below normal for eastern Scotland and normal flows elsewhere. Below normal river flows in central southern England are likely to persist through May-July. For the rest of the UK, May-July river flows are likely to be normal to above normal in northwestern areas and normal elsewhere. Groundwater levels for most boreholes are likely to remain normal to above normal across the UK.

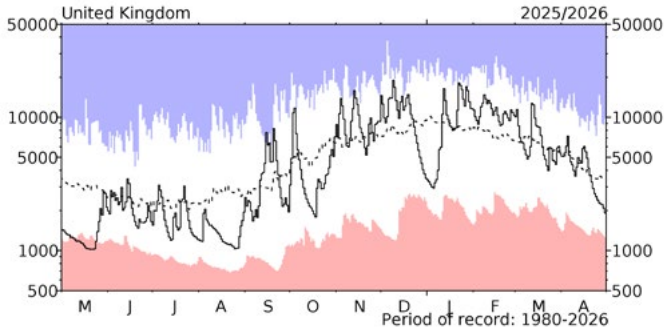
River flow

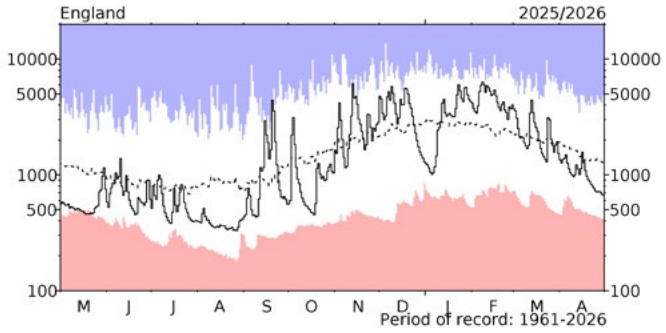


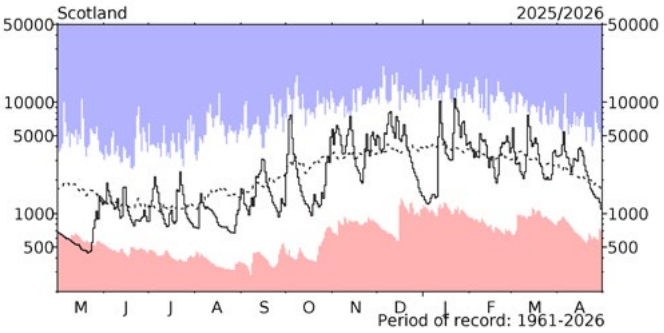
River flows

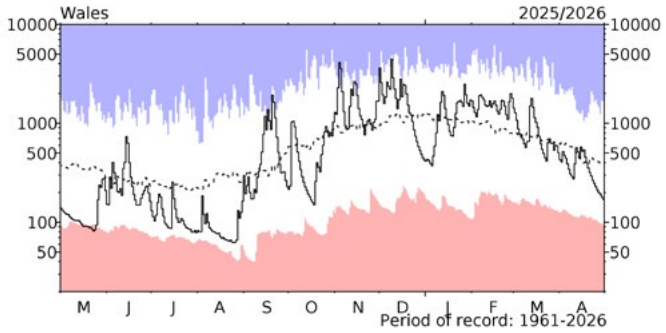
*Comparisons based on percentage flows alone can be misleading. A given percentage flow can represent extreme drought conditions in permeable catchments where flow patterns are relatively stable but be well within the normal range in impermeable catchments where the natural variation in flows is much 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.

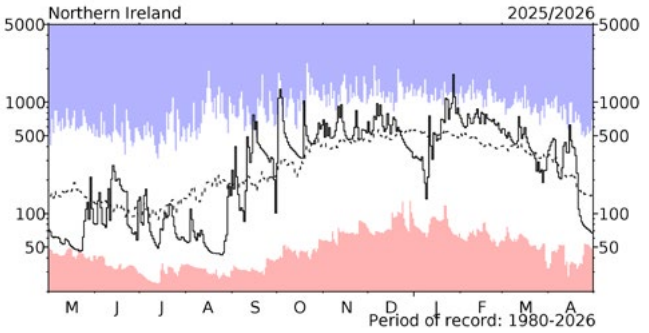
River flow

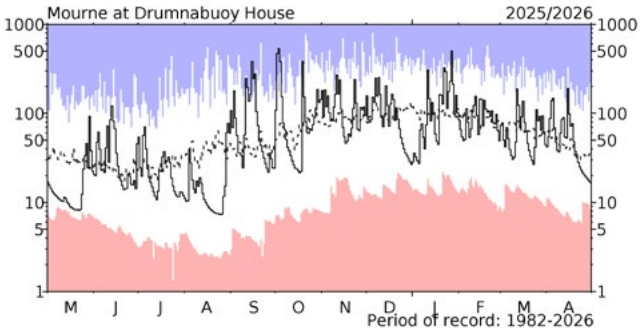


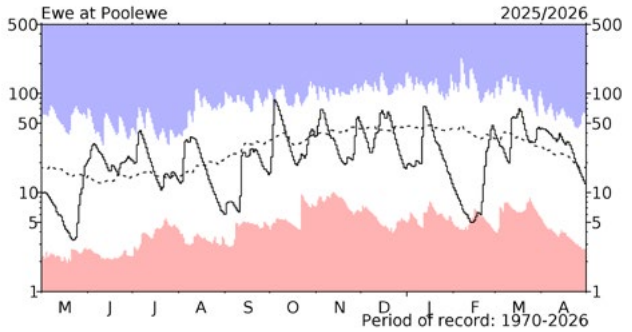


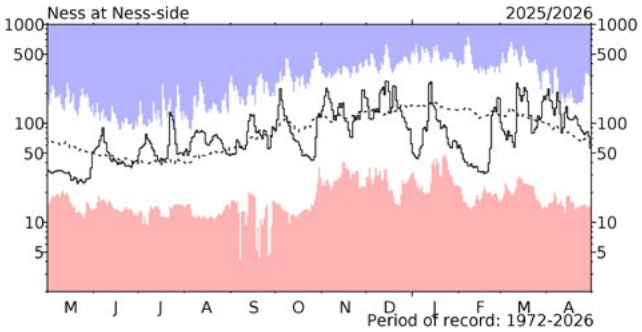


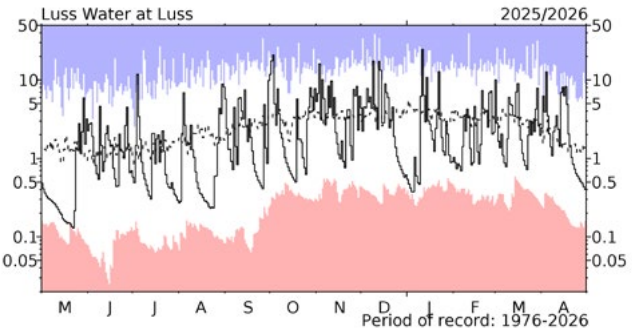


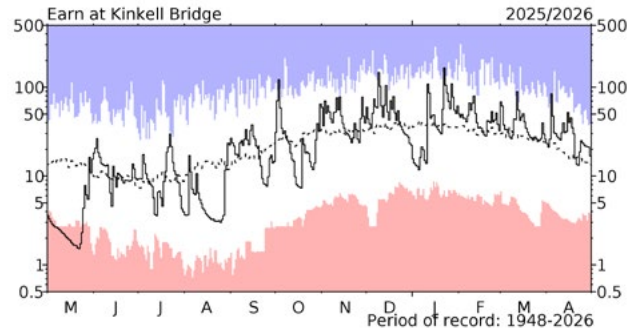








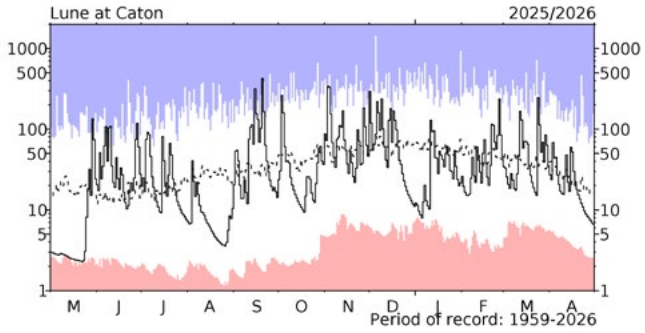


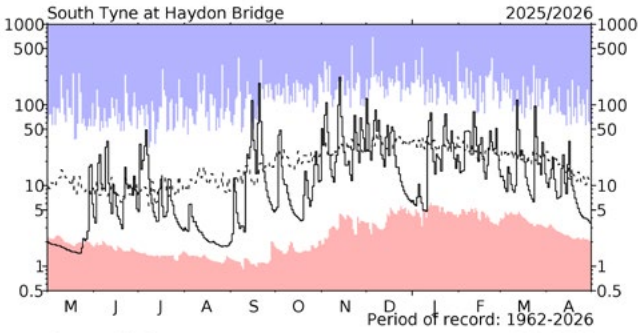


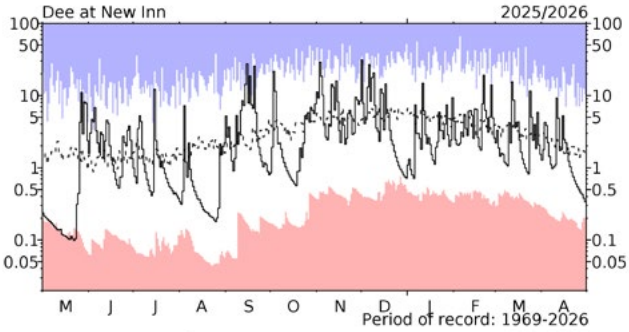
River flow hydrographs

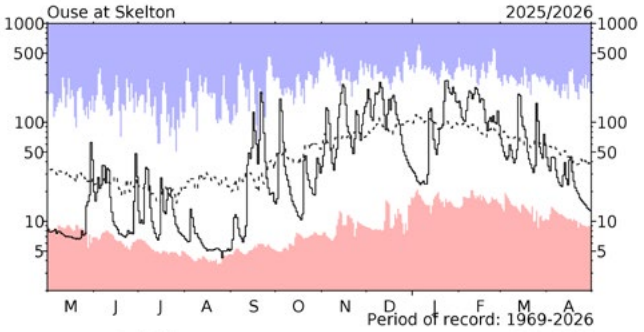
*The river flow hydrographs show the daily mean flows (measured in m^3s^{-1}) together with the maximum and minimum daily flows prior to May 2025 (shown by the shaded areas). Daily flows falling outside the maximum/minimum range are indicated where the bold trace enters the shaded areas. The dashed line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

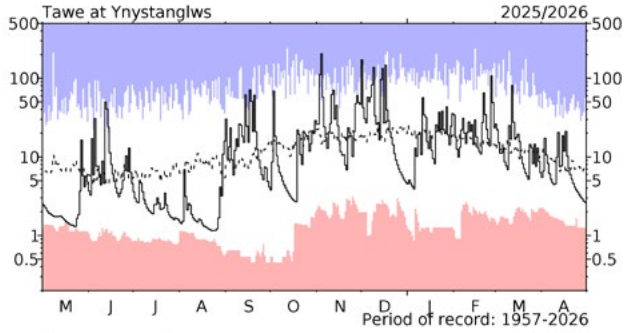
River flow

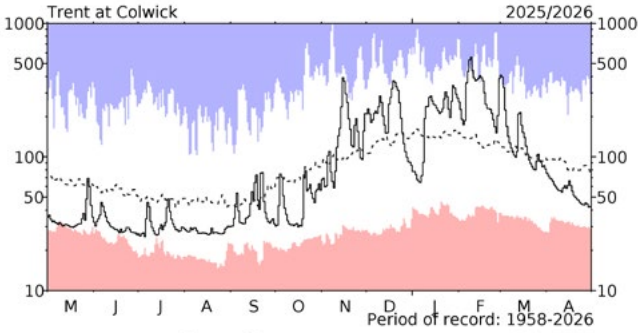

Lune at Caton
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1959-2026

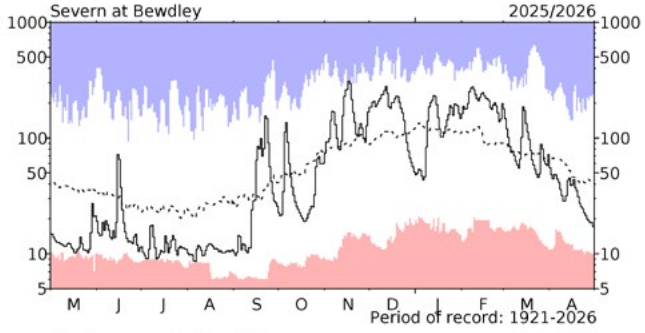

South Tyne at Haydon Bridge
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1962-2026

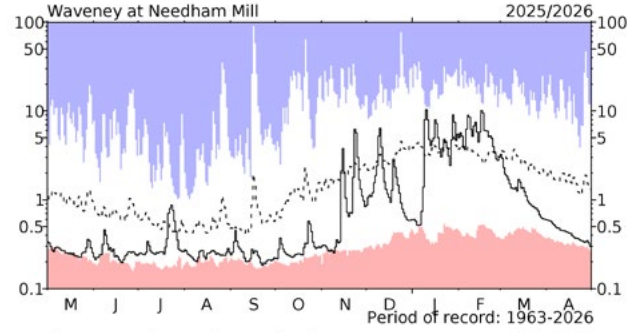

Dee at New Inn
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1969-2026

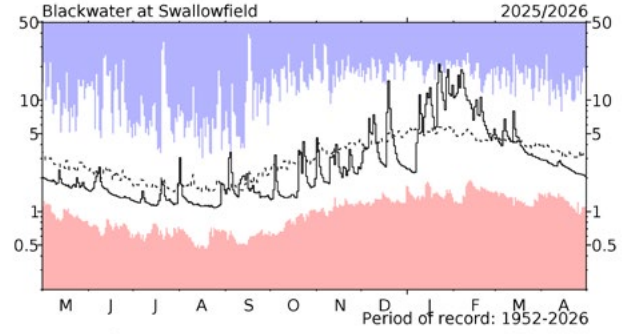

Ouse at Skelton
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1969-2026

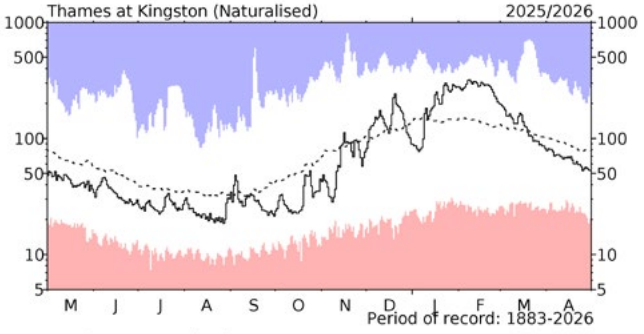

Tawe at Ynystanglws
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1957-2026

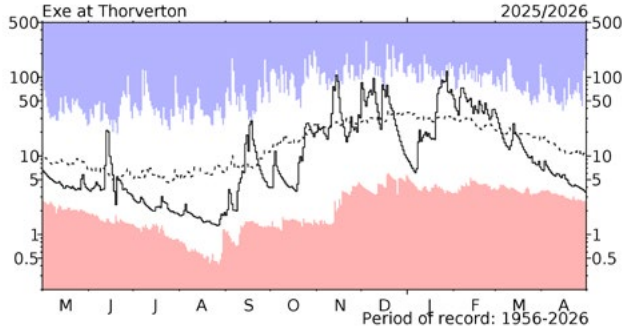

Trent at Colwick
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1958-2026

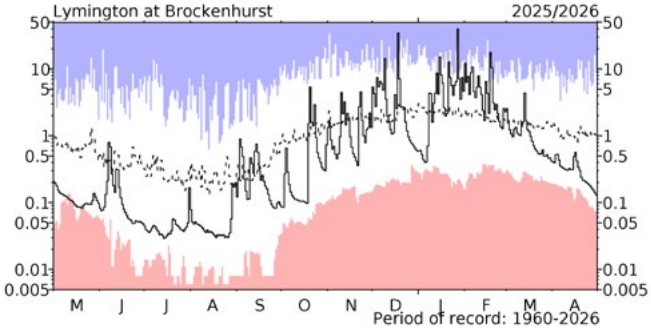

Severn at Bewdley
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1921-2026


Waveney at Needham Mill
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1963-2026

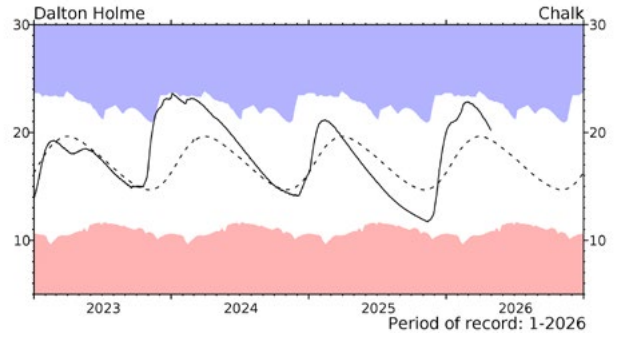

Blackwater at Swallowfield
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1952-2026

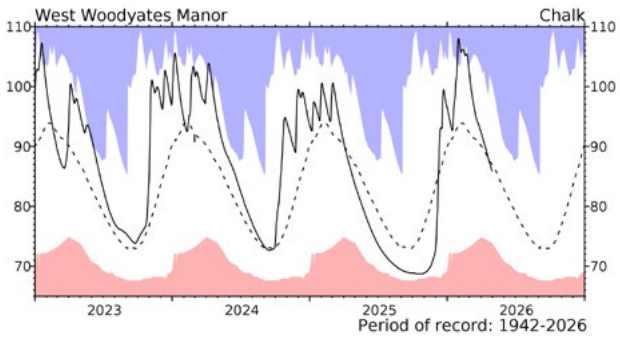

Thames at Kingston (Naturalised)
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1883-2026

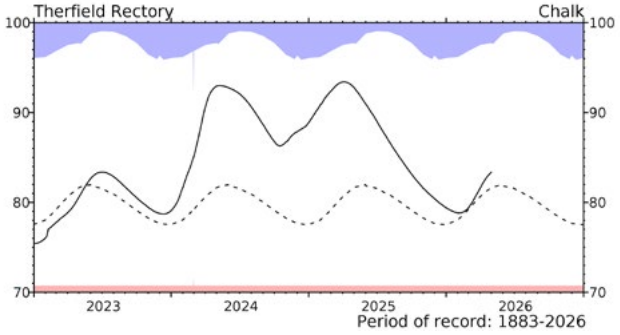

Exe at Thorverton
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1956-2026

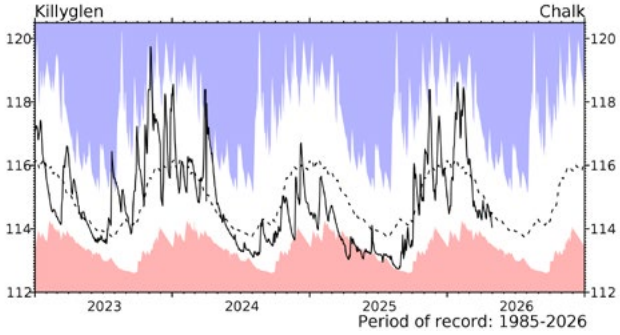

Lymington at Brockenhurst
2025/2026
M J J A S O N D J F M A
Period of record: 1960-2026

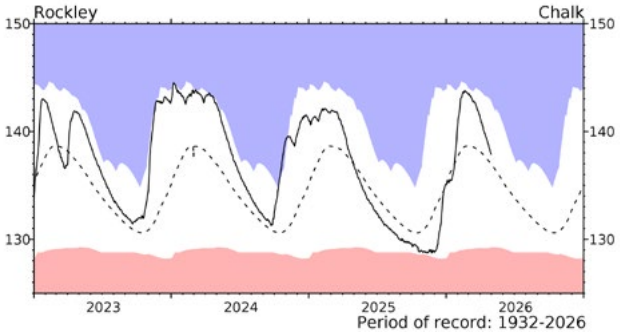
Groundwater

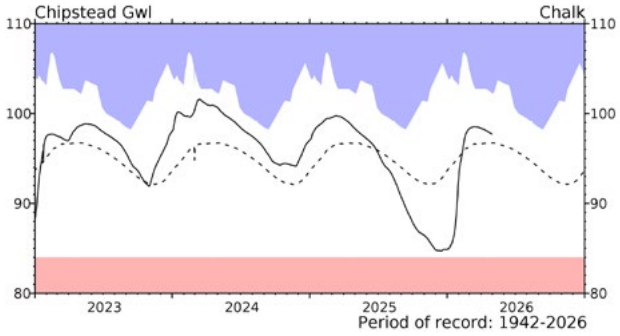


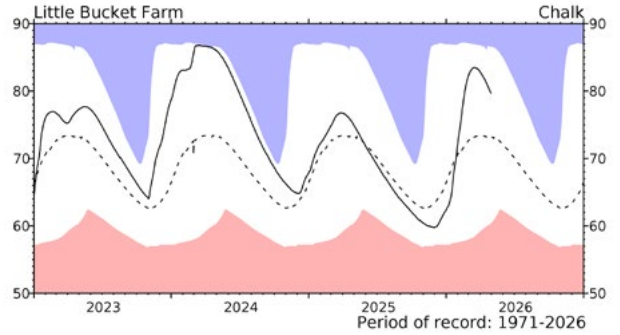


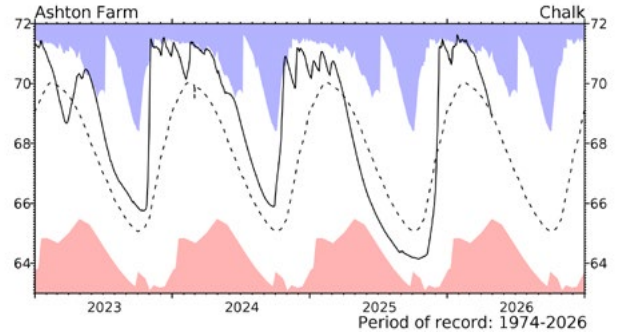


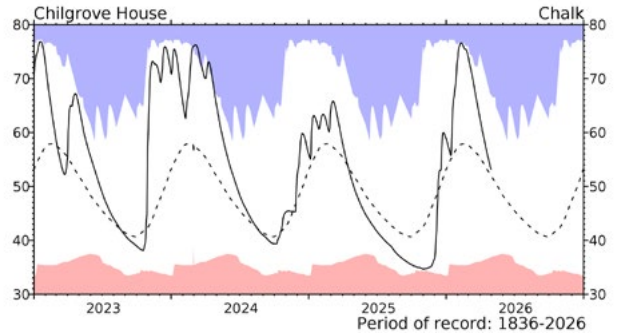


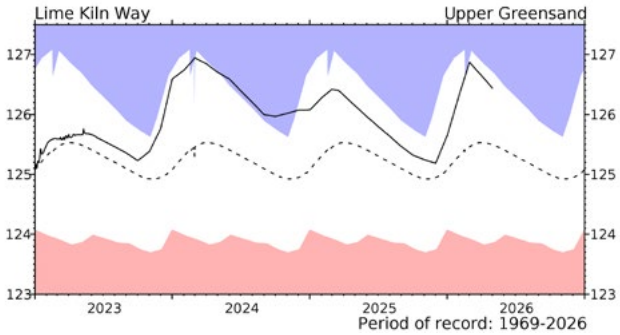






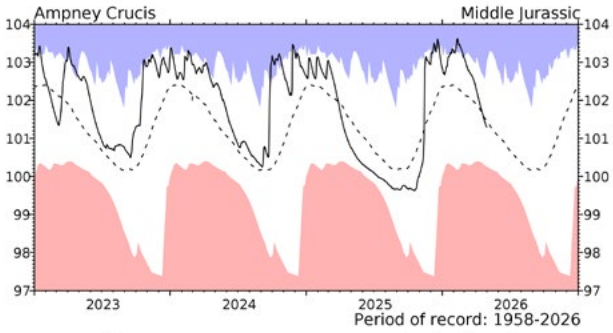


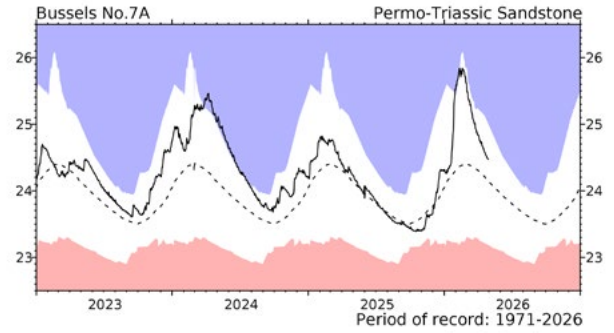


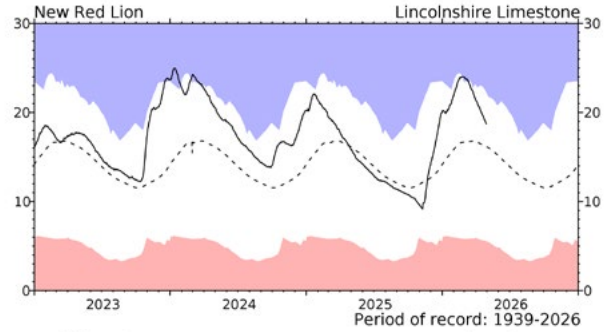


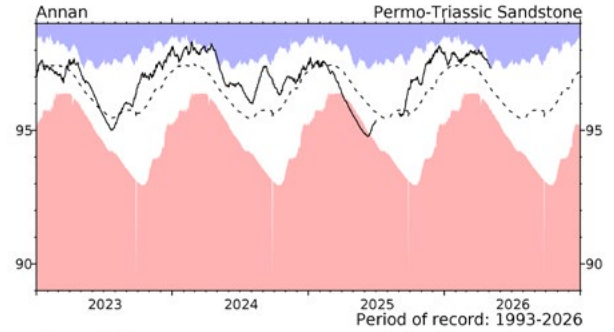
Groundwater levels (measured in metres above ordnance datum) normally rise and fall with the seasons, reaching a peak in the spring following replenishment through the winter (when evaporation losses are low and soil moist). They decline through the summer and early autumn. This seasonal variation is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

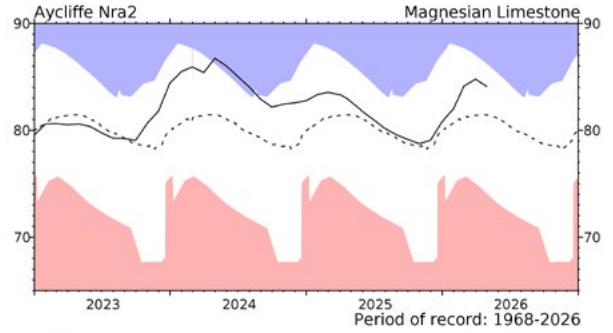
Groundwater

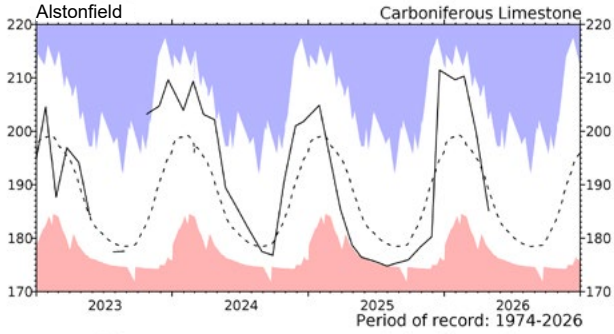


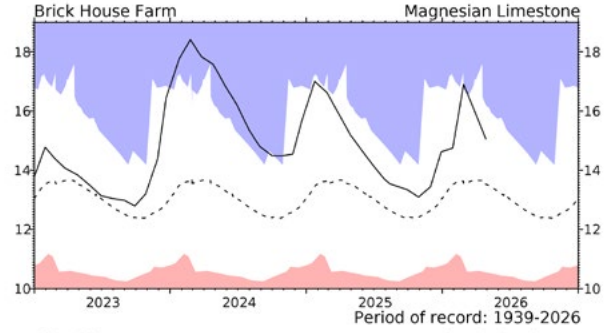


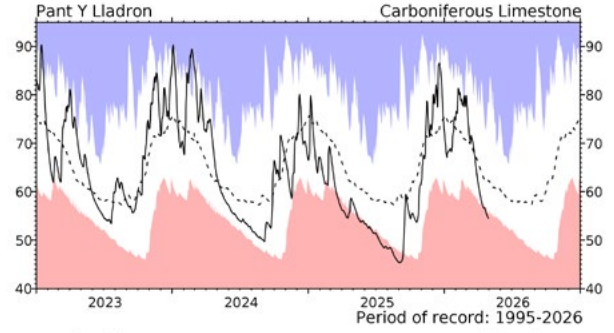


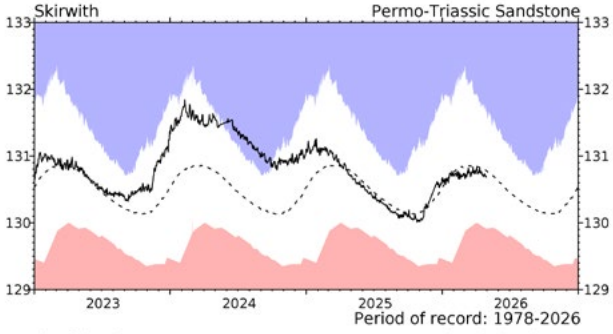


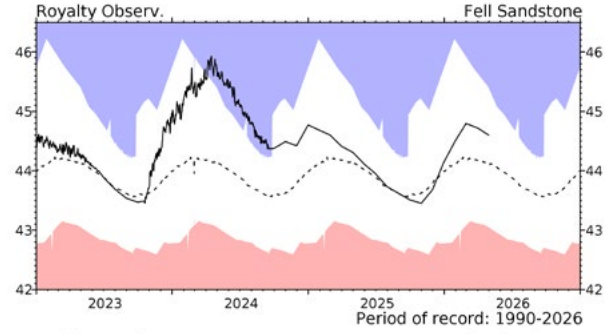


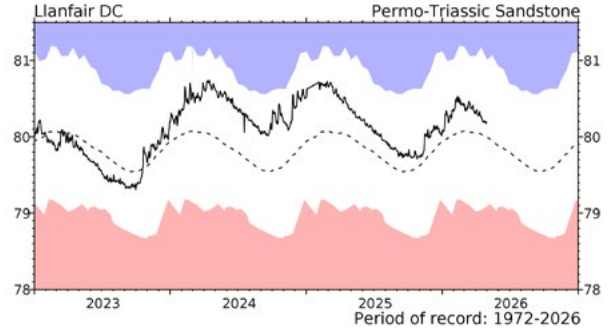


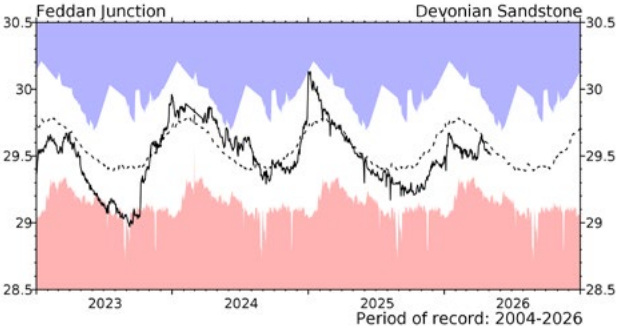












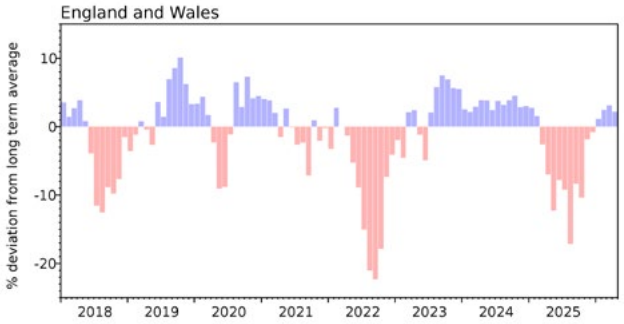
Groundwater

Groundwater levels - April 2026

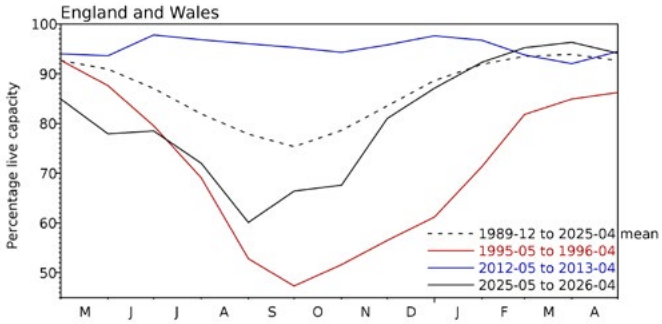
The calculation of ranking has been modified from that used in summaries published prior to October 2012. It is now based on a comparison between the most recent level and levels for the same date during previous years of record. Where appropriate, levels for earlier years may have been interpolated. 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

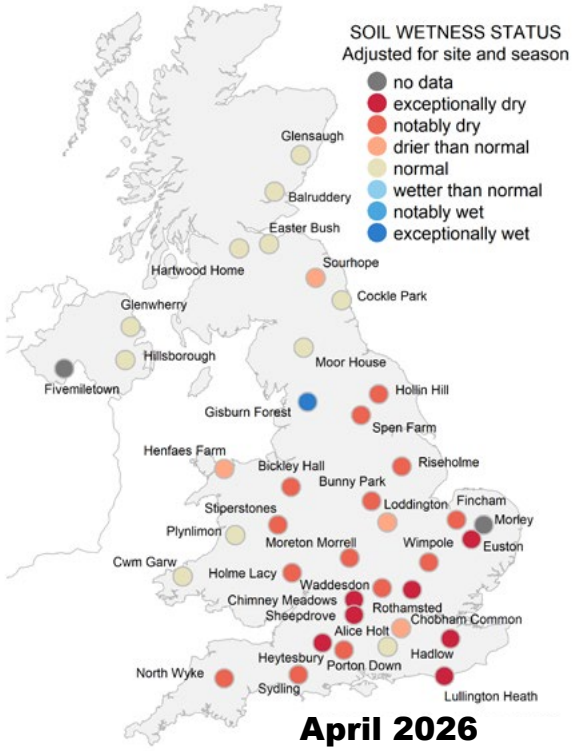
Area	Reservoir		Capacity (Ml)	2026 Feb	2026 Mar	2026 Apr	Apr Anom.	Min Apr	Year* of min	2025 Apr	Diff 26-25
North West	N Command Zone	•	124929	93	100	96	10	62	2025	62	34
	Vyrnwy		55146	100	100	98	5	70	1996	91	8
Northumbrian	Teesdale	•	87936	100	99	90	-1	73	2020	76	14
	Kielder		(199175)	93	93	92	2	84	2025	84	8
Severn-Trent	Clywedog		49936	94	97	99	2	85	1988	96	3
	Derwent Valley	•	46692	100	99	90	-1	54	1996	76	14
Yorkshire	Washburn	•	23373	99	98	91	2	76	1996	80	11
	Bradford Supply	•	40942	100	99	92	2	60	1996	71	21
Anglian	Grafham		(55490)	79	85	88	-6	73	1997	95	-7
	Rutland		(116580)	97	95	96	3	72	1997	91	5
Thames	London	•	202828	90	94	94	-1	86	1990	95	-2
	Farmoor	•	13822	99	99	98	1	81	2000	97	1
Southern	Bewl		31000	94	99	97	7	60	2012	89	8
	Ardingly		4685	100	100	100	1	69	2012	98	1
Wessex	Clatworthy		5662	100	99	90	-3	81	1990	86	4
	Bristol	•	(38666)	100	97	93	0	83	2011	89	4
South West	Colliford		28540	90	92	88	1	56	1997	86	2
	Roadford		34500	100	100	95	9	41	1996	96	-1
	Wimbleball		21320	100	99	91	-4	79	1992	93	-2
	Stithians		4967	100	100	92	0	65	1992	100	-8
Welsh	Celyn & Brenig	•	131155	94	95	93	-3	75	1996	80	13
	Brianne		62140	100	100	100	4	86	1997	90	10
	Big Five	•	69762	100	99	97	5	85	2025	85	12
	Elan Valley	•	99106	100	100	95	0	81	2025	81	14
Scotland(E)	Edinburgh/Mid-Lothian	•	97223	97	98	97	3	62	1998	86	11
	East Lothian	•	9317	99	99	98	-1	88	2025	88	10
Scotland(W)	Loch Katrine	•	110326	97	96	93	2	80	2010	84	9
	Daer		22494	100	100	95	4	78	2013	79	16
	Loch Thom		10721	100	100	93	0	72	2021	87	6
Northern Ireland	Total+	•	56800	98	96	95	6	77	2007	93	2
	Silent Valley	•	20634	100	99	99	13	58	2000	100	-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

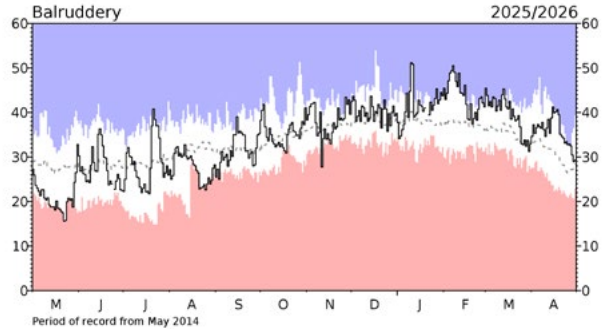


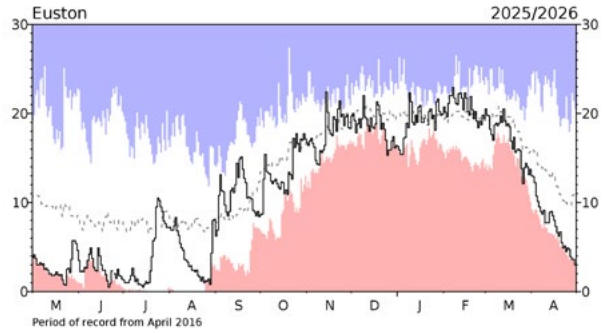
April 2026

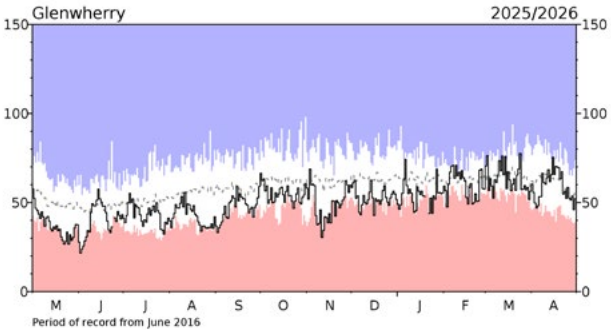
Daily mean soil moisture status at COSMOS-UK sites on the last day of the month 30 April 2026. Soil wetness categories are adjusted for site specific characteristics, i.e. taking account of the possible range of soil wetness at each site, determined through period-of-record data and hindcast modelling. Where no data are available on the last day of the month, these are shown by grey dots.

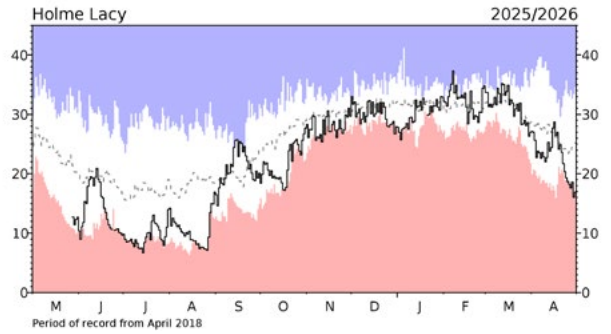
April carried on the trend seen in March, with warm weather and below average precipitation across England and Wales leading to many sites throughout the Midlands and South becoming dry. This is highlighted by the majority of sites across the network, and all sites in the Midlands and the South now sit 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.

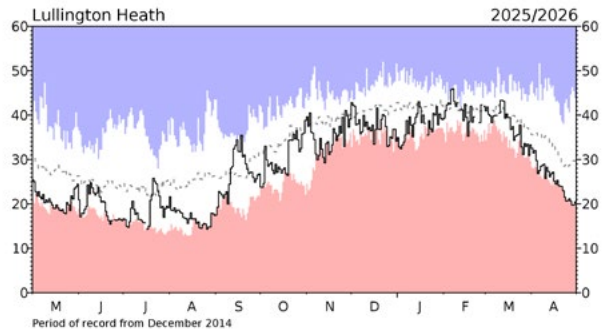
Significantly below average precipitation across England and Wales saw a continuation of the drying trend that began in March, accelerating the drying of most sites in stark contrast to the very wet beginning of this year. Current trends point to further drying of soil across the network if precipitation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











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, groundwater levels, soil moisture 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 providers. 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. River flow data are subject to revision following an annual validation process by the National River Flow Archive; high and low flows may be subject to significant revision.

Month-end soil moisture data is provided by COSMOS-UK for a network of 40 sites across the UK, the longest records of which extend back to 2013. COSMOS-UK data should be considered provisional until annal data publication. More information about individual COSMOS-UK sites, data and measurements can be found on the COSMOS-UK website.

National and regional soil moisture may also be mentioned and plotted in the Hydrological Summary and other NHMP outputs. 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

Given the sparser rain gauge network in the early record and to maintain consistency with previous Hydrological Summaries and NHMP analyses, the NHMP uses rainfall data from 1890 to present in its analyses. 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:
Email: nhmp@ceh.ac.uk

Enquiries about COSMOS-UK soil moisture data should be directed to COSMOS-UK:
Email: cosmos@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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