

# Hydrological modelling and artificial influences: performance assessment & future scenarios CS-NOW-D2 – Future water availability for water intensive energy infrastructure

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Climate services for a net zero resilient world





Sign off

spee

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# About CS N0W

Commissioned by the UK Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), Climate Services for a Net Zero Resilient World (CS-N0W) is a 4-year, £5.5 million research programme, that will use the latest scientific knowledge to inform UK climate policy and help us meet our global decarbonisation ambitions.

CS-N0W aims to enhance the scientific understanding of climate impacts, decarbonisation and climate action, and improve accessibility to the UK's climate data. It will contribute to evidence-based climate policy in the UK and internationally, and strengthen the climate resilience of UK infrastructure, housing and communities.

The programme is delivered by a consortium of world leading research institutions from across the UK, on behalf of DESNZ. The CS-N0W consortium is led by Ricardo and includes research **partners Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research**, including the Universities of East Anglia (UEA), Manchester (UoM) and Newcastle (NU); institutes supported by the **Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)**, including the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), British Geological Survey (BGS), National Centre for Atmospheric Science (NCAS), National Centre for Earth Observation (NCEO), National Oceanography Centre (NOC), Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML) and UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH); and **University College London (UCL)**.







**Natural Environment** Research Council





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# <span id="page-5-0"></span>**Glossary**





### <span id="page-6-0"></span>1. Executive summary

There have been numerous assessments of potential impacts of climate change on river flows and groundwater for the UK. One of the most recent, the eFLaG (enhanced Future Flows and Groundwater) project, provides national and spatially consistent hydrological projections based on UKCP18 regional projections up to 2080. Although eFLaG and many other projects provide scenarios of flow projections, they do not explicitly estimate artificially influenced (AI) river flow after the net impact of abstractions and discharges has been accounted for'. For example, eFLaG provides either natural flows or flows calibrated to current conditions, including AIs. In both cases, it makes no assessment of possible future changes in abstractions/discharges, as well as the need for 'environmental flows' (flows that leave adequate supply for the environment) which will constrain future water availability.

This project, CS-N0W (WPD2), aims to provide future projections of AI-impacted flows across England up to 2080, by accounting for possible future changes in abstractions/discharges. This report presents the modelling approach and datasets used to derive the future flow projections, together with an assessment of how the AIimpacted hydrological model (Grid-to-Grid or "G2G") performs for historical periods. A comparison of simulated and observed river flows for 626 catchments across England between 1999 and 2014 indicates that model simulation of river flows is generally improved at gauged locations. The main improvement is in the simulation of low flows, for which the median performance is improved by 12.5%, while the improvement in the simulation of high flows is a more modest 1.5%.

A companion report, Tanguy et al. (2023), presents an analysis of these scenarios and provides key indicators and statistics of water availability for historical, current and future timescales to 2080.



# <span id="page-7-0"></span>2. Introduction

This report presents the method used to derive England-wide scenarios of Artificial Influence (AI)-impacted river flows from 1980 to 2080 to support a national-scale assessment of future flow regimes and water availability scenarios.

The approach uses future scenarios of surface and groundwater abstractions and discharges which were recently developed by Baron et al. (2023) to capture the range of impacts that artificial influences may have on future flows and groundwater. Three scenarios were provided, ranging from '*Sustainability*' to *'Economic Growth*' demand projections together with a '*Business as Usual*' scenario. These AI scenarios are used as input to a hydrological model (Grid-to-Grid, (Bell et al., 2009)) that was recently enhanced to take account of recorded discharges and monthly abstractions (Rameshwaran et al., 2022).

This report summarises the future AI scenarios and how they are used in the Grid-to-Grid (or "G2G") hydrological model. The G2G simulations of AI-impacted river flows are assessed with respect to observed river flows for 626 English catchments during a historical period for which AI data are available. Following the performance assessment, the AI-impacted G2G was run for longer historical (1<sup>st</sup> December 1980 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020) and projected future (1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2080) periods. The G2Gsimulated AI-impacted flows are used to support a separate analysis of projected-future flow regimes (Tanguy et al., 2023). In particular they support derivation of historical and projected-future Q95, Q90, Q70, mean annual and monthly flows, along with drought metrics such as duration, intensity, and severity.

The CS-N0W G2G hydrological projections developed here are comparable with the eFLaG UKCP18-driven climate and hydrological projections (Hannaford et al., 2023), since the same G2G model implementation is driven by the same climate data (eFLAG bias-corrected UKCP18 regional projections), and results are provided for the eFLAG catchments that lie in England (plus other MaRIUS catchments). The difference between CS-NOW and eFLAG G2G projections is the use of abstractions and discharges in the CS-NOW G2G simulations. Note that this analysis focuses primarily on AI-impacted flows, as



the eFLaG project already conducted an analysis of natural flows as simulated by G2G (Parry et al., 2023).

In this report, we aim to demonstrate the benefits of using high-quality spatio-temporal abstraction and discharge data in distributed hydrological (and potentially land-surface) models. By including AI data, we can enhance our understanding of anthropogenic influences on hydrological regimes at a national scale and inform decision-making processes at regional and national levels.

### <span id="page-8-0"></span>3. Data used in the modelling analysis.

This section outlines the climate and artificial influence (AI) data used in the hydrological modelling (section 4). The climate data used to drive climate projections consist of the eFLaG bias-corrected 12-member UKCP18 regional climate projections which are available at 1 km resolution (section 3.6).

#### <span id="page-8-1"></span>**3.1 Study area**

While in practice hydrological modelling has been undertaken for mainland Britain, model outputs are only applicable for English catchments, albeit with a modest overlap of the Welsh border. This is because, to-date, only English AI data have been obtained and processed for model use (section 3.2), and suitable AI data have not been available for areas outside England. We requested these data from other UK regions but were not able to access them. Thus, gridded G2G hydrological model outputs (e.g. river flows, G2G estimates of monthly water volumes abstracted from rivers) are provided on a 1km × 1km grid across England and include 5 catchments that cross the border into Wales (specifically UK National River Flow Archive (NRFA) catchments 54001, 54032, 54057, 54029 and 54008). Note that abstractions and discharges for these 5 border-crossing catchments are likely to be underestimated as we do not have AI data for Wales. The CS-N0W region for which G2G model outputs are provided is shown in Figure 1(a). Modelled flows are also provided for individual gauging-station locations downstream of 626 catchments across England (Figure 1(b)). These catchments comprise all 605 MaRIUS



project catchments (Rameshwaran et al., 2022), together with an additional 21 eFLaG catchments (Hannaford et al., 2022, Hannaford et al., 2023), that were not used in MaRIUS. In the eFLaG catchment selection strategy, both research and industry needs were considered whereas in MaRIUS only catchments with areas above 50 km<sup>2</sup> are considered. The complete list of all 626 catchments, a significant proportion (>60%) of the NRFA gauging station network for England, is presented in Appendix A, Table 4.

#### <span id="page-9-0"></span>**3.2 Artificial Influence (AI) data**

The AI data (licence/consents/returns) used here have been sourced from the UK Environment Agency (EA) under licence. Specifically, monthly surface- and groundwater abstraction data were obtained from the EA's **NALD** database for 1999 to 2014, and annual discharges (2017) and Hands-off-Flow (HoF) conditions were obtained from the EA's Water Resources GIS (**WRGIS**) database. The impacts of other AIs such as reservoir impoundments and releases are not considered here, and the G2G does not take account of abstractions from lakes or reservoirs.

Although abstraction and discharge data are available from the EA's WRGIS database, these data were not used in CS-NOW as they provide only recent actual *annual* pointpurpose abstractions, which are also an average over the last 6 years. Instead, NALD *monthly* actual abstraction values at specific geographical locations were considered more suitable for distributed hydrological modelling. at a 1km  $\times$  1km spatial resolution.

The benefit of using spatially-distributed NALD abstraction data from 1999 to 2014 was that the true monthly distribution and the inter-annual variability of abstractions (shown in Figure 3, Rameshwaran et al. (2022)) could be accounted for in our modelling. However, the disadvantage of using NALD abstraction data was that the discharge and HoF data could only be obtained from WRGIS and were associated with a different period (2017). Use of WRGIS abstraction and discharge data for the same historical period will be preferred for many applications, but for high-resolution hydrological modelling, the monthly data only available from NALD were more suitable.

Rameshwaran et al. (2022) outlined the methodology used for the conversion of these point abstraction and discharge data into monthly 1 km  $\times$  1 km grids across England for



each of the 57 primary uses (Appendix A, Table 5). Various pragmatic assumptions were made to resolve apparent inconsistencies in licence returns or to overcome uncertainties associated with missing information. One important factor to consider was that the derived monthly grids represent total water abstracted but do not take account of water immediately returned to river by the licence holder (e.g. from vegetable washing).





Although, in reality, abstractions and discharges datasets are related, it was not possible to link individual abstraction licences and discharge permits. To minimise the uncertainty in net abstraction associated with these immediate water returns, use was made of the loss factor term associated with surface water abstractions (Appendix A, Table 5). The four loss factor categories (EA, 2020a) are High (100%), Medium (60%), Low (3%) and Very Low (0.3%). For three of these categories (high, medium and low abstraction losses), an assumption is made here that any water returned to the river is accounted for in the discharge dataset. However, for the abstractions associated with 'Very Low' losses (termed 'Through Flows', e.g. Fish Pass/Canoe Pass, River



Recirculation, Hydroelectric Power Generation) the returns are so high and localised that an assumption that returns are included in discharges cannot be made. For these 'Very Low' loss abstractions we have assumed that only 0.3% of the water volume is removed mainly due to conveyance losses. The basis of this assumption is described in Rameshwaran et al. (2022).

#### <span id="page-11-0"></span>**3.3 Application of Hands-off-Flow conditions**

Surface water abstraction is constrained by a HoF flow value  $(m^3 \text{ day}^1)$ , requiring abstraction to cease (or reduce) if the river flow falls below this threshold. This requirement is designed to prevent detrimental impact of excessive abstraction on the environment and protect river ecosystems during periods of low flows particularly during drier years. This means that during drought periods when the river flow is below the local HoF threshold, the licence holder will be temporarily unable to abstract their full licensed amount. Here, HoF conditions for surface water abstractions were obtained from the EA Water Resources Geographic Information System (WRGIS; provided under licence in 2017).

For this CS-N0W study, the way in which the HoF condition is included in the hydrological modelling has been improved. Previously, when the HoF condition was implemented in the G2G, river flows at the abstraction site were compared with the HoF condition (Rameshwaran et al., 2022). In reality, the HoF condition is often applied with reference to river flows at a different location, the "HoF impact location". HoF impact locations are referenced in the EA's WRGIS system and consist of (sometimes non-local) sub-catchments or waterbodies, rather than point locations. To make use of this information in the G2G hydrological model, the most downstream 1km grid-cell of each HoF impact waterbody was used as the "HoF impact grid-cell", at which G2G-simulated flows are compared with the HoF condition to establish whether an abstraction can take place.

#### <span id="page-11-1"></span>**3.4 Future scenarios of AI data**

Estimates of abstraction and discharges for projected future period (2020 to 2080) were based on three future AI scenarios introduced by Baron et al. (2023). The derived



scenarios were constructed from various published scenario reports and datasets (e.g. Water Resources National Framework (EA, 2020b) and Water Resource Management Plans (WRMP19: Anglian\_Water (2019)). These underlying reports and datasets were developed at different times for different purposes and were not expected to be used in combination with each other, with the result that there are some inconsistencies when they are used together. The result of these inconsistencies is that no AI scenario is always higher or lower than another, so it is not possible to identify a high, medium or low AI scenario. These scenarios are described in detail in Table 2 of Baron et al. (2023) and summarised below:

- *'Sustainability (SUS)' AI scenario*: sustainability is prioritised, high levels of water efficiency are achieved, low population growth, innovation and societal change to achieve Net Zero energy production ahead of schedule, reduction in meat consumption and food waste, additional environmental constraints. Typically this scenario results in lower surface-water and groundwater abstraction volumes than for the two other scenarios, but the overall change relative to the present day depends on individual catchments and the future time period.
- *'Business as Usual (BAU)'* **AI scenario**: current ambitions for water efficiency are achieved with no further efficiencies implemented, best-estimate population growth, a move to green energy production consistent with current projections, and environmental considerations kept at current levels. BAU is typically (but not always) a "central" AI scenario, with abstractions higher than for the SUS scenario, but the overall change relative to the present day depends on individual catchments and the future time period.
- *'Economic Growth (EG)'* **AI scenario**: economic growth is prioritised over sustainability, no water efficiencies, high population growth, continued use of fossil fuels and water-intensive agriculture (e.g. high meat consumption and increase of irrigated area), and some relaxation of environmental considerations. Typically (but not always) this scenario results in higher surfacewater and groundwater abstraction volumes than for the SUS and BAU, but the



overall change relative to the present day depends on individual catchments and the future time period. Note that the assumption that EG is high-abstraction scenario does not always hold, and for some catchments (e.g. 39001) BAU abstractions are higher than for EG for some future time-periods.

For each of the three AI scenarios (above), corresponding **future scenarios of discharge** have been constructed by scaling present day discharges with the same factors used to scale abstractions (Baron et al., 2023). For example, discharges related to Public Water Supply (PWS), were scaled similarly to PWS abstractions but with adjustments to remove the effects of leakage change.

#### <span id="page-13-0"></span>**3.5 Present day (observed) climate data**

The G2G hydrological model performance assessment was undertaken on a 60-year historical period (January 1961 – December 2020: Section 4) for which daily observations of rainfall, air temperature and monthly potential evaporation (PE) were available. The driving datasets were chosen to be exactly the same as those used in the eFLaG project (Hannaford et al. 2023), with the addition of a further two years of more-recent data (2019 and 2020):

- Precipitation and temperature: daily HadUK-Grid 1km x 1km dataset (Hollis et al., 2019), the national standard gridded meteorological dataset and observational product associated with UKCP18.
- Potential Evaporation (PE). monthly MORECS data (Hough and Jones, 1997), an established, national gridded PE product on a 40km grid. Other PE datasets such as CHESS (Robinson et al., 2020) and more recently Hydro-PE (Robinson et al., 2022) are available, but the decision to use MORECS here was based on the requirement for consistency with the eFLAG hydrological projections (Hannaford et al., 2022).

#### <span id="page-13-1"></span>**3.6 Future scenarios of climate data**

Like the previous eFLaG project (Hannaford et al., 2023), CS-N0W modelling of future conditions is driven by the UKCP18 dataset, specifically the 'Regional' 12km projections.



These were created using perturbed-parameter runs of the Hadley Centre Global Climate Model (GCM, HadGEM3-GC3.05) and Regional Climate Model (RCM, HadREM3- GA705) (Murphy et al., 2017). These provide a set of 12 high resolution (12km) spatially consistent climate projections over the UK, covering the period Dec 1980-Nov 2080. The 12-member RCM Perturbed Parameter Ensemble (PPE) is valuable to represent climate model parameter uncertainty. RCM ensemble members are numbered 01–15, corresponding to GCM PPE members, but exclude 02, 03 and 14 as there are no RCM equivalents for these (see Murphy et al. (2018) and Section 4.3); 01 is the standard parameterisation. However, it is important to note that, as all ensemble members are based on the same high emissions scenario (RCP8.5) and underlying climate model structure, they do not represent the full climate uncertainty. The CS-N0W climate change simulations used the UKCP18 RCM output as previously processed by the eFLAG project (Hannaford et al., 2023) to provide the variables needed for hydrological modelling – namely, bias-corrected 1km gridded daily time-series of available precipitation (i.e. after the application of a snow module) and Potential Evapotranspiration (PET).

Note that the Hadley Centre climate model uses a simplified 360-day year, consisting of twelve 30-day months. The RCM precipitation and temperature time-series similarly are only available for a 360-day calendar, and thus the climate-data-driven hydrological model outputs are also provided for this 360-day year.

#### <span id="page-14-0"></span>**3.7 Observed river flow data**

Across the UK, flow records for river flow gauging stations are readily available on the UK National River Flow Archive (NRFA, <https://nrfa.ceh.ac.uk/> and Dixon et al. (2013)). For CS-N0W, the NRFA was the source of the validated river flow data used to assess the performance of the G2G at 626 gauging stations.

## <span id="page-14-1"></span>4. The Hydrological Modelling setup

The previous eFLaG project used two lumped catchment models, PDM (Moore, 2007) and the GR suite (Perrin et al., 2003), and one distributed grid-based hydrological model,



Grid-to-Grid (G2G; Bell et al. (2009)) to make projections of river flows from present day (1980) to 2080. The use of different model structures and spatial representations in eFLaG provided an opportunity to explore how sensitive future river flow projections are to hydrological model choice. However, the requirement to use future projections of AIs in CS-N0W reduced opportunities to explore model structural uncertainty, as lumped catchment models such as PDM and GR are calibrated to observed river flows including artificial influences and thus cannot easily incorporate scenarios of AIs. Thus, only the one eFLaG model, G2G, has been taken forward in CS-N0W.

#### <span id="page-15-0"></span>**4.1 The Grid-to-Grid hydrological model**

G2G is a national-scale hydrological model that provides estimates of river flows, runoff and soil moisture on a 1 km × 1 km grid across Great Britain (Bell et al., 2009, Moore et al., 2006). The G2G model formulation represents the processes of runoff-production and flow routing over a wide area and, across Great Britain, is typically run with a timestep of 15 minutes. G2G has been widely tested and is used operationally for countrywide forecasting over England and Wales by the Flood Forecasting Centre (Price et al., 2012) and, over Scotland, by the Scottish Flood Forecasting Service (Maxey et al., 2012, Cranston et al., 2012). G2G has also been used to assess the potential impact of climate change on floods (Bell et al., 2012, Bell et al., 2016), low flow frequency (Kay et al., 2018) and droughts (Rudd et al., 2017, Rudd et al., 2019). G2G output consists of a value of river flow for every 1 km  $\times$  1 km grid-cell across Great Britain, including ungauged sites. A particular advantage of G2G is that it has one spatially consistent configuration for the whole model domain and is able to represent a wide range of hydrological regimes due to use of spatial datasets of terrain, soil/geology and landcover.

The G2G model has recently been enhanced to account for gridded monthly values of AI, specifically surface- and ground-water abstraction and discharge volumes (Rameshwaran et al. 2022). To enable AI data to be included in the G2G, thousands of point source abstraction and discharge measurements across England were transformed into  $1 \times 1$  km resolution gridded data. These newly-gridded AI data were used as input to an enhanced formulation of the Grid-to-Grid (G2G) hydrological model in which the impact of



abstractions and discharges on river flows were mathematically represented. A comparison of G2G simulated and observed (gauged) river flows catchments across England indicated that model simulations were generally improved at gauged locations downstream of abstraction/discharge sites, particularly for low flows, for which the median performance across >600 catchments was improved by 10.7%, however, the impact on simulation of high river flows is more modest (1.5% improvement). Further details are provided by Rameshwaran et al. 2022.

The overall modelling setup is summarised in Figure 2, which highlights how point abstraction and discharge data are converted to 1km grids before being used as monthly AI input to the G2G hydrological model.



Figure 2 Schematic of the modelling chain used in CS-N0W (Rameshwaran et al., 2022)

#### <span id="page-16-0"></span>**4.2 Model setup for CS-N0W**

The model setup and evaluation of G2G in CS-N0W aims to emulate the approach used in eFLaG as far as possible to enable both sets of future projections to be compared. By its



nature, G2G requires no specific calibration; so, none was undertaken in either project. However, the period over which flow projections from G2G-with-AI were evaluated in CS-N0W is different to eFLaG because observed monthly AI data were only available for the period 1999-2014.

There are two overall sets of model output in CS-N0W, described below. To identify types of model run, eFLaG-based terminology (Hannaford et al., 2023) is adopted throughout (in eFLAG, simobs = observations-driven simulations, simrcm = RCM-driven simulations).

- **simobs**: observation-driven simulations (i.e. simulations for the observed period, driven by observational climate and AI datasets). Here, the simobs period covers the period January 1961 – December 2020 (two years longer than for eFLAG), but model runs using limited observed AI data are for a shorter period (1999-2014).
- **simrcm**: UKCP18 RCM-driven simulation (12 ensemble members) and future AI scenarios (i.e. the 3 future AI ensemble members, SUS, BAU and EG, as described in Section 3.4). There are 36 climate-driven realisations, consisting of 12 RCMs each with 3 AI scenarios, all available from 1980 to 2080. The simrcm runs from the observed period (1980 -2020) can be compared *statistically* with the simobs data, and the impact of future scenarios of AI and climate change can be evaluated by comparing baseline (1980-2020) and future (2020-2080) simrcm runs.

In all cases, climate forcing data was the same as that used in eFLAG (Sections 3.5 and 3.6).

#### <span id="page-17-0"></span>**4.3 G2G simulations using observed AI data**

Here, natural and AI-impacted simulated daily river flow time series are compared against gauged flows for 626 catchments, including English eFLaG catchments, to demonstrate that flows are realistically simulated. These simobs simulations are all driven by observed climate data (Section 3.5)



Three model simulations were undertaken for the historical period 1st January 1999 to 31st December 2014 for which observed AI data are available, to evaluate the impact of including abstractions and discharges in G2G model simulations of river flows:

- Simobs NATURAL: standard G2G simulated flows with no abstractions or discharges (comparable to eFLAG simobs from G2G).
- Simobs ObsAI: G2G simulated flows with time series of observed AI
- Simobs MeanAI: G2G simulated flows with time series of mean monthly observed AI

The Simobs\_MeanAI simulated flows evaluate the sensitivity of the G2G to using mean AI (mean monthly abstractions for the period 2010 to 2014) instead of observed AIs. Future AI scenarios are based on this 5-year mean of observed monthly AI. The purpose of the Simobs MeanAI evaluation run was to quantify whether the use of mean monthly AI adversely affects the performance of the model in simulating observed flows. Table 1 in Section 4.4 summarises the naming convention used for different model runs.

#### <span id="page-18-0"></span>**4.4 G2G simulations for historical and projected future periods**

This next step perturbs the current water availability assessment into the future, to account for future climate change *and* potential changes in water abstractions/consumptions and returns. Future gridded 'natural' water availability is already available within eFLaG, as a 12-member ensemble of daily estimates from 1981 to 2080, on the UKCP RCM projections. The future AI scenarios (see (Baron et al., 2023) and Section 3.4 of this report) perturb the current AI 'net impacts' layer, according to 3 possible scenarios of future water consumption, which are themselves based on predictions in the National Framework for Water Resources (EA, 2020b) and water company and regional WRMPs, as well as assessments of future environmental flow requirements. All 3 scenarios are derived from the 1 km gridded baseline mean monthly artificial influenced (MeanAI) data. Broadly, the abstraction data are split into sectors (PWS, industry, energy, agriculture) and scaling factors (additive or multiplicative) are applied at the finest resolution available. For example, if a sector has a national scaling factor then this will be applied to all the grid, if the scaling factor varies by WRZ then



the specific scaling factor will be applied only to the grid cells covered by that WRZ. Temporally, annual scaling factors are applied to the monthly baseline data, with interpolation between specified time slices where necessary. More details are provided by (Baron et al., 2023). The resulting 3 scenarios of future demand (SUS, BAU and EG, Section 3.4) have been applied to the present-day AI dataset (the 5-year MeanAI data, Section 4.3) to produce 3 continuous and transient datasets of projected future monthly abstractions and yearly discharges.

For the UKCP18-driven climate simulations, G2G model runs were undertaken for the period 1st December 1980 to 30th November 2080 as follows:

- Simrcm NATURAL: driven by the UKCP18 projected climate (no abstractions or discharges, comparable with eFLAG, see Parry et al. (2023)).
- Simrcm\_MeanAI: driven by the UKCP18 projected climate and using *observed mean AI (2000 and 2014) and observed discharges* instead of future AI scenarios
- SimrcmAI\_SUS: uses the sustainability (SUS) AI scenario. From 1980 to 2020 the AI\_SUS data for 2020 is used, and from 2020 to 2080 the transient AI\_SUS scenario is used.
- SimrcmAI\_BAU: uses the Business as usual (BAU) AI scenario. From 1980 to 2020 the AI\_BAU data for 2020 is used, and from 2020 to 2080 the transient AI\_BAU scenario is used.
- SimrcmAI\_EG: uses the Economic growth (EG) AI scenario. From 1980 to 2020 the AI\_EG data for 2020 is used, and from 2020 to 2080 the transient AI\_EG scenario is used.

In each case, the AI\_XXX 2020 scenario is used for the baseline RCM period (1980 to 2020), and for the future RCM period (2020 to 2080) the transient AI\_XXX scenario is used. For example, for the SUS AI scenario model runs, AI\_SUS abstraction and discharge data for 2020 are used for the baseline period from 1980 to 2020, then the transient AI SUS scenario data are used from 2020 to 2080 (Figure 3).





Figure 3 Schematic showing how future AI scenarios are used in the simrcm G2G model runs from 1980 to 2080.

Table 1 summarises the naming convention used for different model runs. Note that the CS-NOW naming convention is based on that used by the previous eFLAG project, but with an additional identifier for the type of AI data used (if any).



\*Mean AI = mean monthly abstractions for the period 2010 to 2014



#### <span id="page-21-0"></span>**4.5 Performance assessment criteria**

Four performance scores were used to quantify different aspects of the agreement between modelled and gauged flows: two based on the daily time series, one based on the magnitude of flow errors, and one based on the flow duration curve (FDC) low flow percentiles. The same performance scores were used within eFLaG (Hannaford et al. (2023) Table 2). They are considered to capture different aspects of the flow regime, from high- to low-flows.

The two time series performance scores are based on the model efficiency criterion of Nash and Sutcliffe (1970), defined as:

$$
NS = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (Q_{o,i} - Q_{m,i})^2}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (Q_{o,i} - \overline{Q_o})^2}
$$
 (1)

where  $Q_{o,i}$  is the gauged flow for time step *i*,  $Q_{m,i}$  is the modelled flow for time step *i*,  $\overline{Q_{o}}$  is the mean of observed data and *n* is the number of time steps. The *NS* can range between  $-\square$  and 1 where  $NS = 1$  means a perfect match between modelled and observed data,  $NS = 0$  indicates that the modelled data are as accurate as the mean of the observed data and  $NS < 0$  indicates that the mean of the observed data is a better predictor of the flow than the model. The original formulation of  $NS$  is more suitable for assessing model performance at high flows, so, for assessing low flows, it is adapted by taking the natural logarithm of the flow data, to increase sensitivity to low and midrange flows;

$$
NS_{log} = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (\ln(Q_{o,i} + \varepsilon) - \ln(Q_{m,i} + \varepsilon))^2}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (\ln(Q_{o,i} + \varepsilon) - \ln(\overline{Q_o} + \varepsilon))^2}
$$
(2)

where  $\varepsilon$  is a small number usually defined as  $\varepsilon = \overline{Q_o}/100$ . The  $NS_{log}$  can range between - $\Box$  and 1, which is interpreted the same as for NS.

The BIAS indicates the magnitude of errors in modelled daily flows relative to gauged daily flows:

$$
BIAS = 100 \times \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (Q_{m,i} - Q_{o,i})}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} Q_{o,i}}.
$$
 (3)



The *BIAS* can range from -∞ to +∞. A value > 0 indicates model overestimation, while a value < 0 indicates model underestimation.

The  $FDC$  performance score, the percentage bias in low flow volume  $lfv$ , compares the statistical characteristics of the flows rather than the time-step equivalence. It is calculated from the low flow end of the  $FDC$ , which is obtained by ranking the flows from a (daily) time series and selecting the flow corresponding to the percentile point *p* (between 1 and 100);  $Q_{m,p}$  and  $Q_{o,p}$  are thus the flow equalled or exceeded  $p\%$  of the time. Following Kay et al. (2015):

$$
lfv = 100 \times \frac{\sum_{p=70}^{95} \left( f(q_{m,p}) - f(q_{o,p}) \right)}{\sum_{p=70}^{95} f(q_{o,p})}
$$
(4)

where the function f is taken as the square root. If v only compares up to the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile flow (from the  $70<sup>th</sup>$ ) so as not to include extreme low flow values, which can be more severely affected by errors in flow measurements due to instrument inaccuracies in shallow flows or low velocities, changes in channel shape and/or weed growth and sedimentation (Petersen-Øverleir et al., 2009, Coxon et al., 2015). For a perfect model simulation the *lfv* value would be zero. A positive  $lfv$  value indicates that the modelled flow is generally higher than gauged flow, with typical values of *lfv* for individual catchments varying from -20 to 20%, indicating that the error in low flow volume is typically up to 20% of the flow observation.

The performance of the G2G simulations of daily mean river flow are assessed by comparing with gauged daily river flow data for 626 catchments (Figure 1b). Flow data for as many catchments as possible were used in the performance assessment. Catchments in England were only excluded from the analysis if no observations were available for the assessment period (1999 to 2014), and only 20 catchments out of 626 had <50% observations over the assessment period. The large number of catchments provides good spatial coverage across England but, as many smaller catchments are nested within larger catchments, there is some overlap.



# <span id="page-23-0"></span>5. Results

This section summarises the analysis of the CS-N0W model predictions, beginning with the G2G performance assessment (1999 to 2014) and then summarising the scenario runs (1980 to 2080).

#### <span id="page-23-1"></span>**5.1 Abstraction and Discharge Impact on River Flows**

As expected, model simulations show that significant abstractions in a catchment reduce river flows while discharges increase flows. The net effect varies, depending on whether catchment AIs are dominated by abstractions or discharges. The maps in Figure 4 show the locations of the 626 catchment outlets, and whether the observed AIs for those catchments are dominated by abstraction (259 catchments: red shading) or river discharges (359 catchments: blue shading). For 8 catchments there were no abstractions or discharges and they are shown with yellow shading. Gradations of colour in Figure 4 a&b denote overlapping sub-catchments.





Figure 4. Maps showing a) gauging station locations within England (Abstraction-dominated in red, dischargedominated in blue and neither dominated in yellow) and the main river network, catchment boundaries for b) the 259 abstraction-dominated catchments, c) the 359 discharge-dominated catchments and d) the 8 catchments with no AI, used in the model performance analysis.

For example, the Thames at Kingston (catchment area  $9,948 \text{ km}^2$ ) is abstractiondominated, but subject to both abstractions and discharges. The May to June 2012 hydrographs in Figure 5 demonstrate the influence of individual anthropogenic interventions in turn: ObsAI flows with abstraction (A) only are much lower than G2Gestimated natural flows. When discharges (D) are added ObsAI (A&D) river flows are much higher, but still less than G2G natural flows. In the Thames to Kingston, there is very little difference between using observed AI and a 5-year mean AI, but use of 5-year MeanAI with A&D leads to slightly lower flows in 2012. Many SW abstractions in the Thames Basin are subject to HoF conditions which will limit SW abstraction during periods of low flows with the aim of maintaining sufficient river flow to support a healthy freshwater environment. Across England, the net influence of abstractions, HoF conditions and discharges varies between catchments, and because *monthly* abstraction data are used, the net AI influence can also vary through the year.





**Figure 5** Example flow hydrographs for the Thames to Kingston (39001) for the period 1 May to 30 June 2012 showing observed flows and G2G model simulations using different combinations of abstractions and discharges

Figure 6 compares gauged and G2G-simulated daily river flows for three catchments from 1st May 2012 to 31st August 2012. For the heavily abstracted Thames at Kingston catchment, the G2G flow simulations with AI are lower than the "Natural" model simulation as expected, but in the discharge-dominated Trent at Drakelow Park, where there are no "Very Low" loss abstractions, the influence of discharge dominates. In this catchment, the G2G-simulated "Natural" flows are low in May and August but when AI are included, G2G-simulated flows are higher and much closer to observed (gauged) flows.





**Figure 6** Example flow hydrographs for 3 catchments (Thames at Kingston (39001), Trent at Drakelow Park (28019) and Darwen at Blue Bridge (71014)) for the period 1 May to 30 June 2012 showing observed flows and the G2G simulation using MeanAI.



#### <span id="page-27-0"></span>**5.2 Model Performance Assessment**

G2G model simulated flows (Simobs) are compared to gauged daily flows across all the CS-N0W catchments as boxplots of performance skill scores in Figure 7. Results are presented for three sets of catchments: all 626 catchments, 259 abstraction-dominated, and 359 discharge-dominated. The boxplots compare the skill scores (*NS*, *NSlog*, *BIAS*, and *lfv*) from standard G2G model for "Natural" flows, G2G with "Observed AI" and G2G with "Observed Mean AI".

Generally, use of AI data in the G2G hydrological model improves model performance during low flow periods, but has less of an impact when flows are higher. As shown in Table 2, the median value of *NSlog* (a measure of model performance at low flows) increases from 0.56 for the "Natural" G2G simulation to 0.63 for the ObsAI and MeanAI (12.5% improvement). The spatial maps of the G2G model skill scores (NS and NSlog) shown in Figure 8 highlight the spatial performance of G2G when driven by ObsAI.

Across all the catchments, the median model *BIAS* is better (1.9%) for the Natural simulation than for the ObsAI and MeanAI simulations (3.9%) indicating the G2G slightly overestimates flow. However, median *lfv* is improved when AI are used (*lfv* is −5.61% for the Natural run, rising to −0.94% and −1.20% for the ObsAI and MeanAI runs respectively). Overall, the median performance across all 626 study catchments is improved through the use of AI data in the G2G hydrological model; such improvements are most apparent in discharge dominated catchments for low flows. In abstraction-dominated catchments, the improvements in model performance through the use of AI data are more modest.





Figure 7 Boxplots of flow-simulation performance scores (*NS*, *NSlog*, *BIAS*, and *lfv*) for SW-abstraction-dominated and discharge-dominated catchments with three different G2G model simulations: 'Natural', 'ObsAI' and 'MeanAI'.



Table 2 Median model performance scores (*NS, NSlog, BIAS*, and *lfv*)







Figure 8 Maps of the G2G model performance skill scores *NS* and *NSlog* (ObsAI), when comparing simulated and observed river flows.

#### <span id="page-30-0"></span>**5.3 Temporal and Mean Variation in Abstraction Data Use**

The work presented here shows how records of "monthly" and "mean monthly" (2000 to 2014) abstraction and discharge data can be incorporated in process-based hydrological models, leading to improvements in model performance in anthropogenically influenced catchments. The G2G model performance statistics in Table 2 are provided for model runs using monthly (ObsAI) and mean-monthly (MeanAI), and they suggest that accuracy of high flow simulations is identical in both cases (*NS* criteria identical to 2 decimal places), but there is a small difference in the accuracy of low flow simulations (a difference in *NSlog* of 1%), and a 4% difference in lfv. Intriguingly, in abstractiondominated catchments the use of MeanAI leads to *improvements* in some skill scores: ~25% improvement in *%BIAS* and 1% improvement in *lfv* (which would generally be expected to occur during summer periods).

The simulation performance results in Table 2 and Figure 7 show the median and range in the ObsAI and MeanAI impacts on G2G performance, but don't indicate how many catchments are particularly affected by this choice of AI data. To understand this, Figure 9 presents scatterplots of G2G simulation performance for all 626 catchments using MeanAI (from 2010 to 2014) and ObsAI. In general, model performance across the



15-year assessment period is very similar and there are ~7 catchments where the *NS, NSlog, BIAS*, and *lfv* values are substantially different between the ObsAI and MeanAI runs (Colne at Colne Bridge (27031), Roch at Rochdale (69803), Don at Sheffield Hadfields (27006), Exe at Pixton (45009), Lark at Temple (33014), Ouse at Gold Bridge(41005), and Eye Brook at Eye Brook Reservoir (31001)). Further investigation indicates that for these catchments, abstractions during the 5-year period over which MeanAI abstractions were calculated differ substantially from recorded abstractions over the 16-year assessment period, often because of changes in abstraction licences. For most other catchments, abstraction changes over this period were more modest, which was why observations of abstractions could be replaced by a monthly mean with greater success.

Overall, these analyses suggest that use of mean-monthly abstraction totals for a relatively recent period (2000 to 2014) provides a reasonable baseline for developing future AI scenarios, though investigation into the use of derived relationships between observed AI and monthly rainfall might be beneficial in the derivation of future scenarios of monthly abstractions.



Figure 9. Scatter plots of the *NS, NSlog, BIAS*, and *lfv* for the actual (ObsAI) and mean abstraction (MeanAI) runs. Outlier catchments are labelled using their catchment ID.

#### <span id="page-31-0"></span>**5.4 G2G-simulated future scenarios of AI-impacted river flows**

For the 12-member ensemble of UKCP18-driven climate simulations (Section 3.6), G2G model runs were undertaken for the period 1st December 1980 to 30th November 2080 for the 3 future AI scenarios (Section 3.4). The output consists of 36 UKCP18-driven



climate-simulations in total, which are analysed in a separate report (Tanguy et al., 2023).

By way of example, Figure 10 presents a 12-member ensemble of daily mean river flows  $(m<sup>3</sup>s<sup>-1</sup>)$  for the Thames at Kingston (39001) corresponding to 12 UKCP18 RCMs (the BAU demand scenario) for a 1-year period from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> December 2050. Monthly hydrographs for all 12 RCM members are plotted together to highlight the variability in projected future flows.



Figure 10. Example plots of daily mean river flows for the Thames at Kingston (Station No. 39001) from 12 RCM ensemble members according to the BAU AI scenario (BAUAI)

For the 3 AI scenarios (Baron et al., 2023), which are summarised in Section 3.4, it has not been possible to identify a consistently low, central or high AI scenario, and for some catchments the scenarios even cross. For example, in the Thames to Kingston, the surface water abstraction scenarios for BAU and EG intersect around 2040, as shown in Figure 11. Thus from 2040 onwards the BAU SW abstraction scenario results in higher SW abstraction demand than for EG. The scenario graphs also highlight that, at the starting point of the scenarios (2020), there are small differences between the 3 scenarios, because the underlying reports on which they are based initialise their "future" scenarios at different times leading to different demand projections for the year 2020.



In a follow-on report (Tanguy et al., 2023), the future AI-impacted flows are analysed for water resource applications and drought analyses at different climate warming thresholds. The scenarios can also be explored to understand the impact of projected climate and AI scenarios on low flows and environmental flows.





For example, Figure 12 presents transient moving windows from 1980 to 2080 of Q95 (the flow exceeded 95% of the time) for three catchments 39001, 28019, 71014, assuming the BAU AI scenario. For catchment 39001, an abstraction-dominated catchment, median Q95 decreases by 23.6% until the 2020-centred time period, then decreases further by 48.5% to the final 2065-centred moving window; similarly, for catchment 71014 median Q95 decreases are 3.8% and 17.6% over the same periods. By comparison, for the example discharge-dominated catchment 28019, median Q95 decreases by just 5.3% and 2.5% over the same periods. Analyses such as these could be used to support investigations into the use of flow exceedance thresholds as a suitable means of determining minimum environmental flow requirements which are defined by flow exceedance thresholds such as Q70 and Q95 (Environment Agency (2020), Appendix 4).

It has not been possible to present results for all catchments, scenario and time periods in report form, but these information are being made available in a CS-NOW project web-tool, which will allow the user to explore future simulations for individual catchments and English regions. Parallel work is exploring options for open publication



of CS-NOW datasets and model simulations on the EIDC or CEDA data centres, following the approach of Hannaford et al., 2022 who published the eFLAG future flow and groundwater simulations.





Figure 12. 30-year transient moving windows from 1980 to 2080 of Q95 (the flow exceeded 95% of the time) for three catchments 39001, 28019, 71014, for the BAU AI scenario and UKCP18 regional climate projections. Orange shading shows the spread of the 12 UKCP18-driven derived Q95 values, the black line shows the median, and the dashed vertical line indicates the start of the 30-year period after which future AIs are included.



#### <span id="page-36-0"></span>**5.5 Summary of G2G model output**

The output from both the observation-driven and UKCP18-driven G2G simulations consists of .csv files of daily flows at 626 English gauging stations, 1km resolution grids of AI-impacted river flows, and 1km grids of total monthly abstracted water, total monthly un-abstracted water (water that could not be abstracted from surface or groundwater), and number of days per month abstraction demand could not be met. The outputs are summarised in Table 3, and a full list is provided in Appendix A, Table 6. The project team are exploring options for open publication of CS-NOW datasets and model following the approach of Hannaford et al., 2022 who published the eFLAG simulations on the EIDC.



Table 3 Summary of AI-impacted G2G model output for present-day and UKCP18 scenarios

![](_page_37_Picture_0.jpeg)

Together, the monthly datasets of G2G-simulated abstracted water, water demand that couldn't be met in the G2G ("unabstracted water"), and number of days per month when abstraction demand cannot be met, can be used to provide an estimate of when and where future demand exceeds water availability, and how it changes over time. Figure 13 presents an example map of G2G-simulated abstracted surface water for August 2014, highlighting the spatial variation in the volume of water  $(m^3)$  that could be abstracted during the model run. The water volume that is available for abstraction will always be less than or equal to the abstraction demand. Maps similar to Figure 13 can be produced for future periods showing where surface water and groundwater abstraction demand can/cannot be met, and for different AI scenarios.

![](_page_37_Figure_2.jpeg)

Figure 13. Map of G2G-estimated abstracted surface water  $(m<sup>3</sup>)$  for August 2014

A comparison of (observed) SW abstraction demand (yellow line) and G2G-simulated abstracted surface water (green line) is presented in Figure 14 for two years, 2011 and 2012. The difference in the two graphs illustrates the difference between recorded abstraction demand  $(m^3)$ , and the volume of water  $(m^3)$  the G2G model was able to abstract from this catchment (39001, the Thames to Kingston). The difference in the two time-series highlights that the volume of river water available for abstraction (green line) may not always be enough to satisfy the local abstraction demand (yellow line).

![](_page_38_Picture_0.jpeg)

Further work will be needed to understand why this is the case, but reasons might include abstraction limited locally by a HoF condition, an abstraction demand that cannot be fulfilled by the current G2G model configuration, such as reservoir abstraction, estuary/tidal abstraction, groundwater abstraction from an aquifer not simulated by the G2G, or even just a large abstraction incorrectly attributed to a minor river channel during discretisation to a 1km grid. Figure 14 also illustrates the monthly and interannual variability in observed SW abstraction, highlighting the importance of using actual monthly abstraction data where possible rather than an annual mean.

![](_page_38_Figure_2.jpeg)

Figure 14. Observed SW abstraction and G2G-simulated abstracted surface water (January 2011 to December 2012) for the Thames to Kingston

### <span id="page-38-0"></span>6. Discussion

A grid-based hydrological model (G2G) has been modified to account for artificial influences (AIs: abstractions and discharges) and used to simulate historical and projected future river flows and water demand comparable with the recently-published eFLaG dataset (Hannaford et al., 2023). The relative success with which actual abstraction values for most catchments can be replaced by 5-year mean values (section 5.3) supports the use of mean monthly abstraction values as a basis for the 3 future scenarios of water demand developed by Baron et al. (2023) and used here for the future AI scenarios.

![](_page_39_Picture_0.jpeg)

However, it is important to acknowledge the wider uncertainties in the model simulations developed here. These uncertainties, which include the observed AI data (specifically the use of NALD rather than WRGIS data), how the AI data are discretised to a 1km grid in the G2G, how AI data are incorporated in the G2G national-scale model are discussed in detail in (Rameshwaran et al., 2022). Use of future scenarios, for both AIs and UKCP18-projected climate, adds another level of uncertainty. In many ways, uncertainty is explored through the use of *ensembles* of AI and UKCP18 RCM scenarios, although it's important to note that the UKCP18 RCM data used here are for RCP8.5, a high emissions scenario representing a rather pessimistic view of the UK's climate future. The median projected impact of this (UKCP18 RCM/RCP8.5) scenario on mean river flows across Britain is ~9% higher flows in winter and 45% lower flows in summer (Kay, 2021), with similar projected impacts on extreme flows (Lane and Kay, 2021) found >10% increase in 10 year return period high flows and -90 to -27% decrease in 10 year return period low flows). (Hannaford et al., 2023) discuss other uncertainties associated with eFLaG (around observational data and bias correction choices, e.g. choice of observational PE, choice of bias correction). It must also be considered that only one hydrological model is used in CS-N0W, thus AI-impacted model structural uncertainty cannot be quantified here.

It is also worth noting that with the current G2G formulation, the true abstraction demand may not always be met as G2G does not include all freshwater anthropogenic influences, such as impounding reservoirs and releases, canals and lakes. For example, in dry summer months, simulated river flows falling below the HoF condition will prevent the surface water abstraction from taking place. There is currently no functionality in the G2G model to enable an unmet abstraction demand to be satisfied by compensation flows from reservoirs, which happen in reality. Similarly, some groundwater abstraction demands will not be met because of the simple approach to groundwater and the way in which groundwater abstraction is implemented in the G2G (no account has been taken of the groundwater abstraction impact zone which can extend some distance from the actual abstraction location). . In such situations the G2G

![](_page_40_Picture_0.jpeg)

model typically will *underestimate* the true water consumption leading to downstream river flows being slightly higher than they would be.

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### <span id="page-41-0"></span>7. Summary

This report was produced for the CS-N0W project (WPD2) which aims to provide future projections of AI-impacted flows across England up to 2080, taking account of possible future changes in abstractions/discharges. The report summarises the modelling approach and datasets used to derive the future flow projections, together with an assessment of how the AI-impacted hydrological model (Grid-to-Grid or "G2G") performs for historical periods. A second report, Tanguy et al. (2023), presents an analysis of these scenarios and provides key indicators and statistics of water availability for historical, current and future timescales to 2080.

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![](_page_43_Picture_0.jpeg)

# <span id="page-43-0"></span>**Appendix A**

Table 4 Gauging stations for which daily flows are estimated by the G2G Model

![](_page_43_Picture_933.jpeg)

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Table 5 EA abstraction uses and associated loss factors

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Table 6 Full list and naming convention for observed- and UKCP18-driven G2G model simulations

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![](_page_51_Picture_1.jpeg)