How the 2025 drought developed in England: annex of national graphics

January 2026

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We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can’t do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

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Overview

These graphics support the publication '2025 drought: how it developed in England'.

1. Rainfall

Both December 2024 and January 2025 were wet in parts of England, particularly the north-west. However, from early spring conditions were much drier across the country, with March, April and May being very dry for many. Through the summer months the north-west received much of the rainfall in England, while central and east England remained drier. September and October were wet for much of the country, although the east continued to see drier conditions. November was very wet for much of England, with the driest conditions in south-east England. December was also wet particularly in the south-west and north-west but drier in the east.

Figure A1: Monthly rainfall in England for January 2025 to December 2025. UKPP radar data. Note: Radar beam blockages in some regions may give anomalous totals in some areas. Source: Met Office. Crown copyright

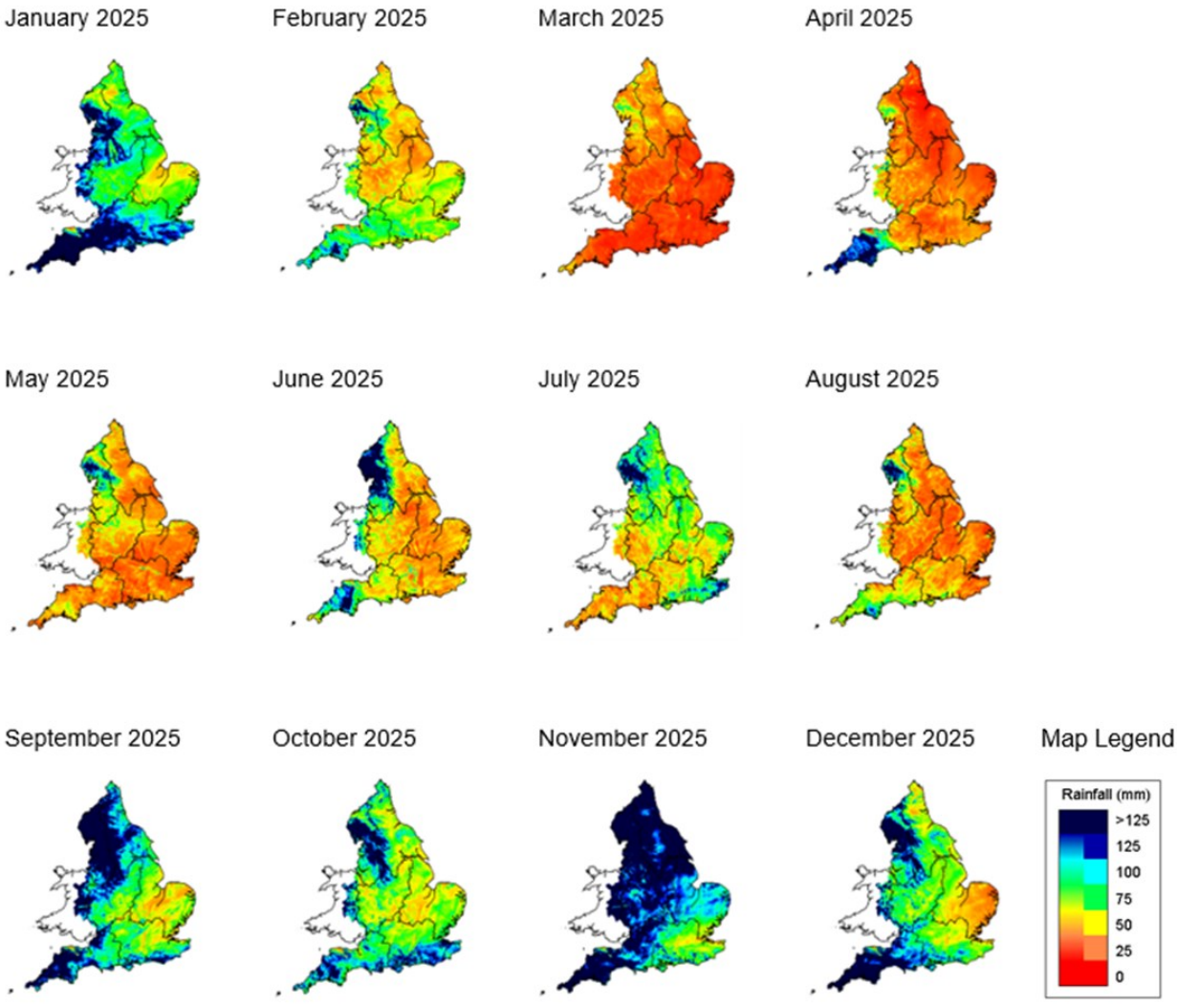
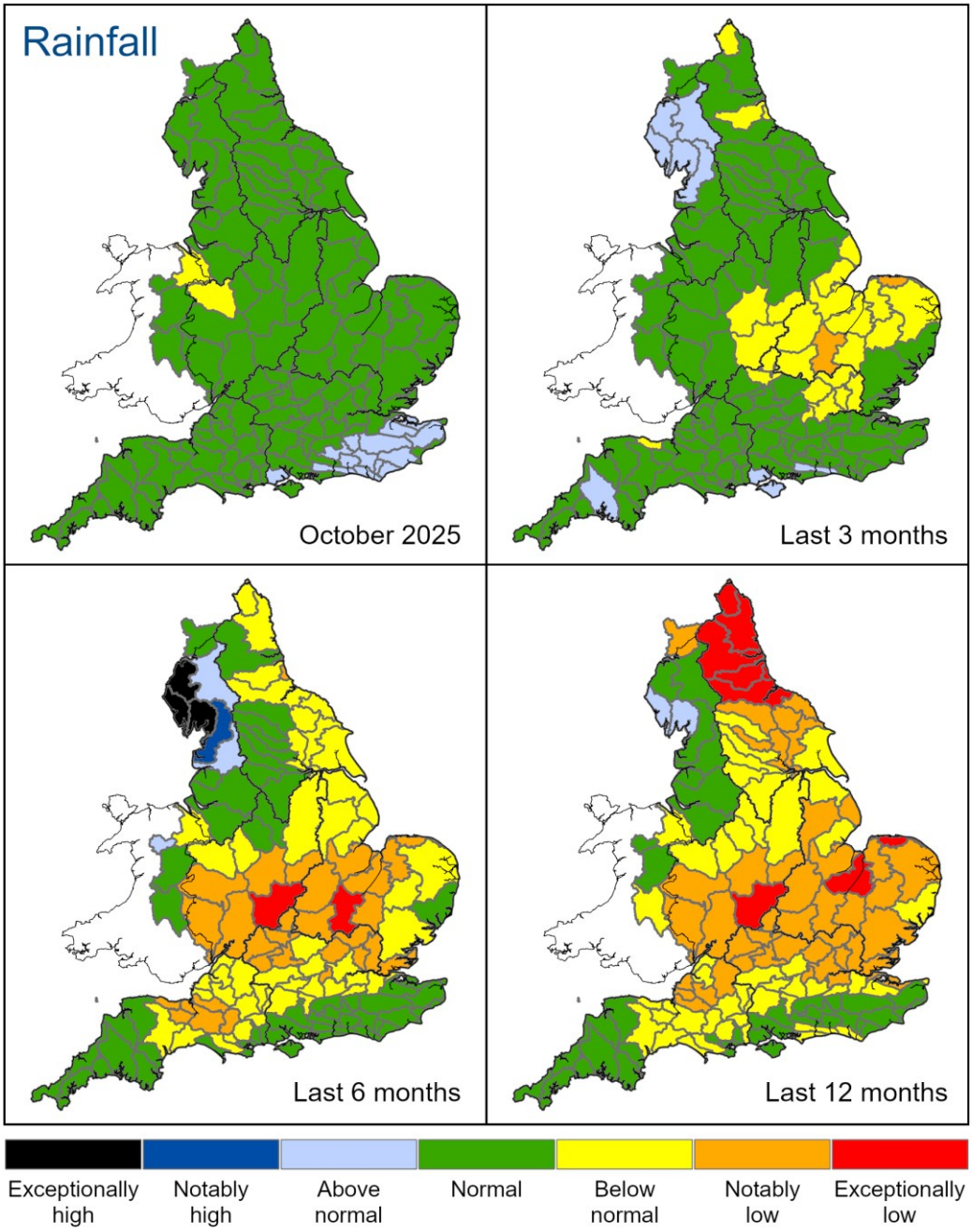


Figure A1 as a data table

Month	Rainfall (mm)	Percent of 1991 to 2020 long term average rainfall
January 2025	93.0	112%
February 2025	52.2	79%
March 2025	14.8	25%
April 2025	28.3	50%
May 2025	32.8	57%
June 2025	51.9	80%
July 2025	58.9	89%
August 2025	31.3	42%
September 2025	102.0	149%
October 2025	81.0	90%
November 2025	137.5	149%

Figure A2: Total rainfall for hydrological areas across England for October 2025, the last 3 months (August to October), the last 6 months (May to October), and the last 12 months (November 2024 to October), classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals. Source: Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges



In October 2025, rainfall was classed as normal across most of England. In the far south-east totals were above normal in some hydrological areas, while two areas in central and north-west England were classed as below normal for the time of year.

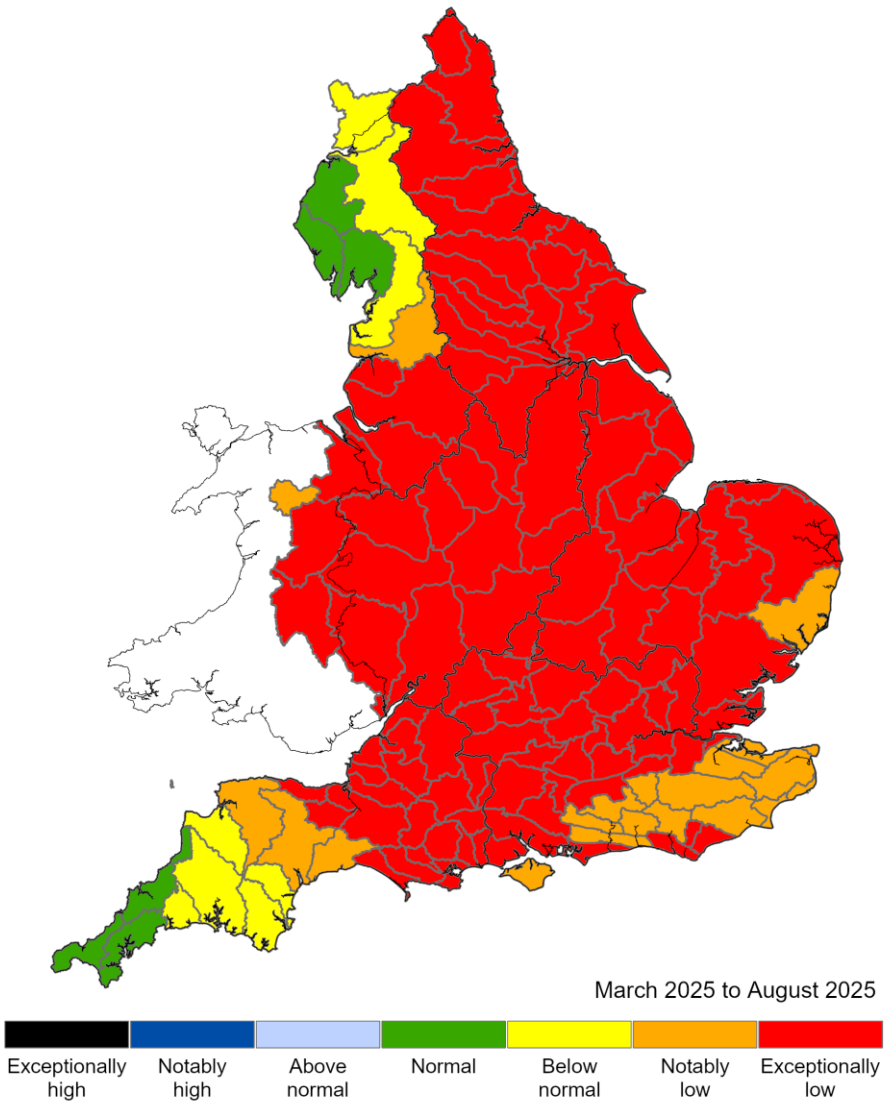
The 3-month cumulative rainfall totals were normal for most of England. A group of hydrological areas across central, eastern and southern England were classed as below

normal or notably low. In Cumbria in the north-west, rainfall totals were above normal, as were totals in a handful of hydrological areas along the south coast.

Over the last 6-months to October, cumulative rainfall totals have been varied across England, although the majority were classed as normal or lower for the period. Across much of England, rainfall was classed as below normal or notably low, however north-west England had above normal or higher rainfall.

Twelve-month cumulative totals were normal or lower for almost all of England, with exceptionally low totals across north-east England, and in parts of east and central England. In western areas, rainfall totals were mostly normal, with two above normal catchment in the north-west.

Figure A3: Accumulated rainfall totals for the period March to August 2025 for all hydrological areas in England relative to an analysis of respective historic totals. Source: Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges

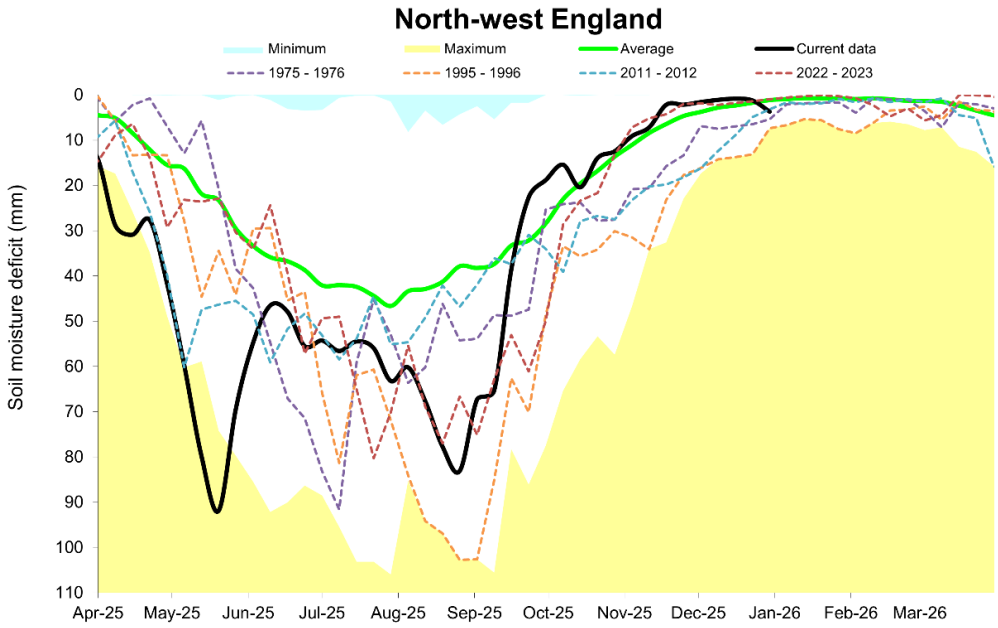


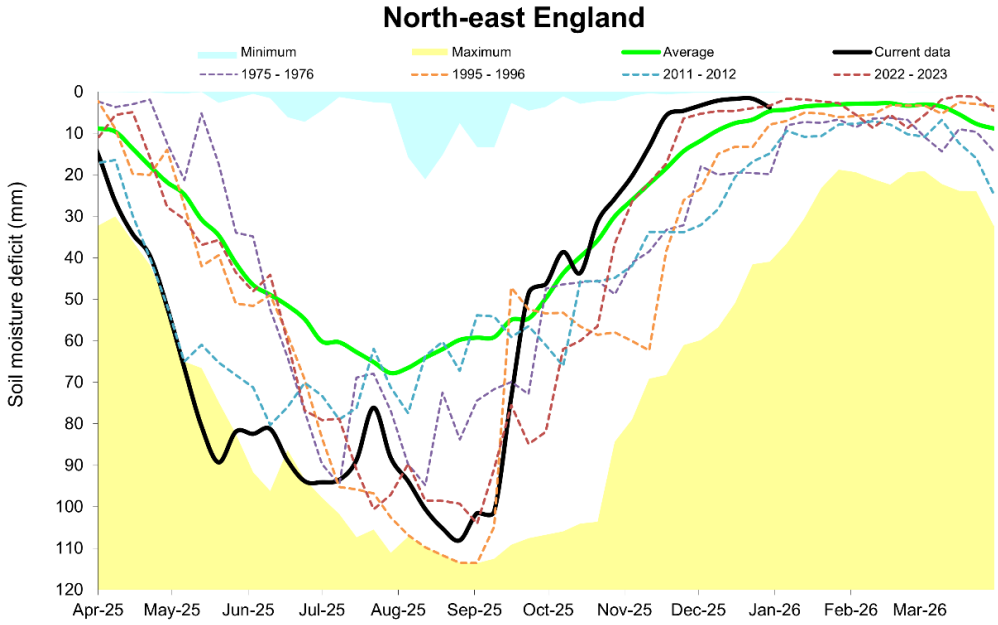
For the 6-month period from March to August 2025, cumulative rainfall totals were classed as exceptionally low across most of England. Parts of south-east and east England had notably low rainfall totals in this period. In the far south-west and in north-west England, rainfall totals were classed as below normal or normal.

2. Soil moisture deficits

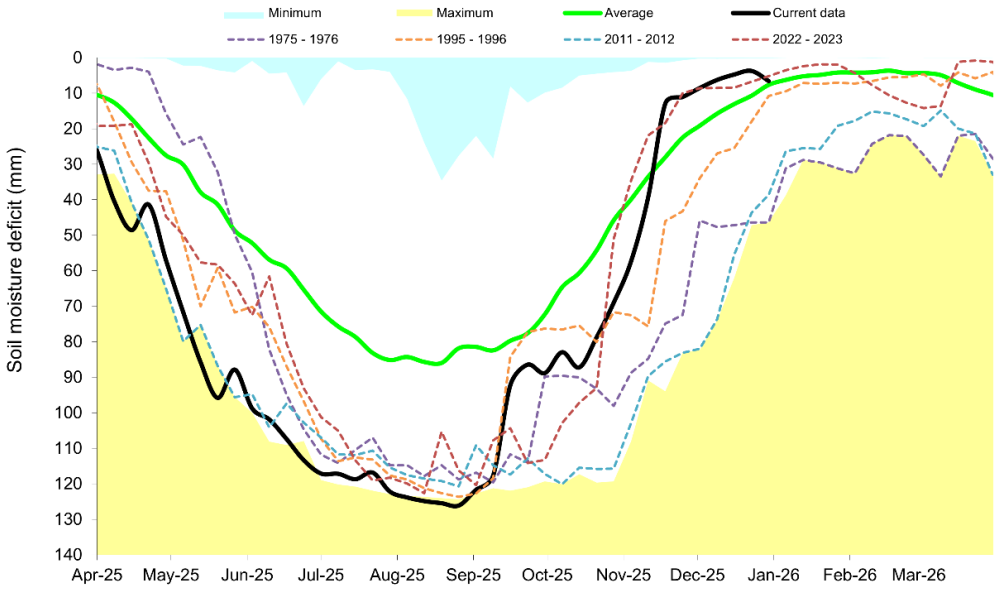
Soil moisture deficits (SMD) are the difference between the amount of water actually in the soil and the amount of water the soil can theoretically hold. They are expressed in depth of water (mm). SMD grew quickly across England during the dry spring. North-west and north-east England had notably high deficits early in the year. Later in the summer, soils remained driest in east and south-east England, roughly tracking deficits in 2022. Following wetter weather in September, October and early November, soils returned to around average or wetter conditions.

Figure A4: Regional soil moisture deficits from April 2025 onwards. Compared against minimum, maximum and average values, and previous notable drought years. Source: Met Office Crown copyright

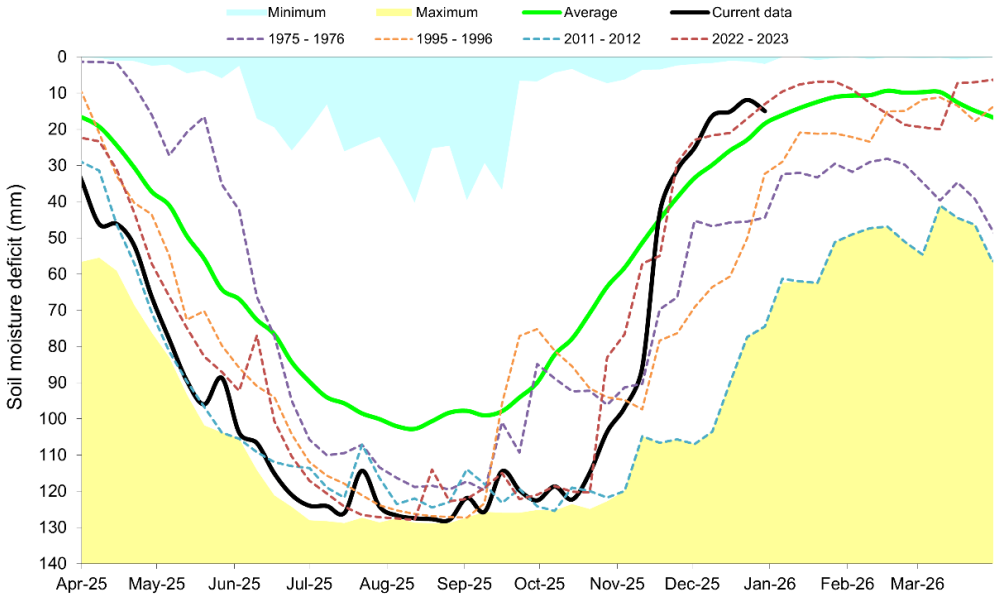


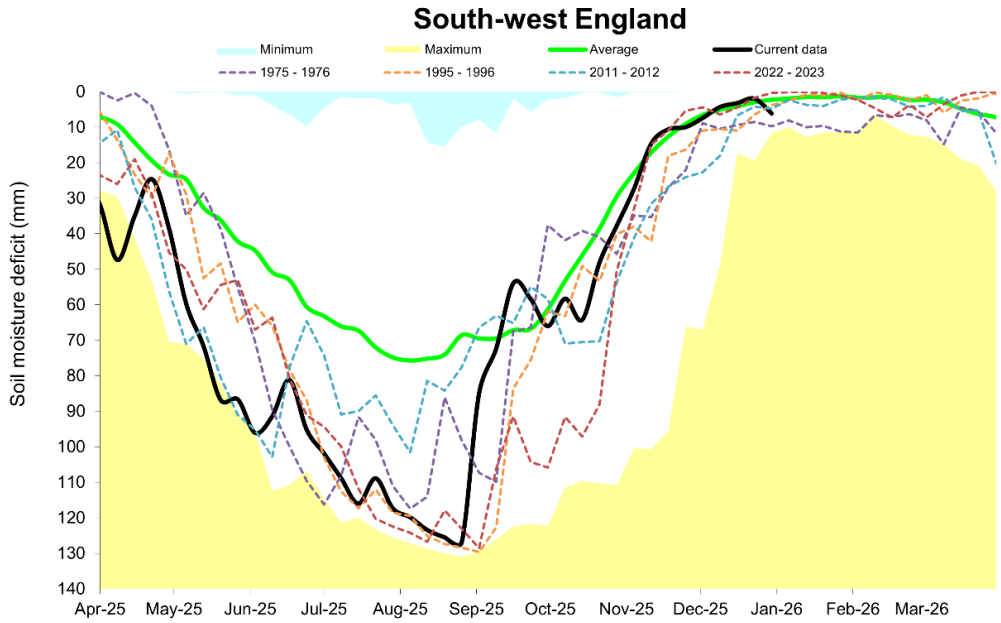


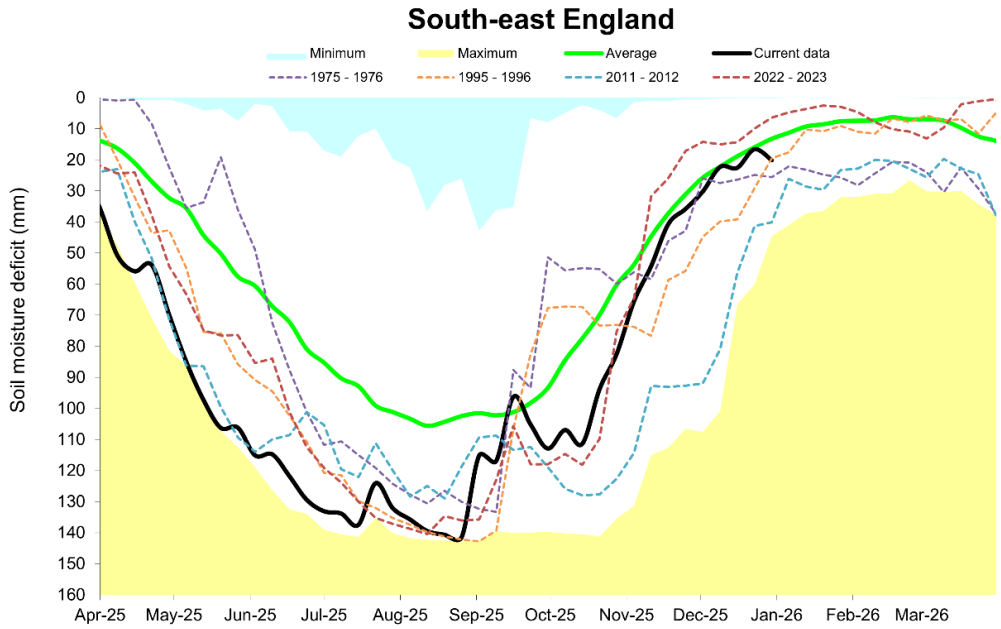
Central England



East England







Soil moisture deficits in north-west England were almost completely reduced early in December 2025, before dry weather towards the end of the month left soils slightly drier than would be expected at the end of the month. Following dry weather early in the year, deficits increased quickly, leaving soils much drier than average, and drier than previous notable dry periods including 1976. They remained drier than average until late September when ongoing wet conditions helped to reduce deficits quickly.

In north-east England, soil moisture deficits were around average in December 2025. Earlier in the year, deficits had increased quickly following dry weather in the spring, and soils were drier than would be expected until September when wet weather saw deficits begin to decrease.

Central England has seen consistently drier than average soils throughout 2025, but following a wet November and December, they were around average for the time of year

at the end of December. Through the summer, soils were drier than other notable dry weather periods, including 1976, 2011 to 2012 and 2022.

In east England, soil moisture deficits grew quickly during the spring, leaving soils drier than would be expected for much of the year. In August soils were drier than other dry periods including 1976 and 2022. In late October, wetter weather helped deficits decrease quickly, so that soils were slightly wetter than would be expected at the end of December.

Soil moisture deficits in south-west England were above average for most of 2025, with notably large deficits developing in the summer. Some relief was experience in September, before another period of drier weather left soils slightly drier than would be expected. By the end of December, deficits were around average for the time of year.

South-east England has seen soils drier than average for much of 2025, with soils being drier than 1976 and 2022 in June and July. Despite wet weather helping to diminish deficits in the autumn, by December soils remained slightly drier than average for the time of year.

3. River flows

Rivers levels fell early in the year after the dry spring and many rivers were notably low or lower through the summer. The most widespread low rivers flows were seen in August. Following wetter weather in the autumn, river flows were mostly normal at the end of October, and by December more than half of sites were classed as above normal or higher.

Figure A5: Percentage of monthly mean river flows across England in each class relative to an analysis of respective historic river flows (data for November relates to week ending 18 November). Source: Environment Agency

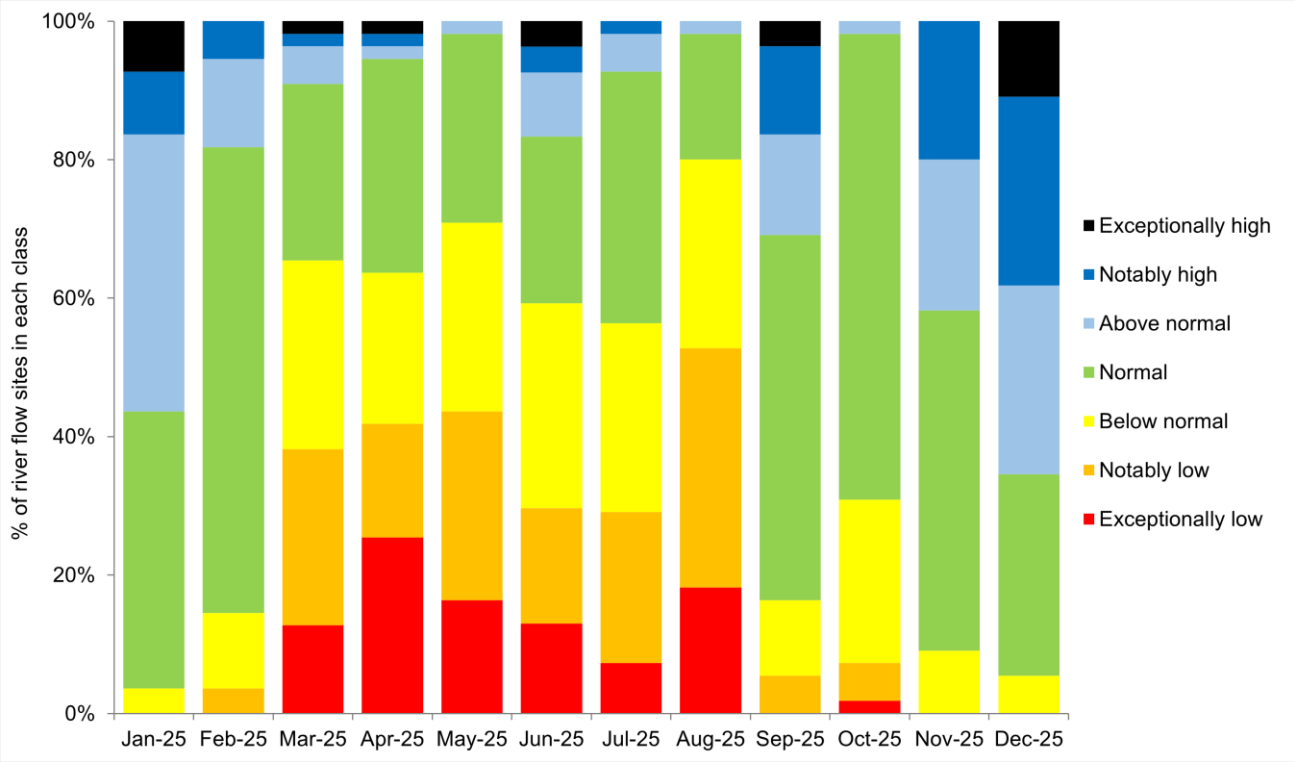
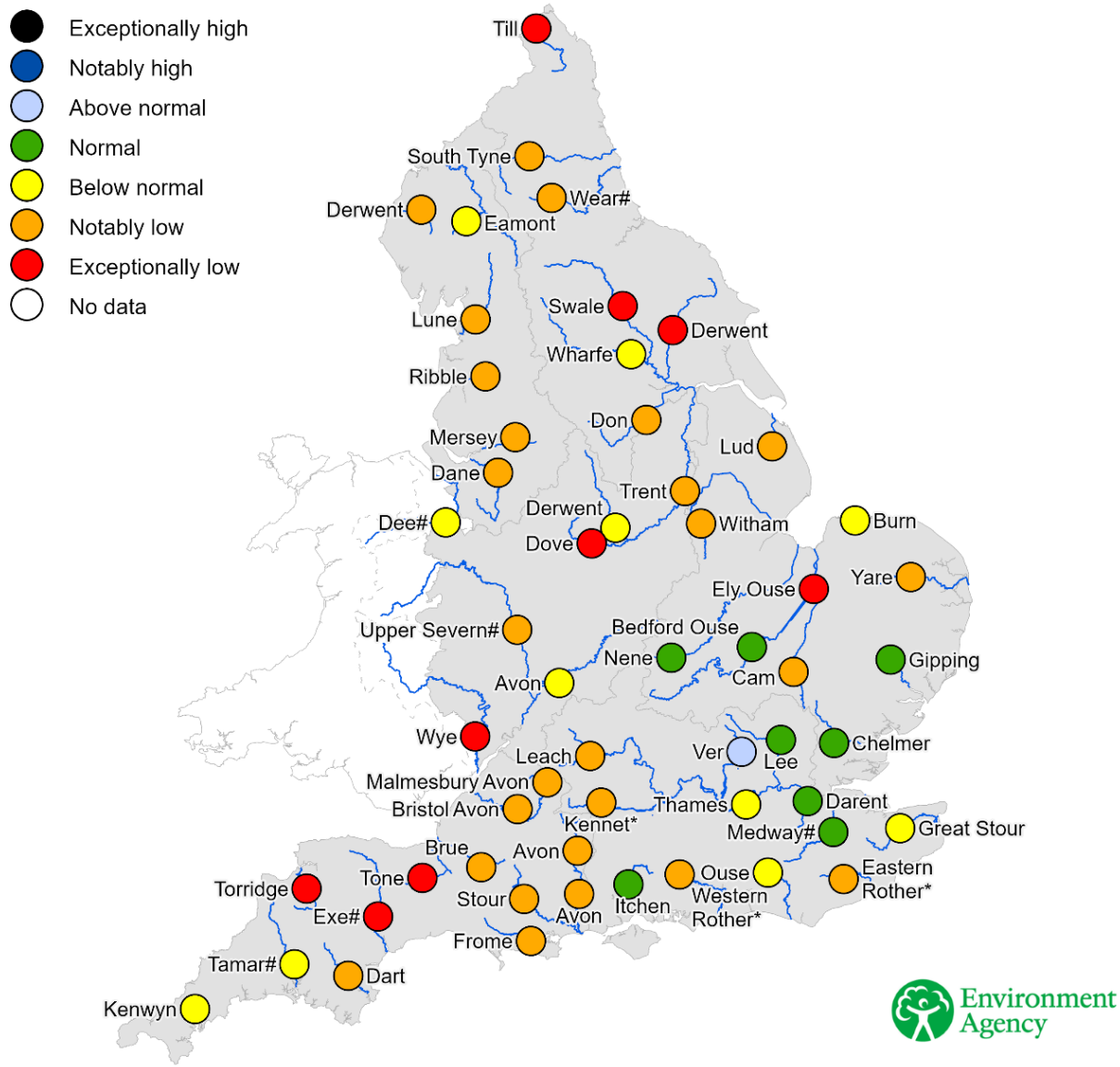


Figure A5 as a data table: Percentage of monthly mean river flows across England in each class relative to an analysis of respective historic river flows.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Exceptionally high	7	0	2	2	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	11
Notably high	9	5	2	2	0	4	2	0	13	0	20	27
Above normal	40	13	5	2	2	9	5	2	15	2	22	27
Normal	40	67	25	31	27	24	36	18	53	67	49	29
Below normal	4	11	27	22	27	30	27	27	11	24	9	5
Notably low	0	4	25	16	27	17	22	35	5	5	0	0
Exceptionally low	0	0	13	25	16	13	7	18	0	2	0	0

Figure A6: River flows in England on 26 August 2025, when low flows were most prevalent across the country. Source: Environment Agency

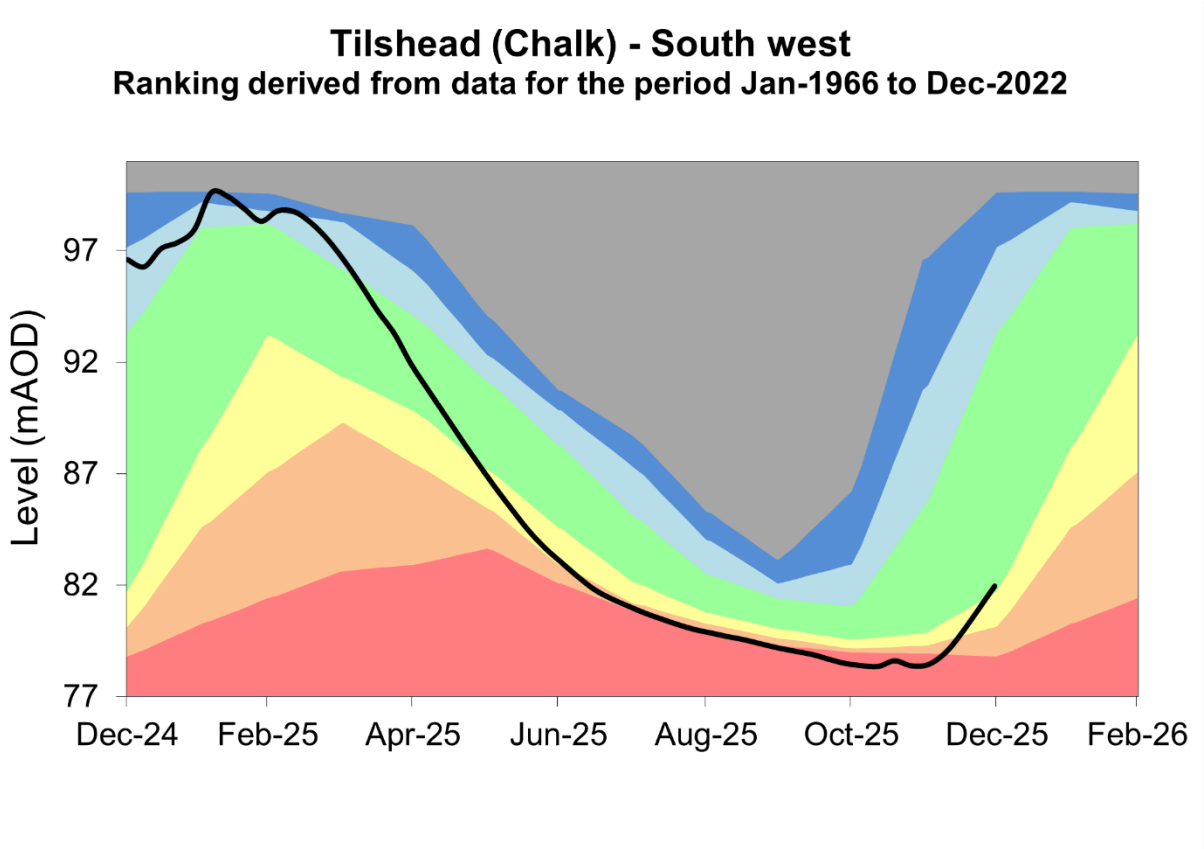


River flows were notably or exceptionally low at the majority of sites across England on August 26 2025. Exceptionally low flows were found in north-east, central and south-west England. In east and south-east England eight sites had river flows classed as normal for the time of year. The River Ver in south-east England was classed as above normal for the time of year, as high groundwater levels in the catchment continued to support flows in the river.

4. Groundwater

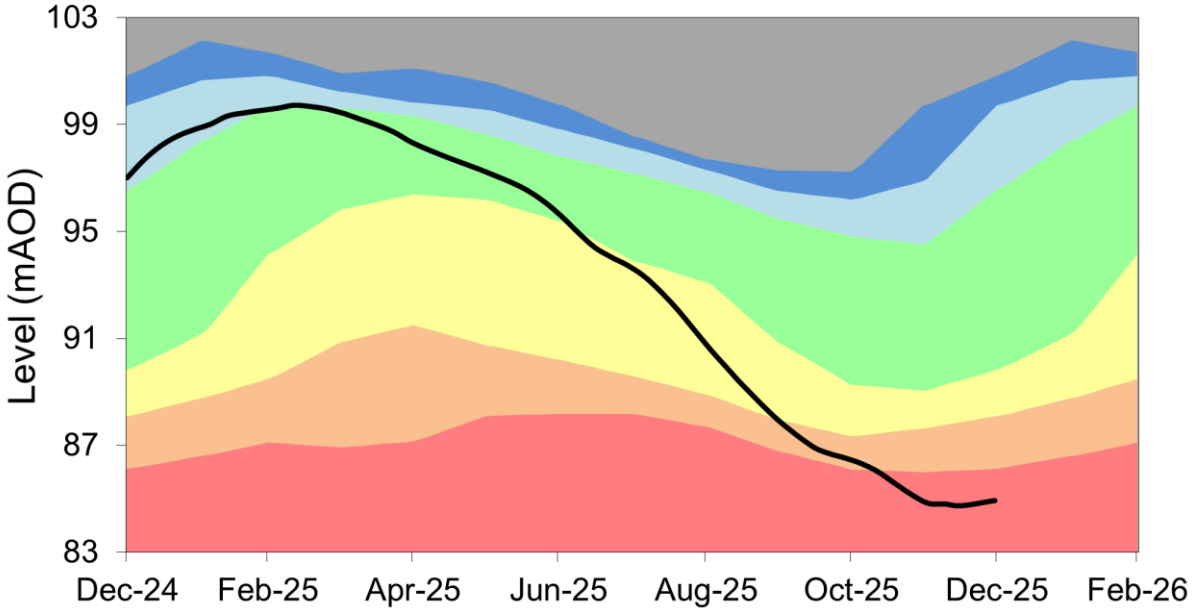
Groundwater levels were normal or above normal across much of England following the wet autumn and winter in 2024/25. However, some of the more reactive aquifers declined earlier than expected following the dry spring in 2025. Of our monitoring sides, Jackaments Bottom in the Cotswolds Jurassic Limestone declined fastest and was classified as exceptionally low from early April to early September, before it recovered quickly in the autumn. Many sites continued to fall in November as soils remained dry meaning recharge of groundwater resources could not yet begin. This included Chipstead in the Epsom Downs Chalk in south-east England, which continued to fall and was exceptionally low at the end of December.

Figure A7: Groundwater levels at four sites across England between January and November 2025. Source: Environment Agency



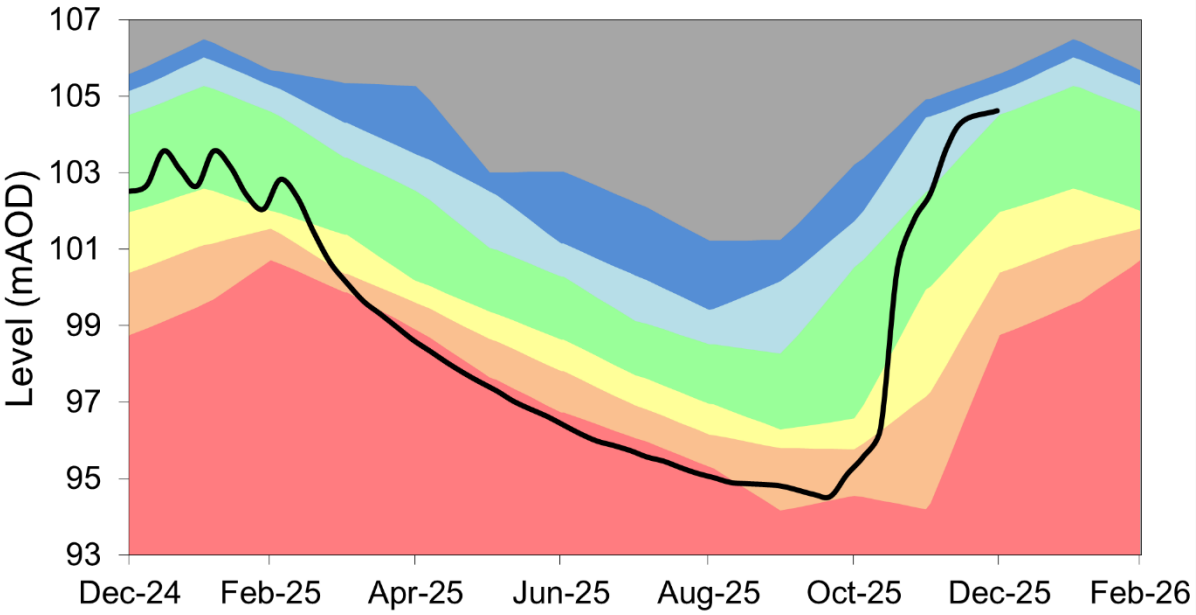
Chipstead (Chalk) - South east

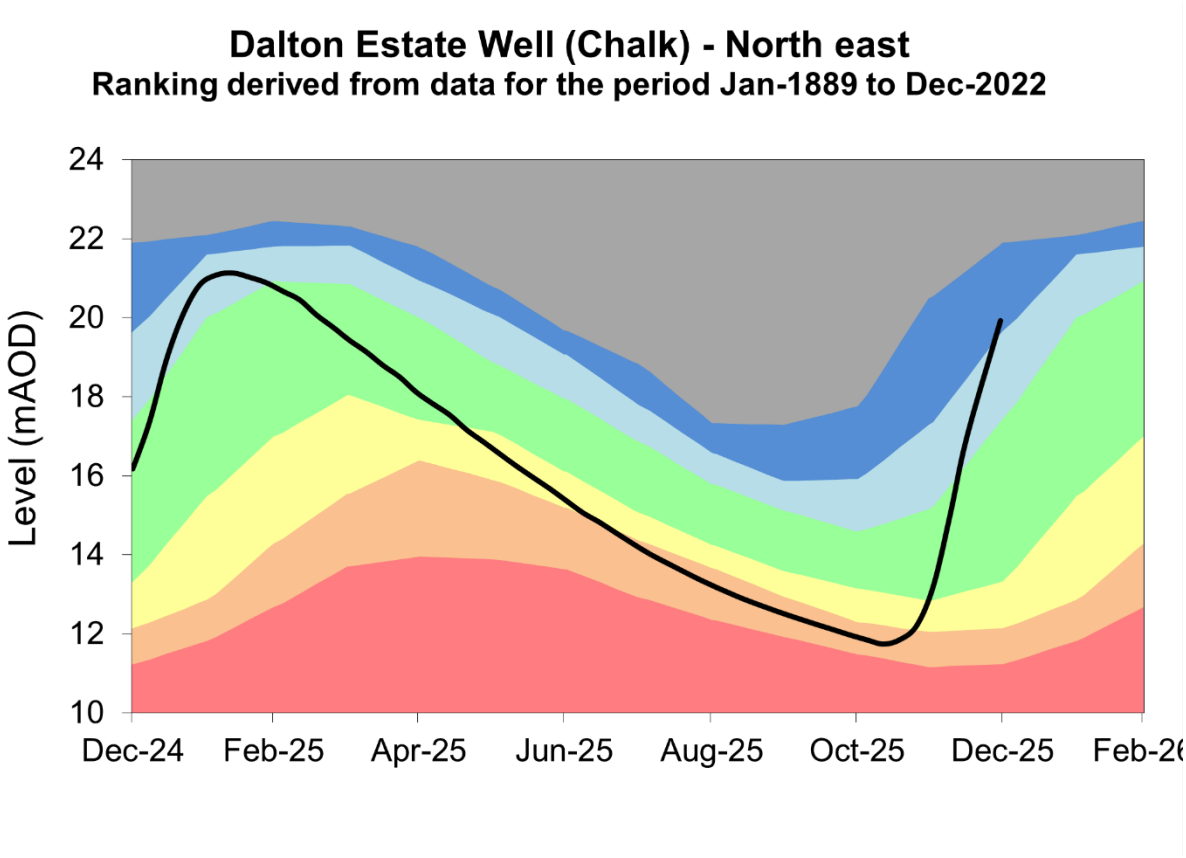
Ranking derived from data for the period Oct-1942 to Dec-2022



Jackaments Bottom (Jurassic Limestone) - South east

Ranking derived from data for the period Jan-1974 to Dec-2022





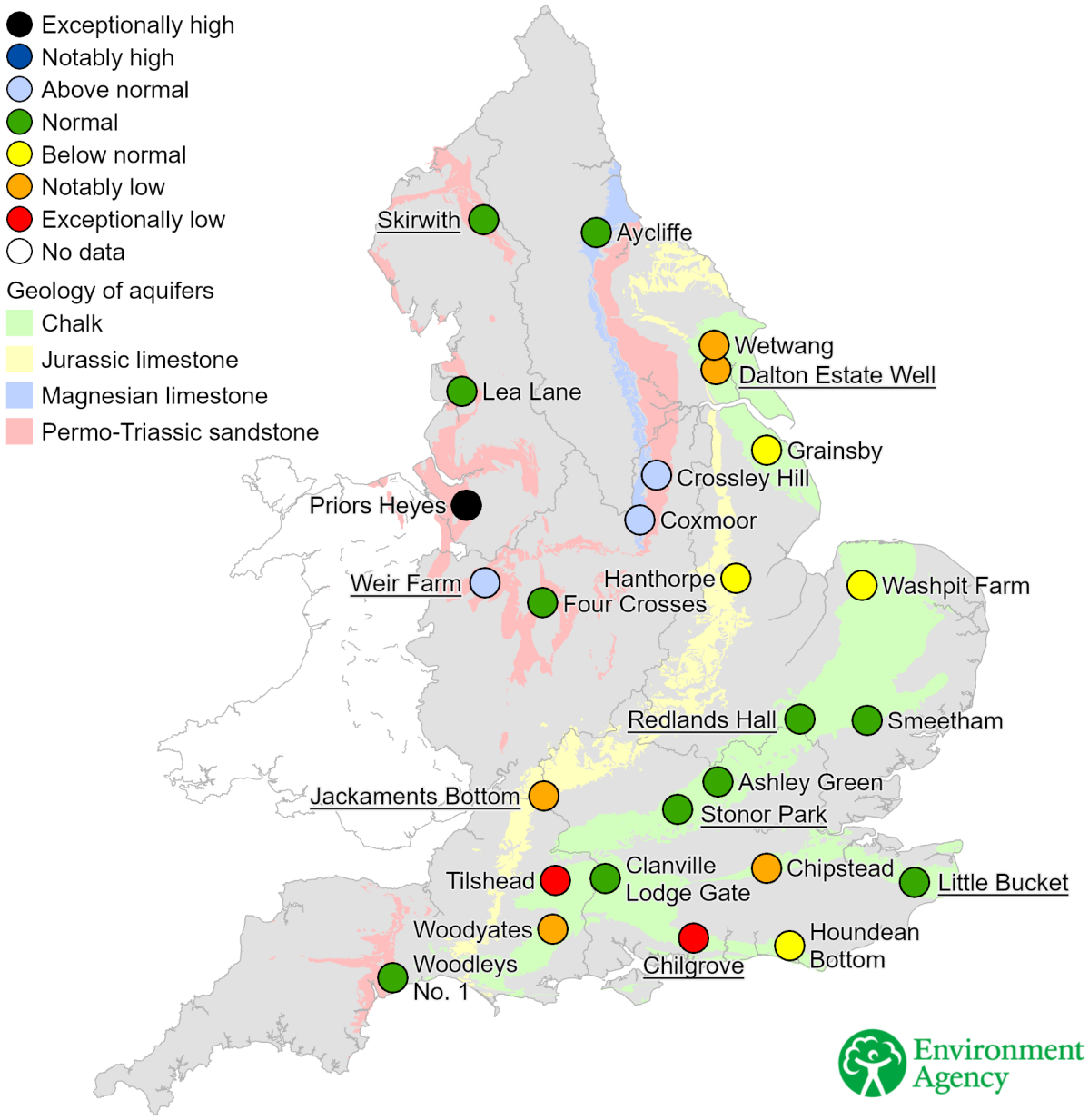
Tilshead in the chalk in south-west England was classed as normal in December 2025, as it began to recover having been below normal or lower since May. Early in 2025, groundwater levels had been classed as above normal, before they declined quickly in the late spring and early summer.

Chipstead in the chalk in south-east England was classed as exceptionally low in December 2025. Groundwater levels had declined steadily since the spring and were below normal from June. Earlier in the year, groundwater levels had been mostly normal.

Jackaments Bottom in the Jurassic Limestone in south-east England was classed as above normal in December 2025, after groundwater levels rose quickly following a wet autumn. Before that, groundwater levels had been notably or exceptionally low since March.

Dalton Estate Well in the chalk in north-east England was classed as notably high in December 2025, having recovered quickly from notably low levels. It had been in this class since June, having declined from its peak in January when it was classed as above normal for the time of year.

Figure A8: Groundwater levels in England on 14 October 2025 when low groundwater levels were extensive across multiple aquifers. Groundwater levels classed relative to an analysis of respective historic levels. Source: Environment Agency



Groundwater levels were normal or lower at the majority of sites on October 14 2025. The exceptions were a handful of sites in north-west and central England were above normal or higher. In the Jurassic Limestone aquifer, groundwater levels were below normal at Hanthorpe in east England, and notably low at Jackaments Bottom in the south-east. Groundwater levels in chalk aquifers were mixed, with sites in the north-east and east mostly below normal or notably low. In the Chilterns most sites were normal for the time of year. In the Wessex and South Downs, Tilshead and Chilgrove were both exceptionally low, while Woodyates and Chipstead were notably low.