Monthly water situation report: Devon and Cornwall Area

1 Summary - January 2026

Devon and Cornwall received 191% of the January long term average (LTA) rainfall, which was exceptionally high for the time of year, and the wettest January on record. Soil moisture deficit (SMD) was near 0mm for most of January. Monthly mean river flows were normal to exceptionally high for the time of year across the area. Groundwater levels ended the month between normal and exceptionally high for the time of year. Total reservoir storage across Devon and Cornwall on 25 January was 89%, with Wimbleball, Colliford and Roadford at 90%, 76% and 93% respectively.

1.1 Rainfall

Devon and Cornwall received 264mm of rain during January (191% of the January LTA), which is exceptionally high for the time of year. The first week of January was fairly dry, before becoming increasingly unsettled throughout the remainder of the month. The last ten days of the month saw significant rainfall, with the wettest day on 26 January recording 40mm of rain on average across the area, and provisional data suggests daily rainfall totals of up to 100mm in some places. This was the wettest January, and the 5th wettest October (start of water year) to January period on record.

All hydrological areas reported exceptionally high rainfall for the time of year, except Taw and North Devon Streams and Torridge and Hartland Streams which were notably high for the time of year.

Cumulative rainfall for the last 3 months was exceptionally high across the area except for the Taw and North Devon Streams, which experienced notably high rainfall. Over the last 6 months, rainfall was exceptionally high across the area except for the Taw and North Devon Streams hydrological area, which recorded above normal rainfall, and the Torridge and Hartland Streams and Exe hydrological areas, which recorded notably high rainfall. Over the last 12 months, rainfall was normal to exceptionally high across the area.

1.2 Soil moisture deficit

SMD in the Devon and Cornwall area was less than 10mm at the beginning of January, before reducing to near 0mm for most of the month. SMD was within 5 mm of the LTA SMD for January across the area. The SMD at the end of January was below 10mm in every hydrological area.

1.3 River flows

January monthly mean river flows ranged from notably high to exceptionally high across Cornwall and south and east Devon. Monthly mean river flows were lower at Thorverton on the river Exe and Torrington on the River Torridge, which were both classed as normal, and at Umberleigh on the river Taw, which was classed as above normal for the time of year.

All sites showed normal to notably high flows in the first two weeks of the month, before increasing sharply to exceptionally high in the second half of the month. Daily mean flows on 31 January ranged from notably high to exceptionally high across Devon and Cornwall, except for flows at Bellever on the river Dart which ended the month above normal for the time of year.

1.4 Groundwater levels

On 27 January, groundwater levels were classed as follows:

- Normal at Woodleys No1 (monitoring the Otterton Sandstone Formation),
- Above normal at Woodbury Common No2 (monitoring the Budleigh Salterton Pebble Beds) and Branscombe Lane (monitoring the Dawlish Sandstone)
- Notably high at Coleford Production (monitoring the Permian Breccias and Sandstones) and Whitlands (monitoring the Upper Greensand)
- Exceptionally high at Bussels No7A (monitoring the Dawlish sandstone) and Winnards Perch (monitoring the Staddon Formation)

Groundwater levels at all sites are recovering after their summer and autumn recession. Winnards Perch's hydrograph is very 'noisy', as levels at this site respond quickly to rainfall variations due to the low storage of the secondary aquifer which it monitors.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

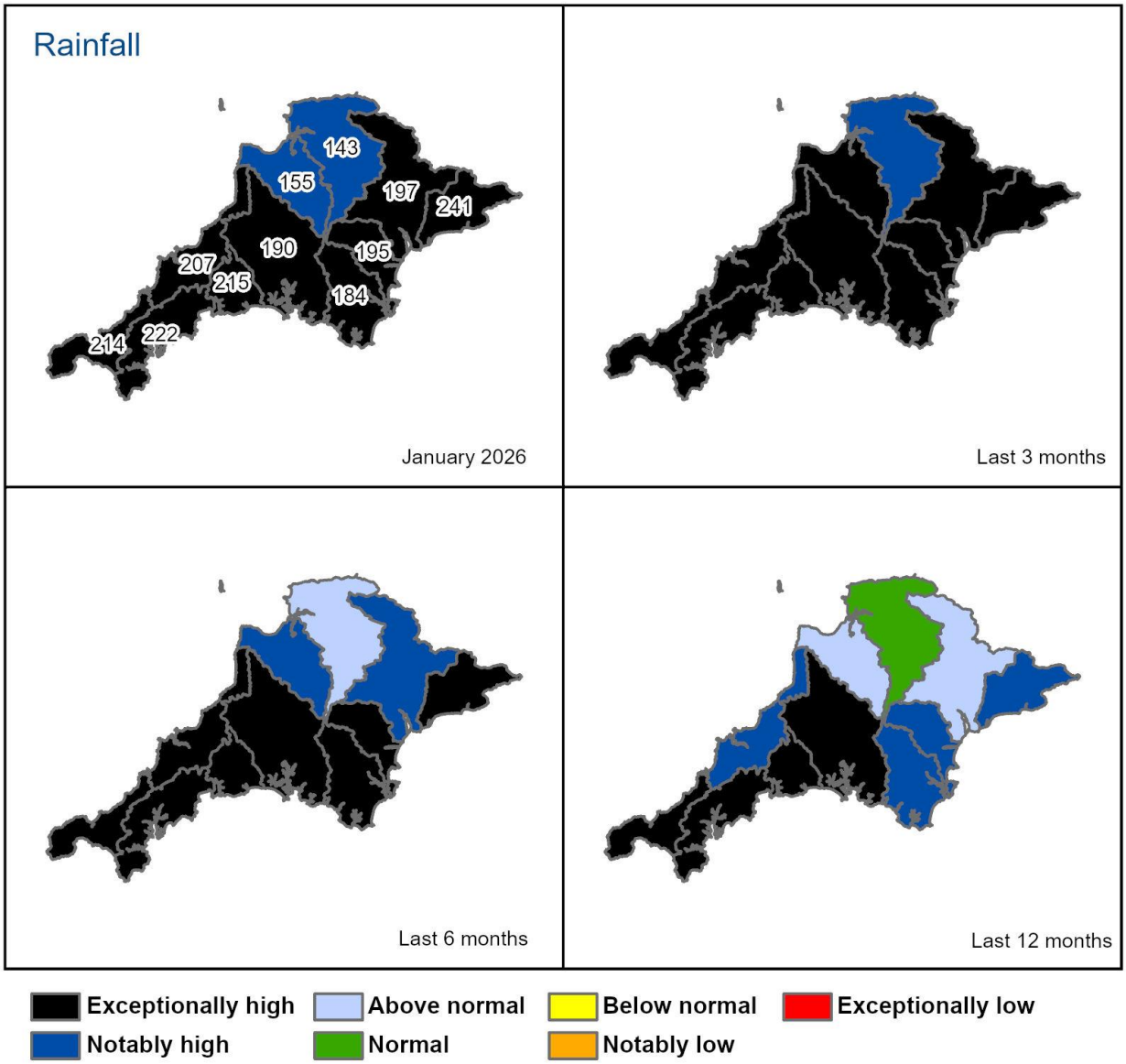
Total reservoir storage was 89% on 25 January, which is an overall increase of 9% since 28 December. This is lower than storage at the same time in 2022 (the most recent drought year), which was 91%. On 25 January, storage at Wimbleball, Colliford and Roadford was 90%, 76% and 93% respectively, compared to 94%, 74% and 98% at the same time in 2022.

Author: Devon and Cornwall Hydrology, hydrology.dandc@environment-agency.gov.uk

2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

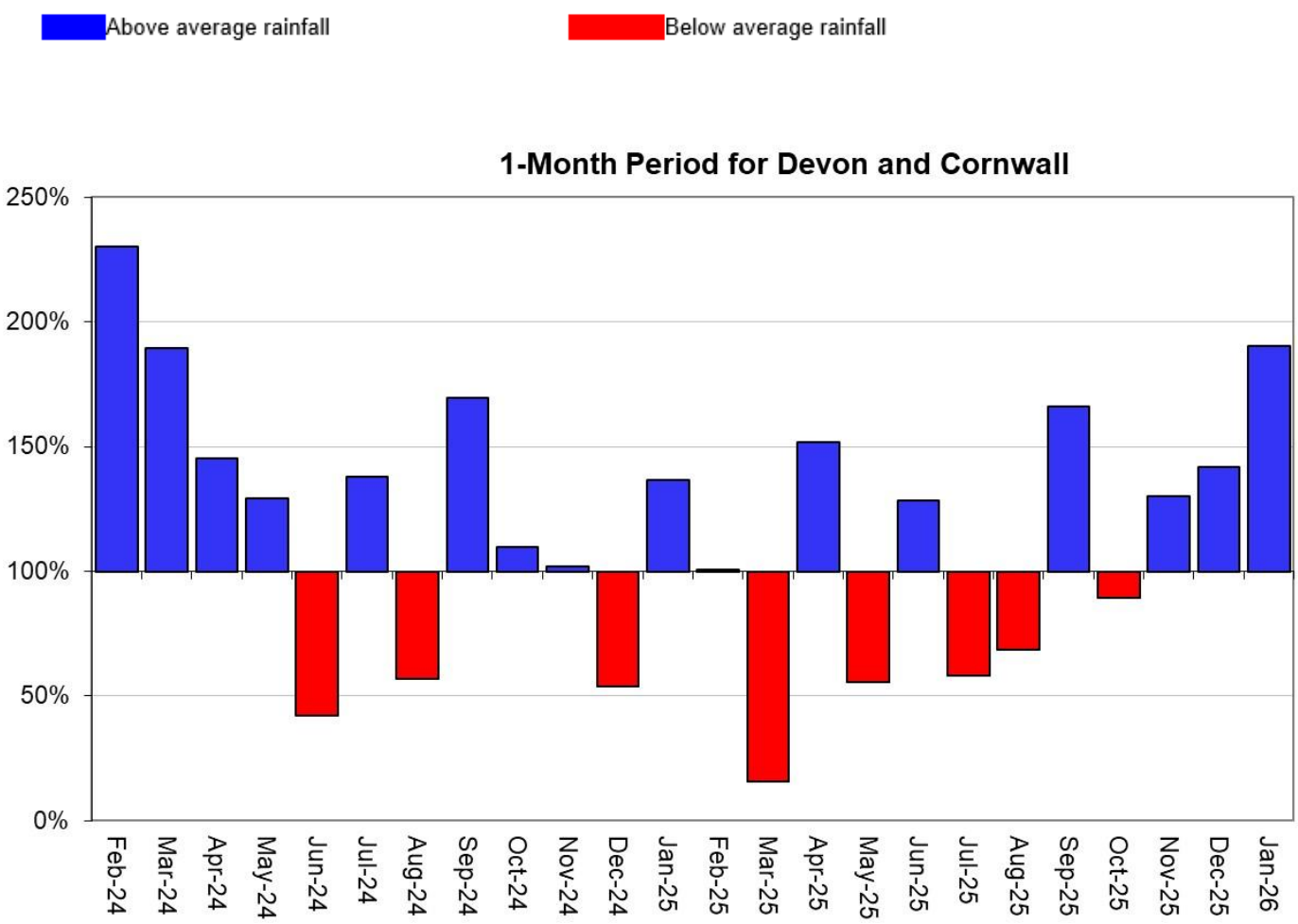
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 31 January 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



HadUK data based on the Met Office 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). Provisional data based on Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

2.2 Rainfall charts

Figure 2.2: Monthly rainfall totals for the past 24 months as a percentage of the 1991 to 2020 long term average for Devon and Cornwall area.

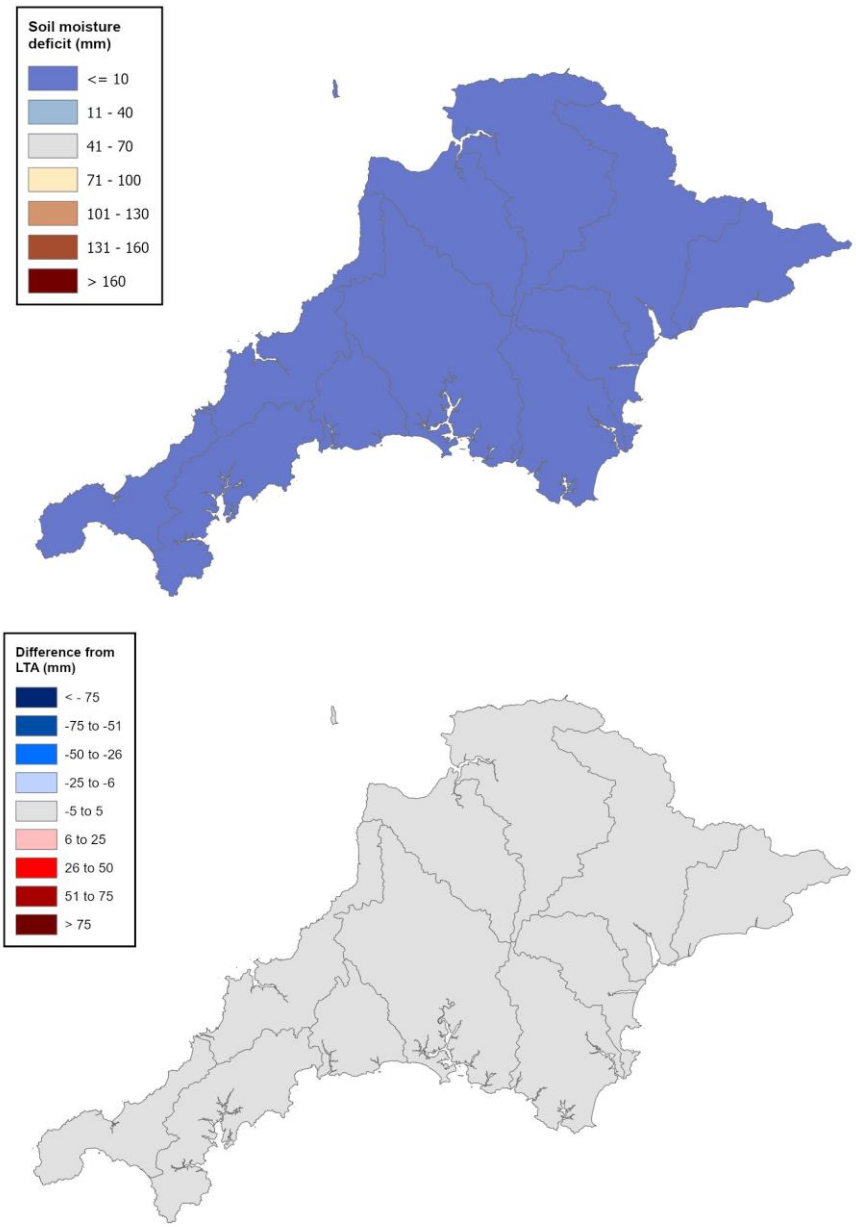


Rainfall data for 2026, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, AC0000807064, 2026). Rainfall data prior to 2023, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from registered rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

3 Soil moisture deficit

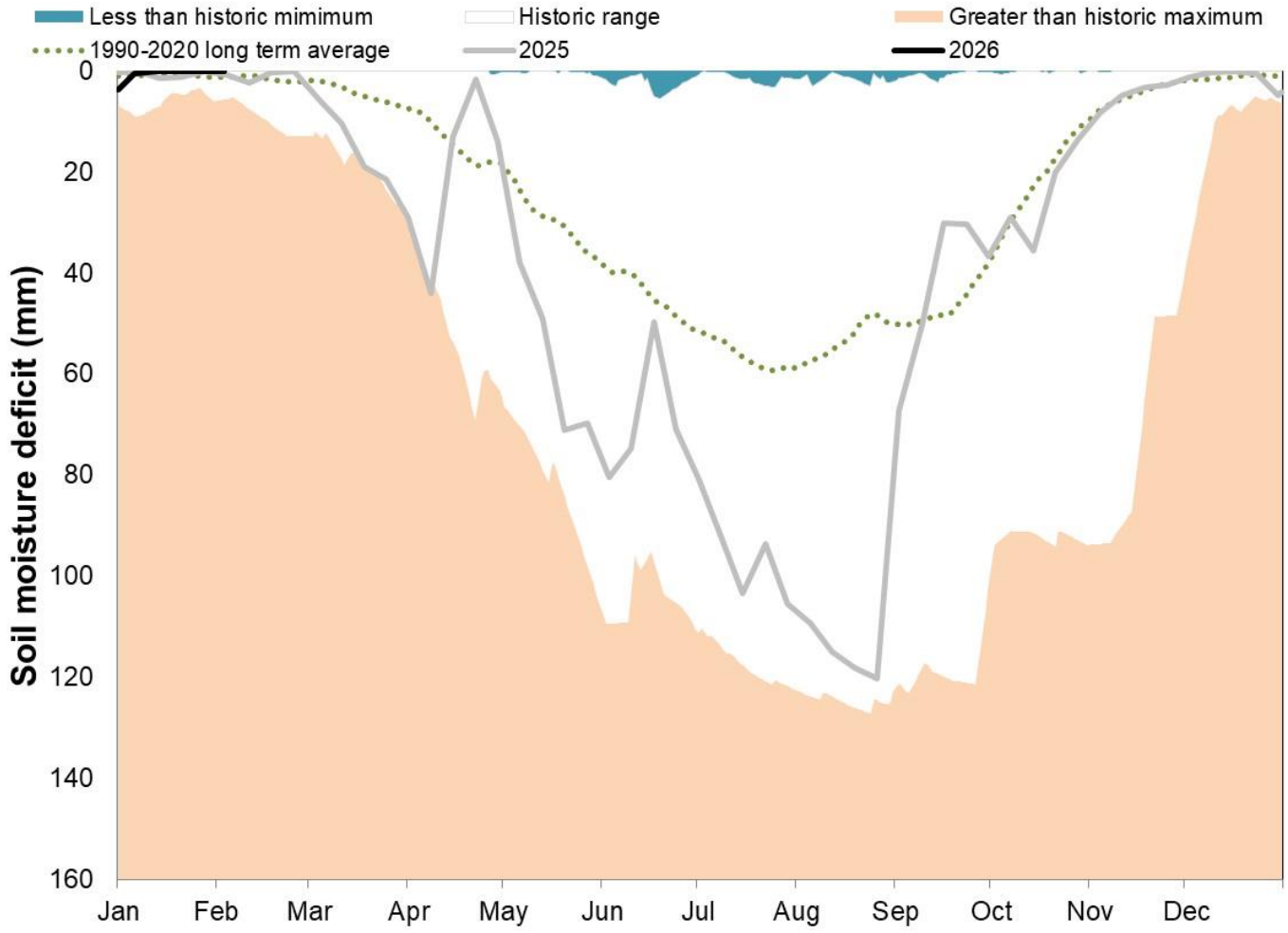
3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

Figure 3.1: Top map shows soil moisture deficit for week ending 3 February 2026. Bottom map shows the difference (mm) between the actual soil moisture deficit and the 1991 to 2020 long term average soil moisture deficits. MORECS data for real land use.



3.2 Soil moisture deficit charts

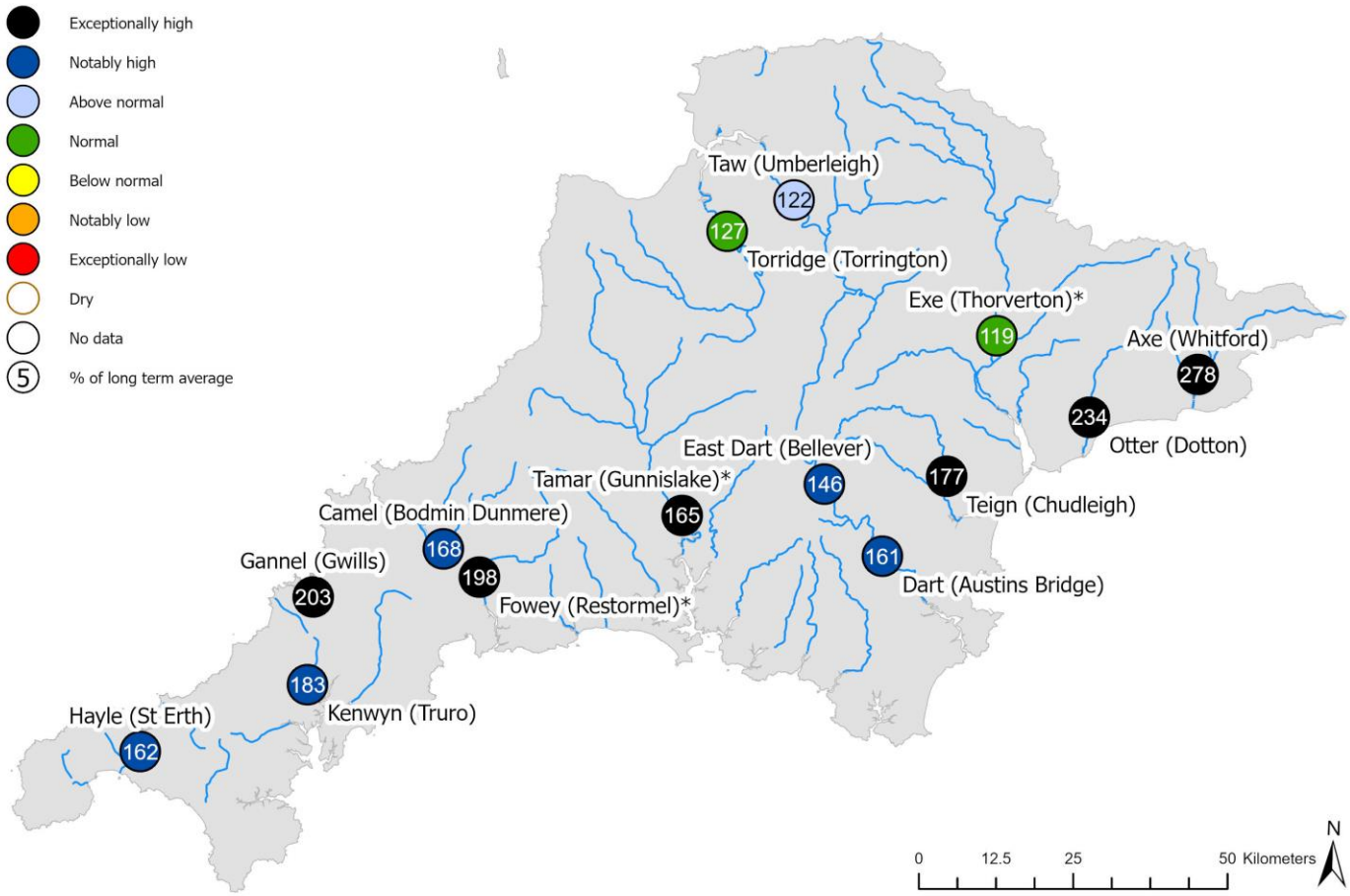
Figure 3.2: Latest soil moisture deficit compared to previous year, maximum, minimum, and 1991 to 2020 long term average. Weekly MORECS data for real land use.



4 River flows

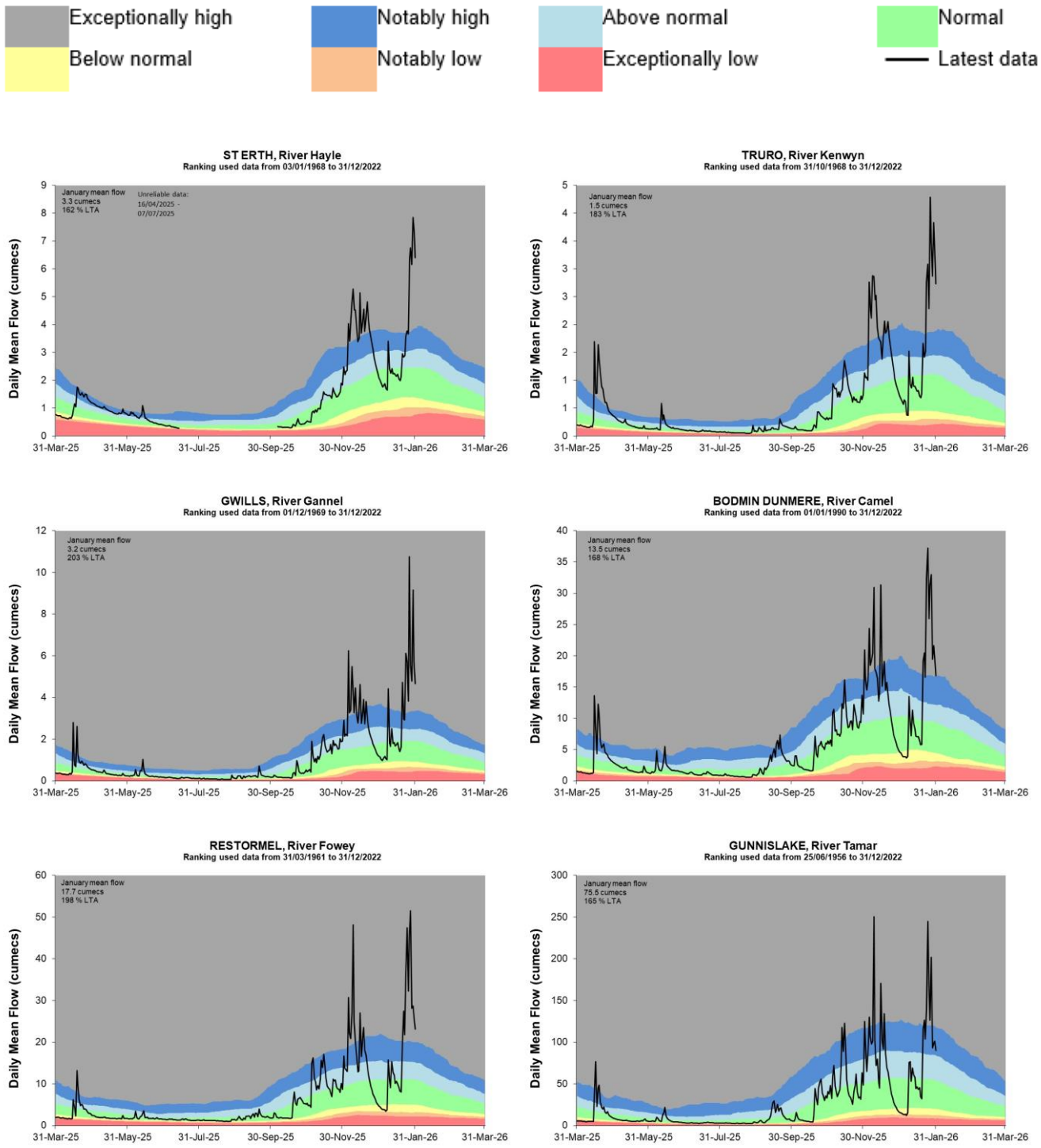
4.1 River flows map

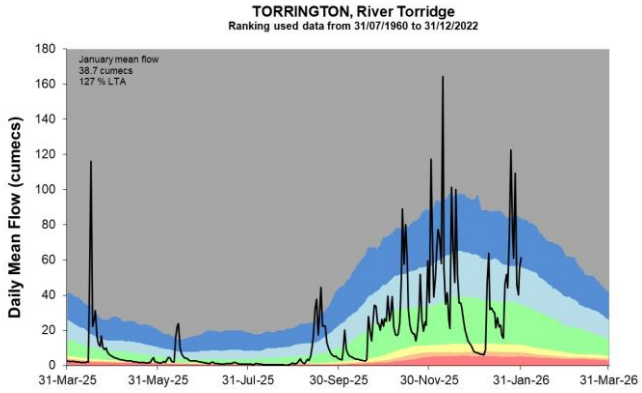
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for January 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic January monthly means. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

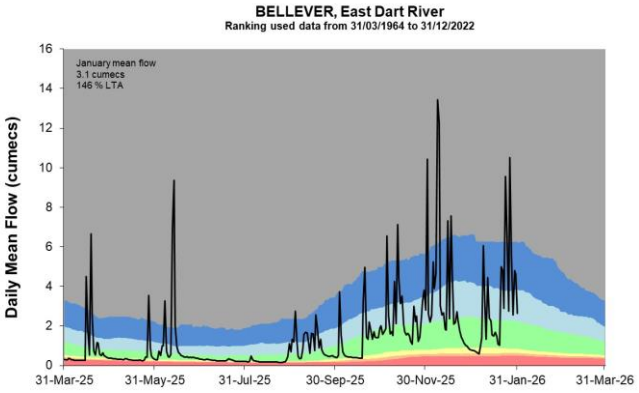


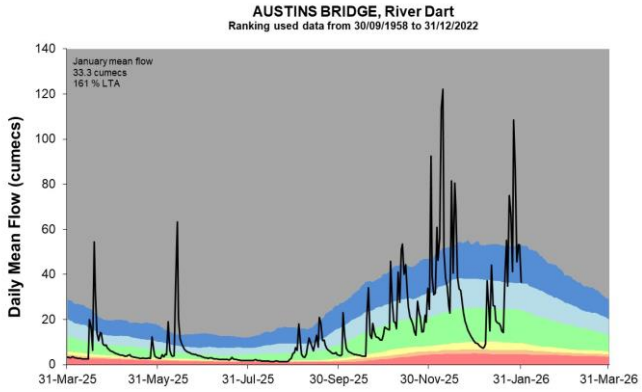
4.2 River flow charts

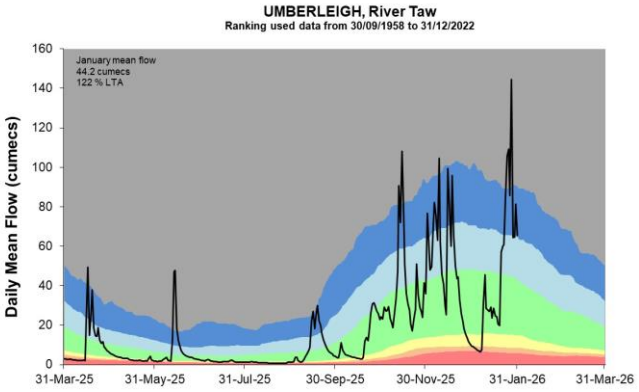
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for indicator sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.

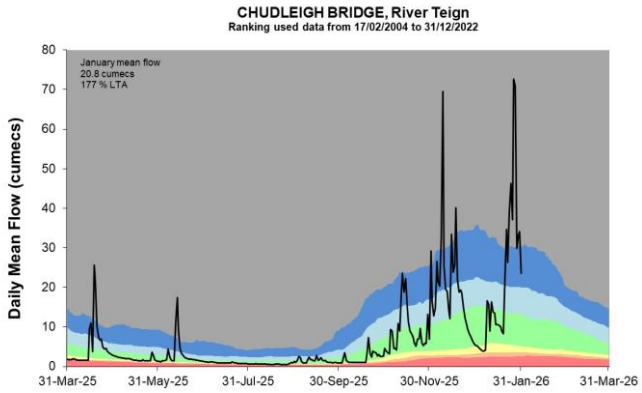


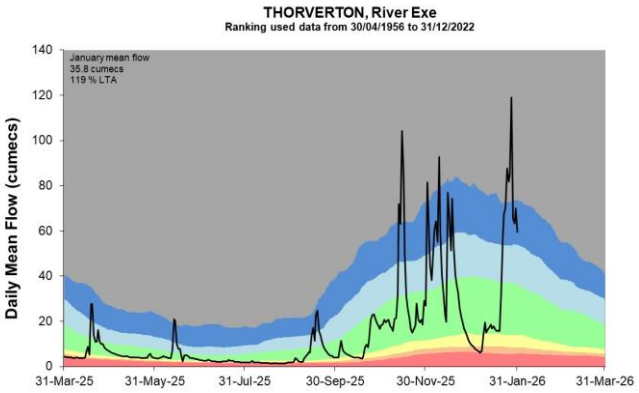


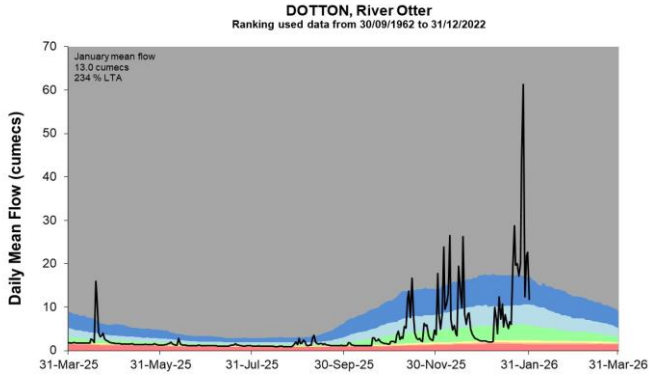


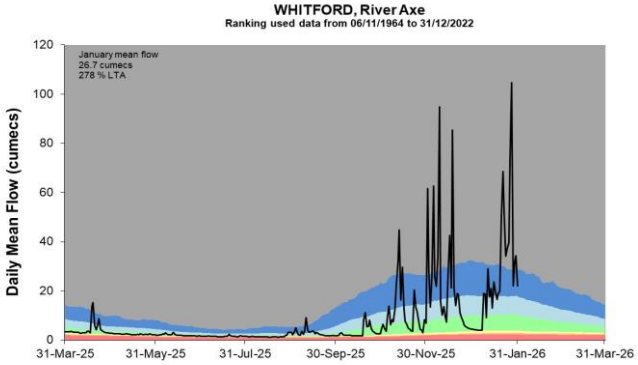










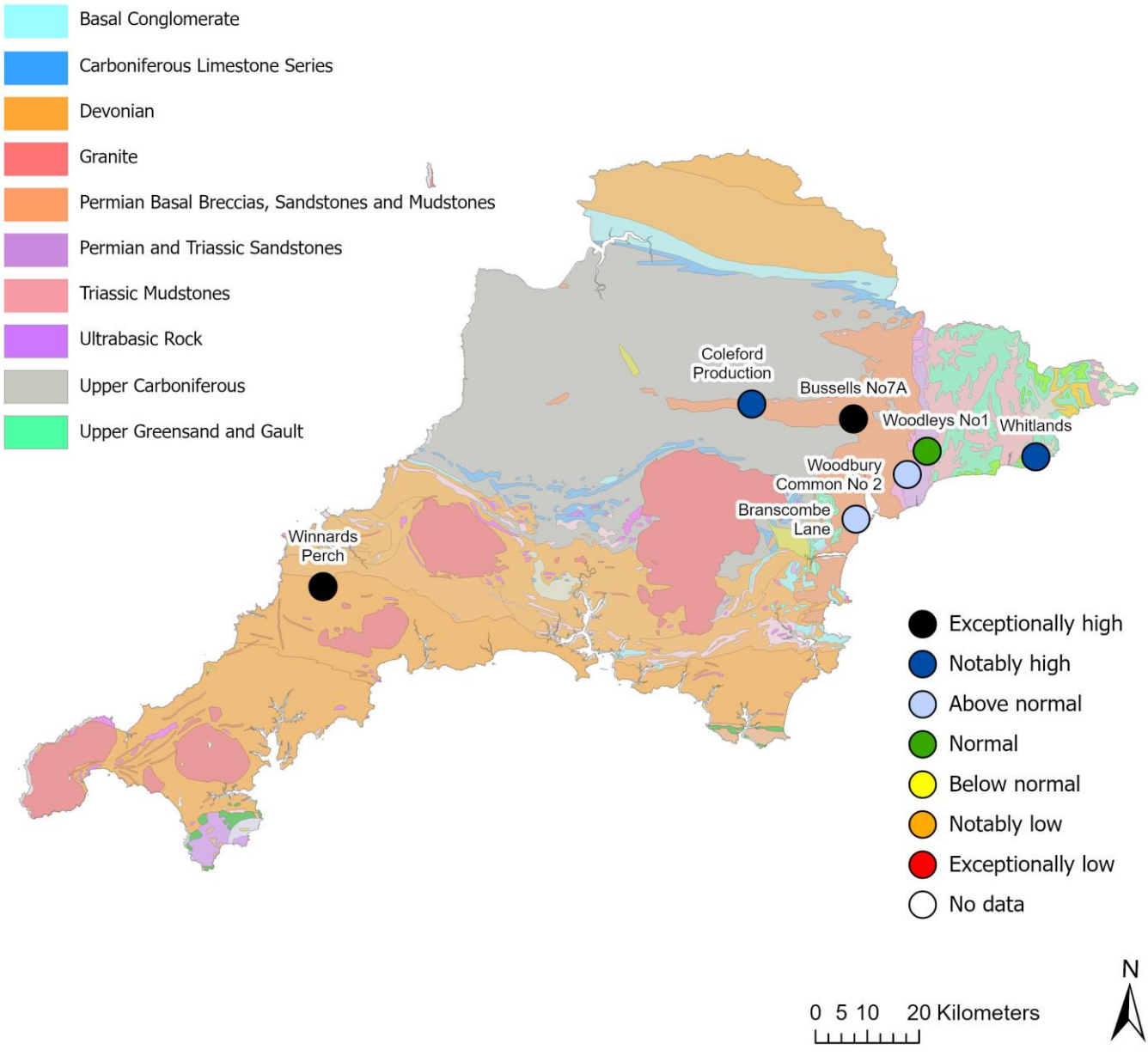


Source: Environment Agency.

5 Groundwater levels

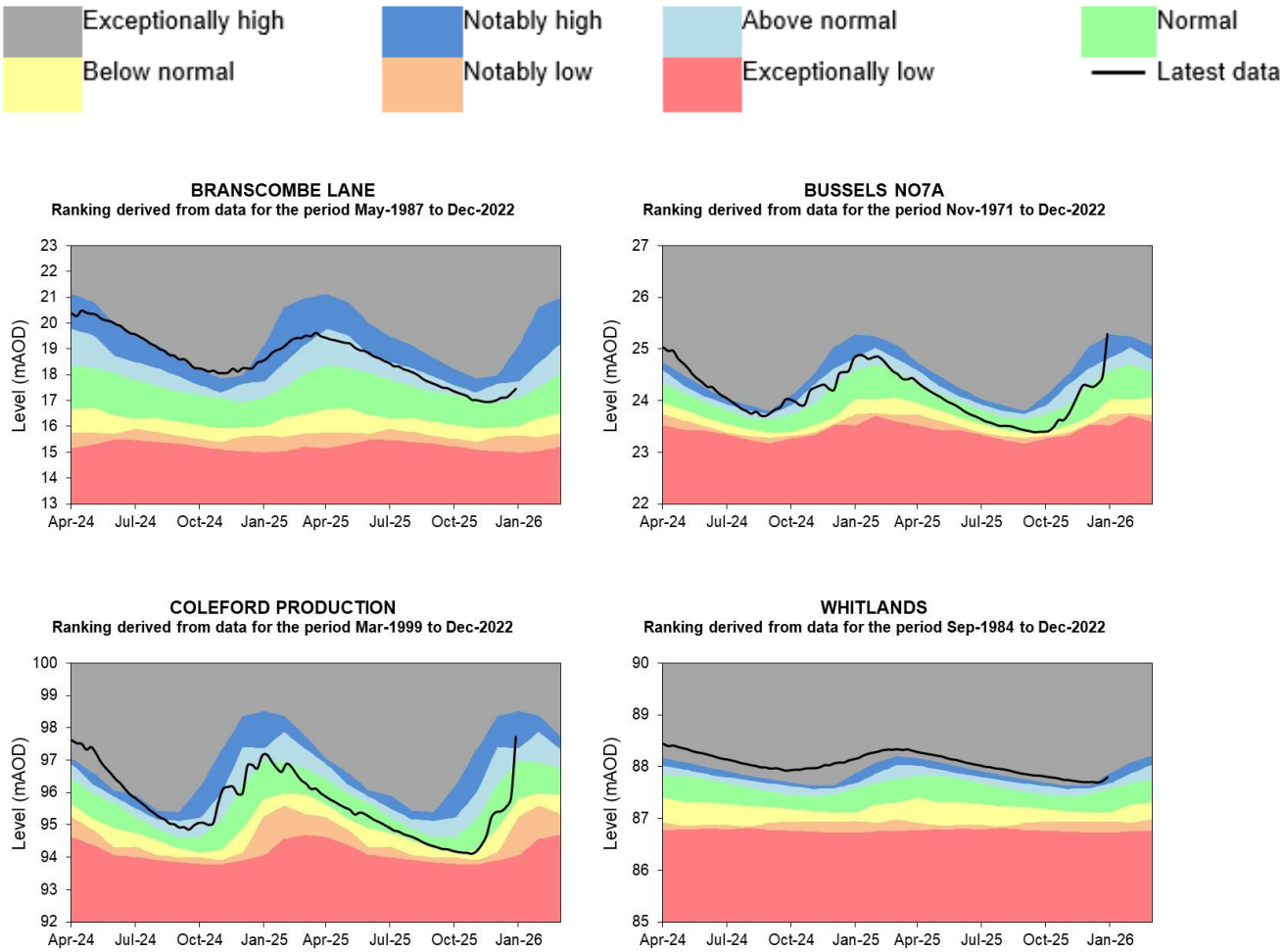
5.1 Groundwater levels map

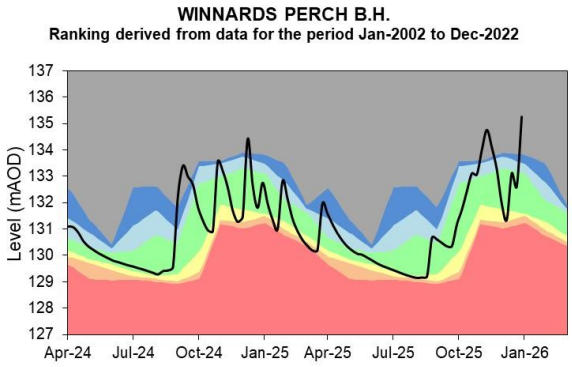
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of January 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic January levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

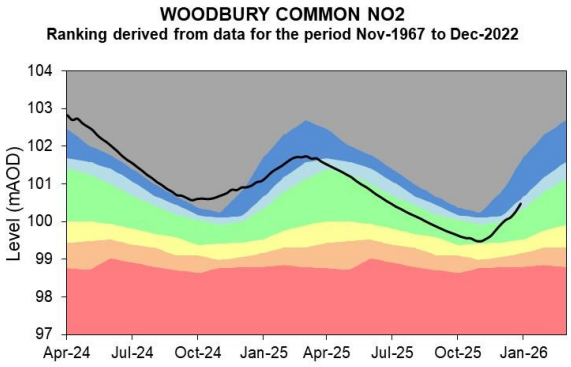


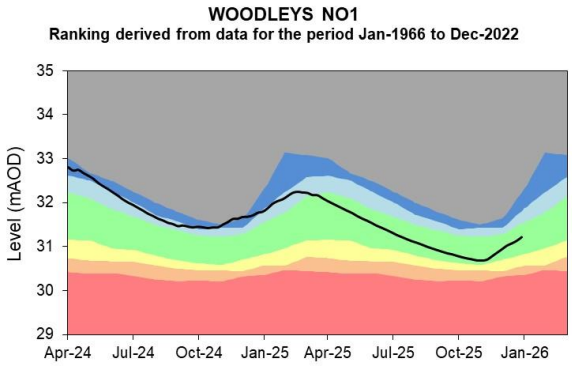
5.2 Groundwater level charts

Figure 5.2: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 22 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels and long term maximum and minimum levels.





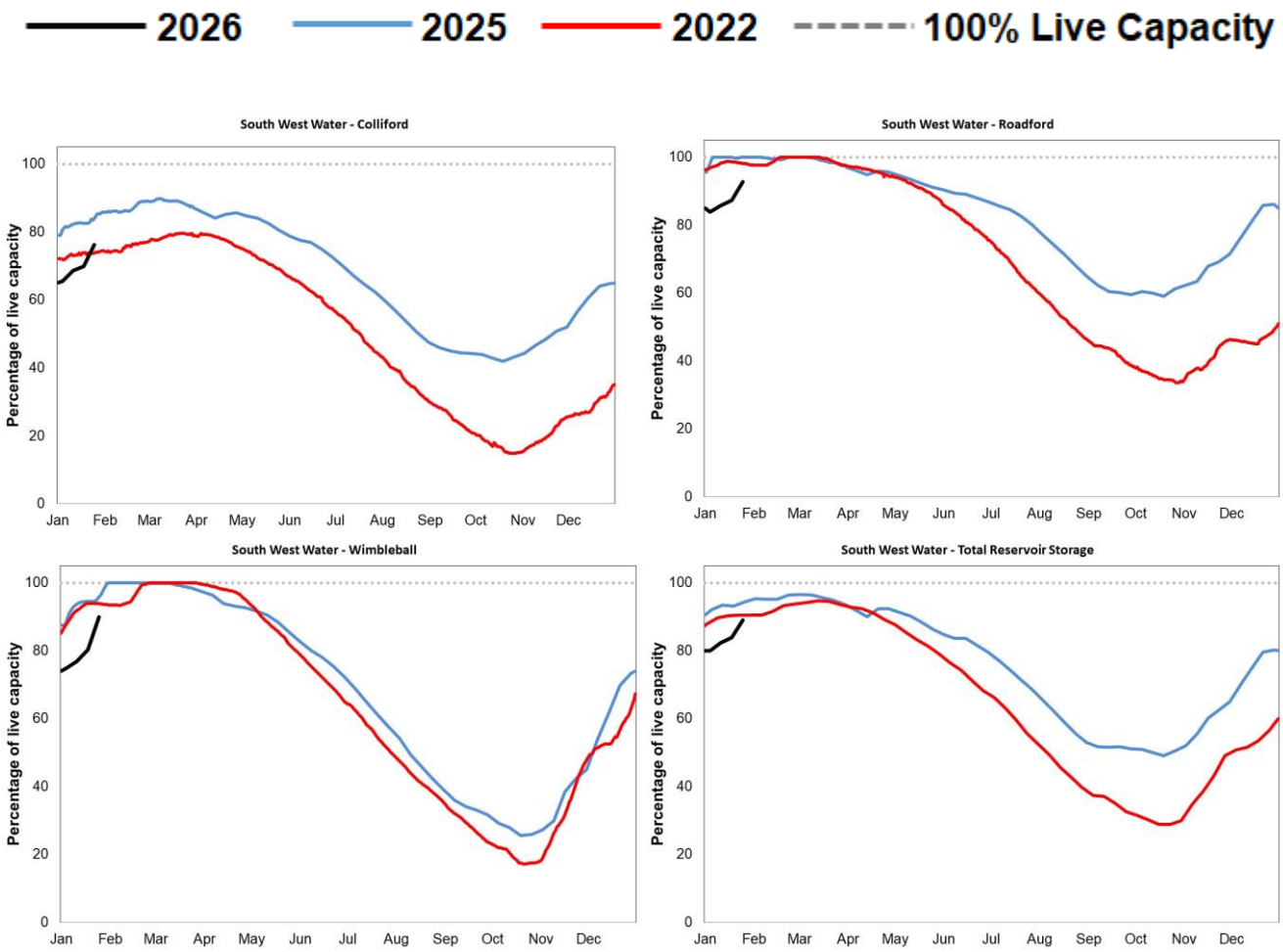




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

6 Reservoir stocks

Figure 6.1: End of month reservoir storage compared to previous year and a historic drought year. Note: Historic records of individual reservoirs vary in length.



(Source: South West Water).

7 Glossary

7.1 Terminology

Aquifer

A geological formation able to store and transmit water.

Areal average rainfall

The estimated average depth of rainfall over a defined area. Expressed in depth of water (mm).

Artesian

The condition where the groundwater level is above ground surface but is prevented from rising to this level by an overlying continuous low permeability layer, such as clay.

Artesian borehole

Borehole where the level of groundwater is above the top of the borehole and groundwater flows out of the borehole when unsealed.

Cumecs

Cubic metres per second (m^{3s-1}).

Effective rainfall

The rainfall available to percolate into the soil or produce river flow. Expressed in depth of water (mm).

Flood alert and flood warning

Three levels of warnings may be issued by the Environment Agency. Flood alerts indicate flooding is possible. Flood warnings indicate flooding is expected. Severe flood warnings indicate severe flooding.

Groundwater

The water found in an aquifer.

Long term average (LTA)

The arithmetic mean calculated from the historic record, usually based on the period 1991 to 2020. However, the period used may vary by parameter being reported on (see figure captions for details).

mAOD

Metres above ordnance datum (mean sea level at Newlyn Cornwall).

MORECS

Met Office Rainfall and Evaporation Calculation System. Met Office service providing real time calculation of evapotranspiration, soil moisture deficit and effective rainfall on a 40 by 40 km grid.

Naturalised flow

River flow with the impacts of artificial influences removed. Artificial influences may include abstractions, discharges, transfers, augmentation and impoundments.

NCIC

National Climate Information Centre. NCIC area monthly rainfall totals are derived using the Met Office 5 km gridded dataset, which uses rain gauge observations.

Recharge

The process of increasing the water stored in the saturated zone of an aquifer. Expressed in depth of water (mm).

Reservoir gross capacity

The total capacity of a reservoir.

Reservoir live capacity

The capacity of the reservoir that is normally usable for storage to meet established reservoir operating requirements. This excludes any capacity not available for use (for example, storage held back for emergency services, operating agreements or physical restrictions). May also be referred to as ‘net’ or ‘deployable’ capacity.

Soil moisture deficit (SMD)

The difference between the amount of water actually in the soil and the amount of water the soil can hold. Expressed in depth of water (mm).

7.2 Categories

Exceptionally high

Value likely to fall within this band 5% of the time.

Notably high

Value likely to fall within this band 8% of the time.

Above normal

Value likely to fall within this band 15% of the time.

Normal

Value likely to fall within this band 44% of the time.

Below normal

Value likely to fall within this band 15% of the time.

Notably low

Value likely to fall within this band 8% of the time.

Exceptionally low

Value likely to fall within this band 5% of the time.

8 Appendices

8.1 Rainfall table

Hydrological area	Jan 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Jan 2026 band	Nov 2025 to January cumulative band	Aug 2025 to January cumulative band	Feb 2025 to January cumulative band
Avon Dart And Erme	184	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Exe	198	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Above normal
Fal And St Austell	222	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
North Cornwall	207	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Otter Sid Axe And Lim	241	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Seaton Looe And Fowey	215	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
Tamar	190	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
Taw And North Devon Streams	143	Notably High	Notably high	Above normal	Normal
Teign And Torbay	195	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Notably high

Hydrological area	Jan 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Jan 2026 band	Nov 2025 to January cumulative band	Aug 2025 to January cumulative band	Feb 2025 to January cumulative band
Torridge And Hartland Streams	155	Notably High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Above normal
West Cornwall	214	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high

8.2 River flows table

Site name	River	Catchment	Jan 2026 band	Dec 2025 band
Austins Bridge	Dart	Dart	Notably high	Exceptionally high
Bellever	East Dart	Dart	Notably high	Notably high
Bodmin Dunmere	Camel	Camel	Notably high	Exceptionally high
Chudleigh Bridge	Teign	Teign Upper	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Dotton	Otter	Otter	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Gunnislake	Tamar	Tamar Lower	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Gwills	Gannel	Gannel	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
Restormel	Fowey	Fowey	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
St Erth	Hayle	Hayle	Notably high	Exceptionally high
Thorverton	Exe	Exe Lower	Normal	Above normal
Torrington	Torridge	Torridge Middle	Normal	Notably high
Truro	Kenwyn	Tresillian Trevella Kenwyn	Notably high	Exceptionally high

Site name	River	Catchment	Jan 2026 band	Dec 2025 band
Umberleigh	Taw	Taw Middle	Above normal	Above normal
Whitford	Axe	Axe Devon Middle	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high

8.3 Groundwater table

Site name	Aquifer	End of Jan 2026 band	End of Dec 2025 band
Branscombe Lane	Dawlish Sandstone	Above normal	Above normal
Bussels No7a	Dawlish Sandstone	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Coleford Production	Permian Breccias And Sandstones	Notably high	Normal
Whitlands	Upper Greensand	Notably high	Exceptionally high
Winnards Perch B.h.	Staddon Formation	Exceptionally high	Normal
Woodbury Common No2	Budleigh Salterton Pebble Beds	Above normal	Normal
Woodleys No1	Otterton Sandstone Formation	Normal	Normal

8.4 Hydrological Areas