Monthly water situation report: Kent and South London Area

1 Summary - January 2026

In January, the Kent South London and East Sussex (KSLES) area experienced significantly wetter conditions, receiving 195 percent of its long-term average (LTA). Majority of the catchments recorded exceptionally high rainfall totals ranging from 184 percent of the LTA in the Darent and Eastern Rother catchments to 213 percent in the Lower Mole catchment. Soil Moisture Deficits (SMDs) continued to fall in January, remaining below average across all catchments, supported by January's effective rainfall reaching 191 percent of the LTA. Monthly Mean Flows (MMFs) were above normal or higher at majority of the sites with the exception of the River Ravensbourne at Catford, River Darent at Hawley and the Dour at Crabble Mill which recorded normal flows for the time of the year. Groundwater levels increased at all the key indicator sites with levels at all sites within the normal range. Reservoir stocks increased in January, with levels rising at all sites except Weir Wood Reservoir which stayed stable.

1.1 Rainfall

In January, the KSLES area experienced significantly wetter conditions, receiving 195 percent of its LTA rainfall based on the whole area average. Almost all catchments in KSLES recorded exceptionally high rainfall, with the only exceptions being Thanet Chalk, Sheppey and North West Grain, which still experienced notably high totals. Rainfall across the area ranged from 184 percent of the LTA in the Darent and in the Eastern Rother catchments to 213 percent in the Lower Mole catchment. Overall, this made January the fourth wettest on record since 1991.

The top 5 highest rainfall days were 8,15, 26, 21 and 6 January, with the highest daily rainfall total of 36.2mm recorded at Brede PS TBR in the Eastern Rother catchment on 8 January. In contrast, only two days across the entire KSLES area were classed as dry days, recording 0.2 mm of rainfall on both 5 January and 10 January.

1.2 Soil moisture deficit and recharge

SMDs continued to decrease in January across all catchments in the KSLES area, with all catchments recording values below the LTA for the time of year. This decline reflects the exceptionally high rainfall experienced throughout the month. By the end of December, most

catchments reported SMDs of less than 1 mm, with the exception of Thanet Chalk and North West Grain. The effective rainfall recorded in January was 191% of the LTA average.

1.3 River flows

Monthly Mean Flows (MMFs) increased at all the key indicator sites in January, with majority of indicator sites recording flows in the above normal category or higher. Only three sites located in the northern part of the catchment – the River Ravensbourne at Catford, River Darent at Hawley and the Dour at Crabble Mill – recorded flows within the normal range for the time of year. Exceptionally high flows were recorded at the River Medway at Teston and the East Stour at South Willesborough, indicating a much stronger response to recent weather conditions.

1.4 Groundwater levels

By the end of January, groundwater levels increased at all the key indicator sites across the area, with levels at all sites within the normal range. At Chipstead, groundwater levels increased significantly, moving from exceptionally low to normal. Nearby to the east at Sweeps Lane, levels rose from below normal to normal. Groundwater level across the rest of the area rose more steadily, with most sites showing gradual rises, reflecting the wetter than usual weather experienced through the winter period.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

Four out of five water company reservoirs in KSLES saw a rise in levels during January; Weirwood reservoir stayed stable throughout the month.

By the end of January, the reservoirs held the following live storage capacities and LTA class:

- Darwell – 92% Above normal
- Bewl – 83% Above normal
- Bough Beech – 100% Above normal
- Powdermill – 100% Above normal
- Weir Wood – 100% Above normal

1.6 Environmental impact

There were sixty-one fluvial flood alerts and ten fluvial flood warnings issued in January.

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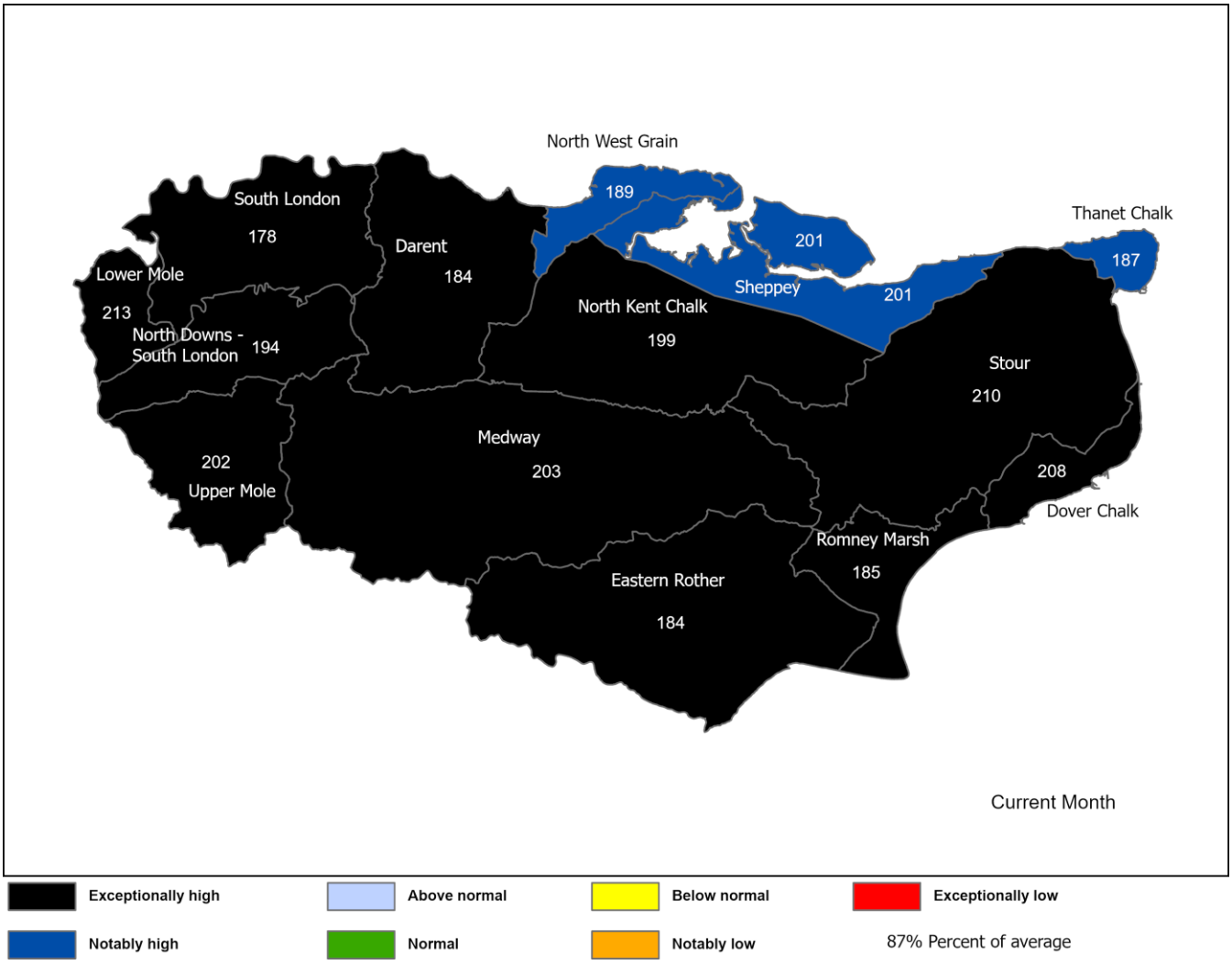
2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map one

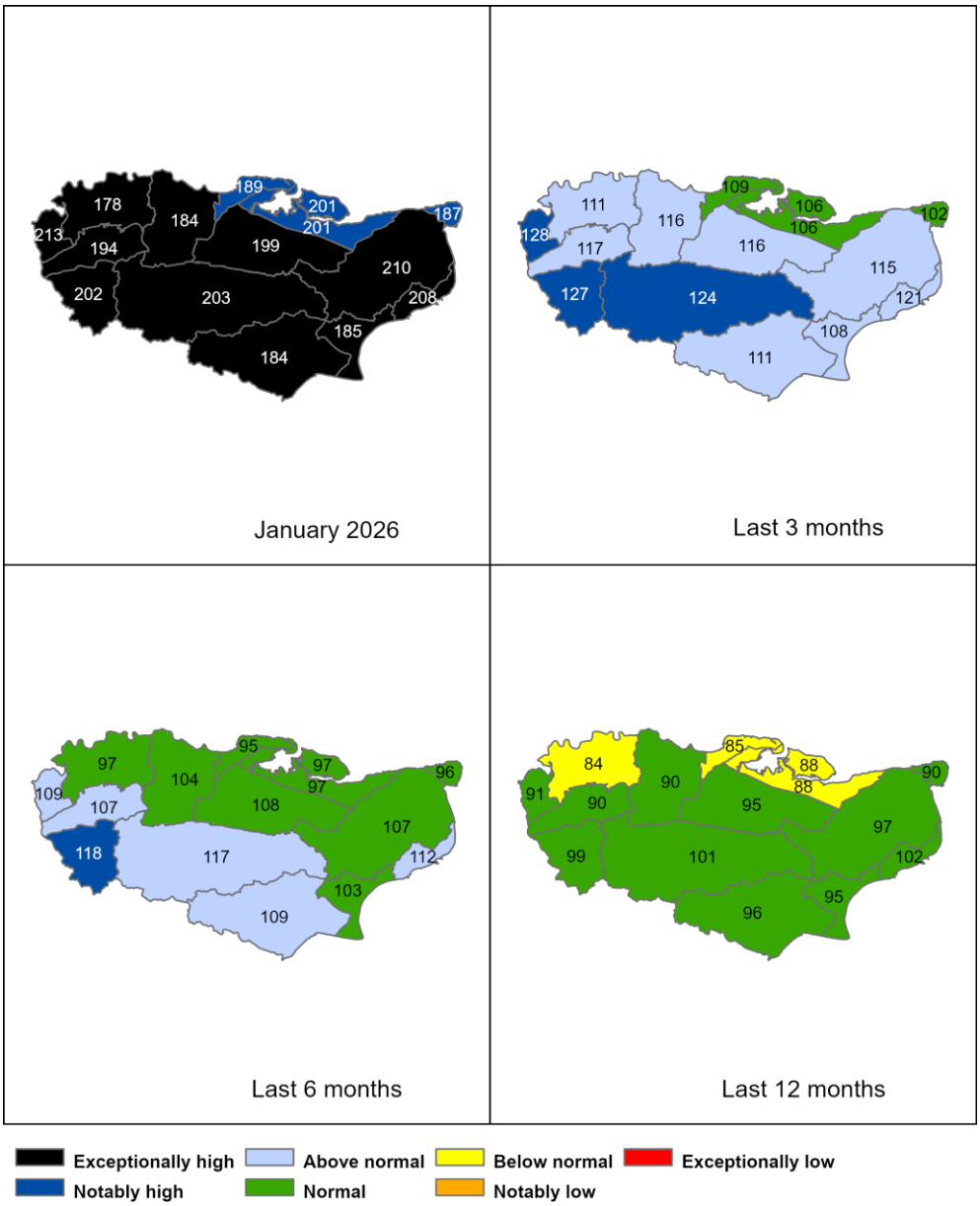
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas across Kent and South London for the current month (up to 31 January 2026), classed relative of historic totals. The percentage of average uses the period of 1991 – 2020. Table available in the appendices with more detailed information.



HadUK data for October 2023 onwards, 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. Includes material based on Ordnance Survey 1:50 000 maps with the permission of the controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100026380, 2026.

2.2 Rainfall map two

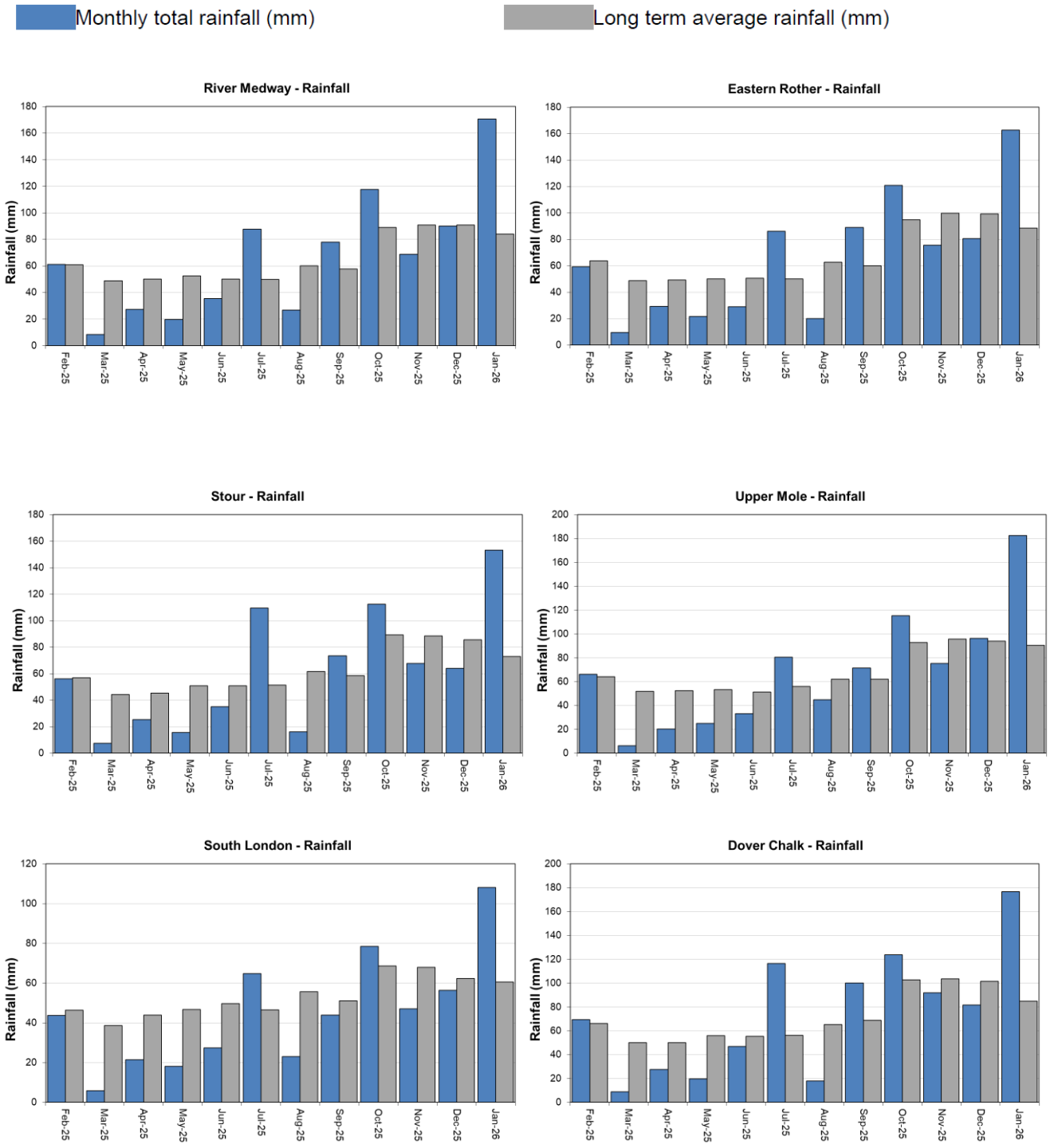
Figure 2.2: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 31 January 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months,), classed relative of historic totals. The percentage of average uses the period of 1991 – 2020. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

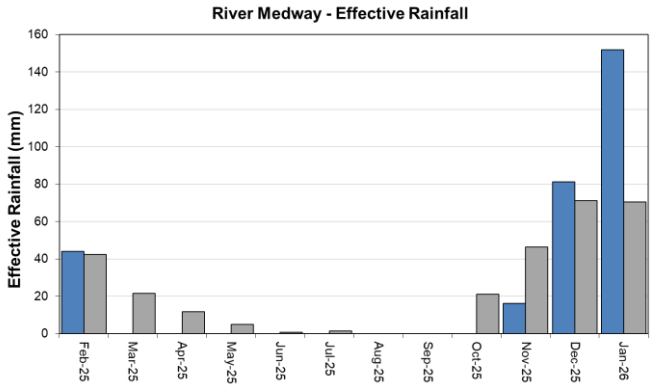


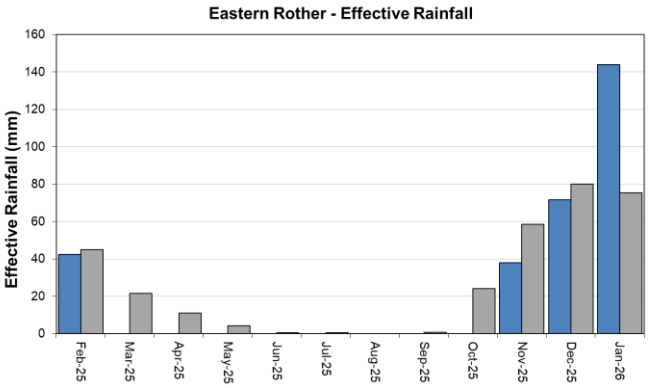
HadUK data for October 2023 onwards, based the Met Office 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). Provisional data based on Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. Includes material based on Ordnance Survey 1:50 000 maps with the permission of the controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100026380, 2026.

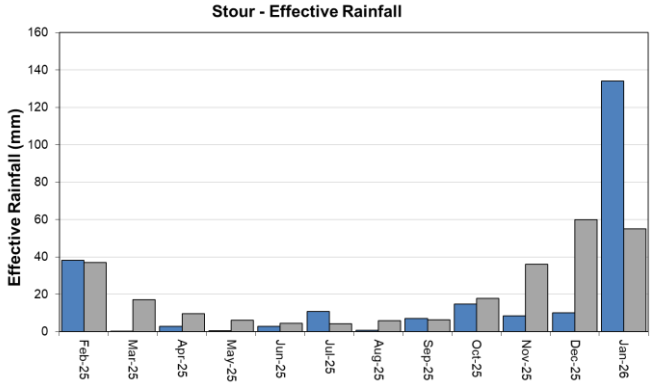
2.3 Rainfall and effective rainfall charts

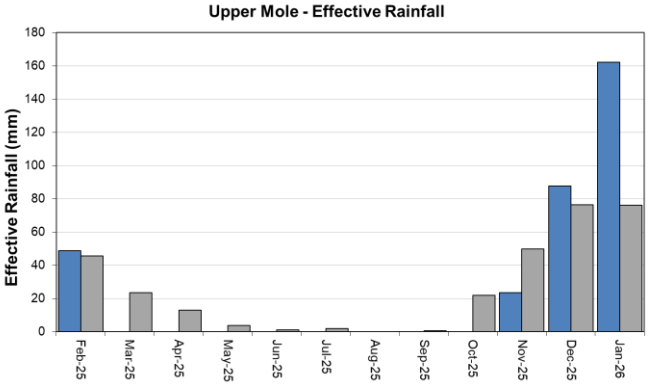
Figure 2.3: Monthly rainfall and effective rainfall totals for the past 12 months as a percentage of the 1991 to 2020 long term average (LTA) for a selection of areal units. HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). EA effective rainfall data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model).

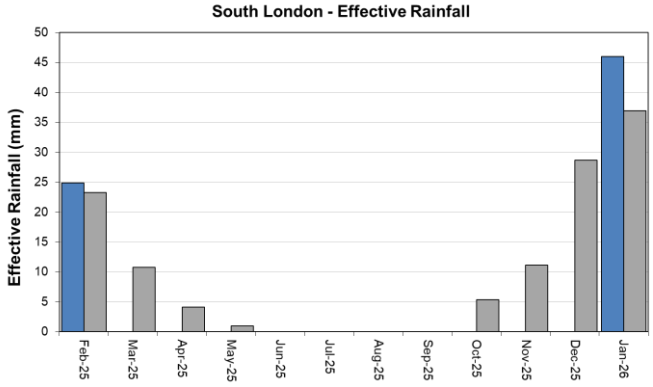


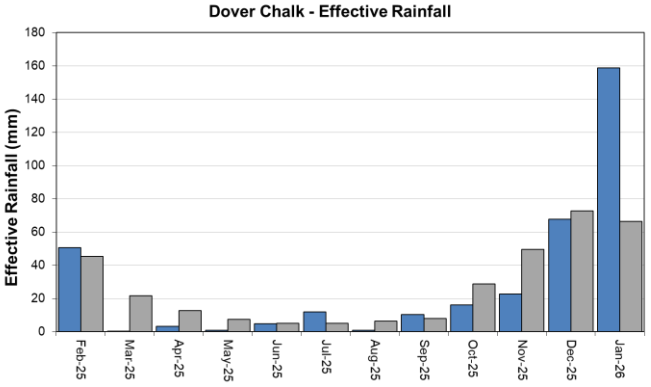

River Medway - Effective Rainfall
Effective Rainfall (mm)
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160
Feb-25
Mar-25
Apr-25
May-25
Jun-25
Jul-25
Aug-25
Sep-25
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26


Eastern Rother - Effective Rainfall
Effective Rainfall (mm)
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160
Feb-25
Mar-25
Apr-25
May-25
Jun-25
Jul-25
Aug-25
Sep-25
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26


Stour - Effective Rainfall
Effective Rainfall (mm)
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160
Feb-25
Mar-25
Apr-25
May-25
Jun-25
Jul-25
Aug-25
Sep-25
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26


Upper Mole - Effective Rainfall
Effective Rainfall (mm)
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160
180
Feb-25
Mar-25
Apr-25
May-25
Jun-25
Jul-25
Aug-25
Sep-25
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26


South London - Effective Rainfall
Effective Rainfall (mm)
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
Feb-25
Mar-25
Apr-25
May-25
Jun-25
Jul-25
Aug-25
Sep-25
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26


Dover Chalk - Effective Rainfall
Effective Rainfall (mm)
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160
180
Feb-25
Mar-25
Apr-25
May-25
Jun-25
Jul-25
Aug-25
Sep-25
Oct-25
Nov-25
Dec-25
Jan-26

2.4 Rainfall and effective rainfall table

Figure 2.4: This is a second estimate of areal rainfall and effective rainfall (percolation or runoff) for a selection of the hydrological areas across the Kent and South London area. There may be significant variation within each area which must be considered when interpreting these data. When additional meteorological data is available estimates are revised which will affect the period totals in section 2.5.

Number	Hydrological Area	Rainfall (mm) 31 day Total	January % LTA	Effective Rainfall (mm) 31 day total	January % LTA
6230TH	North Downs - South London (W)	162	194%	143	209%
6505TH	Upper Mole	183	202%	162	213%
6508TH	South London	108	178%	46	124%
6706So	Darent	129	184%	74	156%
6707So	North Kent Chalk	141	199%	114	218%
6708So	Stour	153	210%	134	243%
6709So	Dover Chalk	177	208%	159	239%
6710So	Thanet Chalk	100	187%	13	92%
6809So	Medway	171	203%	152	216%
6810So	Eastern Rother	163	184%	144	191%

6811So	Romney Marsh	131	185%	111	206%
6812So	North West Grain	94	189%	0	0%
6813So	Sheppey	104	201%	11	46%
	Kent & South London Average	140	195%	97	192%

HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

EA effective rainfall data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model)

2.5 Seasonal summary table of rainfall and effective rainfall

Figure 2.5: This is a seasonal estimate of areal rainfall and effective rainfall (percolation or runoff) for a selection of the hydrological areas across the Kent and South London area, expressed as totals and as a percentage of the LTA. There may be significant variation within each area which must be considered when interpreting these data. When additional meteorological data is available estimates are revised which will affect the period totals.

Winter period 01/10/2025 to 31/01/2026

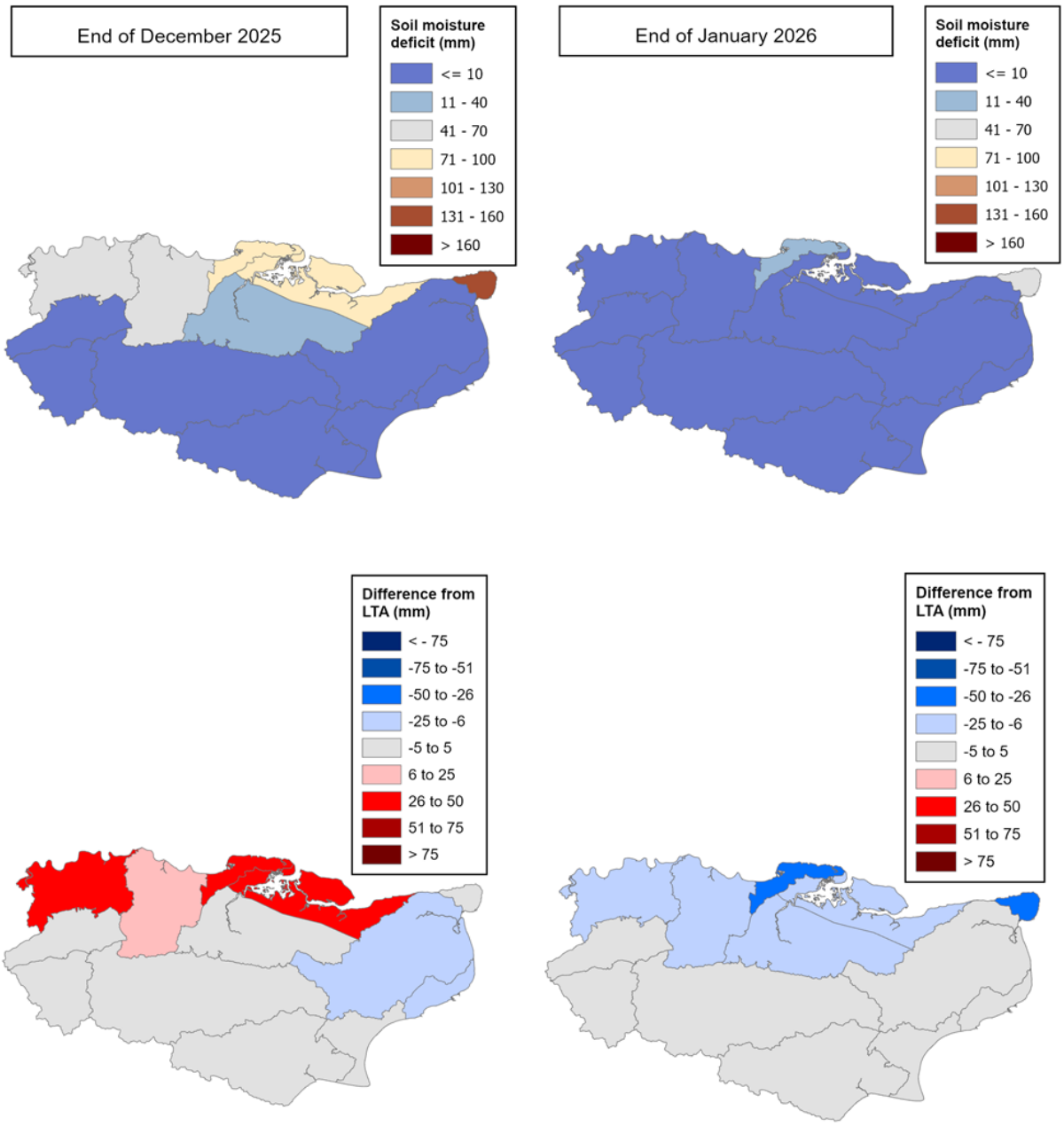
Number	Hydrological Area	Seasonal Rainfall (mm) Total	% LTA	Seasonal Effective Rainfall (mm) Total	% LTA
6230TH	North Downs - South London (W)	416	118%	187	96%
6505TH	Upper Mole	470	126%	281	125%
6508TH	South London	290	112%	46	56%
6706So	Darent	345	116%	104	81%
6707So	North Kent Chalk	379	121%	146	99%
6708So	Stour	397	118%	172	102%
6709So	Dover Chalk	473	121%	267	123%
6710So	Thanet Chalk	273	104%	35	77%
6809So	Medway	447	126%	256	122%
6810So	Eastern Rother	440	115%	259	109%

6811So	Romney Marsh	363	112%	148	93%
6812So	North West Grain	253	110%	0	0%
6813So	Sheppey	272	113%	11	21%
	Kent & South London Average	371	117%	147	100%

3 Soil moisture deficit

3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

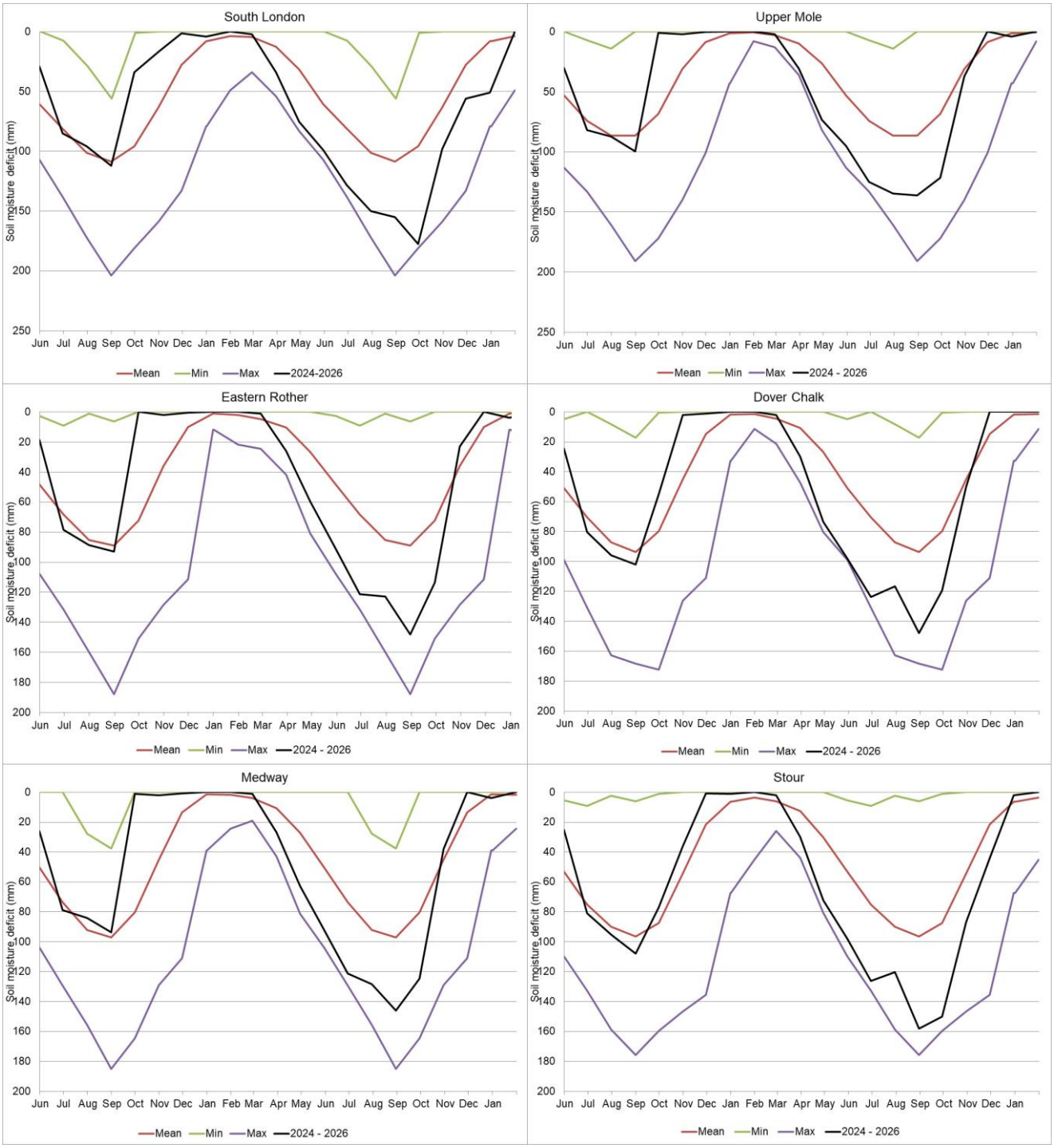
Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficits for weeks ending 31 December 2025 (left panel) and 31 January 2026 (right panel). Top row shows actual soil moisture deficits (mm) and bottom row shows the difference (mm) of the actual from the 1991 to 2020 long term average soil moisture deficits. EA Soil Moisture Deficit data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model).



(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026.

3.2 Soil moisture deficit charts

Figure 3.2: Latest soil moisture deficit compared to maximum, minimum, and 1991 to 2020 long term average. EA soil moisture deficit data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model).



(Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026

3.3 Soil moisture deficit table

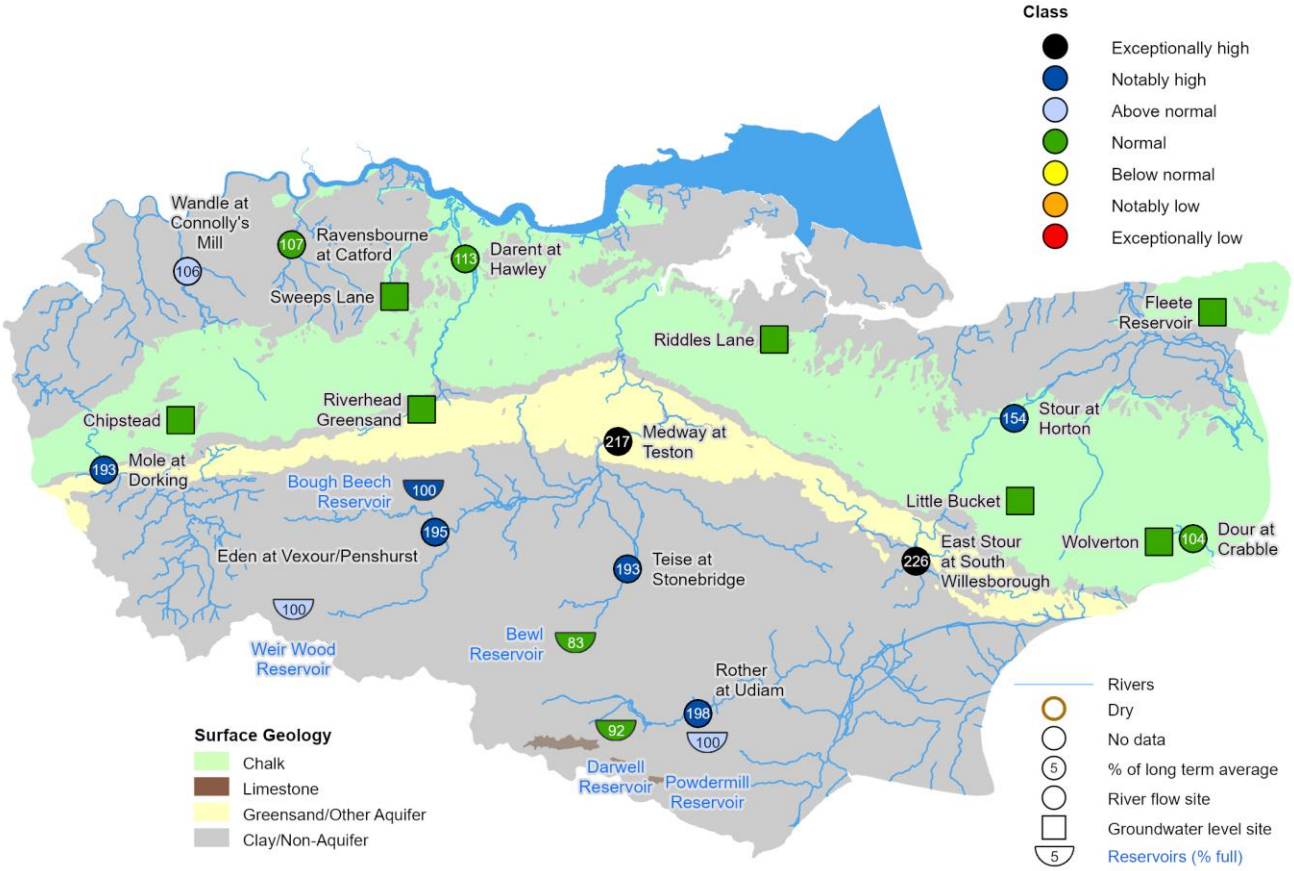
Figure 3.3: This is a second estimate of soil moisture deficit for the hydrological areas across the Kent and South London area. There may be significant variation within each area which must be considered when interpreting these data. EA soil moisture deficit data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model).

Number	Hydrological Area	SMD (mm) Day 31	End Jan LTA
6230TH	North Downs - South London (W)	0	2
6505TH	Upper Mole	0	1
6508TH	South London	0	12
6706So	Darent	0	9
6707So	North Kent Chalk	0	6
6708So	Stour	0	3
6709So	Dover Chalk	0	2
6710So	Thanet Chalk	67	108
6809So	Medway	0	1
6810So	Eastern Rother	0	1
6811So	Romney Marsh	0	2
6812So	North West Grain	12	40
6813So	Sheppey	0	25
	Kent & South London Average	6	16

4 River flows, groundwater levels and reservoir stocks

4.1 River flows, groundwater levels and reservoir stocks map

Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flows* ** for indicator sites for January 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average (period 1992 – 2020) and classed relative to an analysis of historic January monthly means. End of month groundwater levels 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 levels. Tables available in the appendices with detailed information. End of month levels for reservoirs for January 2026, expressed as percent full. (Source: Water Companies).



*Flows at gauging stations in the Medway catchment might be affected by upstream reservoir releases
**Weirwood Reservoir is currently offline

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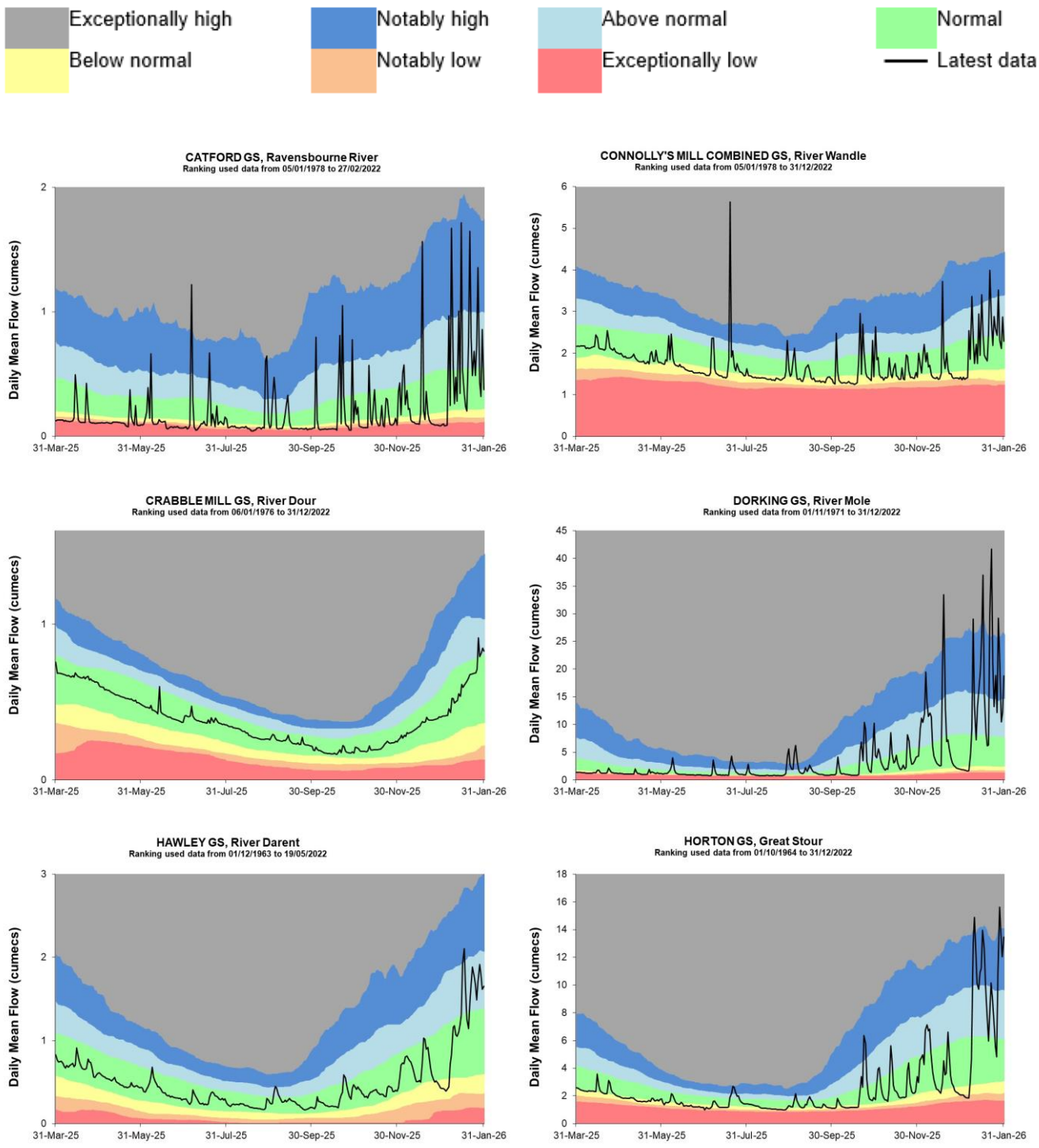
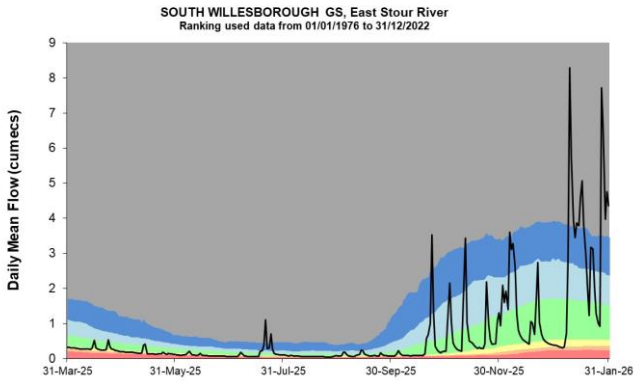
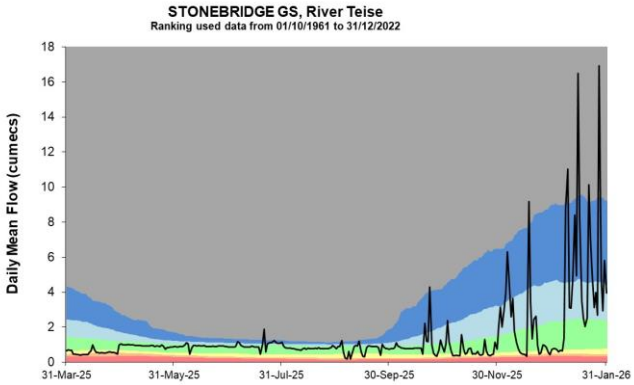
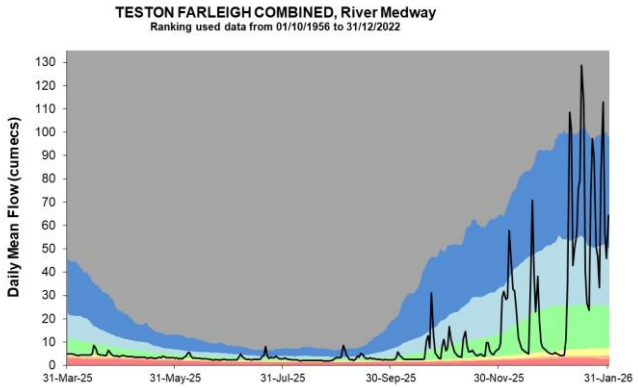
4.2 River flow charts

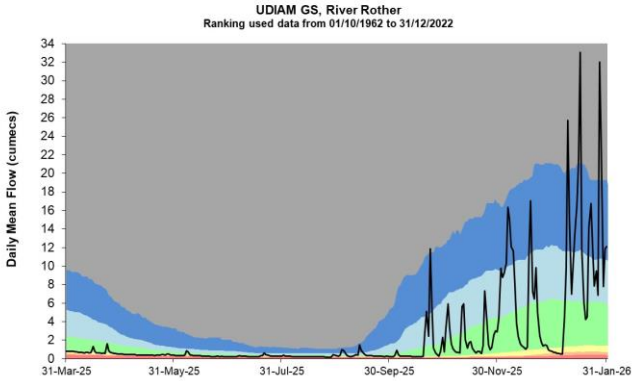
Figure 4.1: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.

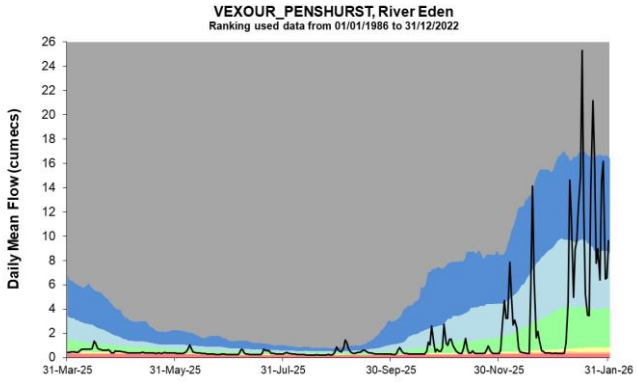










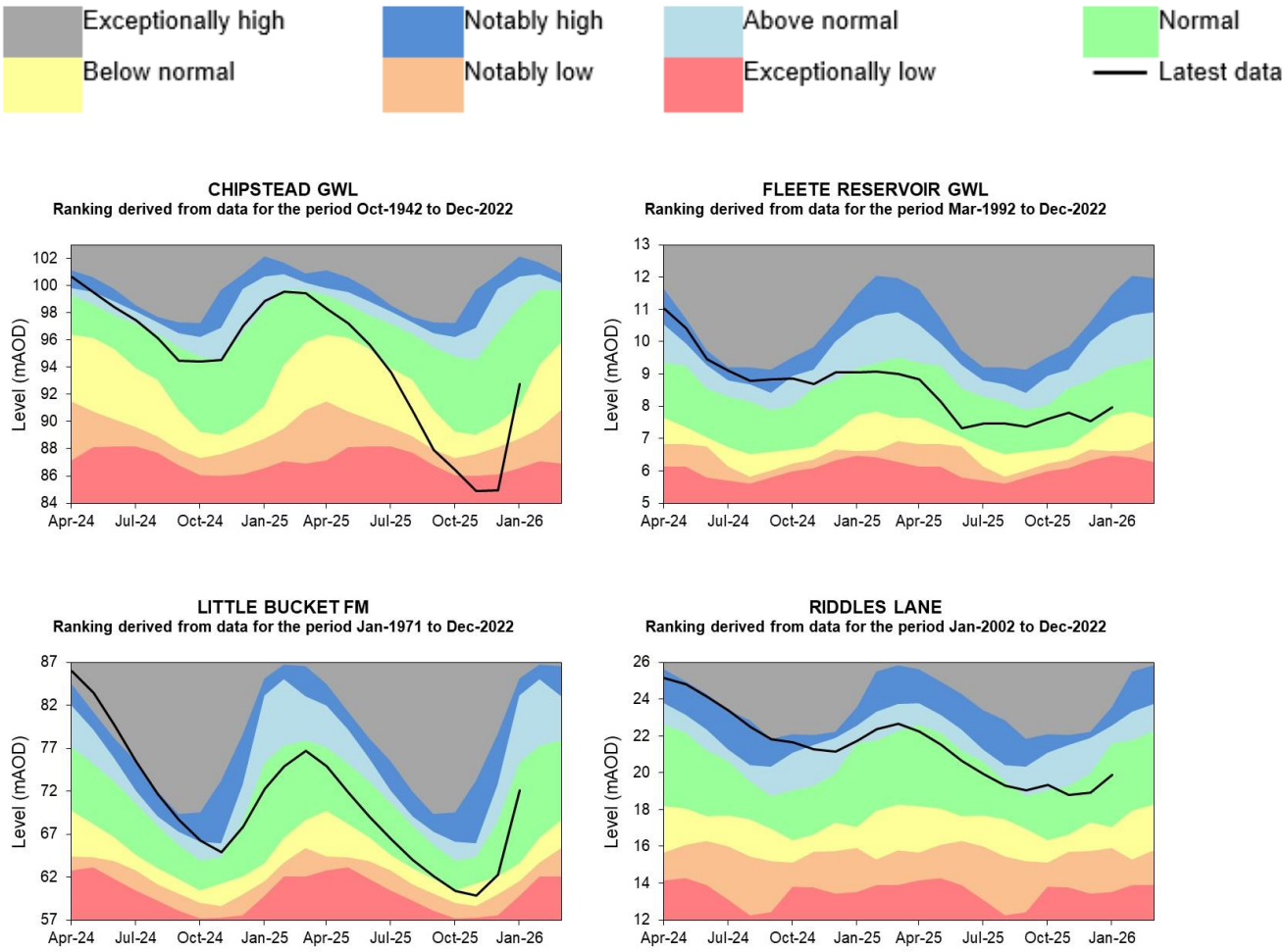


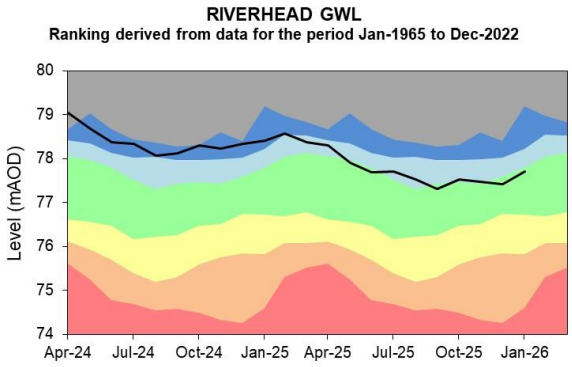
Source: Environment Agency.

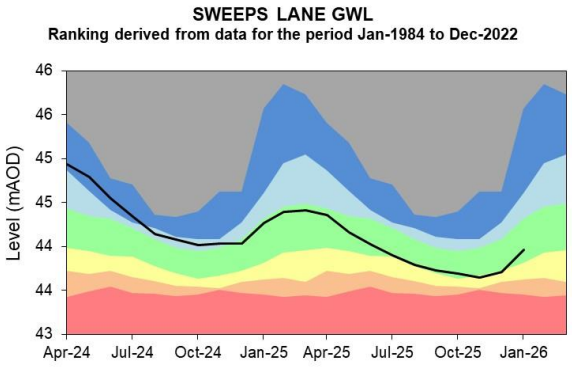
5 Groundwater levels

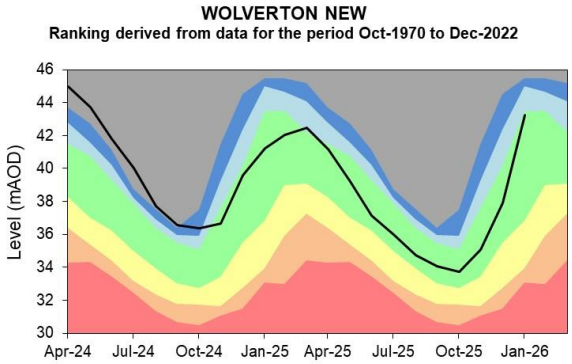
5.1 Groundwater level charts

Figure 5.1: 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.







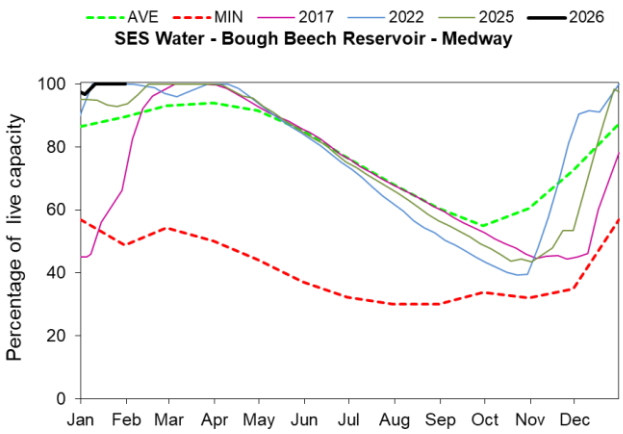


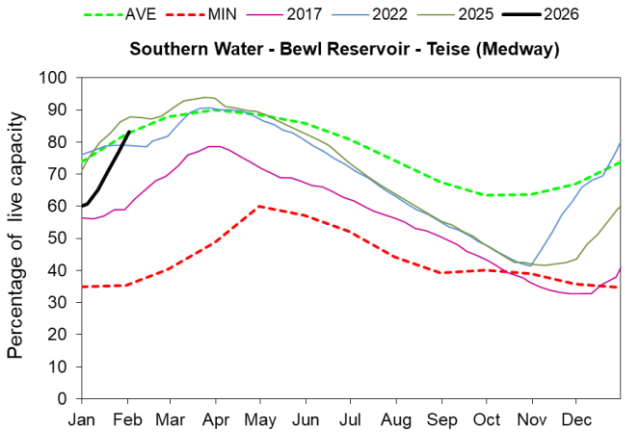
Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

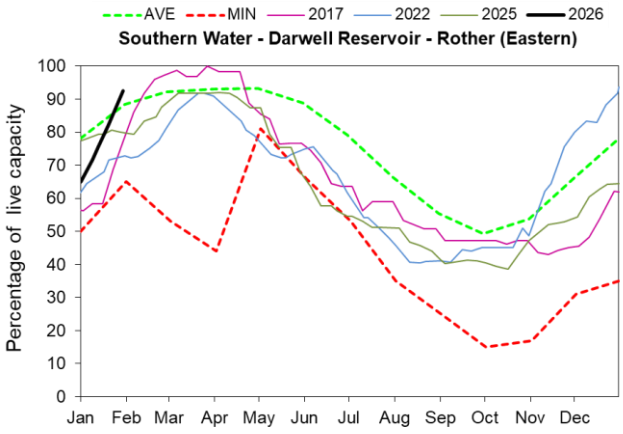
6 Reservoir stocks

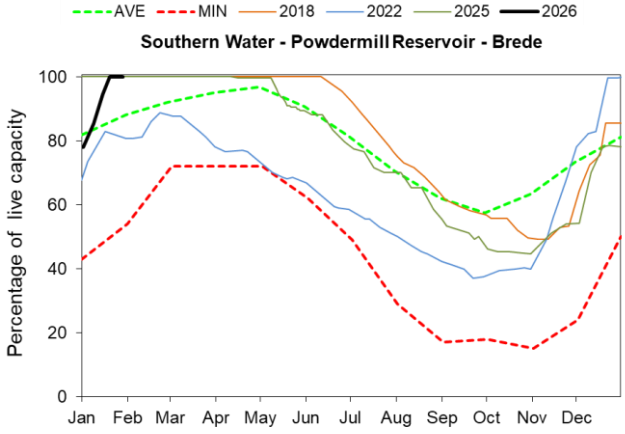
6.1 Reservoir stocks charts

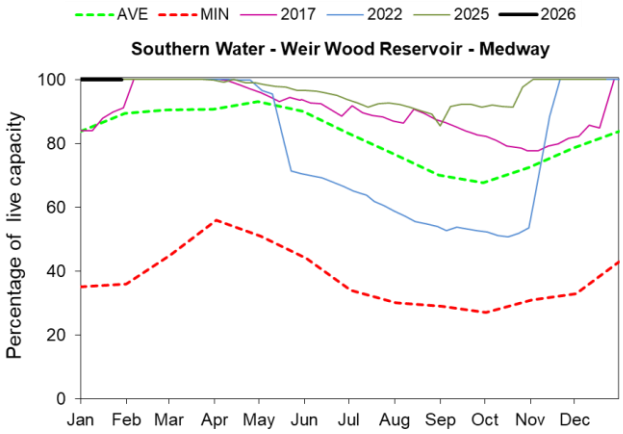
Figure 7.1: End of month regional reservoir stocks compared to long term maximum, minimum and average stocks. (Source: Water Companies). Note: Historic records of individual reservoirs and reservoir groups making up the regional values vary in length.











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
North Downs - South London	194	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Above normal	Normal
Upper Mole	202	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
South London	178	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Normal	Below normal
River Darent	184	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Normal	Normal
North Kent Chalk	199	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Normal	Normal
Stour	210	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Normal	Normal
Dover Chalk	208	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Above normal	Normal
Thanet Chalk	187	Notably High	Normal	Normal	Normal
River Medway	203	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Above normal	Normal

Eastern Rother	184	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Above normal	Normal
Romney Marsh	185	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Normal	Normal
North West Grain	189	Notably High	Normal	Normal	Below normal
Sheppy	202	Notably High	Normal	Normal	Below normal

8.2 River flows table

Site name	River	Catchment	Jan 2026 band	Dec 2025 band
Catford Gs	River Ravensbourne	Ravensbourne	Normal	Below normal
Connolly's Mill Combined Gs	River Wandle	Wandle	Above normal	Below normal
Crabble Mill Gs	River Dour	Dour	Normal	Normal
Dorking Gs	River Mole	Mole Surrey	Notably high	Normal
Hawley Gs	River Darent and Cray	Darent and Cray	Normal	Normal
Horton Gs	Great Stour River	Great Stour	Notably high	Normal
South Willesborough Gs	East Stour River	East Stour	Exceptionally high	Normal
Stonebridge Gs	River Teise	Teise	Notably high	Normal
Teston Farleigh Combined	River Medway	Medway (Middle)	Exceptionally high	Normal
Udiam Gs	River Rother	Rother (Kent)	Notably high	Normal
Vexour_penshurst	River Eden	Eden (Kent)	Notably high	Normal

8.3 Groundwater table

Site name	Aquifer	End of Jan 2026 band	End of Dec 2025 band
Fleete Reservoir Gwl	Isle Of Thanet Chalk	Normal	Normal
Chipstead Gwl	Epsom North Downs Chalk	Normal	Exceptionally low
Little Bucket Fm	East Kent Chalk - Stour	Normal	Normal
Riddles Lane	North Kent Swale Chalk	Normal	Normal
Riverhead Gwl	Kent Greensand	Normal	Normal
Sweeps Lane Gwl	West Kent Chalk	Normal	Below normal
Wolverton New	East Kent Chalk - Stour	Normal	Normal