Monthly water situation report: South-east England

1 Summary - January 2026

The year of 2026 started off rather wet across the South-east of England with 192% of the long term average (LTA) recorded. This was due to three named storms affecting the South-east, that of Storm Goretti on the 8 January, Ingrid on 24 January and Chandra on 26 January. Over half of the areal units were the wettest January since 2014 and many of those were second or third wettest January on their respective records. The soil moisture deficits (SMDs) fell during the month and were reduced to zero by the second week in most of the areal units across the South-east during January. They were well below the LTA for the end of January in each Area. Once the SMDs were close to zero within the first two weeks of the month, recharge continued at pace. By the end of January, the total winter recharge so far (October to January) was above average. The river flows were all normal or higher for January. Flows generally rose at all of the key indicator sites during the month, due to multiple peaks, reflecting the storms and bands of heavy rain that moved across the South-east during January. There was a total of 213 fluvial flood alerts and 43 fluvial flood warnings issued across the South-east. The groundwater levels across the South-east rose during January and significantly so at a number of sites. All of the key indicator sites were at normal levels or higher for the time of year. There were eight groundwater flood alerts issued, mainly in Solent and South Downs (SSD), but also one in Thames (THM) by the end of the month

1.1 Rainfall

The year of 2026 started off rather wet across the South-east of England with 192% of the LTA recorded. This was due to three named storms affecting the South-east, that of Storm Goretti on the 8 January, Ingrid on 24 January and Chandra on 26 January. The first week was cold with an arctic air mass being the biggest influence on the weather and bringing some snow to parts of the South-east. Low pressure systems then dominated the rest of the month when temperatures rose compared to the first week, but remained slightly below average for the month. The highest daily rainfall total was 42.9mm recorded at Lyndhurst (Lymington, SSD) on 26 January but the wettest day was 8 January when there was widespread heavy rainfall across the whole of the South-east and accounted for, on average, 16% of the monthly total. The second wettest day was 15 January and third wettest day was 26 January. When all three days were combined, on average, around 40% of the monthly rainfall was recorded. The 8 January was the wettest in Hertfordshire and North London (HNL) and Kent and South London (KSL). SSD was wettest on 26 January, and THM had 4 fairly equally wet days being 8, 15, 21 and 26 January.

Over half of the areal units were the wettest January since 2014 and many of those were second or third wettest January on their respective records. Most of the South-east received rainfall in the exceptionally high category with the exception of a few areal units across the north of THM and HNL that received notably high rainfall for January. There were eight groundwater flood alerts issued, mainly in SSD, but also one in THM by the end of the month.

1.2 Soil moisture deficit and recharge

The SMDs fell during the month and were reduced to zero by the second week in most of the areal units across the South-east during January. They were well below the LTA for the end of January in each Area, with only KSL having a few remaining millimetres of SMD in Thanet and North West Grain areal units. Whilst recharge had begun last month despite the remaining SMDs, once the SMDs were close to zero within the first two weeks of the month, recharge continued at pace. By the end of January, the total winter recharge so far (October to January) was above average compared to the end of December when there had only been just above two thirds of the winter recharge to the end of December. Each Area had above average recharge for January, although THM, KSL and SSD all recorded around twice the LTA for the end of January.

1.3 River flows

The river flows were all normal or higher for January. Flows generally rose at all of the key indicator sites during the month, due to multiple peaks, reflecting the storms and bands of heavy rain that moved across the South-east during January. The highest flows were on or around the Wealden Clay, mostly in KSL, but with a few exceptions being the Wey at Tilford (THM), the Rother at Iping Mill and Arun at Alfoldean (both SSD). Lymington at Brockenhurst (SSD) responded significantly to Storm Chandra. Flows on the Wey at Tilford (THM), Arun at Alfoldean and Lymington at Brockenhurst (both SSD) all reached the second highest January flows on record, the highest since 2014. There was a total of 213 fluvial flood alerts and 43 fluvial flood warnings issued across the South-east.

	HNL	THM	SSD	KSL	Total
Fluvial alerts	19	66	72	56	213
Fluvial Warnings	0	3	30	10	43
GW alerts	0	1	7	0	8
Total	19	70	109	66	264

1.4 Groundwater levels

The groundwater levels across the South-east rose during January and significantly so at a number of sites. All of the key indicator sites were at normal levels or higher for the time of year compared to last month when there were still sites at below normal and lower. The key indicator sites where levels were highest were in SSD reflecting some of the highest rainfall

totals during January and the impact of Storm Chandra in particular. Levels at Houndean Bottom (SSD) reached the fourth highest January on record after 2016 and Carisbrooke on the Isle of Wight (also SSD) ended the month at the third highest January on record, after 1995. The only key indicator site higher than normal that wasn't in SSD was Rockley (THM) that ended the month at above normal levels. There were eight groundwater flood alerts issued, mainly in SSD, but also one in THM by the end of the month.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

The reservoir storage remained below the LTA at Farmoor, Lower Thames (both THM) and at Arlington (KSL) and on the LTA at Bewl (KSL) and at the Lower Lee reservoirs (HNL). The storage at the remaining reservoirs at Bough Beech, Weir Wood, Darwell , Powdermill (all KSL) and at Ardingly (SSD) had recovered to above the LTA for January and were at 100% , with just the exception of Darwell.

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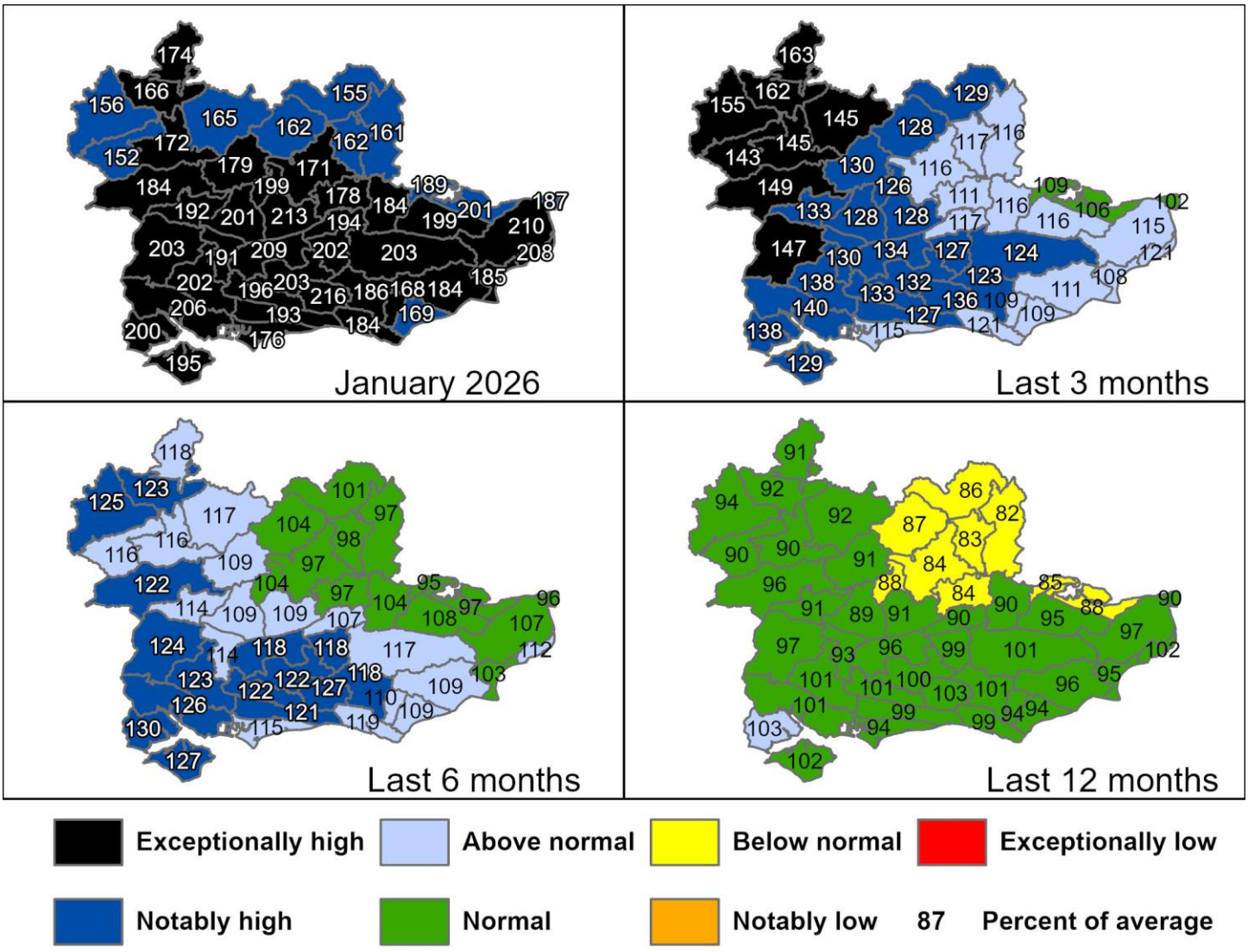
2 Maps

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. The numbers refer to percentage of the 1991-2020 long term average.

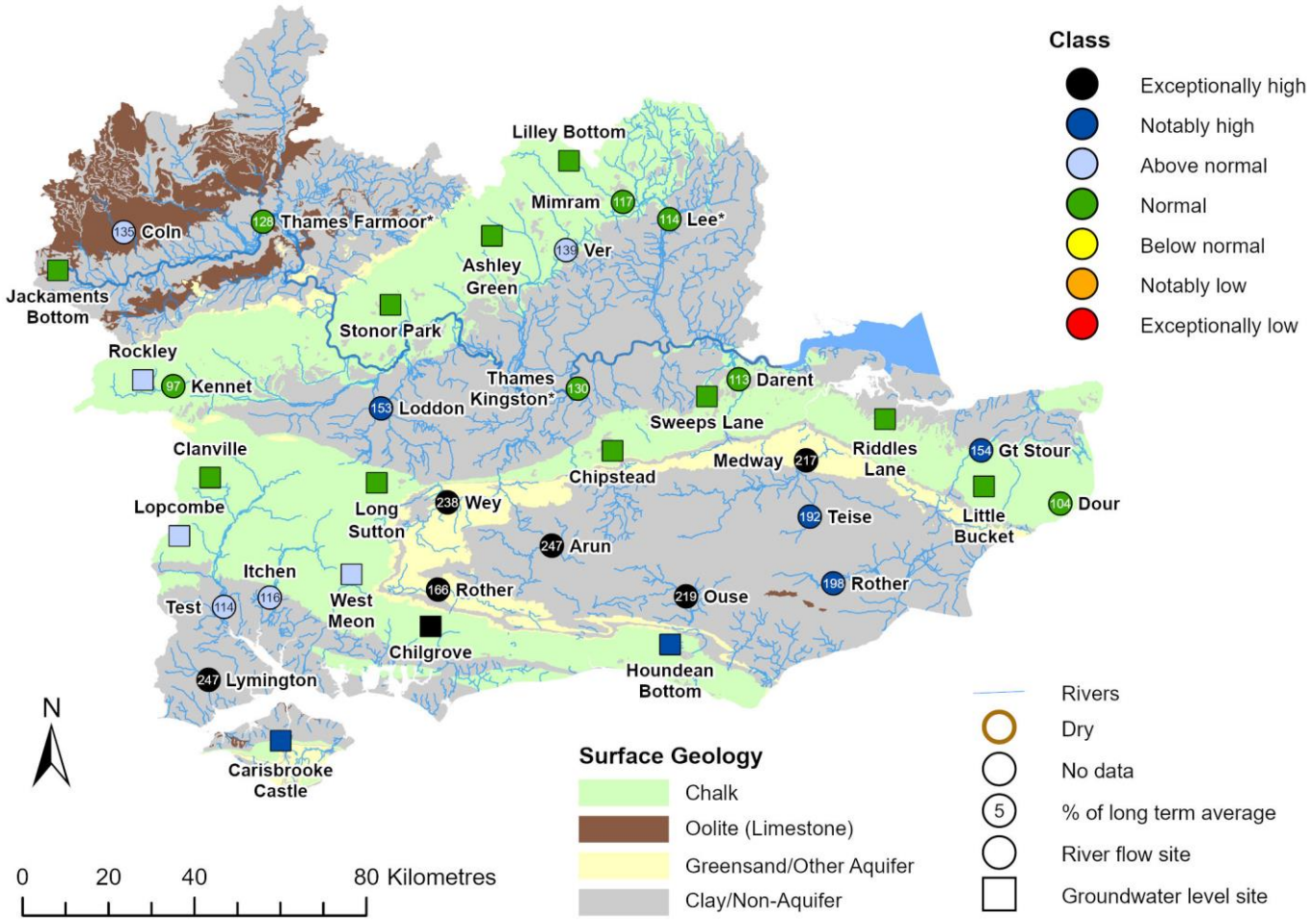


Rainfall data for Oct 2023 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright 2026 AC0000807064). Rainfall data prior to Oct 2023 extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall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

2.2 River flows and groundwater levels map

Figure 2.2: 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. 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.

Flows at gauging stations in the Medway catchment (KSL) might be affected by upstream reservoir releases.



(Source: Environment Agency). © Ordnance Survey Crown Copyright and Database Rights 2026 AC0000807064. Geological map reproduced with kind permission from UK Groundwater Forum, BGS copyright NERC. © Ordnance Survey Crown Copyright and Database Rights 2026 AC0000807064.

3 Rainfall, effective rainfall and soil moisture deficit tables

3.1 Rainfall, effective rainfall and soil moisture deficit table

Figure 3.1: This is a second estimate of areal rainfall, effective rainfall (percolation or runoff) and SMDs for a selection of the hydrological areas across the South-east of England. 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 Figure 3.2.

Number	Hydrological Area	Rainfall (mm) 31 day Total	January % LTA	Effective Rainfall (mm) 31 day total	January % LTA	SMD (mm) Day 31	End Jan LTA
6010TH	Cotswolds - West (A)	130	156%	110	161%	0	1
6070TH	Berkshire Downs (G)	153	186%	133	213%	0	5
6130TH	Chilterns - West (M)	134	179%	112	205%	0	7
6162TH	North Downs - Hampshire (P)	189	191%	168	205%	0	2
6190TH	Wey - Greensand (S)	199	209%	178	227%	0	2
	Thames Average	137	183%	113	202%	0	5
	Thames Catchment Average	140	184%	116	201%	0	5
6140TH	Chilterns - East - Colne (N)	119	162%	81	153%	0	7
6600TH	Lee Chalk	95	156%	21	60%	0	23
6507TH	North London	110	172%	48	120%	0	11
6509TH	Roding	91	161%	20	62%	0	15
	Herts and North London	103	163%	42	107%	0	13
6230TH	North Downs - South London (W)	162	191%	143	209%	0	2
6706So	Darent	129	185%	74	156%	0	9

6707So	North Kent Chalk	141	199%	114	218%	0	6
6708So	Stour	153	210%	134	243%	0	3
6809So	Medway	171	203%	152	216%	0	1
	Kent & South London Average	140	195%	97	192%	6	16
6701So	Test Chalk	188	203%	168	224%	0	2
6702So	East Hampshire Chalk	207	202%	187	214%	0	1
6703So	West Sussex Chalk	202	192%	182	201%	0	1
6804So	Arun	196	204%	176	214%	0	1
6805So	Adur	204	215%	185	227%	0	1
	Solent & South Downs Average	186	193%	166	205%	0	2
	South East Average	149	188%	117	194%	2	8

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

EA effective rainfall and soil moisture deficit data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model 2026.)

3.2 Seasonal summary table of rainfall and effective rainfall

Figure 3.2 This is a seasonal estimate of areal rainfall and effective rainfall (percolation or runoff) for a selection of the hydrological areas across the South-east of England, 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	Seasonal Rainfall as % LTA	Seasonal Effective Rainfall (mm) Total	Seasonal Effective Rainfall as % LTA
6010TH	Cotswolds - West (A)	493	139%	293	129%
6070TH	Berkshire Downs (G)	452	133%	227	131%
6130TH	Chilterns - West (M)	371	119%	145	99%
6162TH	North Downs - Hampshire (P)	495	122%	277	113%
6190TH	Wey - Greensand (S)	505	130%	284	123%
	Thames Average	403	128%	173	111%
	Thames Catchment Average	405	126%	176	110%
6140TH	Chilterns - East - Colne (N)	358	116%	113	79%
6600TH	Lee Chalk	303	117%	49	57%
6507TH	North London	296	109%	48	52%
6509TH	Roding	274	111%	20	26%
	Herts and North London	305	113%	54	56%
6230TH	North Downs - South London (W)	416	118%	187	96%

6706So	Darent	345	116%	104	81%
6707So	North Kent Chalk	379	121%	146	99%
6708So	Stour	397	118%	172	102%
6809So	Medway	447	126%	256	122%
	Kent & South London Average	371	117%	147	100%
6701So	Test Chalk	511	134%	291	133%
6702So	East Hampshire Chalk	556	130%	367	132%
6703So	West Sussex Chalk	550	124%	385	127%
6804So	Arun	511	129%	325	129%
6805So	Adur	524	131%	363	140%
	Solent & South Downs Average	512	125%	330	129%
	South East Average	416	123%	200	113%

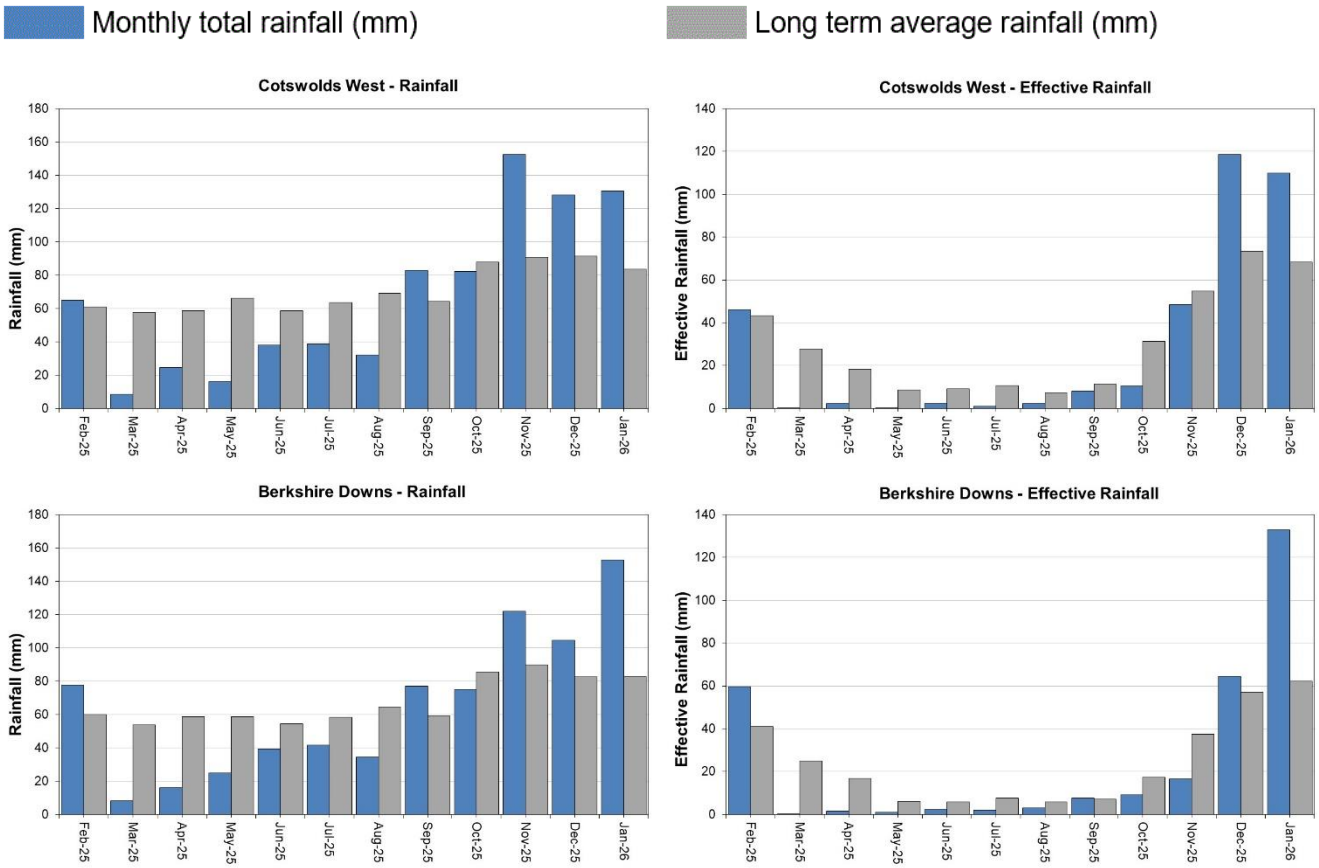
HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

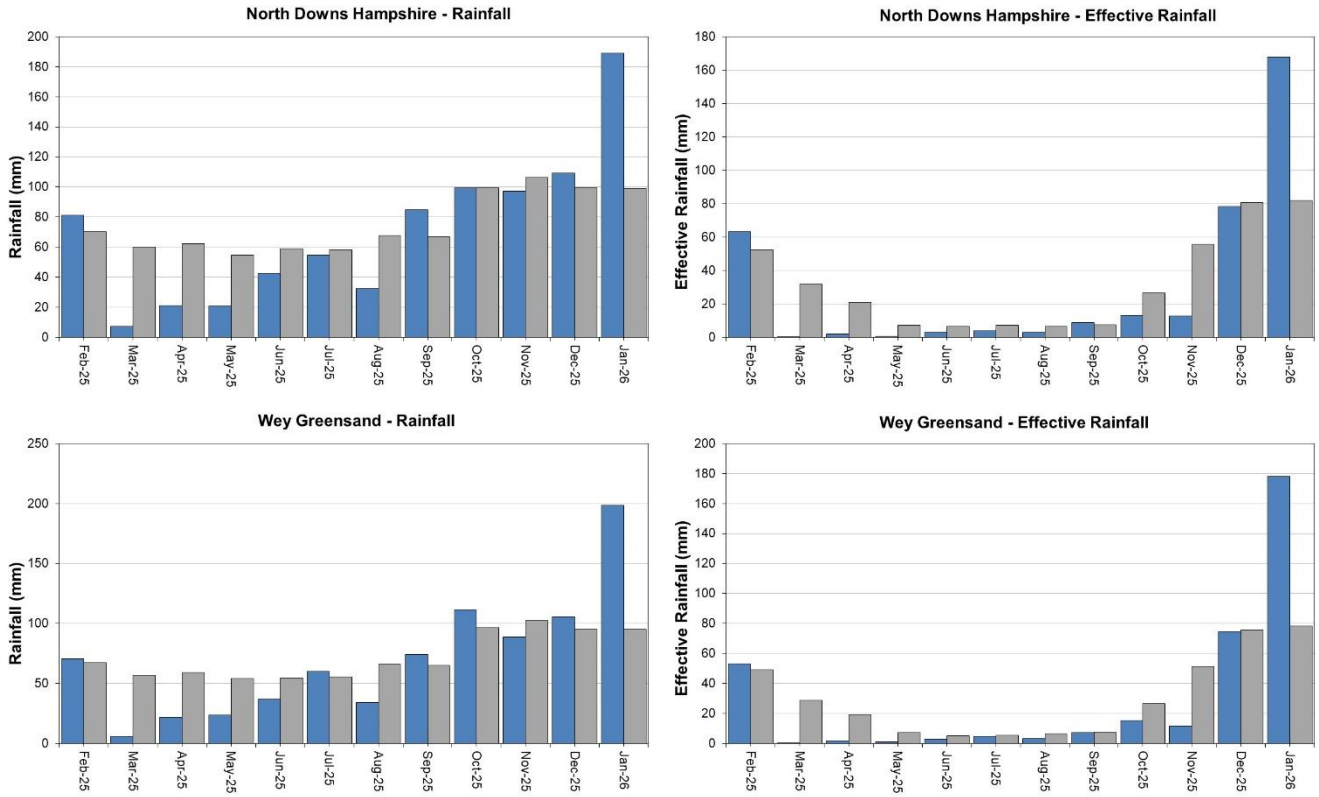
EA effective rainfall data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model 2026.)

4 Thames

4.1 Thames Rainfall and effective rainfall charts

Figure 4.1: Monthly rainfall and effective rainfall totals for the past 24 months compared to the 1991 to 2020 long term average for a selection of areal units.



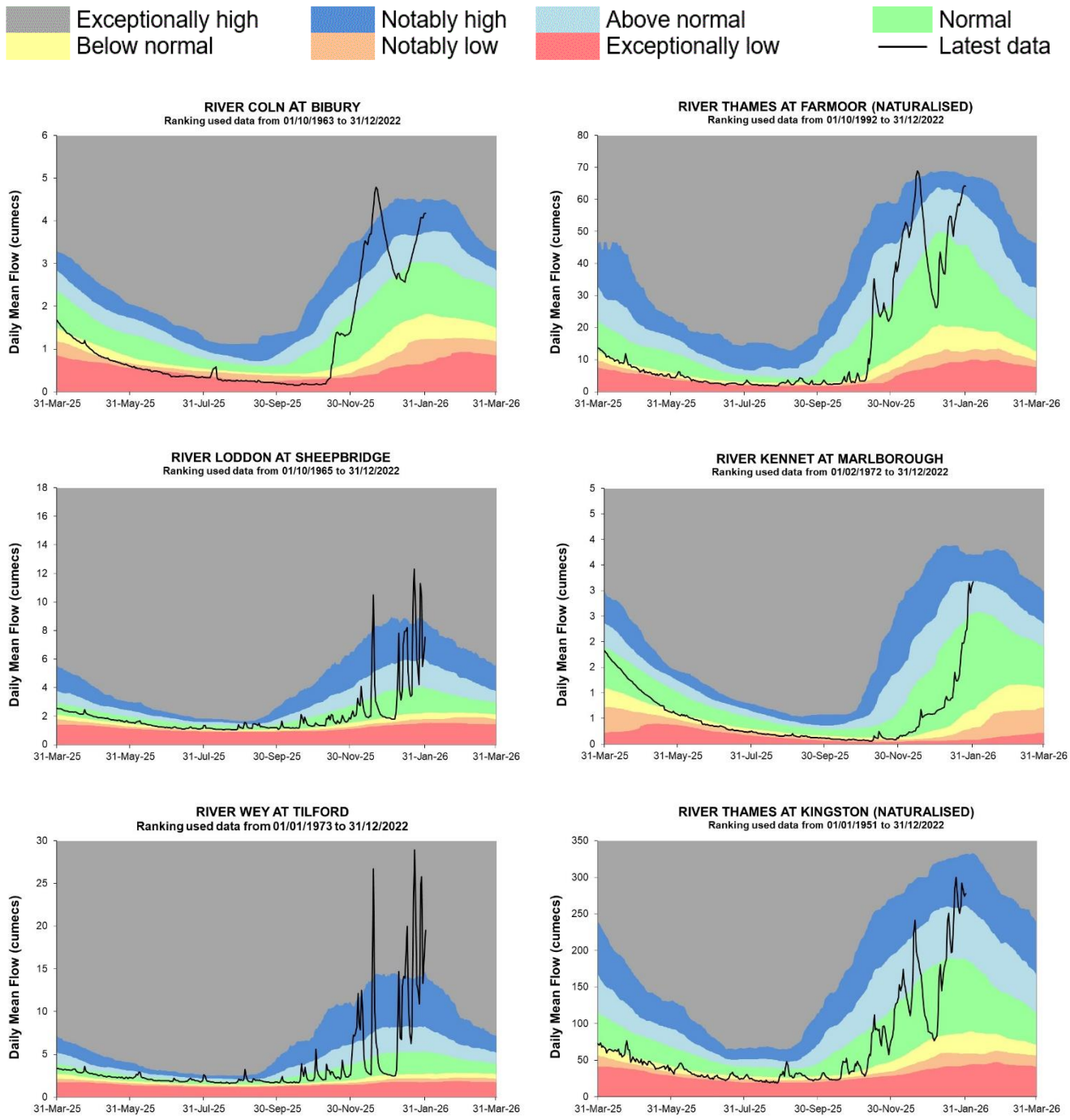


HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

EA effective rainfall data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model, 2026).

4.2 Thames River flow charts

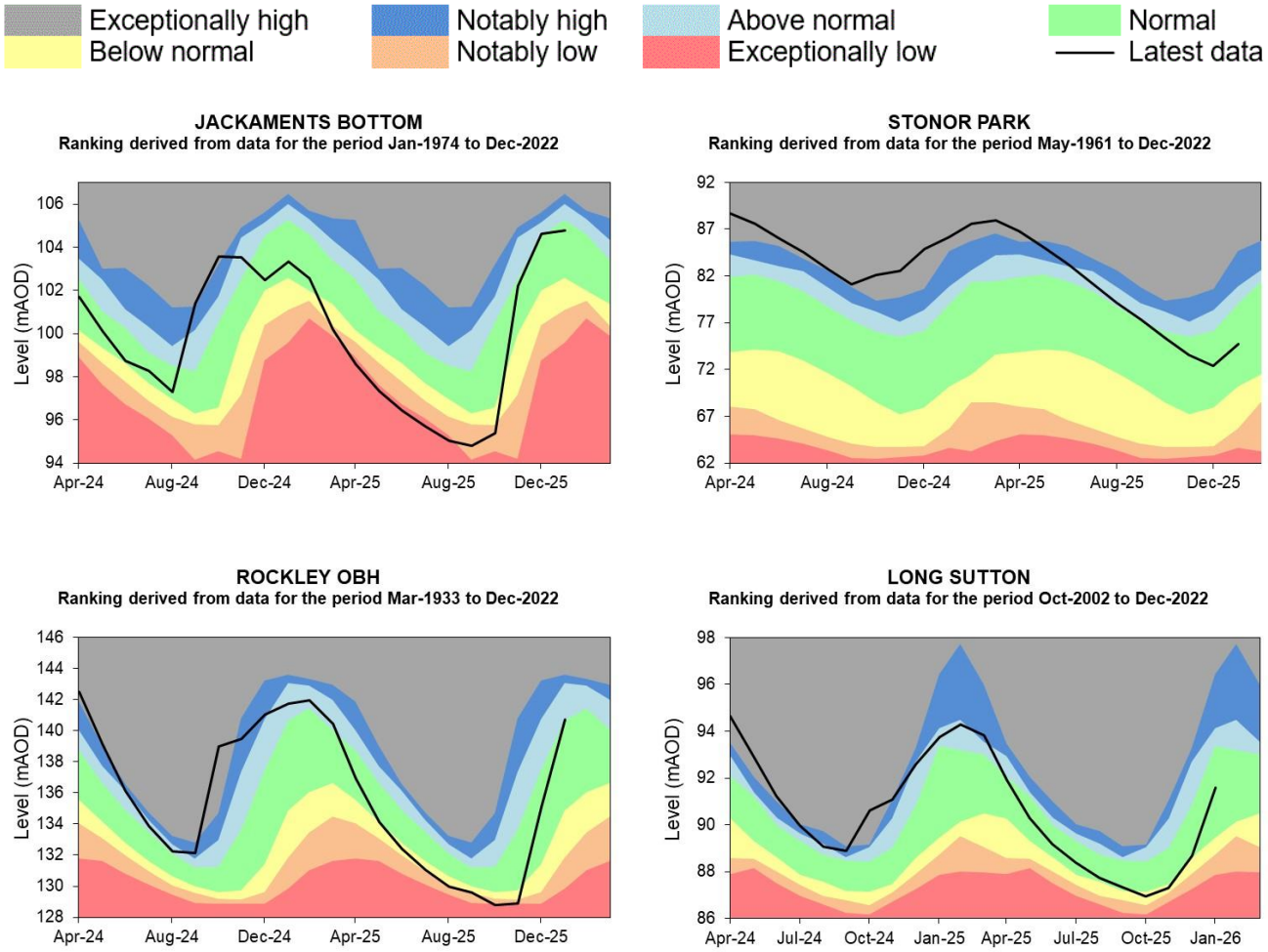
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.



Source: Environment Agency. 2026

4.3 Thames Groundwater level charts

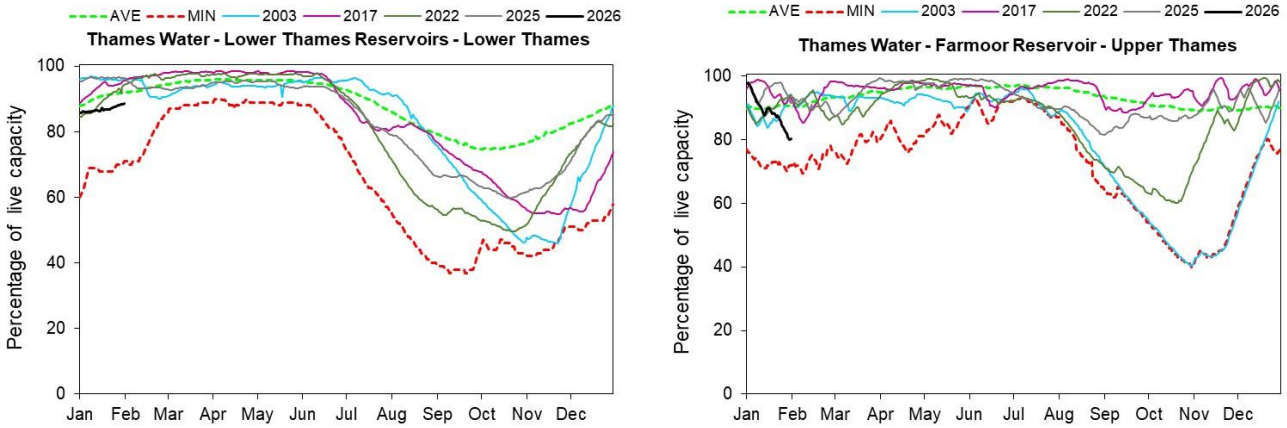
Figure 4.3: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 22 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels and long term maximum and minimum levels. Tile Barn Farm data has been estimated from 2 local sites since April 2022. A replacement is planned.



Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

4.4 Thames Reservoir stocks

Figure 4.4: End of month regional reservoir stocks compared to long term maximum, minimum and average stocks. Note: Historic records of individual reservoirs and reservoir groups making up the regional values vary in length.

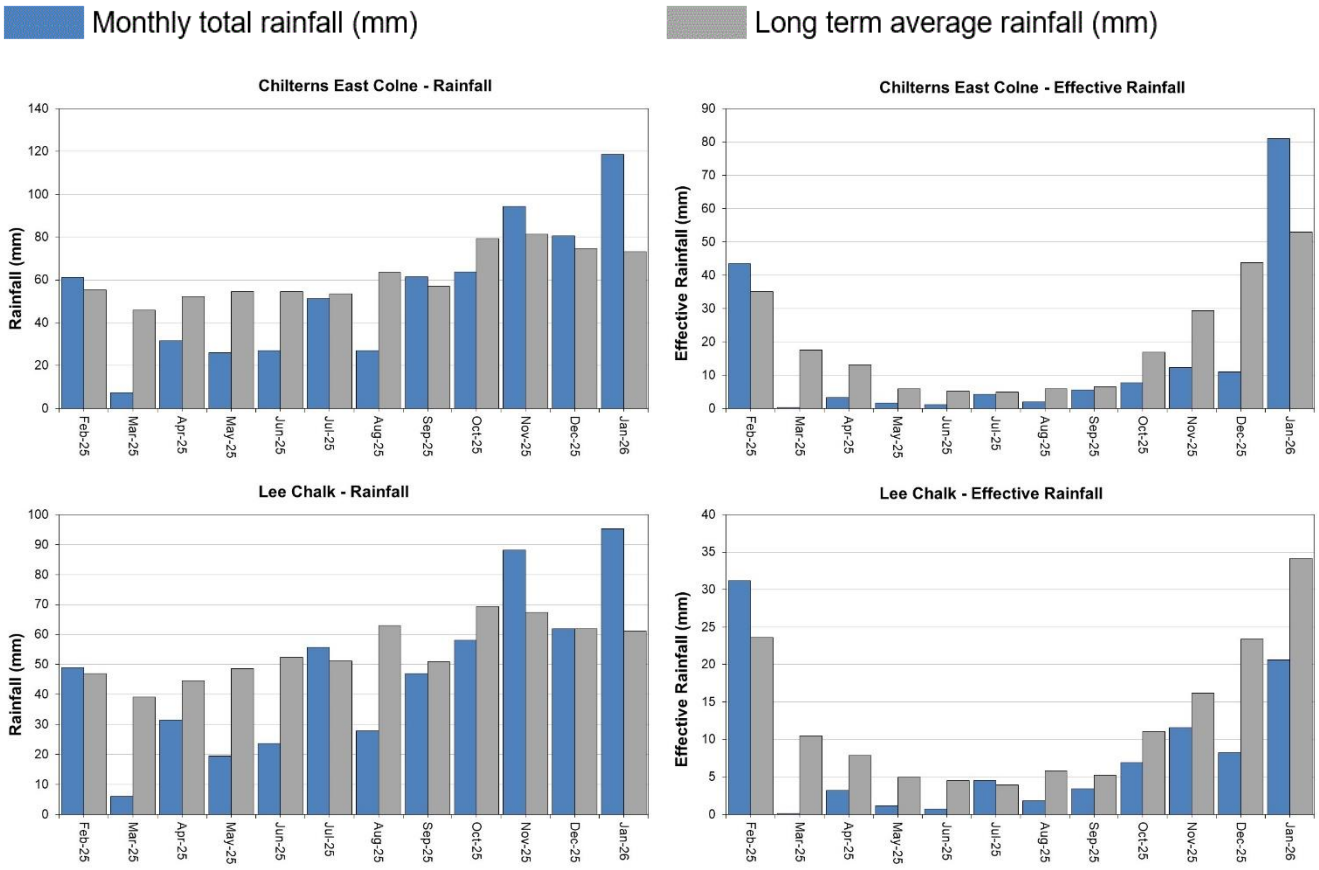


(Source: water companies).

5 Hertfordshire and North London (HNL)

5.1 HNL Rainfall and Effective rainfall charts

Figure 5.1: Monthly rainfall and effective rainfall totals for the past 24 months compared to the 1991 to 2020 long term average for a selection of areal units.

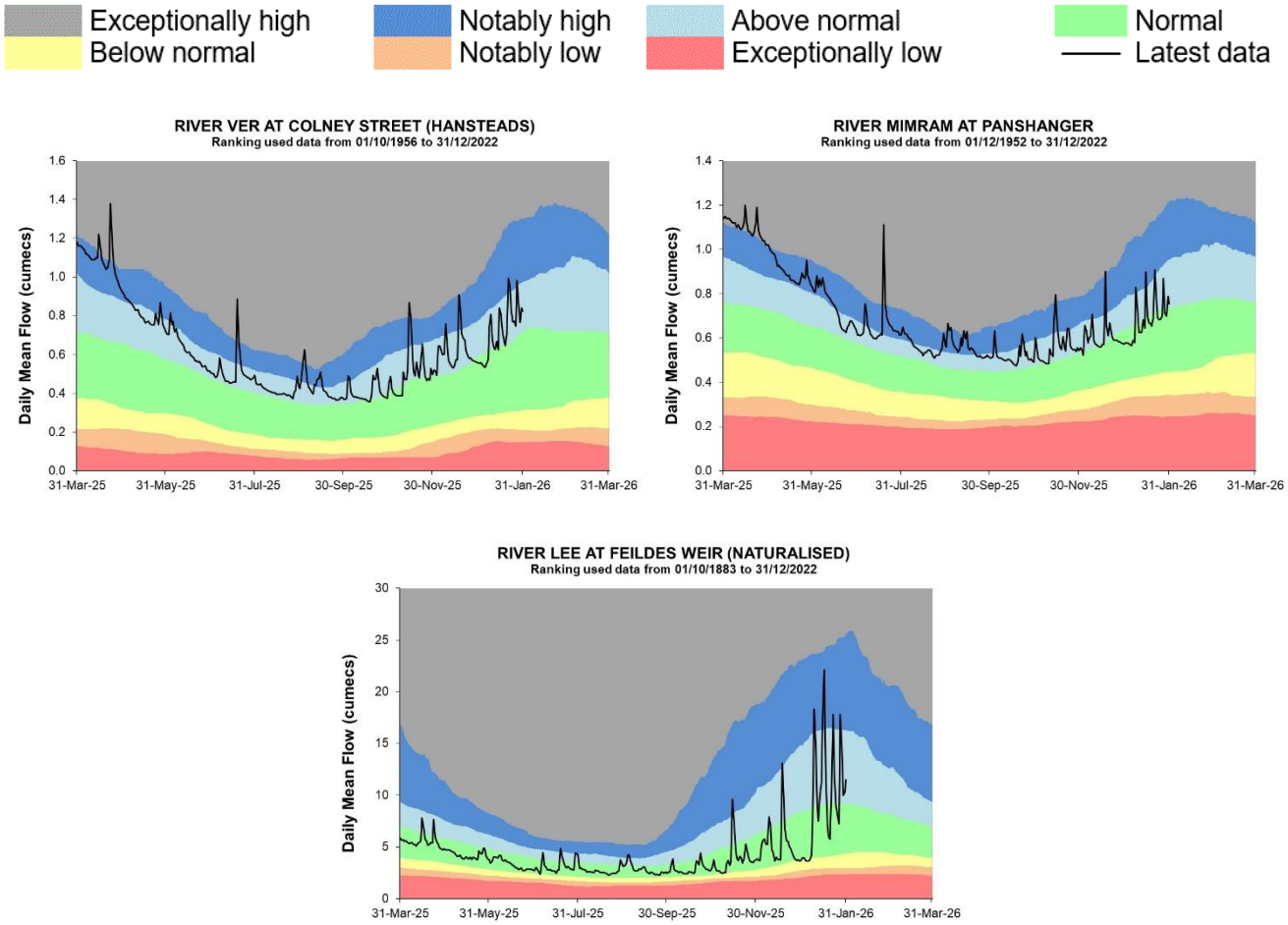


HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

EA effective rainfall data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model, 2026).

5.2 HNL River flow charts

Figure 5.2 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. 2026

5.3 HNL Groundwater level charts

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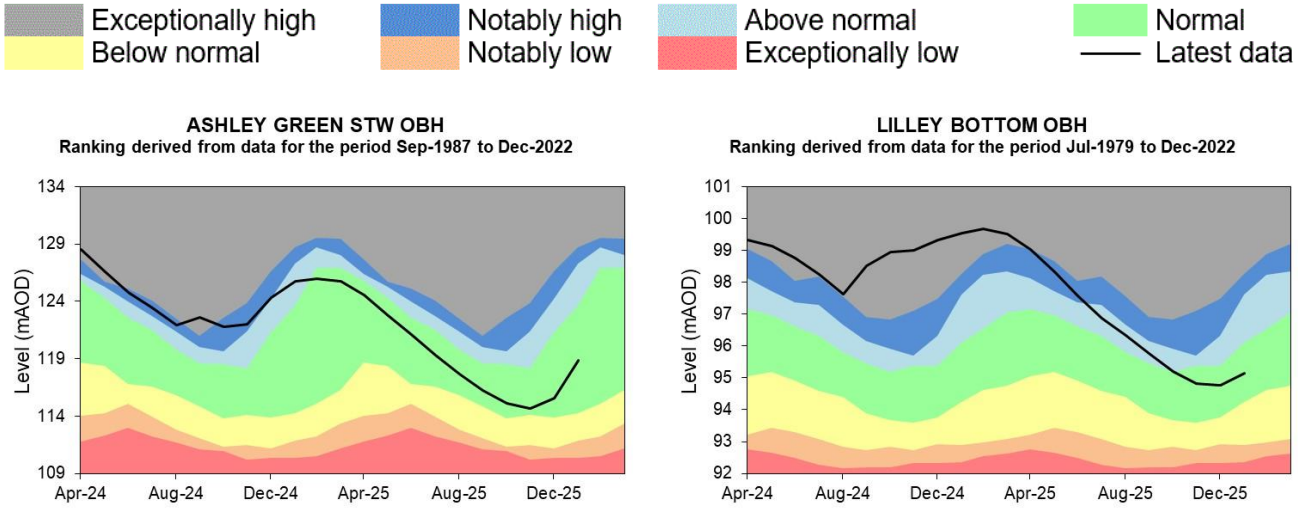
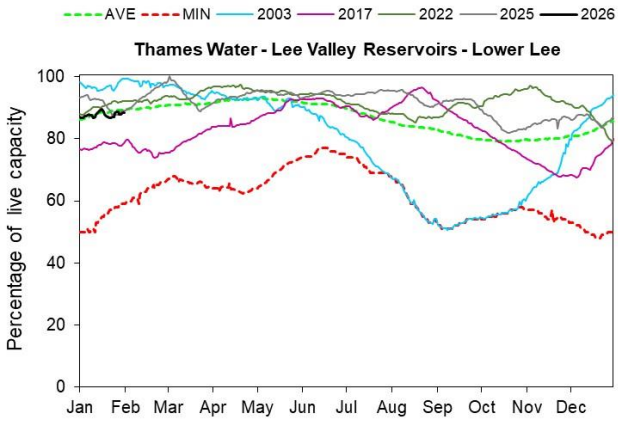


Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

5.4 HNL Reservoir stocks

Figure 5.4: End of month regional reservoir stocks compared to long term maximum, minimum and average stocks. Note: Historic records of individual reservoirs and reservoir groups making up the regional values vary in length.

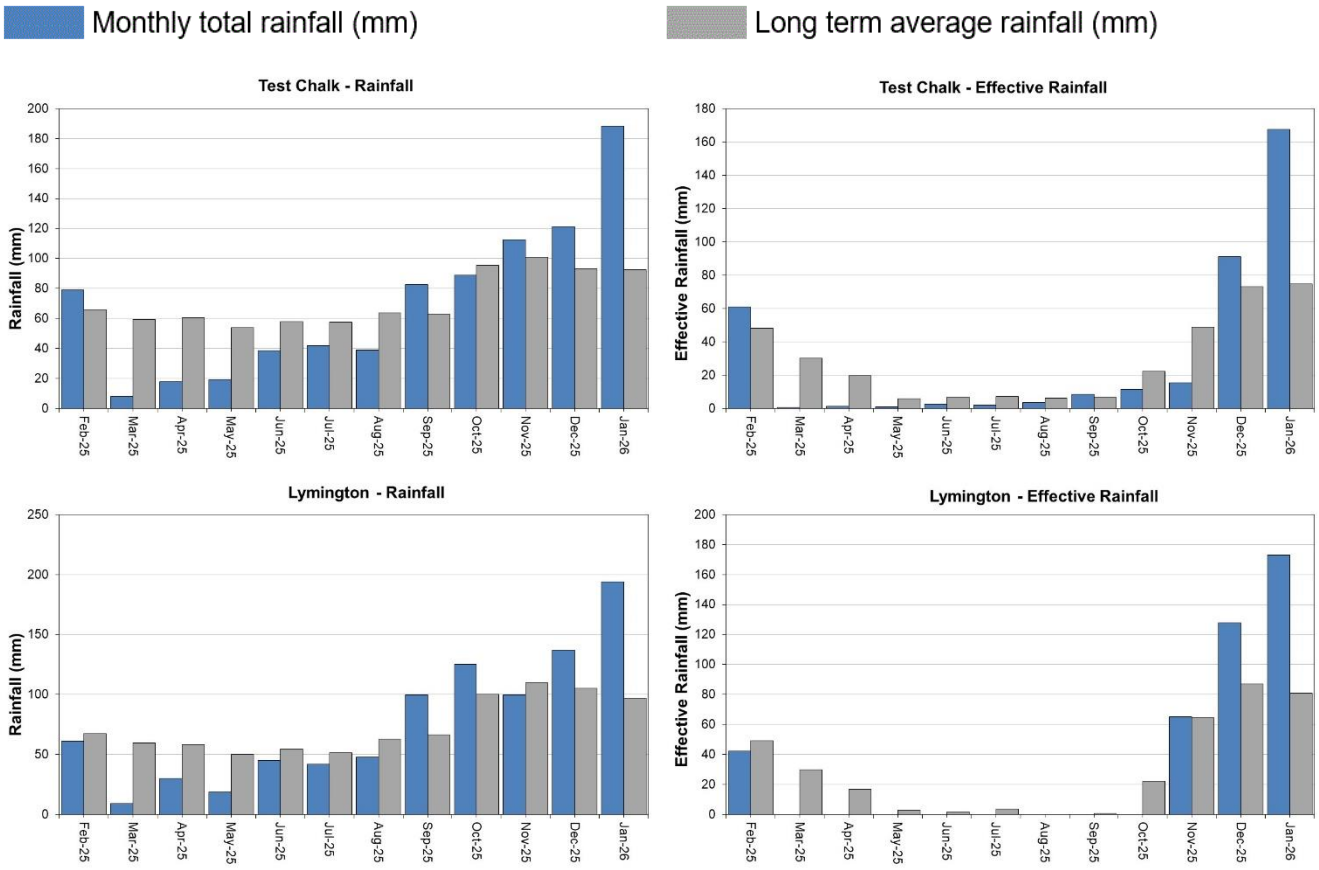


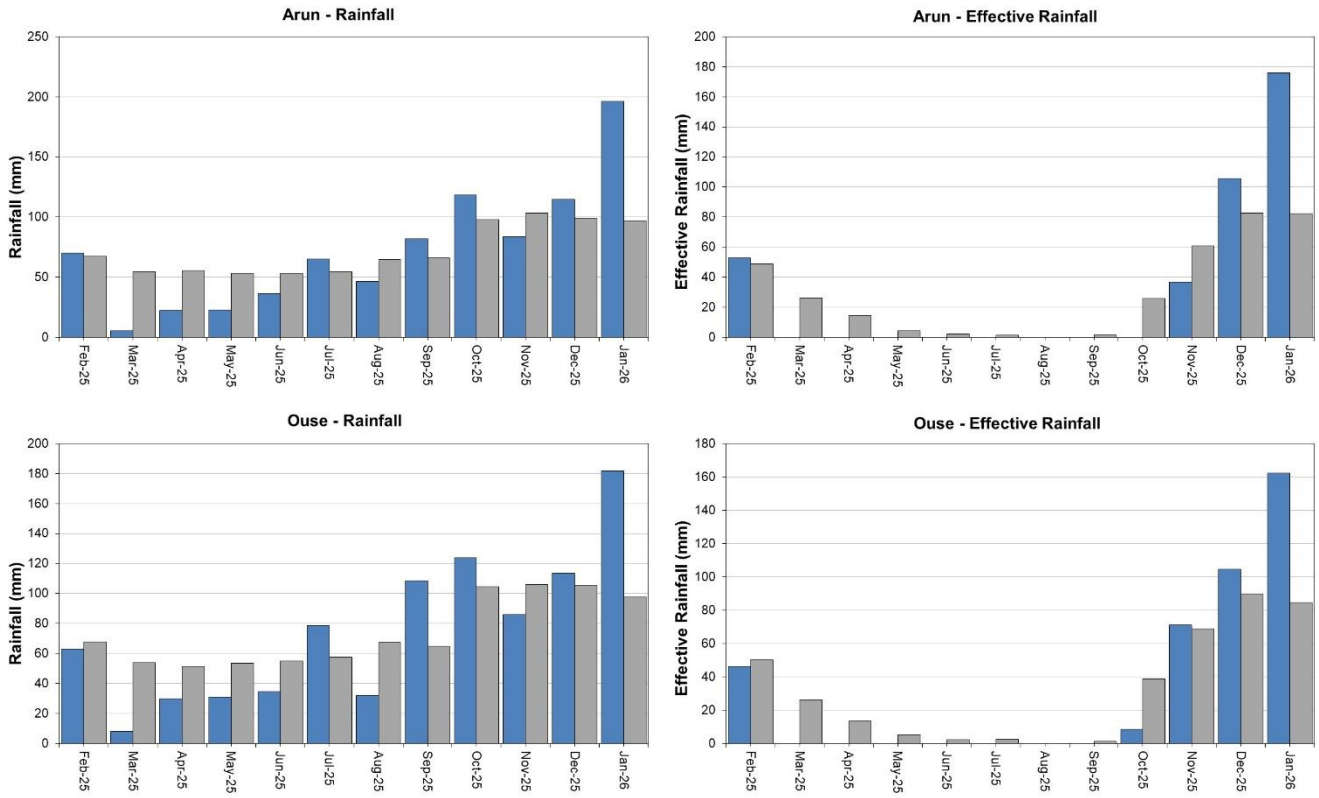
(Source: water companies).

6 Solent and South Downs (SSD)

6.1 SSD Rainfall and Effective Rainfall charts

Figure 6.1: Monthly rainfall and effective rainfall totals for the past 24 months as a percentage of the 1991 to 2020 long term average for a selection of areal units.



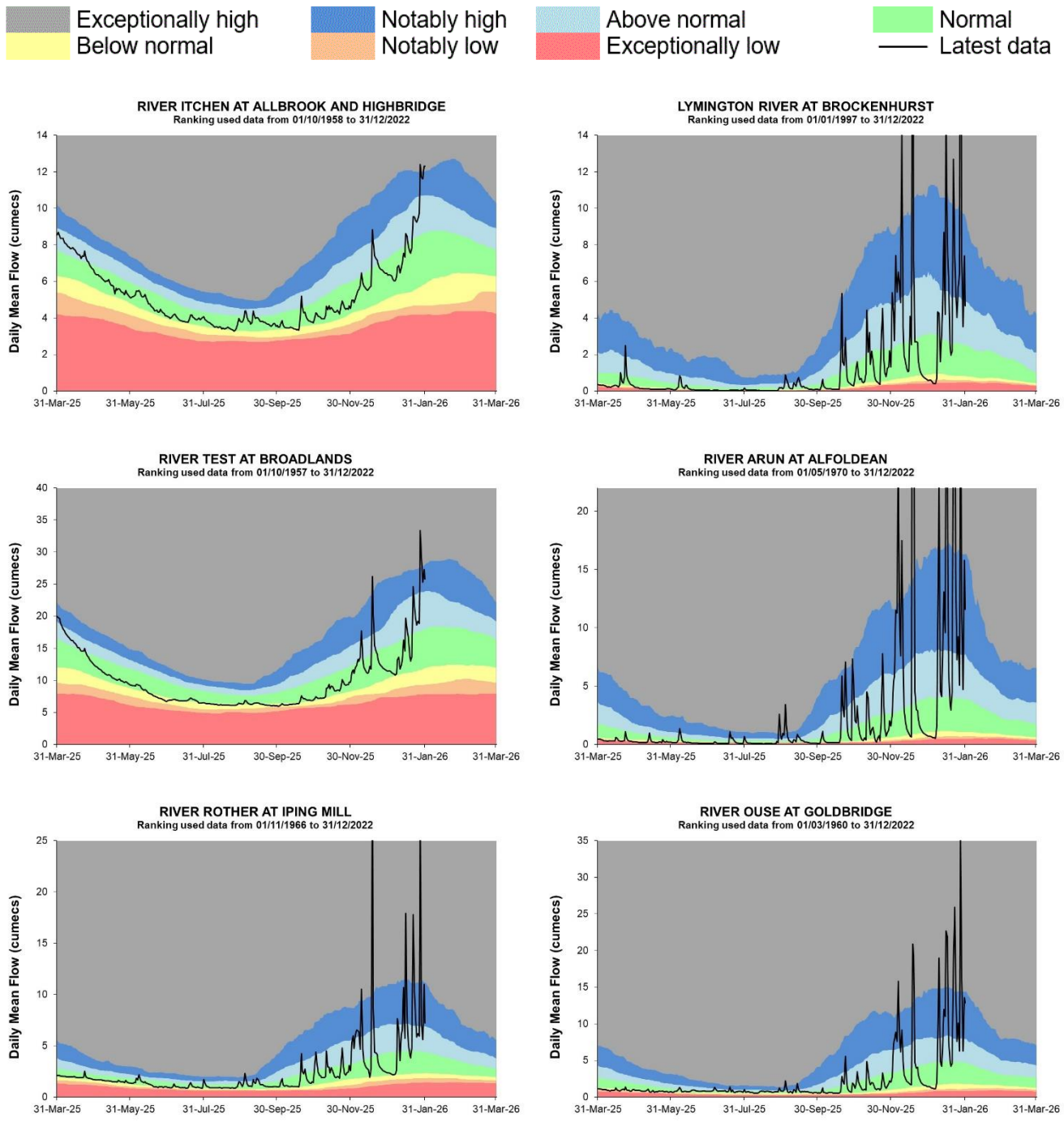


HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

EA effective rainfall data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model, 2026).

6.2 SSD River flow charts

Figure 6.2: 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. 2026

6.3 SSD Groundwater levels

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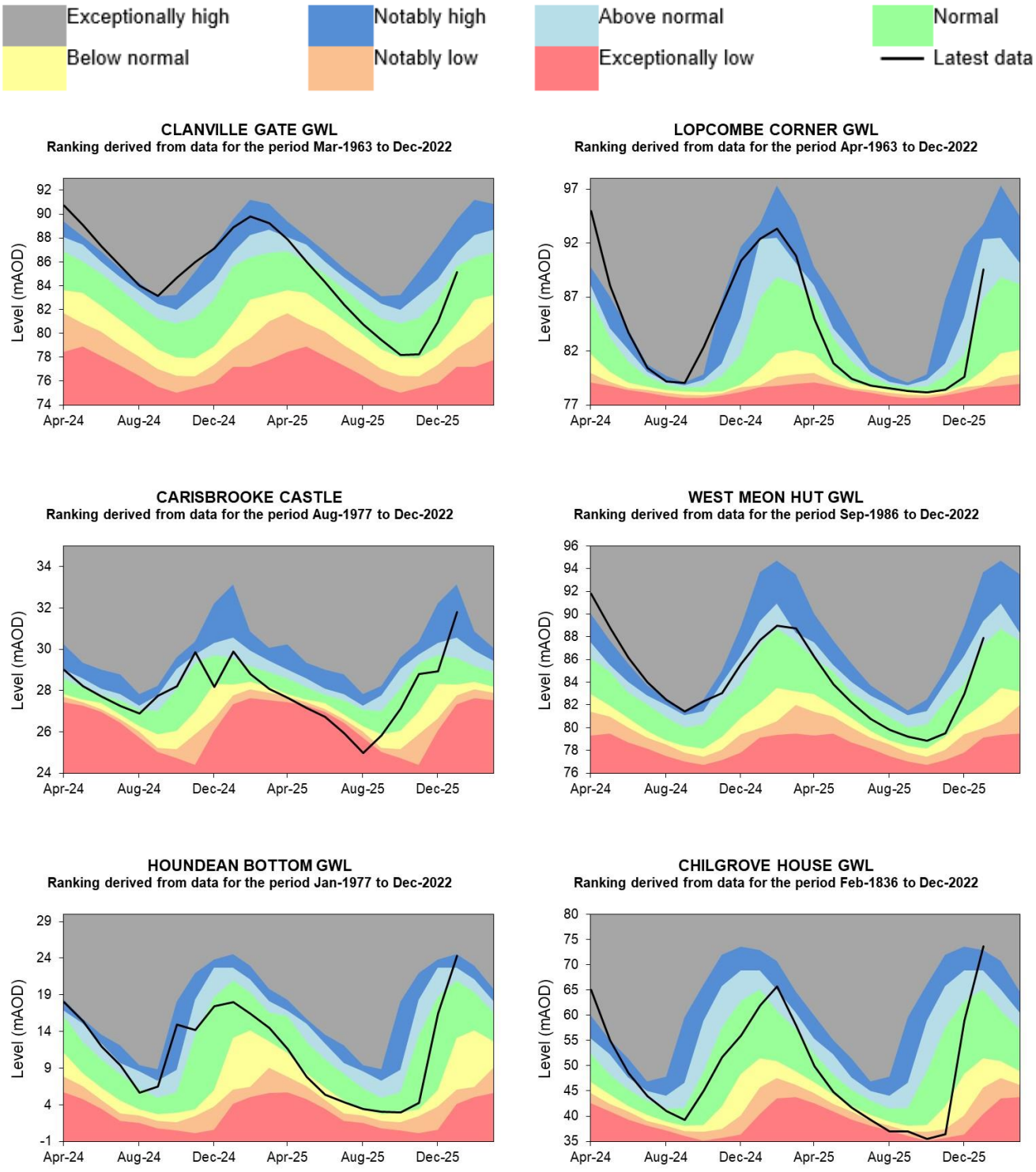
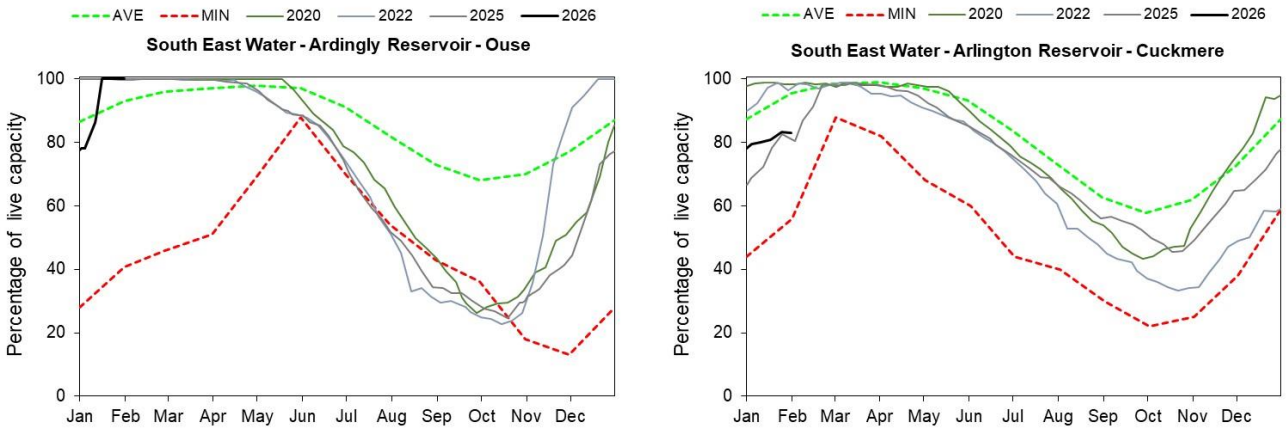


Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

6.4 SSD Reservoir stocks

Figure 6.4: End of month regional reservoir stocks compared to long term maximum, minimum and average stocks. Note: Historic records of individual reservoirs and reservoir groups making up the regional values vary in length.

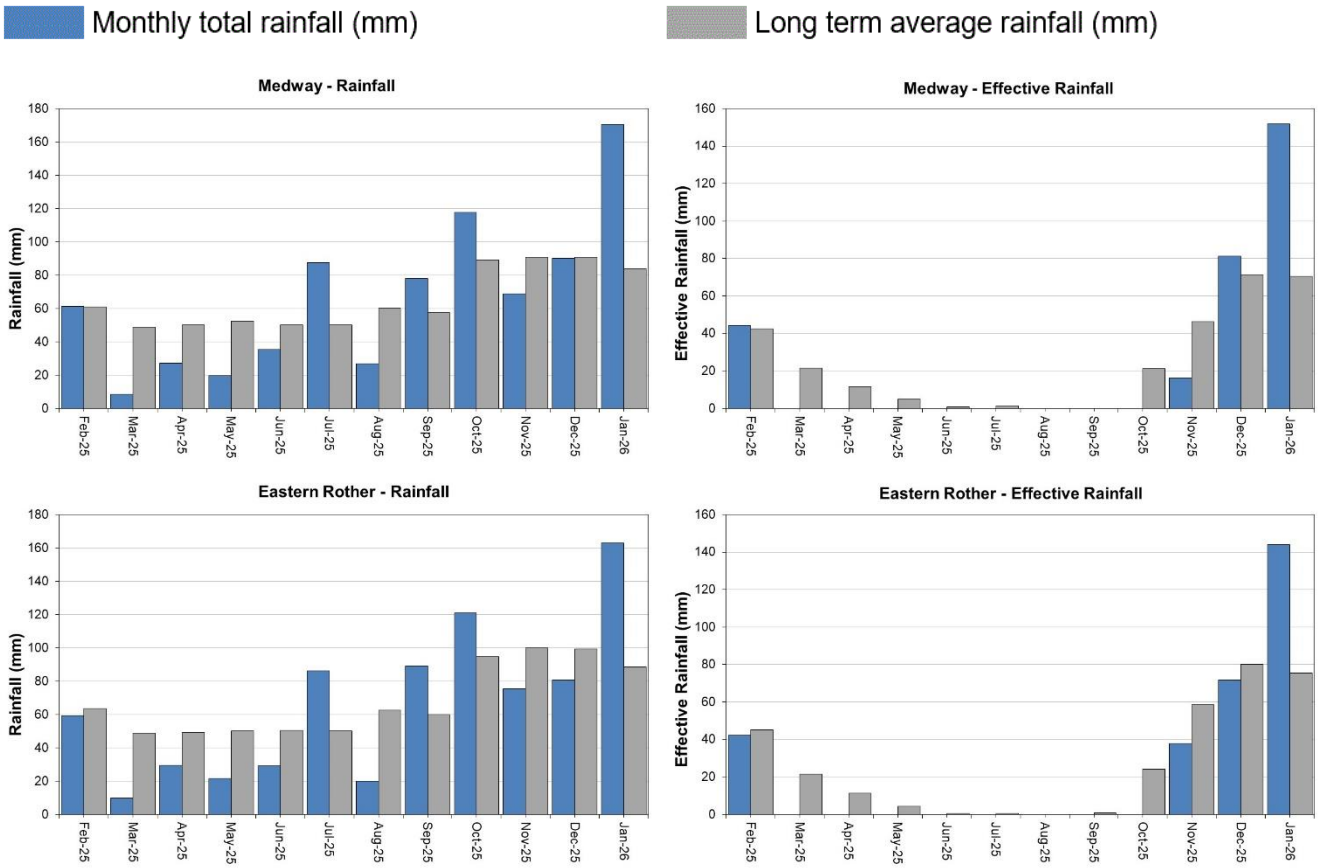


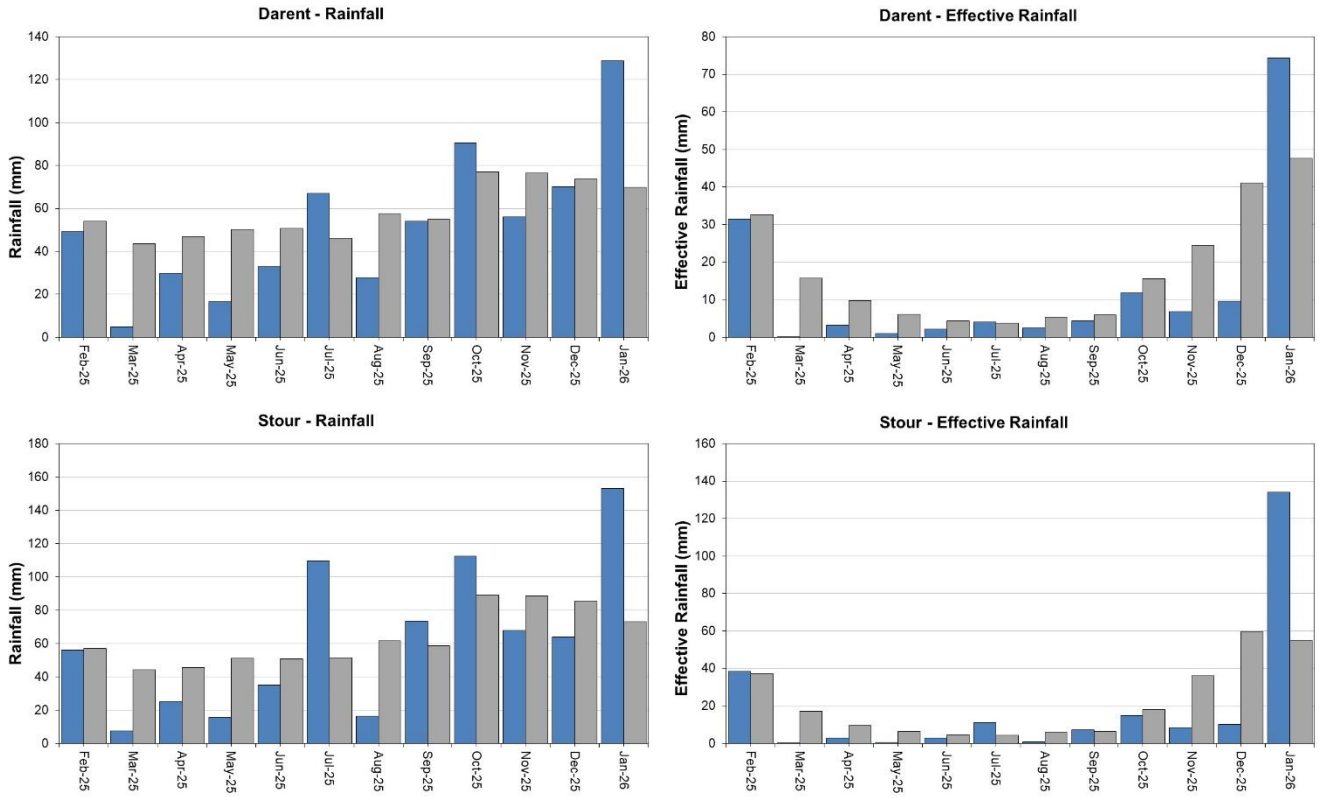
(Source: water companies).

7 Kent and South London (KSL)

7.1 KSL Rainfall and Effective Rainfall charts

Figure 7.1: Monthly rainfall and effective rainfall totals for the past 24 months compared to the 1991 to 2020 long term average for a selection of areal units.



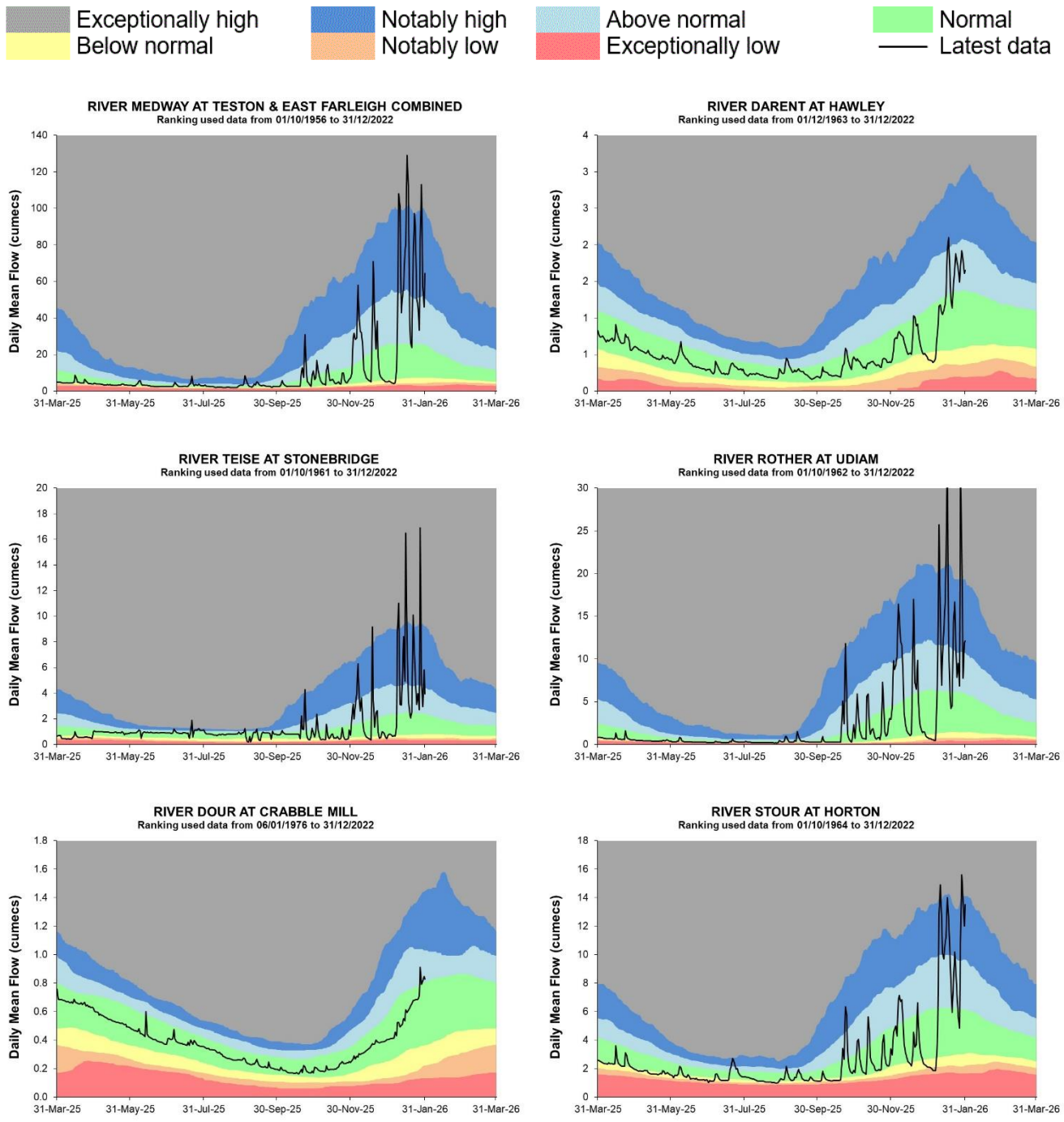


HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

EA effective rainfall data (Source EA Soil Moisture Model, 2026).

7.2 KSL River flow charts

Figure 7.2: 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. 2026 .

7.3 KSL Groundwater levels

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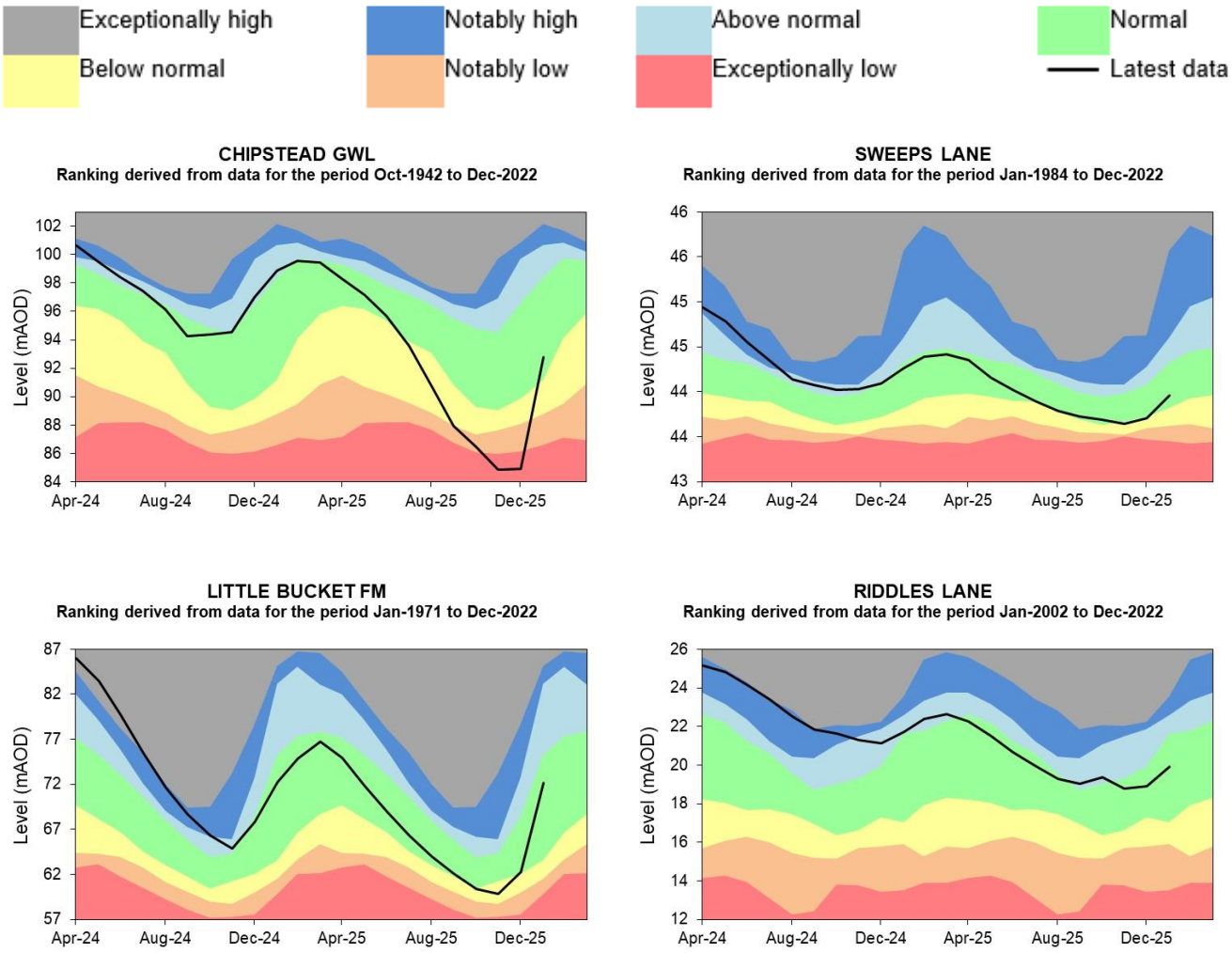

Source: Environment Agency. 2026

7.4 KSL Reservoir stocks

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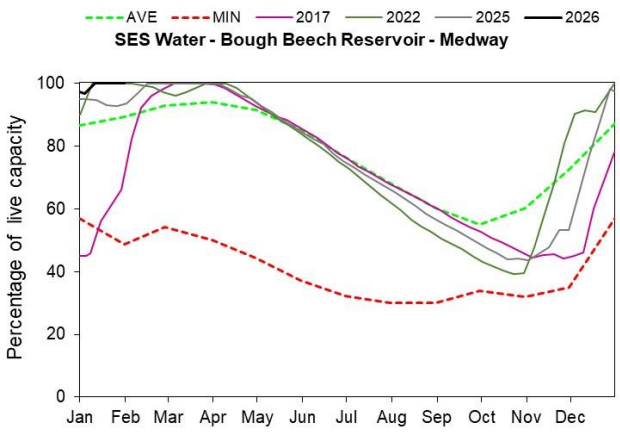

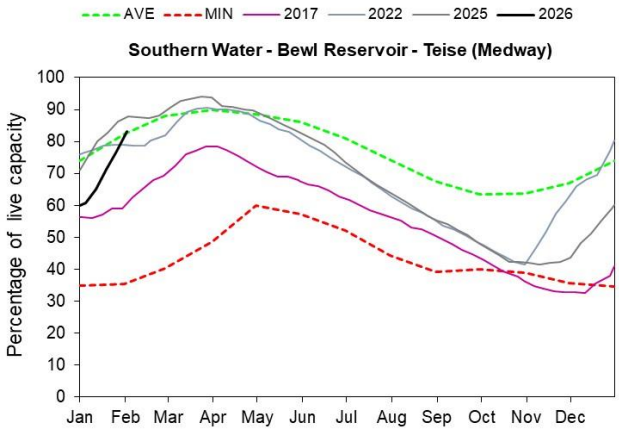

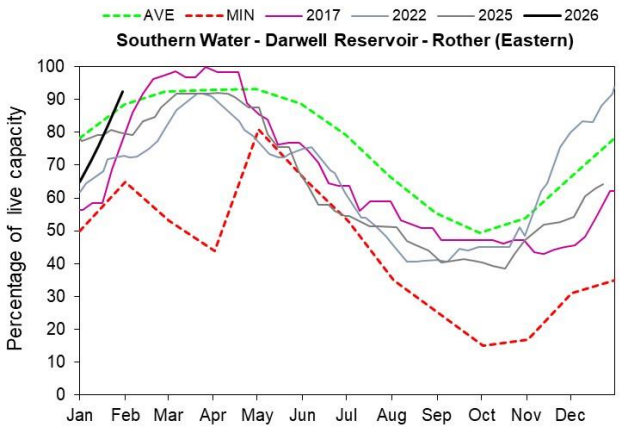

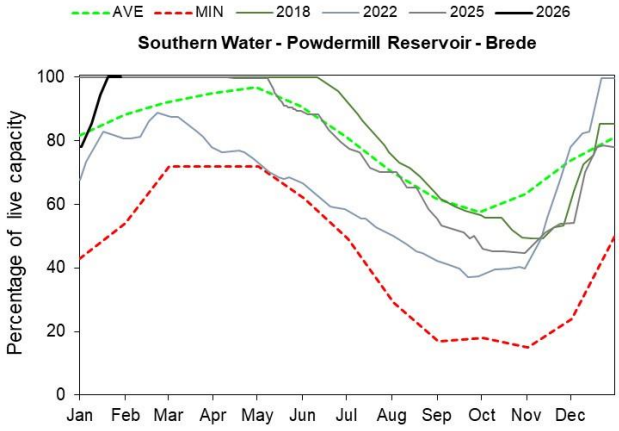

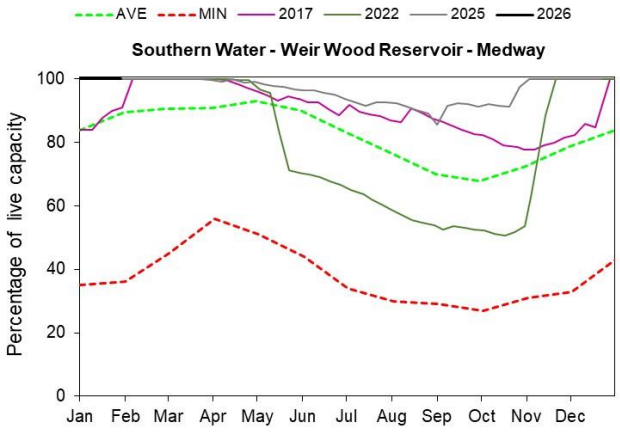

8 Glossary

8.1 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).

8.2 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.

9 Appendices

9.1 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
Cotswold West	156	Notably High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Cotswold East	166	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Berkshire Downs	185	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Chilterns West	179	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Above normal	Normal
Chilterns East Colne	162	Notably High	Notably high	Normal	Below normal
North Downs - Hampshire	191	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Above normal	Normal
North Downs - South London	194	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Above normal	Normal
Upper Thames	152	Notably High	Exceptionally high	Above normal	Normal
Upper Cherwell	174	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Above normal	Normal
Thame	165	Notably High	Exceptionally high	Above normal	Normal
Loddon	201	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Above normal	Normal
Lower Wey	214	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Above normal	Normal
Upper Mole	202	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
Lower Lee	162	Notably High	Above normal	Normal	Below normal
North London	171	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Normal	Below normal
South London	178	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Normal	Below normal
Roding	161	Notably High	Above normal	Normal	Below normal

Ock	172	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Above normal	Normal
Enborne	192	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Above normal	Normal
Cut	199	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Normal	Below normal
Lee Chalk	155	Notably High	Notably high	Normal	Below normal
River Test	203	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
East Hampshire Chalk	202	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
West Sussex Chalk	193	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
East Sussex Chalk	184	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Above normal	Normal
Sw Isle Of Wight	195	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	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
Western Rother Greensand	196	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
Hampshire Tertiaries	207	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
Lymington River Avon Water And O	200	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Above normal
Sussex Coast	176	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Above normal	Normal
River Arun	203	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
River Adur	216	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
River Ouse	186	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
Cuckmere River	168	Exceptionally High	Above normal	Above normal	Normal

Pevensey Levels	169	Notably High	Above normal	Above 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

9.2 River flows table

Site name	River	Catchment	Jan 2026 band	Dec 2025 band
Colney Street_hansteads		Colne	Above normal	Above normal
Feildes Weir (nat)	Lee (middle)	Lee	Normal	Normal
Panshanger	Mimram	Lee	Normal	Above normal
Crabble Mill Gs	Dour	Little Stour	Normal	Normal
Hawley Gs	Darent	Darent and Cray	Normal	Normal
Horton Gs	Great Stour	Stour Kent	Notably high	Normal
Stonebridge Gs	Teise	Teise	Notably high	Normal
Teston Farleigh Combined	Medway100	Medway Estuary	Exceptionally high	Normal
Udiam Gs	Rother	Rother Kent Lower	Notably high	Normal
Alfoldean Gs	Arun	Arun	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Allbrook Gs And Highbridge	Itchen (so)	Itchen	Above normal	Normal
Broadlands	Test	Test Lower	Above normal	Normal
Brockenhurst Gs	Lymington	New Forest	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Goldbridge Gs	Ouse (so)	Ouse Sussex	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Iping Mill Gs	Rother	West Rother	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Farmoor (naturalised)	River Thames	Thames	Normal	Notably high
Kingston (naturalised)	River Thames	Thames North Bank	Normal	Above normal
Marlborough	River Kennet	Kennet	Normal	Normal
Sheepbridge	River Loddon	Loddon	Notably high	Normal
Tilford	River Wey	Wey Addleston Bourne	Exceptionally high	Above normal

9.3 Groundwater table

Site name	Aquifer	End of Jan 2026 band	End of Dec 2025 band
Ashley Green Stw	Mid-chilterns Chalk	Normal	Normal
Lilley Bottom	Upper Lee Chalk	Normal	Normal
Little Bucket Fm	East Kent Chalk - Stour	Normal	Normal
Chipstead Gwl	Epsom North Downs Chalk	Normal	Exceptionally low
Riddles Lane	North Kent Swale Chalk	Normal	Normal
Sweeps Lane Gwl	West Kent Chalk	Normal	Below normal
Houndean Bottom Gwl	Brighton Chalk Block	Notably high	Normal
Chilgrove House Gwl	Chichester-worthing-portsdown Chalk	Exceptionally high	Normal
Carisbrooke Castle	Isle Of Wight Central Downs Chalk	Notably high	Normal
West Meon Hut Gwl	River Itchen Chalk	Above normal	Normal
Clanville Gate Gwl	River Test Chalk	Normal	Normal
Lopcombe Corner Gwl	River Test Chalk	Above normal	Normal
Long Sutton	Basingstoke Chalk	Normal	Normal
Rockley Obh	Berkshire Downs Chalk	Above normal	Normal
Jackaments Bottom Obh	Burford Oolitic Limestone (inferior)	Normal	Above normal
Stonor Estate	South-west Chilterns Chalk	Normal	Normal

9.4 South-east England areal units for reference