Monthly water situation report: Wessex Area

1 Summary - January 2026

January 2026 was the second wettest on record for Wessex. An average of 190mm rain fell across Wessex, 200% of the long term average (LTA). After an initial dry period, rain occurred throughout January, with a particularly wet period during Storm Chandra when 33% of the month's rain fell in two days. Monthly mean river flows responded, and are exceptionally high, notably high or above normal across the majority of Wessex. The River Wylye and Upper Hampshire Avon reported normal mean flows due to slower responding groundwater recharge from the Chalk aquifer. The majority of groundwater sites monitoring the Chalk aquifer are recording exceptionally high levels, largely in response to rainfall received during Storm Chandra. Groundwater sites in the north and west of Wessex are recording normal to notably high levels. Soil moisture deficit (SMD) decreased in January to between 0 to 10mm at the end of the month and now meet the LTA for this time of year. Reservoir levels in Wessex have largely increased throughout January. At the end of the month, reservoir levels for Wessex Water were approximately 100% capacity and combined levels for Bristol Water were 99% capacity. Reservoir levels for Wessex Water and Bristol Water are in line with the LTA for this time of year.

1.1 Rainfall

January was the second wettest on record, an average of 190mm rain fell across Wessex (200% of the LTA). After an initial dry period, rain occurred regularly throughout January with the wettest period between 26 and 27 January due to Storm Chandra, when 33% of the month's rain fell. The highest relative rainfall for January was recorded in the River Piddle which received 272mm rainfall (230% of the LTA). The lowest relative rainfall was recorded in Little Avon which received 119mm rainfall (141% of the LTA). The Evershot rain gauge in the Dorset Frome catchment recorded 293mm of rain during January (238% of the LTA at the gauge).

Over the past 3 months, all hydrological areas in Wessex have received notably high or exceptionally high rainfall. Over the past 6 months, the majority of areas have received notably high or exceptionally high rainfall, except for the Axe, Brue and West Somerset Streams which received above normal rainfall. Over the past 12 months, most hydrological areas received normal rainfall, except for West Dorset Streams, River Frome, River Piddle and the Middle Dorset Stour.

1.2 Soil moisture

Soil moisture deficit (SMD) decreased in January in response to recent rainfall. At the end of January all hydrological areas in Wessex recorded an SMD between 0 to10mm. SMD was within 5mm of the LTA across all areas in Wessex.

1.3 River flows

In January, river flows in Wessex responded to the rainfall, reporting exceptionally high, notably high or above across the majority of Wessex. The sites that reported normal monthly mean flows were the River Wylye and Upper Hampshire Avon. This is due to slower responding groundwater levels in the Chalk aquifer. The Tone at Bishops Hull and Dorset Stour at Hammoon both recorded their highest monthly mean flows on record for January. Daily mean flows peaked in the majority of Wessex on 27 January in response to the rain from Storm Chandra, however Great Somerford and Frenchay recorded lower mean flows as less rainfall was recorded in north Wessex for this period.

1.4 Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels increased in response to heavy rainfall across the majority of Wessex. At the end of January, groundwater sites in Wessex were reported between exceptionally high and normal levels. The majority of groundwater sites monitoring the Chalk aquifer reported exceptionally high levels at the end of January and four of these sites recorded their highest levels at the end of January since records began. These sites were Chitterne Down, Oakley Industrial Estate, Delcombe and Woodyates. In the west of Wessex, the majority of sites reported between notably high and above normal. In the east, levels at Tilshead (monitoring the Chalk) increased quickly in January but are currently at normal as the site was recovering slowly from low levels last year. Groundwater levels at Allington (monitoring the Great Oolite) have increased throughout January but remain normal as less rainfall was received in north Wessex during Storm Chandra.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

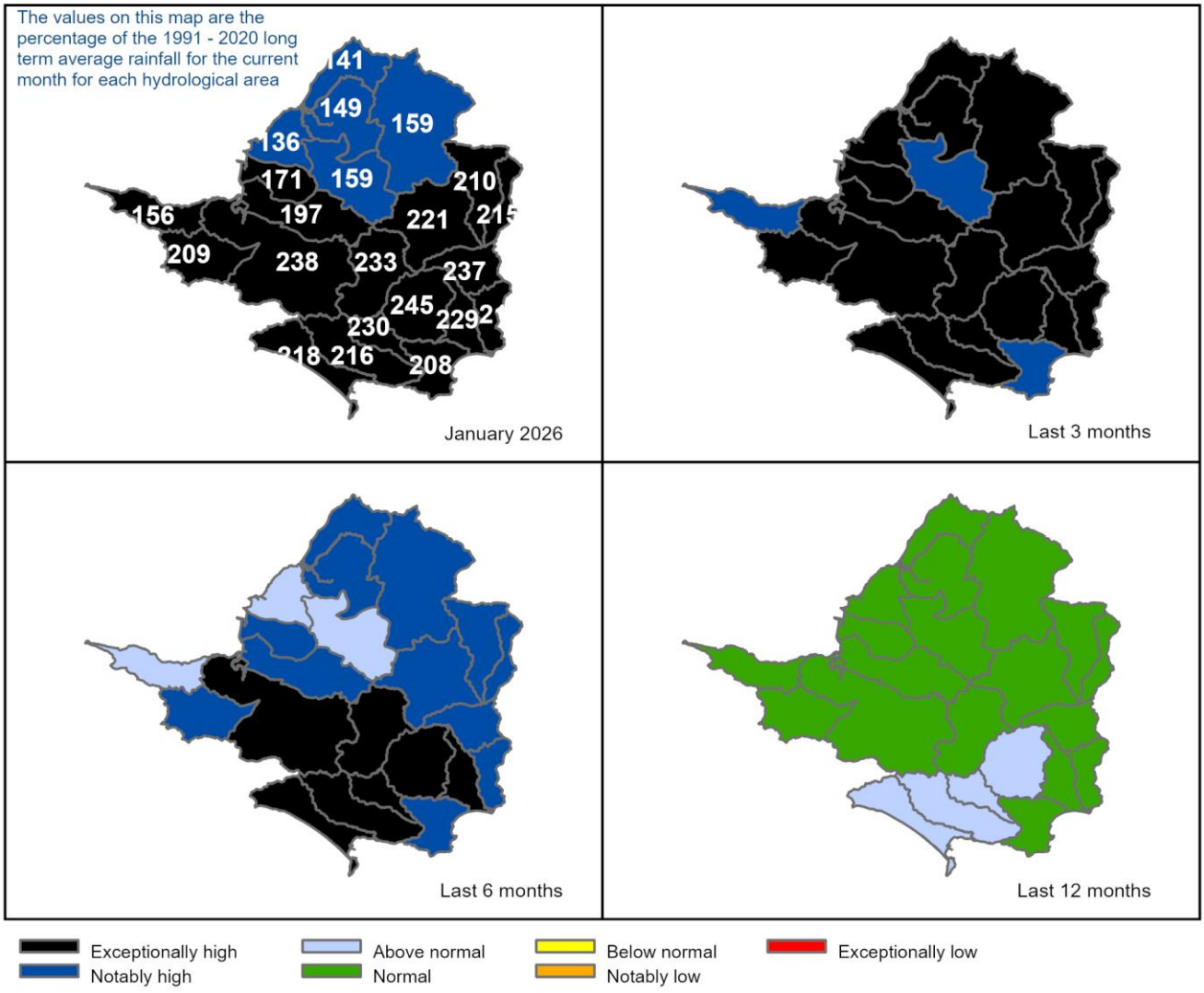
Both Wessex Water and Bristol Water reservoir levels remain at or near capacity in January. The combined levels at the end of the month for Wessex Water were approximately 100% capacity, while for Bristol Water, combined levels were approximately 99% capacity. For Bristol and Wessex Water, these levels are typical for this time of year.

Author: Wessex Hydrology, hydrology.wessex@environment-agency.gov.uk

2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

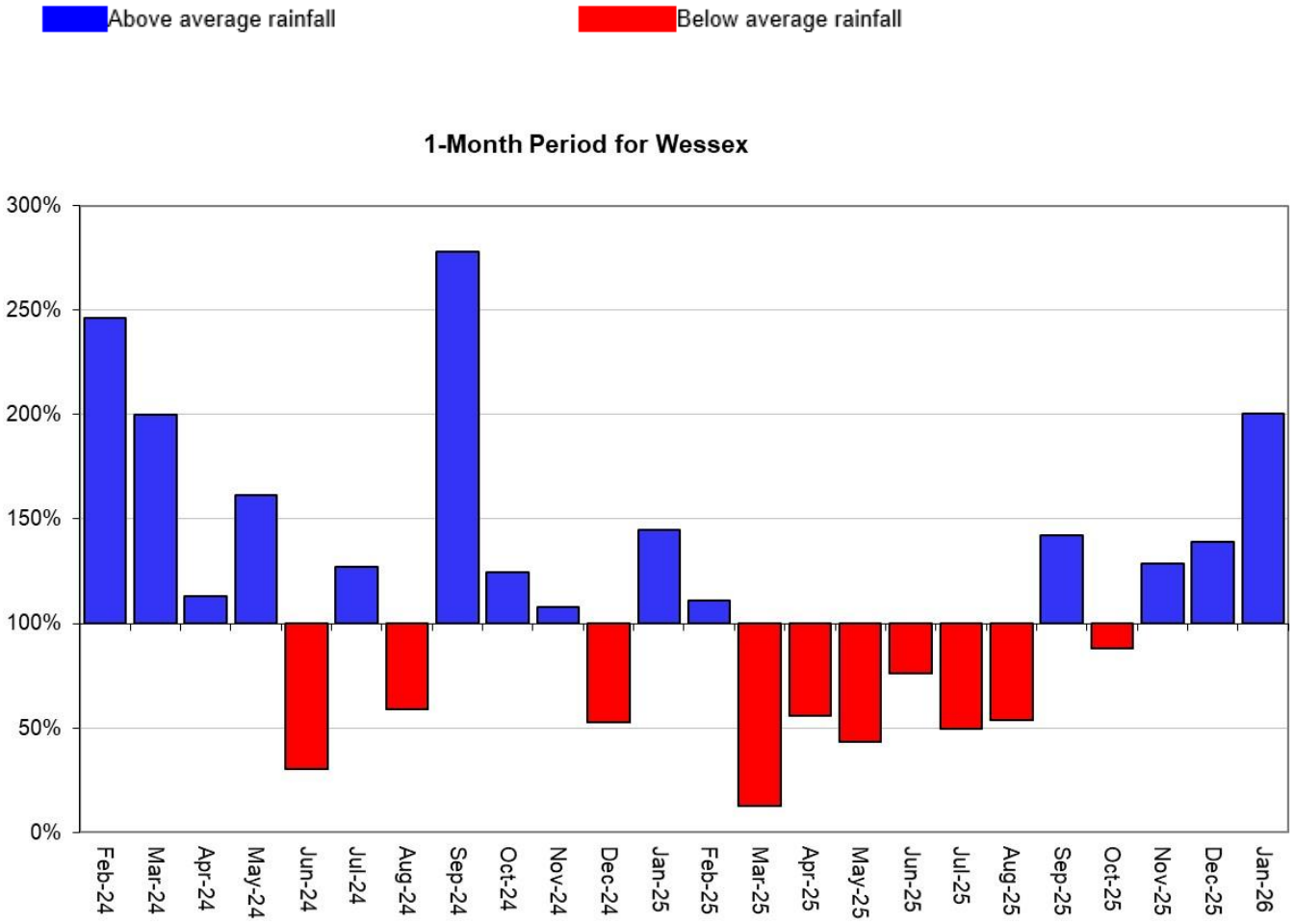
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas for the current month (up to 31 January 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic totals between 1991 and 2020. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



Rainfall data for January 2025 onwards, 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 January 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from registered rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 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 each region and for England.

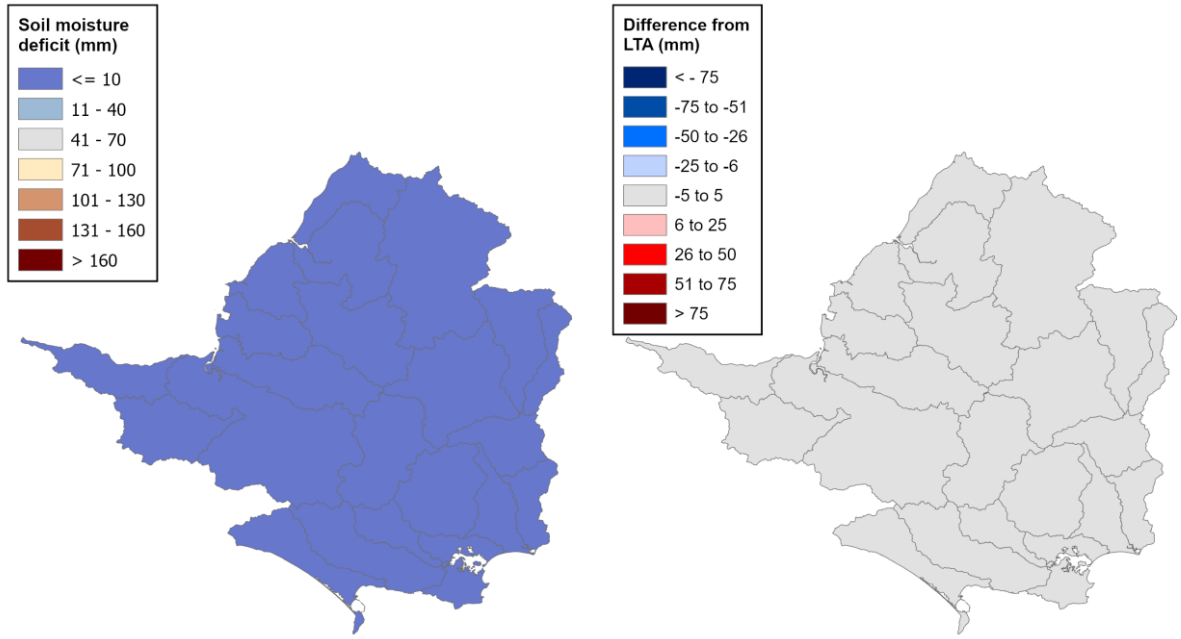


Rainfall data for January 2025 onwards, extracted from Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. (Source: Environment Agency. Crown Copyright, 100024198, 2026). Rainfall data prior to January 2025, extracted from Met Office HadUK 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from registered rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

3 Soil moisture deficit

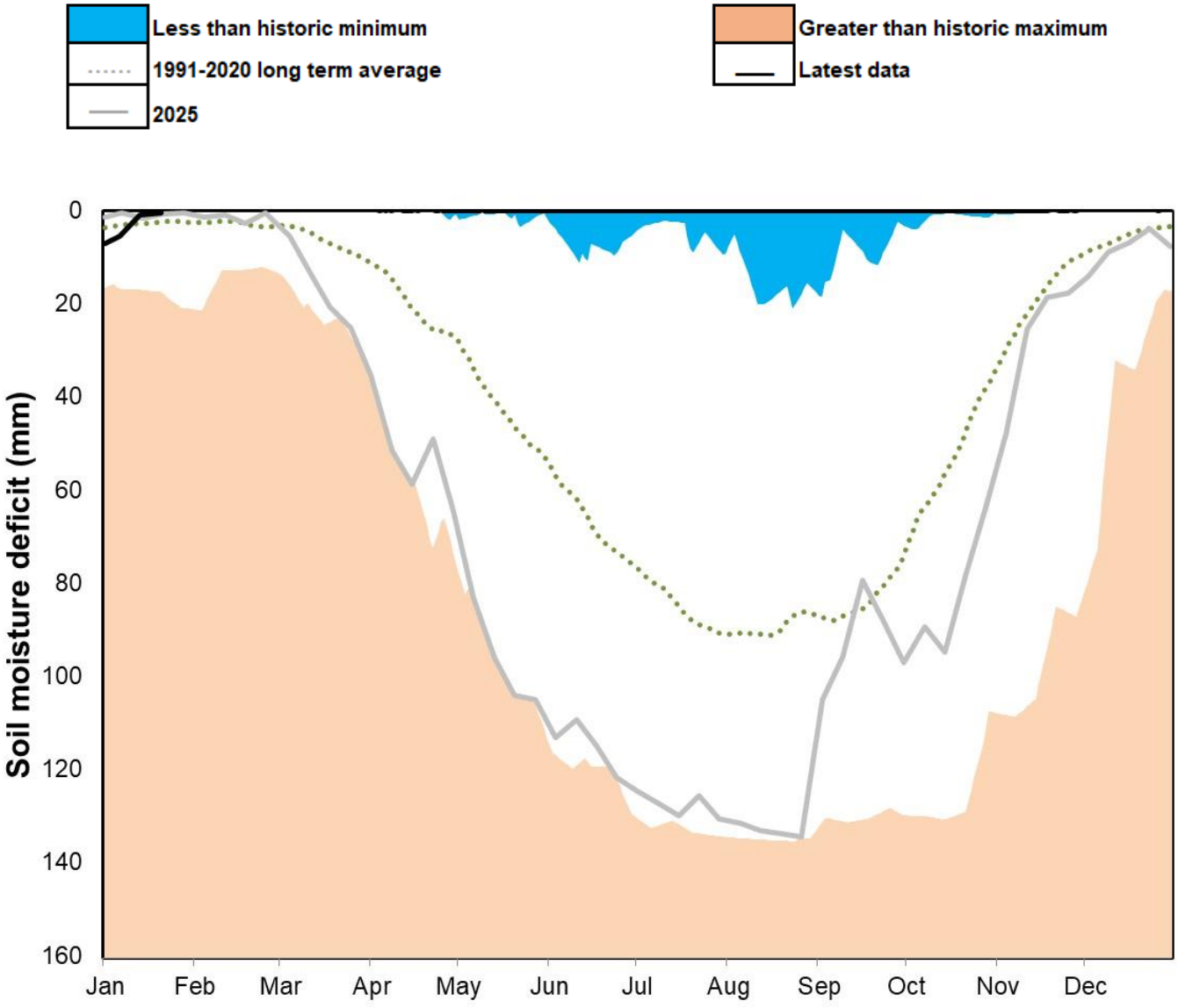
3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficits for weeks ending 31 January 2026. Shows the difference (mm) of the actual soil moisture deficit from the 1991 to 2020 long term average soil moisture deficits. MORECS data for real land use.



3.2 Soil moisture deficit charts

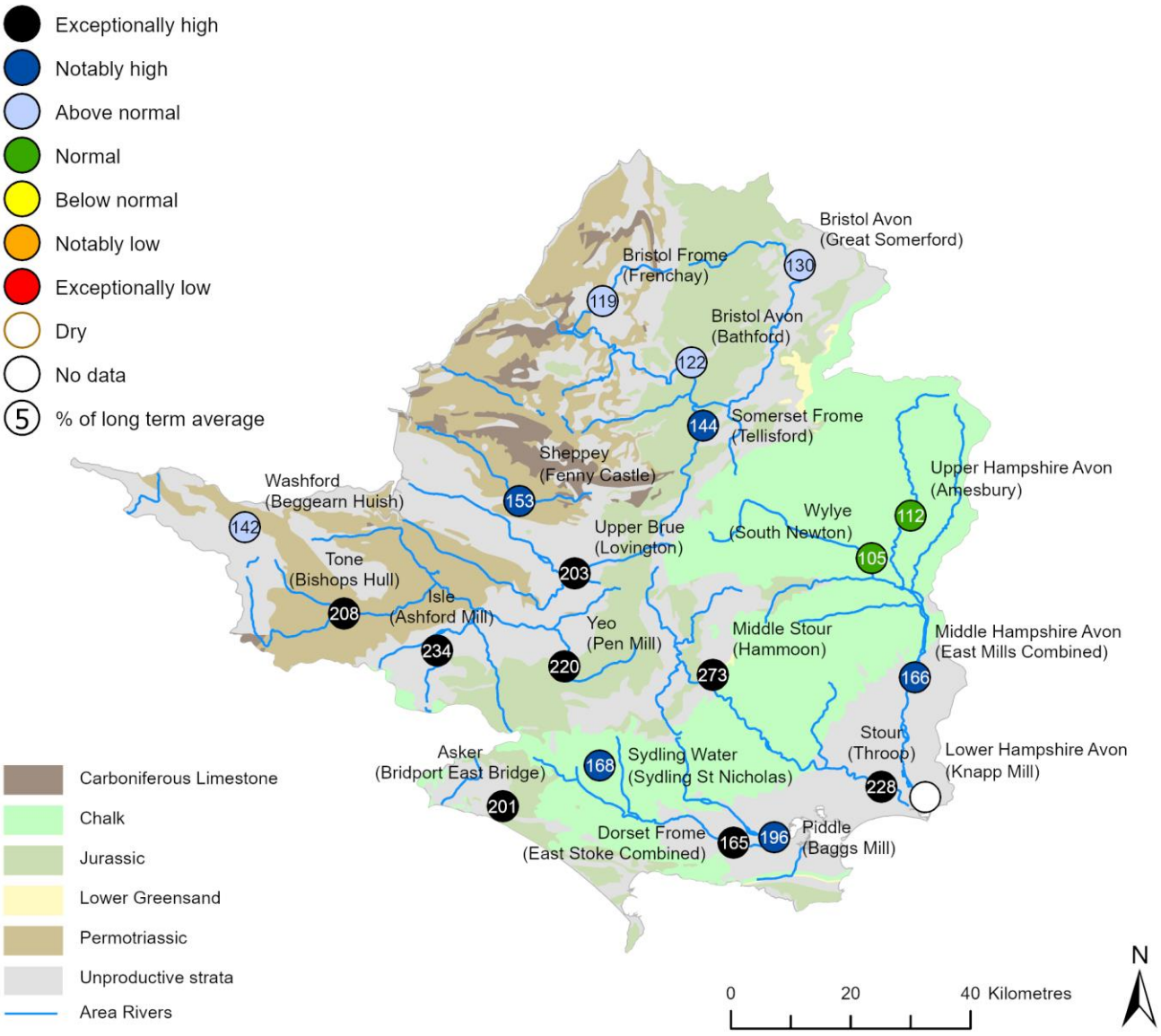
Figure 3.2: Latest soil moisture deficit compared to previous year, maximum, minimum, and 1991 to 2020 long term average. Weekly MORECS data for real land use.



4 River flows

4.1 River flows map

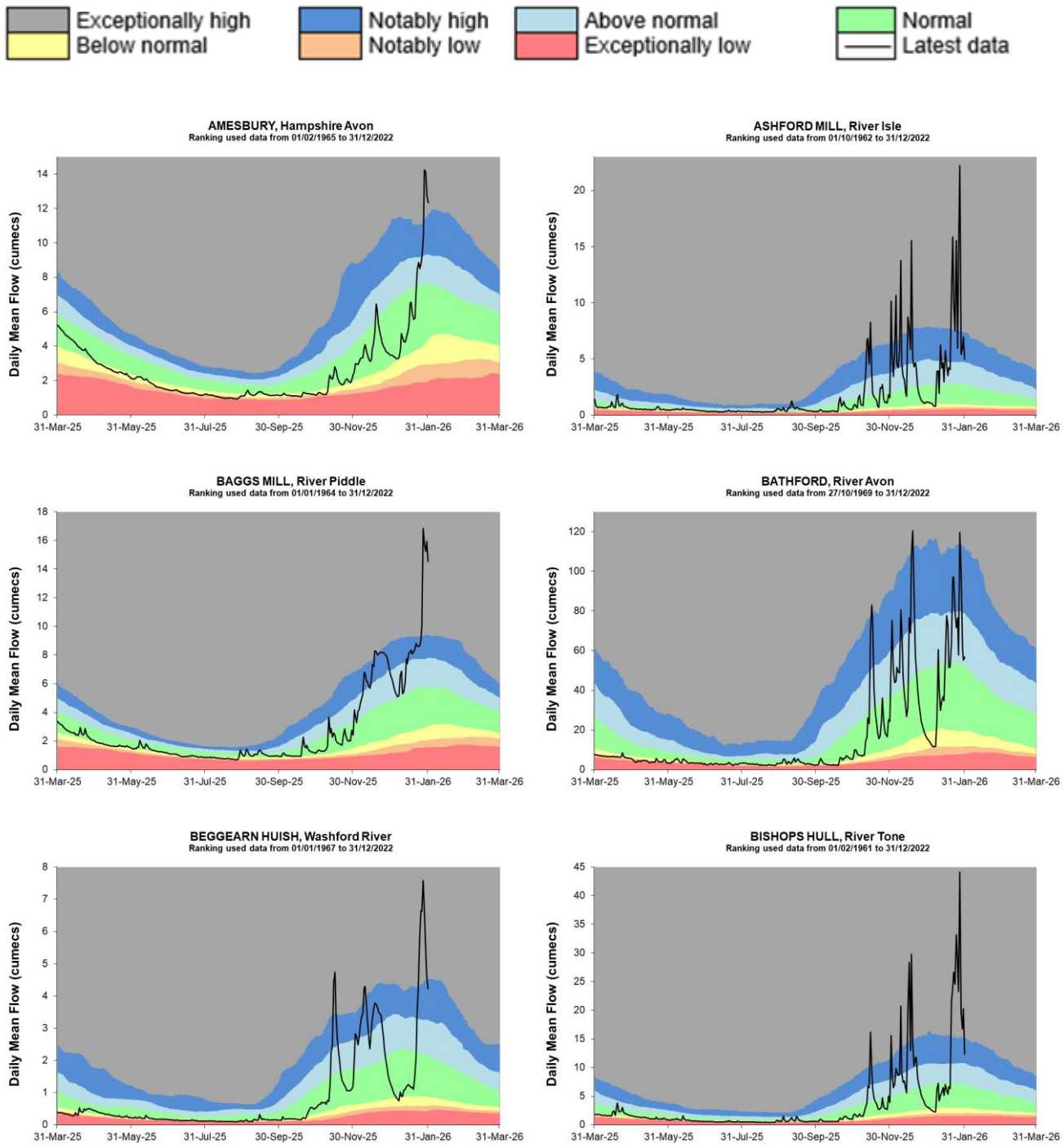
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for January 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic January monthly means. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



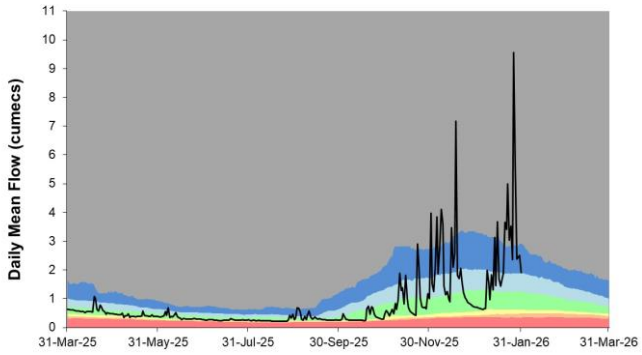
(Source: Environment Agency). Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026. The Stour at Throop should be treated with caution and the Hampshire Avon at Knapp Mill is omitted due to data issues.

4.2 River flow charts

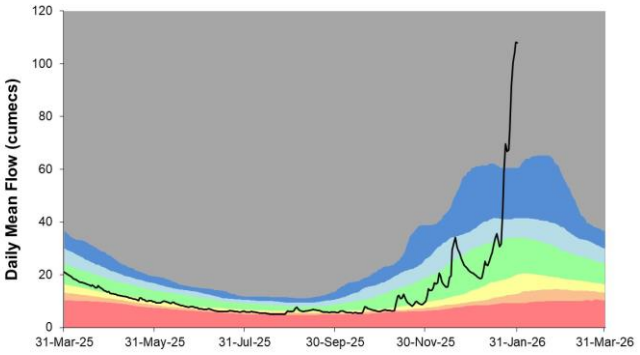
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows.



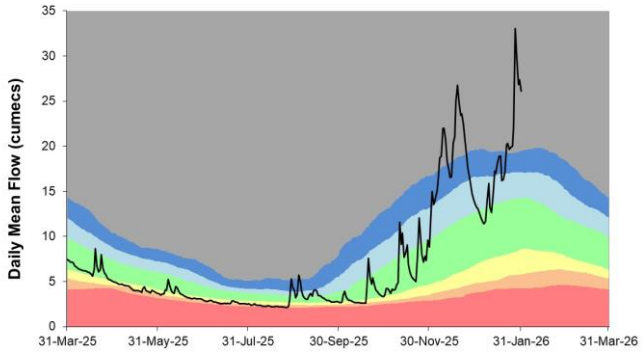
BRIDPORT EAST BRIDGE, River Asker
Ranking used data from 01/03/1996 to 31/12/2022



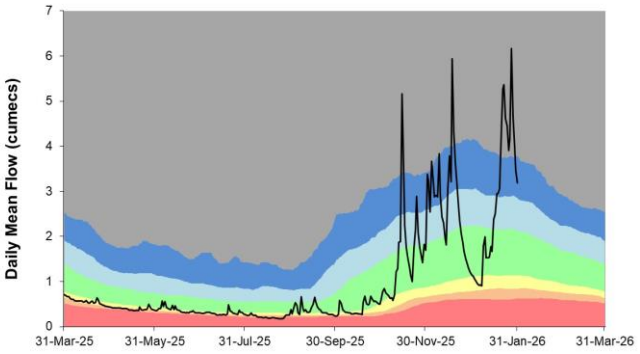
EAST MILLS COMBINED, Hampshire Avon
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022



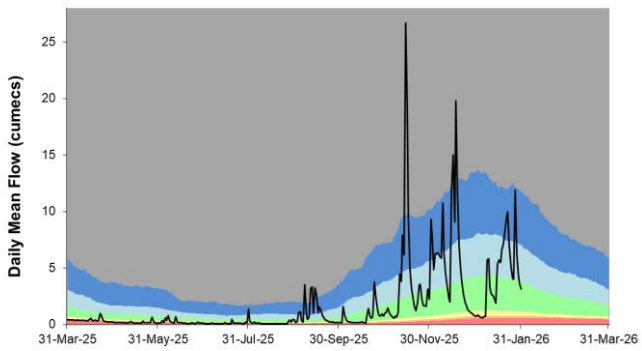
EAST STOKE COMBINED, Dorset Frome
Ranking used data from 01/10/1965 to 31/12/2022



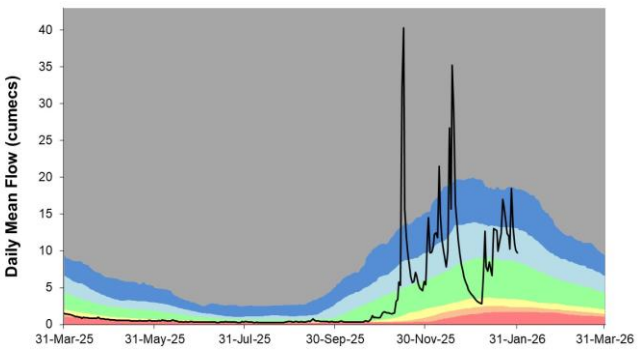
FENNY CASTLE , River Sheppey
Ranking used data from 01/01/1964 to 31/12/2022



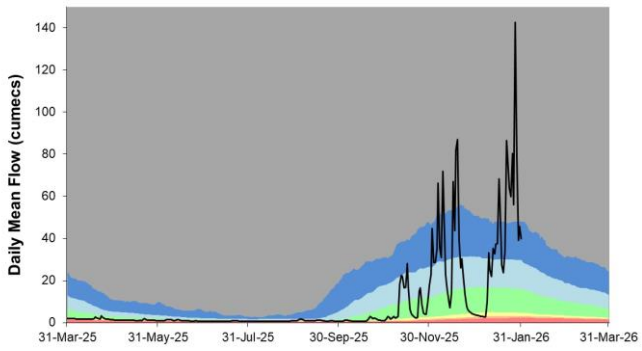
FRENCHAY, Bristol Frome
Ranking used data from 01/09/1961 to 31/12/2022



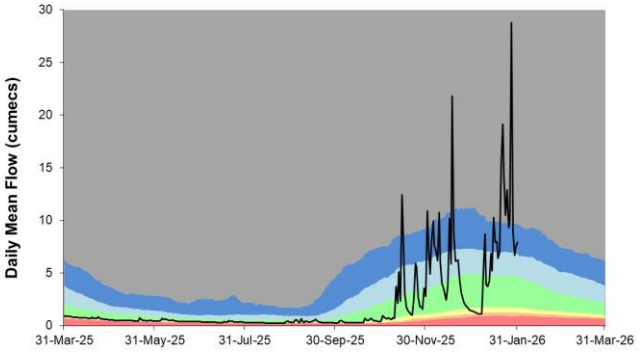
GREAT SOMERFORD, River Avon
Ranking used data from 16/12/1963 to 31/12/2022

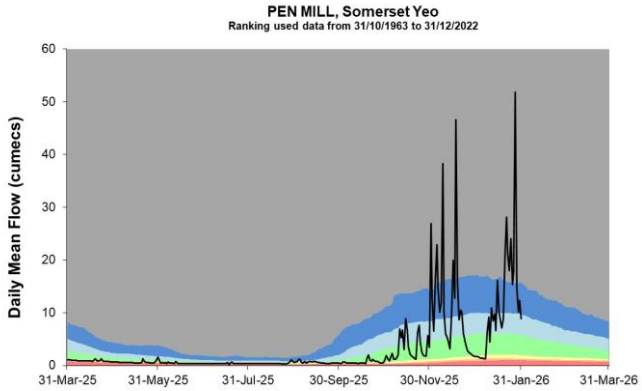


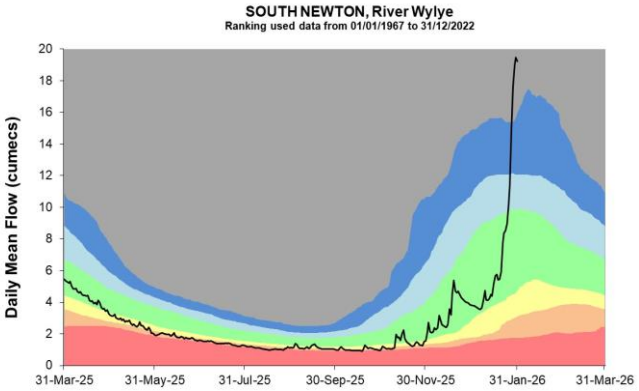
HAMMOON, River Stour
Ranking used data from 01/03/1968 to 31/12/2022

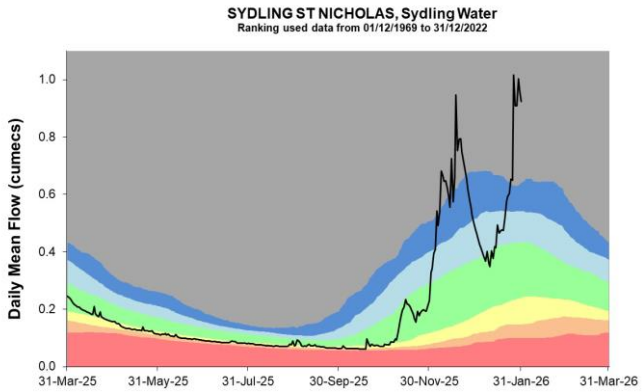


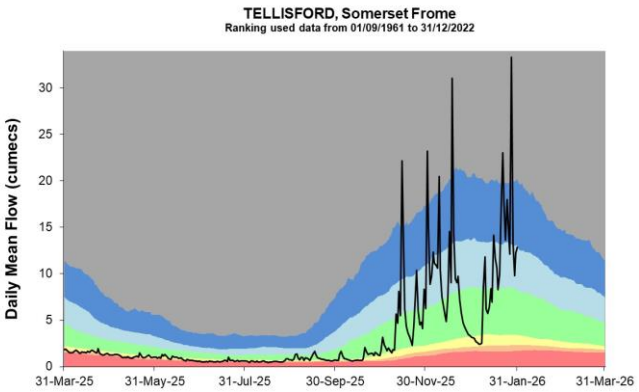
LOVINGTON, River Brue
Ranking used data from 01/10/1964 to 31/12/2022

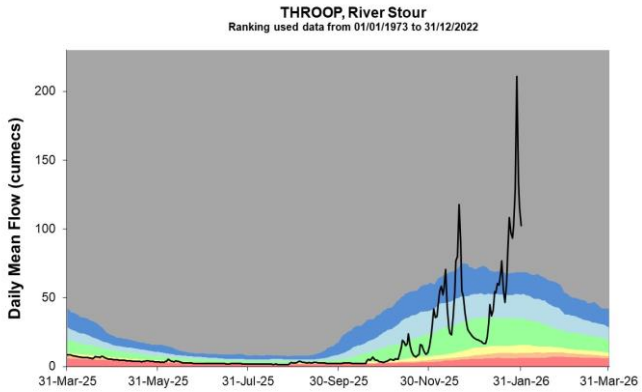










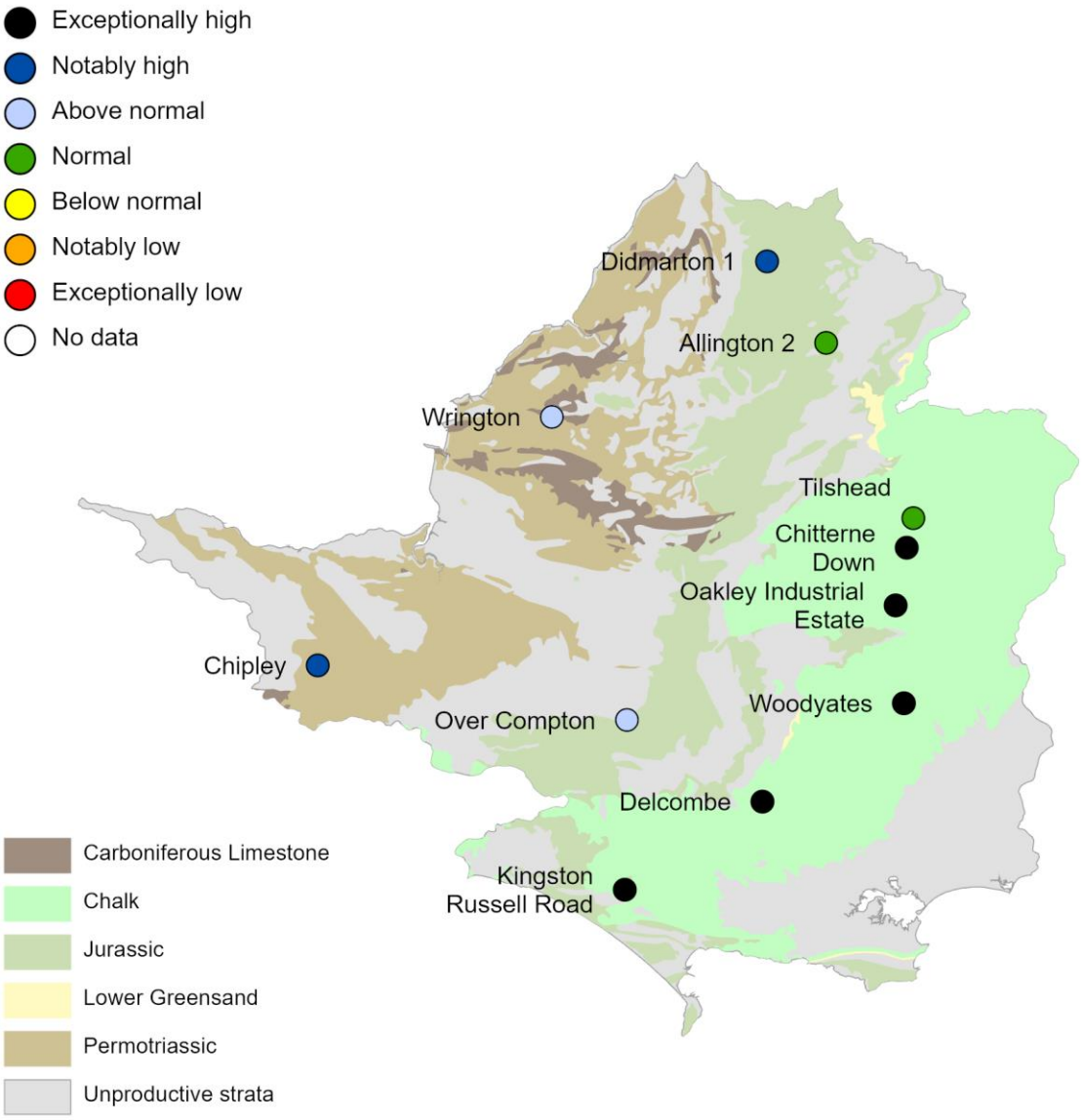


Source: Environment Agency, 2026. The Stour at Throop should be treated with caution and the Hampshire Avon at Knapp Mill is omitted due to data issues.

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

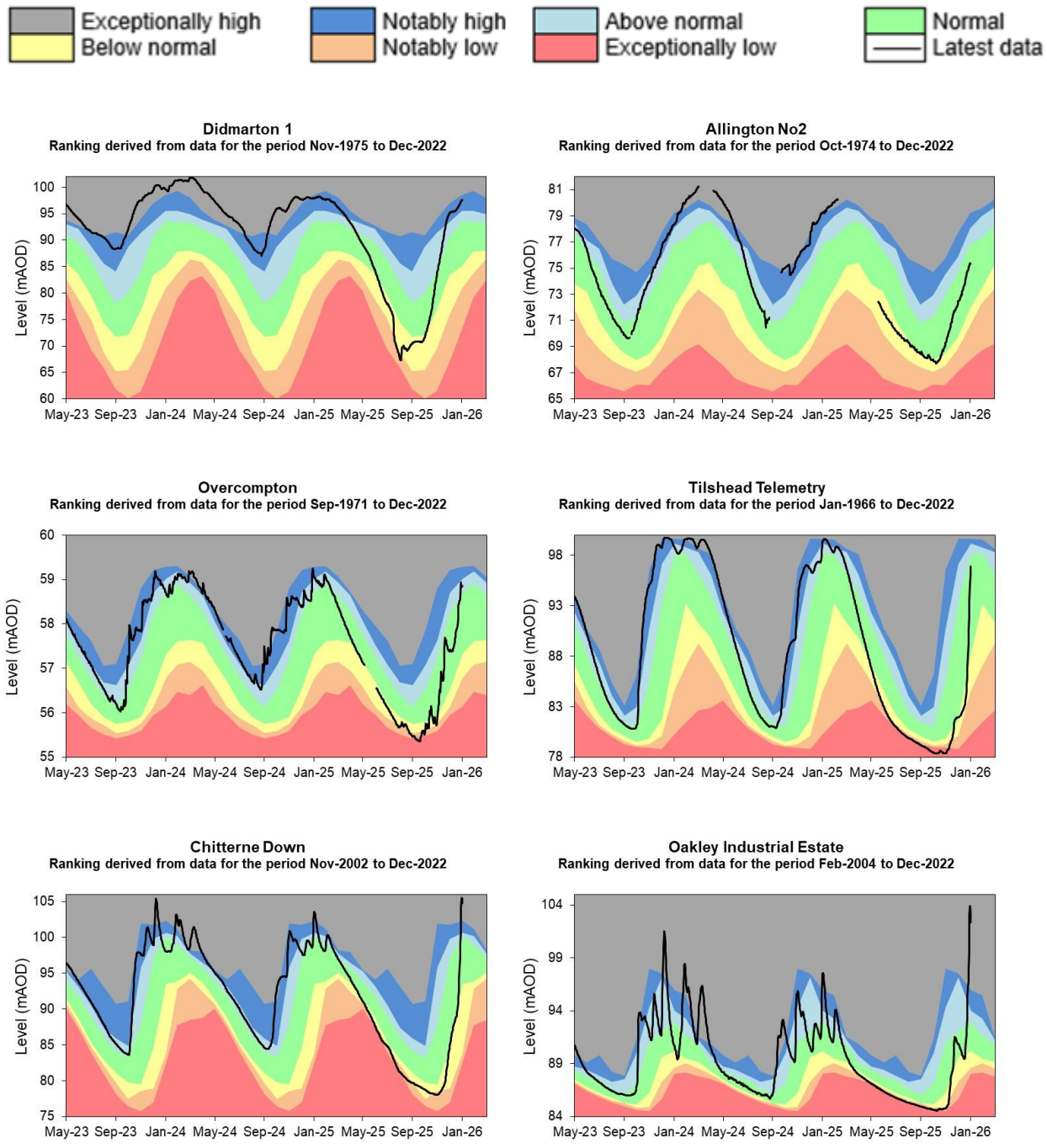
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of January 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic January levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

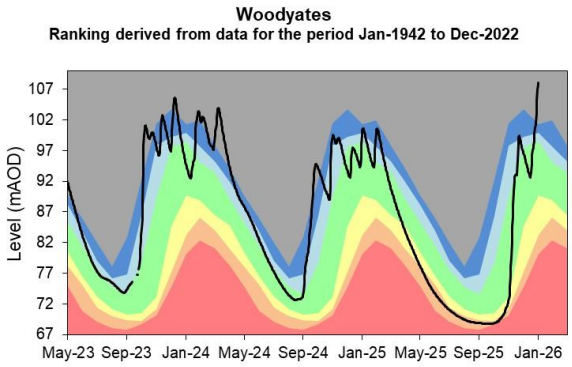


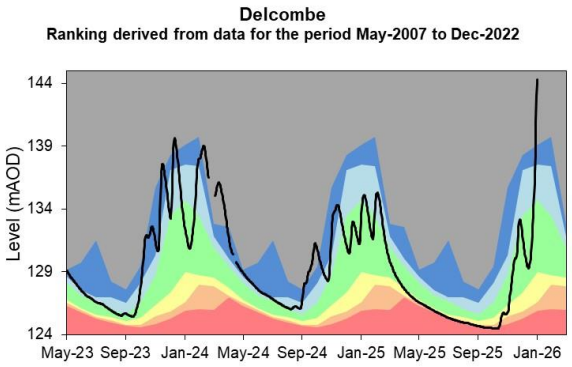
(Source: Environment Agency). Geological map reproduced with kind permission from UK Groundwater Forum, BGS copyright NERC. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, AC0000807064, 2026.

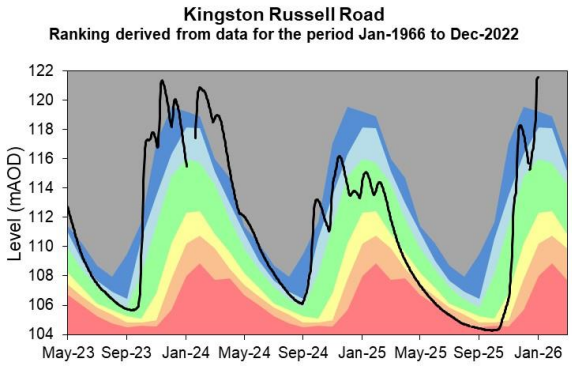
5.2 Groundwater level charts

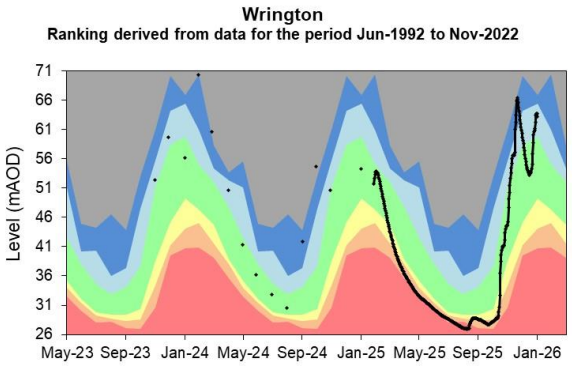
Figure 5.2: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 34 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels.

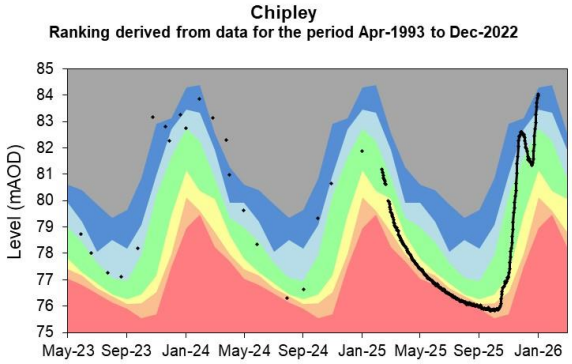








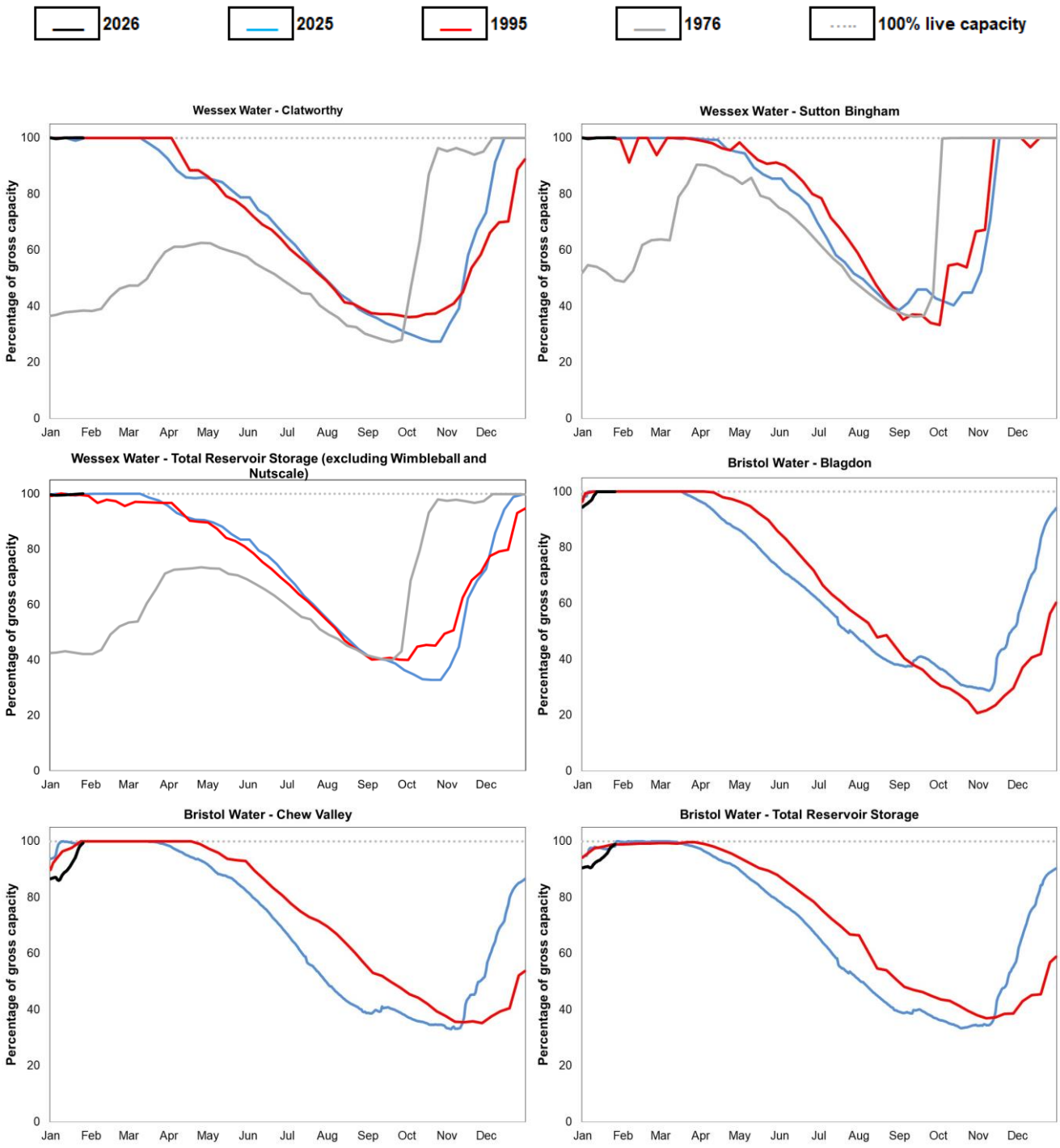




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

6 Reservoir stocks

Figure 6.1: End of month regional reservoir stocks compared to the previous year, and if available, also a comparison to reservoir stocks in 1995 and 1976.



(Source: Wessex Water and Bristol Water).

7 Flood alerts and warnings

7.1 Flood alerts

Table 1: Fluvial, coastal and groundwater flood alerts issued during January

Area	Number of fluvial flood alerts in January	Number of coastal flood alerts in January	Number of groundwater flood alerts in January
North Wessex	25	1	0
South Wessex	37	20	3

7.2 Flood warnings

Table 2: Fluvial, coastal and groundwater flood warnings issued during January

Area	Number of fluvial flood warnings in January	Number of coastal flood warnings in January	Number of groundwater flood warnings in January
North Wessex	22	0	0
South Wessex	41	13	32

7.3 Severe flood warnings

Table 3: Fluvial, coastal and groundwater severe flood warnings issued during January

Area	Number of fluvial severe flood warnings in January	Number of coastal severe flood warnings in January	Number of groundwater severe flood warnings in January
North Wessex	0	0	0
South Wessex	2	0	0

8 Stream support

8.1 Sites providing stream support

Table 4: End of January status for stream support sites.

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of January status
Bristol Avon	Chalfield Brook	South Wraxall	Great Chalfield (Wessex Water)	Off
Bristol Avon	Chalfield Brook	Little Chalfield	Great Chalfield (Wessex Water)	Off
Bristol Avon	Charlton Stream	Charlton	Crabb Mill	Off
Bristol Avon	Gauze Brooke	Hullavington	Rodbourne	Off
Bristol Avon	Horscombe Stream	Tucking Mill	No Gauge	Off
Bristol Avon	Luckington Brook	Luckington	Fossway	Off
Bristol Avon	Rodbourne Brook	Lower Stanton St. Quinton	Startley	Off
Bristol Avon	Semington Brook	Easterton	No Gauge	Off
Bristol Avon	Sherston Avon	Stanbridge	Fossway	Off
Bristol Avon	Tetbury Avon	Tetbury	Brokenborough	Off
Dorset Frome	South Winterbourne	Winterbourne Abbas	Winterbourne Steepleton	Off

Catchment	River	Stream support site	Gauging station	End of January status
Dorset Frome	Watergates Stream	Watergates	No Gauge	Off
Piddle	Devil's Brook	Dewlish	Dewlish Woodsdown Cross	Off
Piddle	Piddle	Alton Mill	South House & Little Puddle	Off
Piddle	Piddle	Morningwell	South House & Little Puddle	Off
Piddle	Piddle	Briantspuddle	Briantspuddle	Off
Dorset Stour	Crichel Stream	Long Crichel	No Gauge	Off
Dorset Stour	Gussage Stream	Gussage All Saints	Bowerswain	Off
Dorset Stour	Allen	Wyke Down	All Hallows	Off
Dorset Stour	Pimperne Stream	Pimperne	No Gauge	Off
Hampshire Avon	Bourne	Porton	Salisbury Bourne	On
Hampshire Avon	Chitterne Brook	Codford Road	Codford	Off
Hampshire Avon	Wylye	Brixton Deverill	Brixton Deverill & Heytesbury	Off
Hampshire Avon	Wylye	Kingston Deverill	Brixton Deverill & Heytesbury	Off

9 Abstraction licences subject to restrict or cease

9.1 Abstraction licences subject to restrict or cease

Table 5: Number of licences at restrict or cease at the end of January

Catchment	Number of licences at restrict at the end of January	Number of licences at cease at the end of January
Bristol Avon	0	0
Dorset	0	0
Hampshire Avon	0	0
Somerset	0	0

10 Glossary

10.1 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).

10.2 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.

10.3 Rainfall Areas Map

Figure 6.2 Rainfall catchments in Wessex.

11 Appendices

11.1 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
Axe	171	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Brue	197	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Little Avon	141	Notably High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Lower Bristol Avon And Bristol Frome	149	Notably High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Lower Dorset Stour And River Crane	229	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Normal
Lower Hampshire Avon	211	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Mendips And River Chew	160	Notably High	Notably high	Above normal	Normal
Middle And Upper Bristol Avon	159	Notably High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal

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
Middle Dorset Stour	245	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Middle Hampshire Avon	237	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Parrett	238	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Normal
Poole Harbour And Purbeck	208	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Notably high	Normal
River Bourne	215	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
River Frome	216	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Above normal
River Piddle	230	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Above normal
Tone	210	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Upper Dorset Stour	233	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Normal
Upper Hampshire Avon	210	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal

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
West Dorset Streams	218	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high	Above normal
West Somerset Streams	156	Exceptionally High	Notably high	Above normal	Normal
Wylye And Nadder	221	Exceptionally High	Exceptionally high	Notably high	Normal
Yeo And Kenn	136	Notably High	Exceptionally high	Above normal	Normal

11.2 River flows table

Site name	River	Catchment	Jan 2026 band	Dec 2025 band
Amesbury	Upper Hampshire Avon	Hampshire Avon	Normal	Normal
Ashford Mill	Isle	Parrett	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
Baggs Mill	Piddle	Piddle	Notably high	Notably high
Bathford	Bristol Avon	Bristol Avon	Above normal	Normal
Beggearn Huish	Washford	Washford River	Above normal	Notably high
Bishops Hull	Tone	Tone	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Bridport East Bridge	Asker	Asker	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Fenny Castle	Sheppey	Brue	Notably high	Notably high
East Mills Combined	Middle Hampshire Avon	Hampshire Avon	Notably high	Normal
East Stoke Combined	Dorset Frome	Dorset Frome	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
Frenchay	Bristol Frome	Bristol Frome	Above normal	Notably high
Great Somerford	Bristol Avon	Bristol Avon	Above normal	Notably high

Site name	River	Catchment	Jan 2026 band	Dec 2025 band
Hammoon	Middle Stour	Dorset Stour	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
Knapp Mill	Lower Hampshire Avon	Hampshire Avon	Data unavailable	Data unavailable
Lovington	Upper Brue	Brue	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Pen Mill	Yeo	Parrett	Exceptionally high	Exceptionally high
South Newton	River Wylye	Hampshire Avon	Normal	Normal
Sydling St Nicholas	Sydling Water	Dorset Frome	Notably high	Exceptionally high
Tellisford	Somerset Frome	Bristol Avon	Notably high	Above normal
Throop	Lower Stour	Dorset Stour	Exceptionally high	Notably high

11.3 Groundwater table

Site name	Aquifer	End of Jan 2026 band	End of Dec 2025 band
Allington No2	Upper Bristol Avon Great Oolite	Normal	Normal
Chitterne Down	Upper Hampshire Avon Chalk	Exceptionally high	Normal
Delcombe	Dorset Frome And Piddle Chalk/upper Greensand	Exceptionally high	Normal
Didmarton 1	Upper Bristol Avon Inferior Oolite	Notably high	Notably high
Kingston Russell Road	Dorset Frome Chalk	Exceptionally high	Notably high
Overcompton	Somerset Yeo Bridport Sand	Above normal	Normal
Tilshead	Upper Hampshire Avon Chalk	Normal	Normal
Woodyates	Dorset Stour Chalk	Exceptionally high	Normal
Oakley Industrial Estate	Upper Hampshire Avon Chalk	Exceptionally high	Normal
Chipley	Somerset Tone Otter Sandstone	Notably high	Above normal
Wrington	North Somerset Carboniferous Limestone	Above normal	Above normal