Monthly water situation report: East Anglia

1 Summary - April 2026

April 2026 was a very dry month across East Anglia, with rainfall ranging from 5% to 16% of the long term average for the month. Soil Moisture Deficit (SMD) has resultantly increased at a high rate, starting April at normal levels and ending the month within the notably low band. All river flow sites showed reduction of flows, the majority with below normal or notably low monthly average flows. Groundwater levels have started to decrease at almost all monitoring sites, but remain at normal or above normal levels for most. Only two groundwater sites have below normal levels for April. Public water supply reservoirs ended April with levels ranging from 86% to 95% of their full storage capacity. Both Grafham and Ardleigh reservoir stocks have fallen below their target curves.

1.1 Rainfall

Exceptionally low rainfall was received across all East Anglian catchments in April 2026. Rainfall totals ranged from 5% to 14% of the Long Term Average (LTA). The average area rainfall for East Anglia was 4.4mm. South Essex and CAM were the driest catchments, receiving 1.9mm and 2.4mm cumulative rainfall respectively. The Upper Bedford Ouse received the most rainfall with a cumulative 6.9mm. East Anglian rainfall totals over the past 3 months have been normal for all but North Norfolk, Northwest Norfolk and Wissey, and Little Ouse and Lark which were below normal.

1.2 Soil moisture deficit and recharge

The regional average SMD increased significantly during April, rising from a normal 20mm at the end of March to a notably High 66mm by the end of April. Most catchments had an SMD within the range of 41mm to 70mm by the end of April, but Central Area Fenland and South Essex both fell within the 71mm to 100mm range. All catchments had an SMD of 26mm to 50mm greater than the LTA for the time of year.

1.3 River flows

Month mean river flows ranged from 40% to 87% of the LTA in April 2026, with flows ranging from normal to notably low for the time of year. The Ely Ouse, Wissey, and Bure, Yare and Waveney in the east all fell within the notably low band. The Ely Ouse recorded the lowest flows at 40% with the high 87% LTA flow being Heacham in the north.

1.4 Groundwater levels

Groundwater levels have now started to fall at the majority of groundwater sites, with Bircham Newton being the only site to show a continued rise in groundwater levels. Levels fall within the normal ranges for April for most catchments. Only Bircham Newton and Breckland are at below normal levels having been unable to fully recover with this winter's recharge. Bury St Edmunds and Smeetham Hall conversely remain above normal for the time of year.

1.5 Reservoir stocks

Public water supply reservoir stocks for East Anglia ranged from 86% to 95% of their full storage capacity. Alton, Abberton and Hanningfield are all currently above their target curve, and both Grafham and Ardleigh are below.

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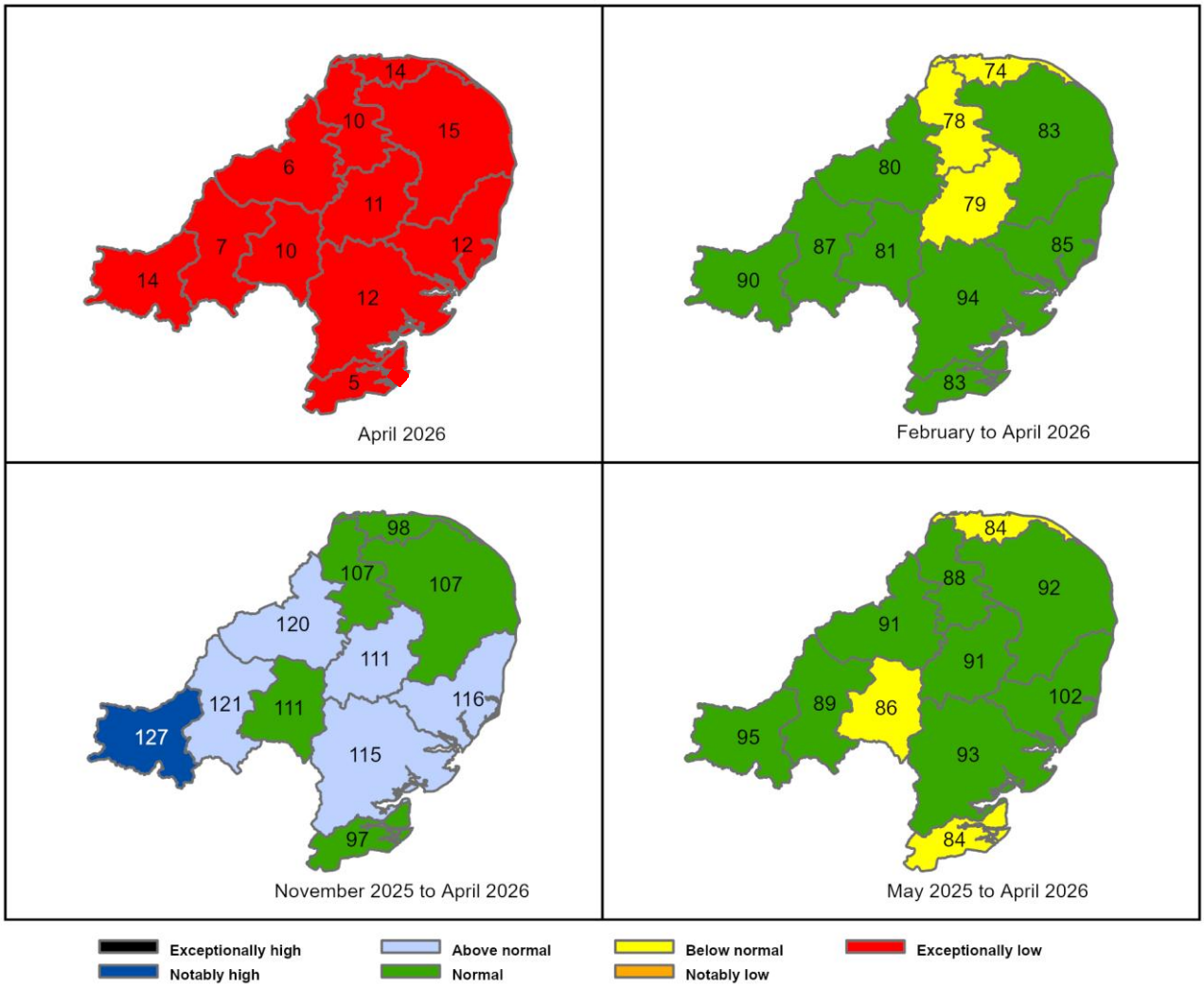
2 Rainfall

2.1 Rainfall map

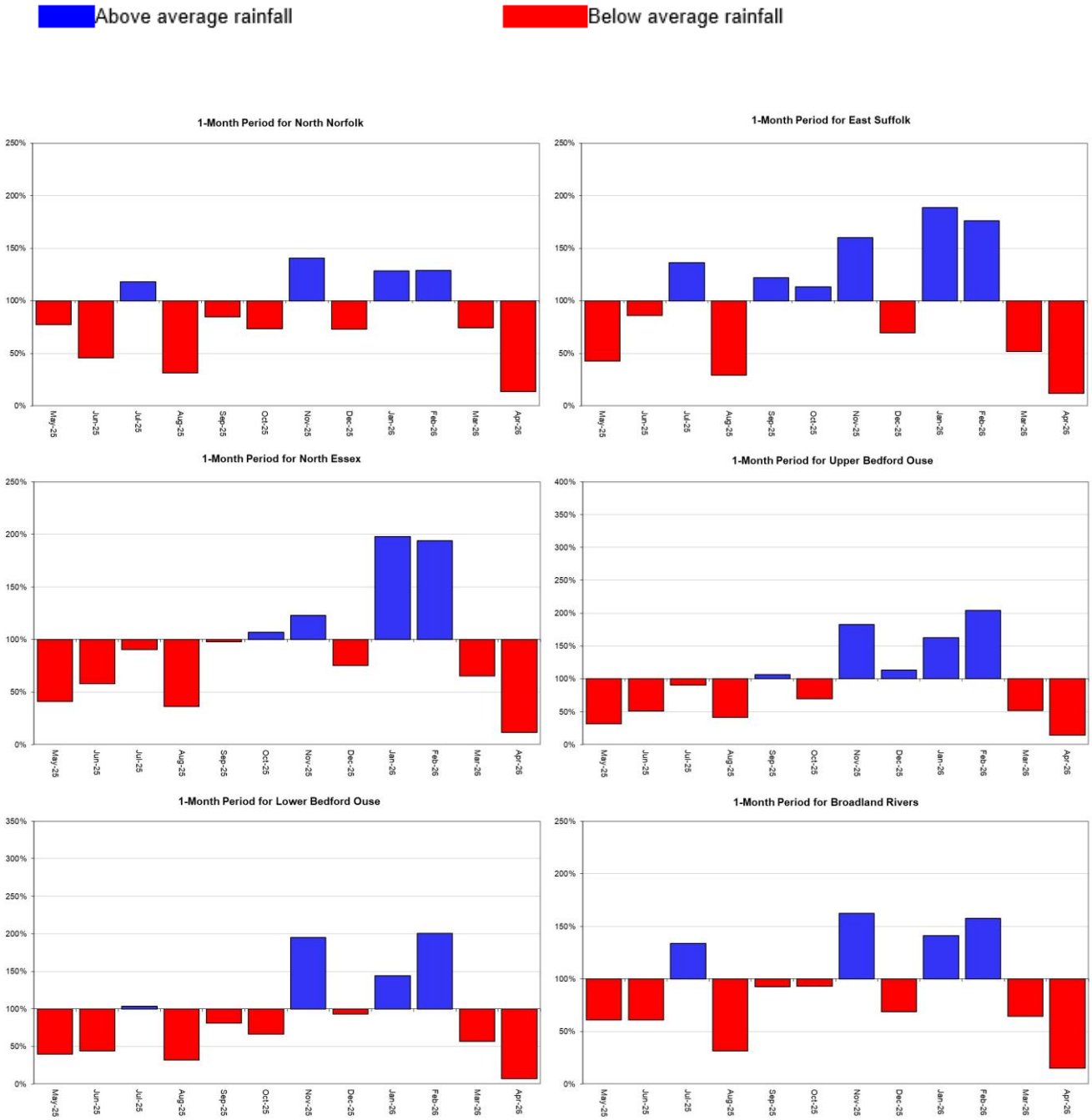
Figure 2.1: Total rainfall for hydrological areas across East Anglia, expressed as a percentage of long term average rainfall for the current month (up to 30 April 2026), the last 3 months, the last 6 months, and the last 12 months. Category classes are based on an analysis of respective historic totals. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

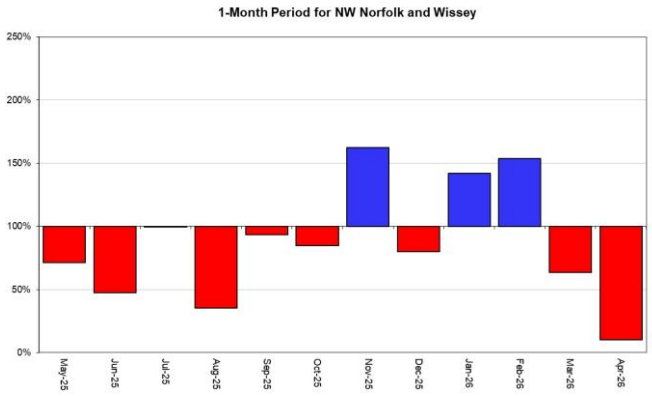


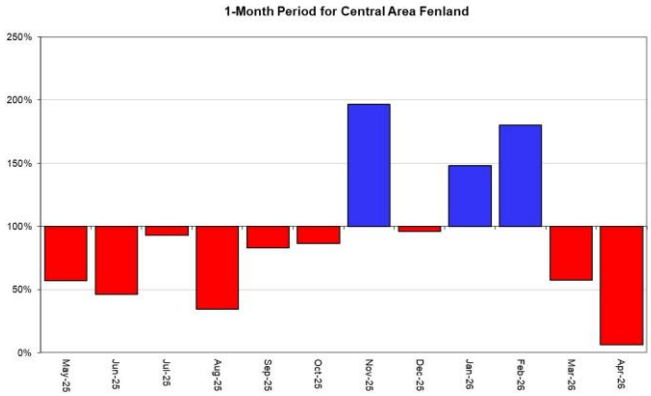
HadUK data based on the Met Office 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from rain gauges (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026). Provisional data based on Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026.

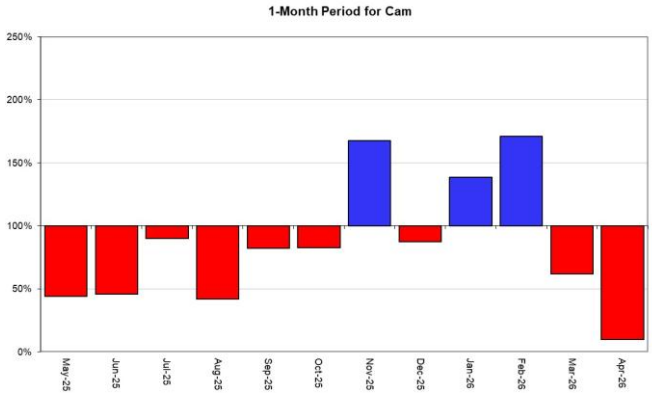
2.2 Rainfall charts

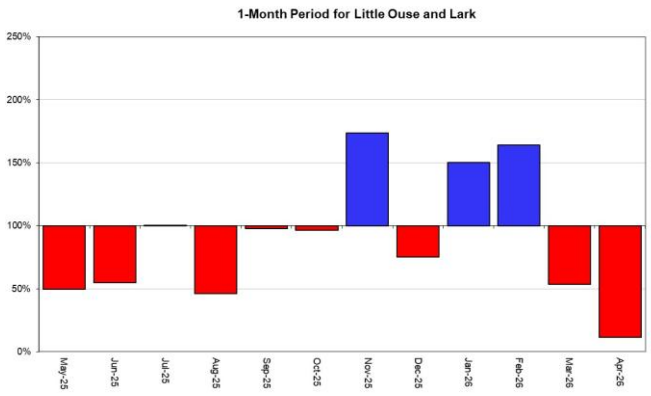
Figure 2.2: Monthly rainfall totals for the past 12 months as a percentage of the 1991 to 2020 long term average for each region and for England.

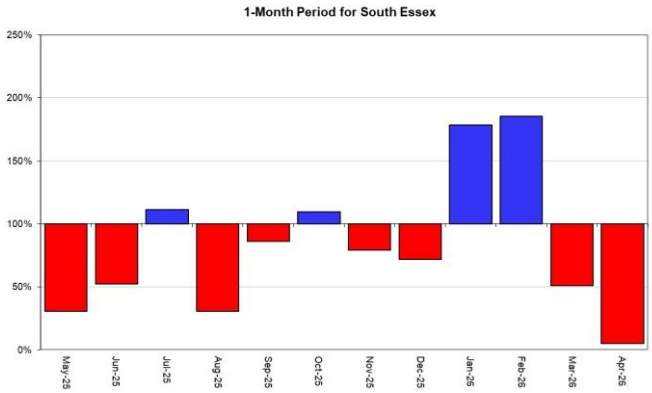






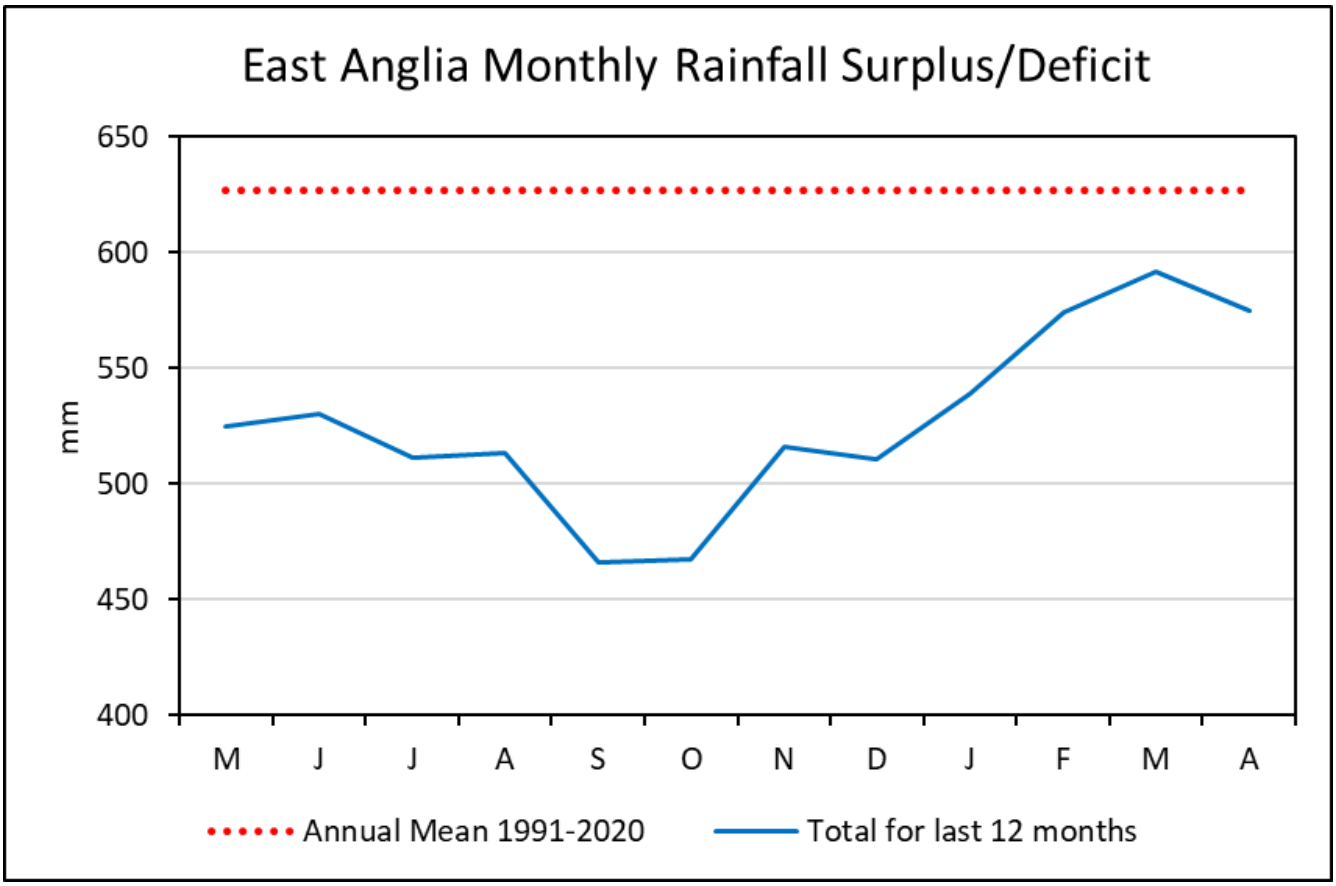






HadUK rainfall data. (Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2026).

2.3 Monthly rainfall surplus deficit chart



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

3 Soil moisture deficit

3.1 Soil moisture deficit map

Figure 3.1: Soil moisture deficit values for 30 April 2026. Values based on the weekly MORECS data for real land use.

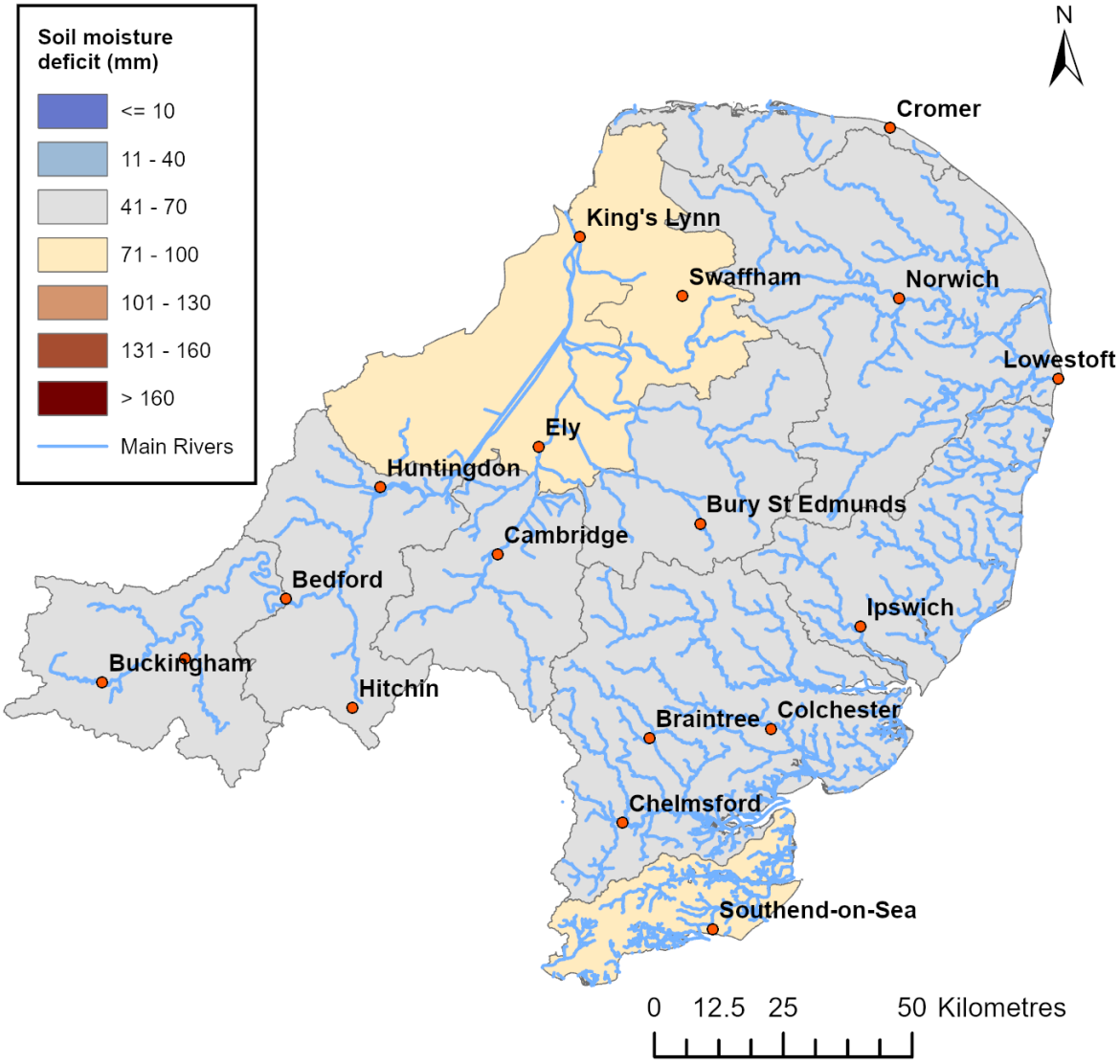
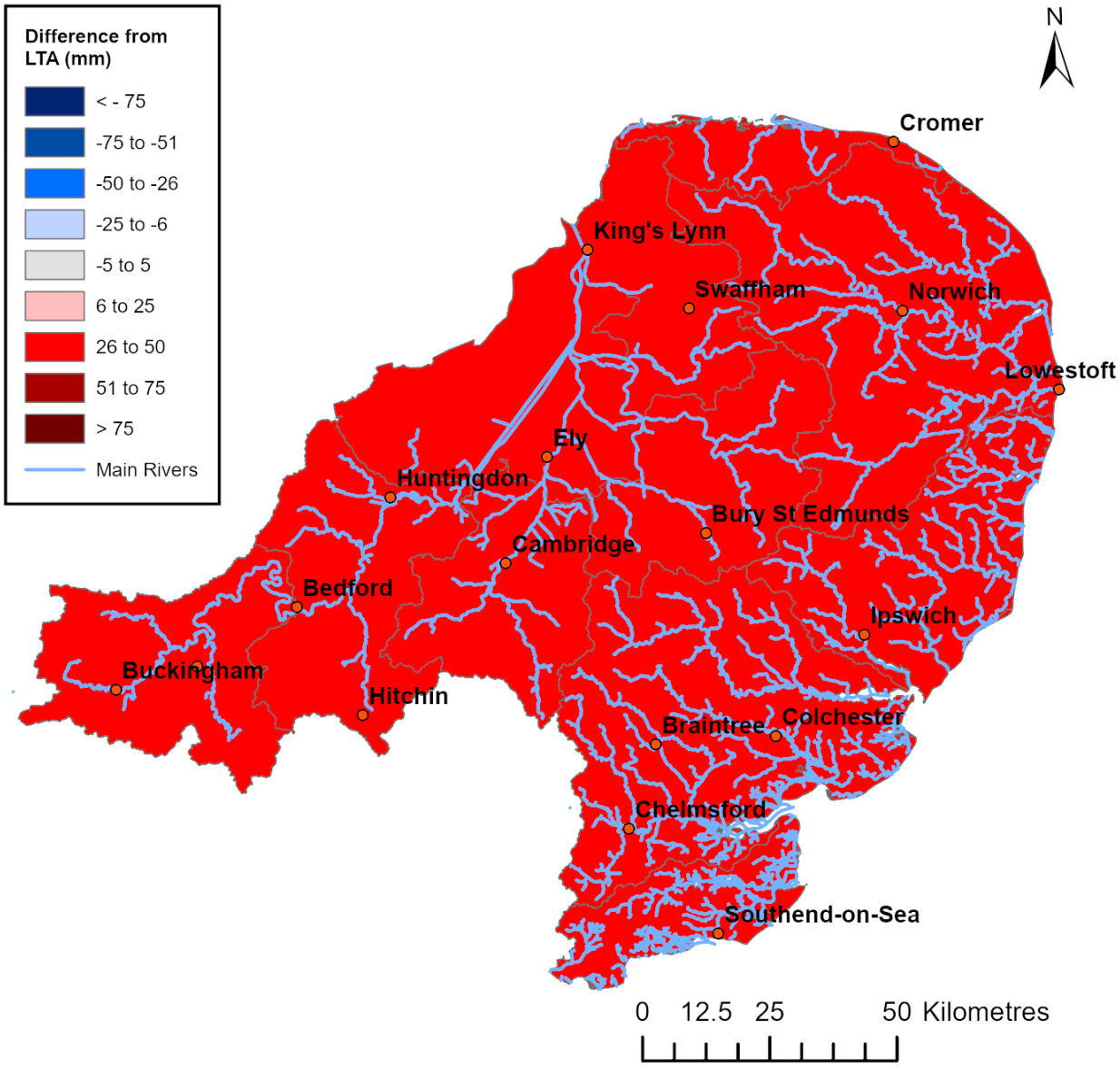
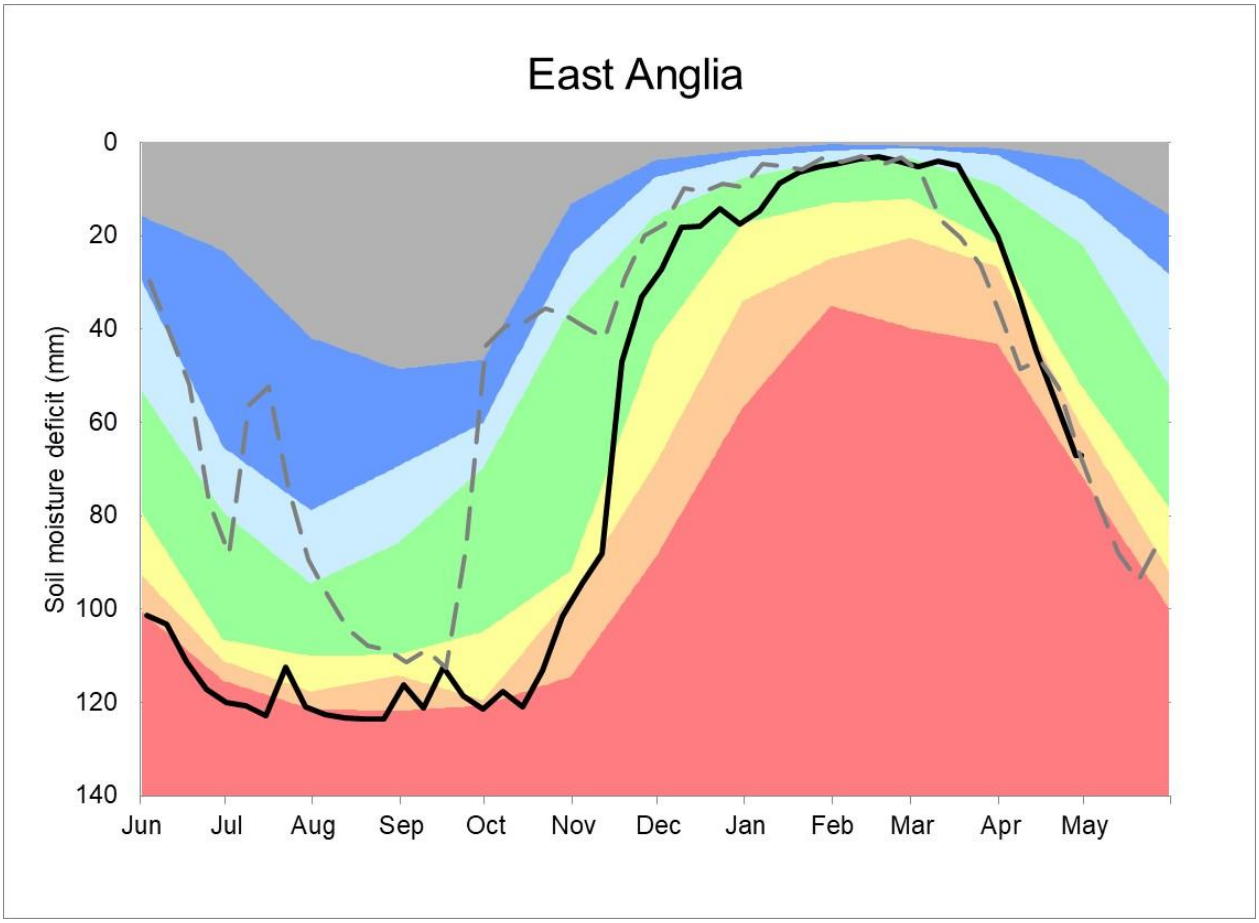


Figure 3.1a: Difference between soil moisture deficit values for 31 March 2026 and the long term average soil moisture deficit values for the end of March. Values based on the weekly MORECS data for real land use.



3.2 Soil moisture deficit charts

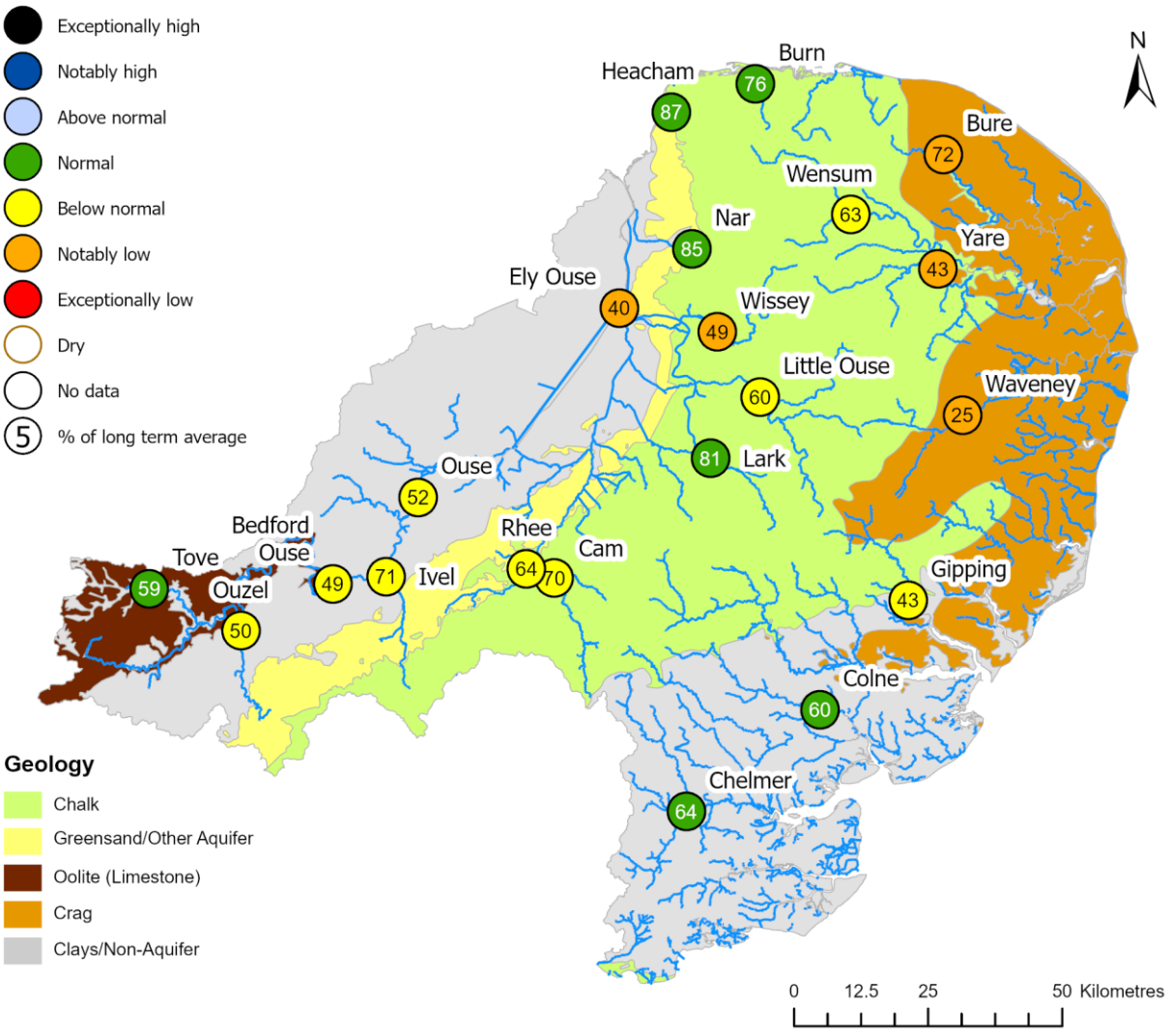
Figure 3.2: Latest soil moisture deficit compared to an analysis of historic 1991 to 2020 long term data set. Weekly MORECS data for real land use.



4 River flows

4.1 River flows map

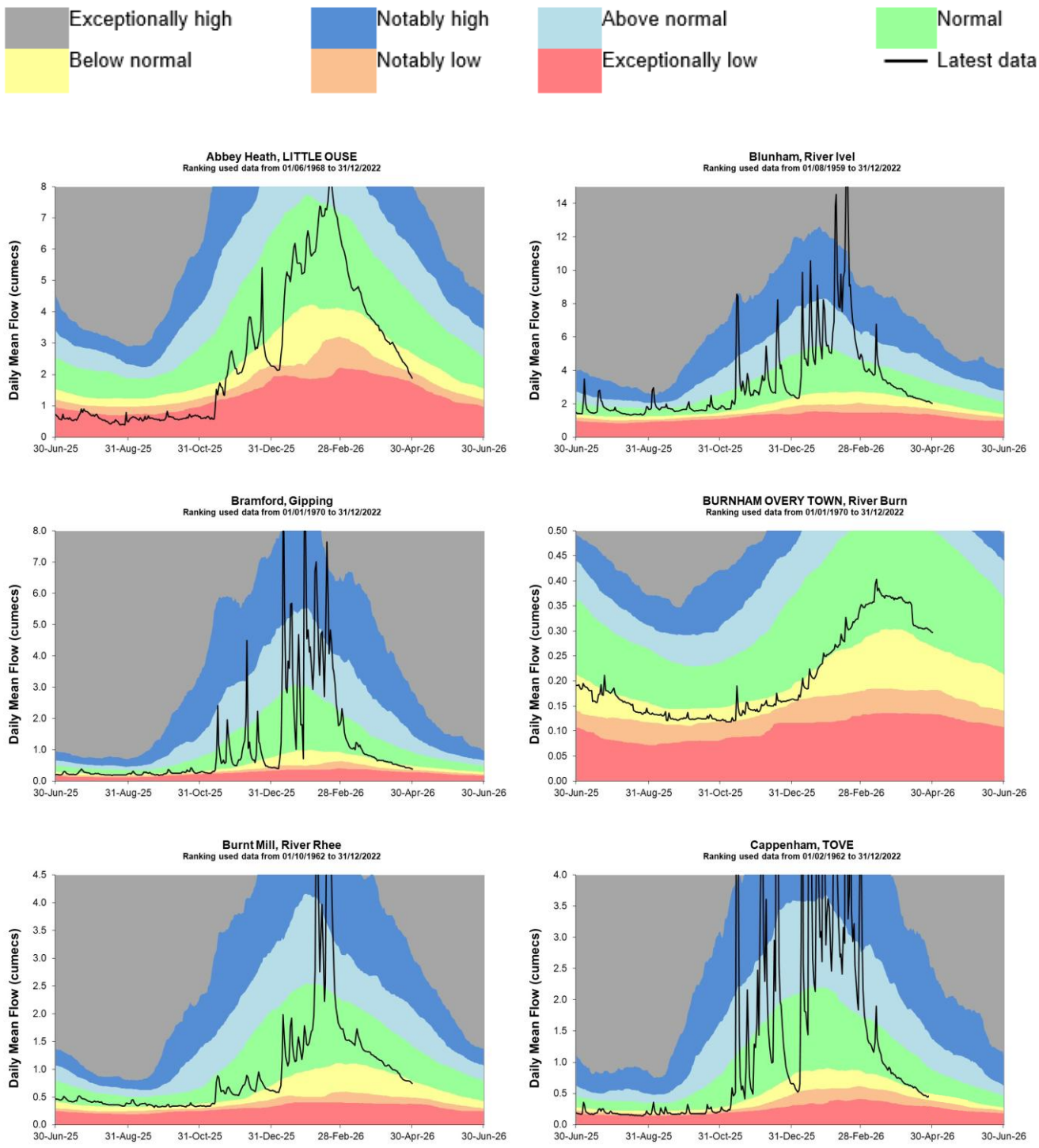
Figure 4.1: Monthly mean river flow for indicator sites for April 2026, expressed as a percentage of the respective long term average and classed relative to an analysis of historic April monthly means Table available in the appendices with detailed information.

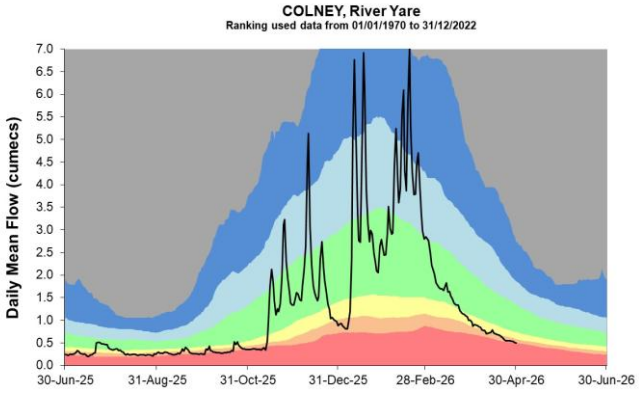


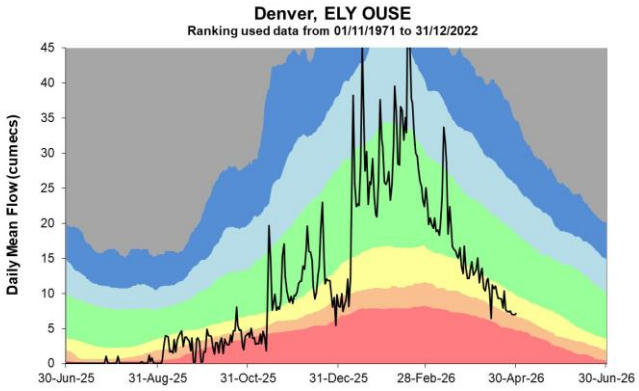
(Source: Environment Agency). Geological map reproduced with kind permission from UK Groundwater Forum, BGS copyright NERC. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026.

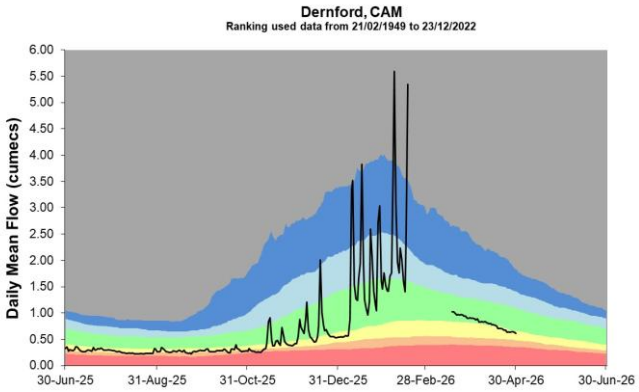
4.2 River flow charts

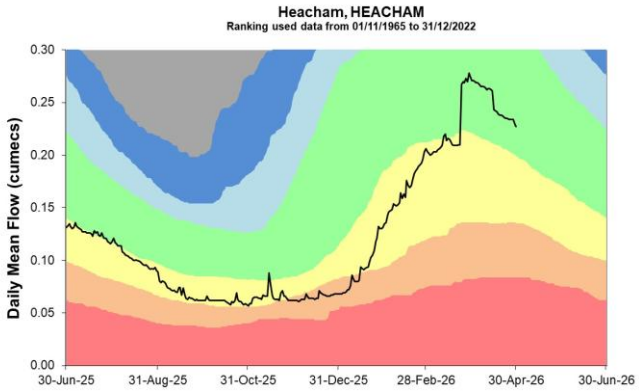
Figure 4.2: Daily mean river flow for index sites over the past year, compared to an analysis of historic daily mean flows, and long term maximum and minimum flows.

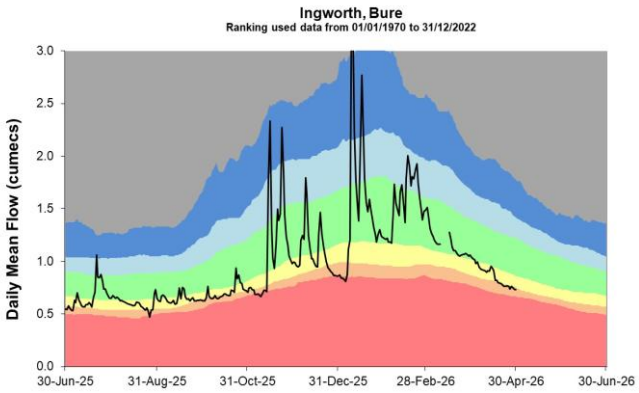


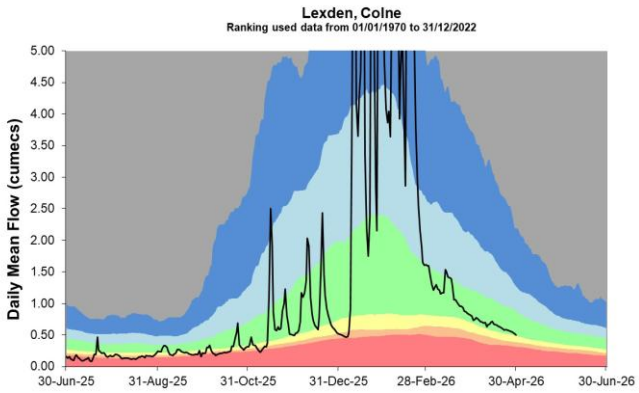

COLNEY, River Yare
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
7.0
6.5
6.0
5.5
5.0
4.5
4.0
3.5
3.0
2.5
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
30-Jun-25
31-Aug-25
31-Oct-25
31-Dec-25
28-Feb-26
30-Apr-26
30-Jun-26

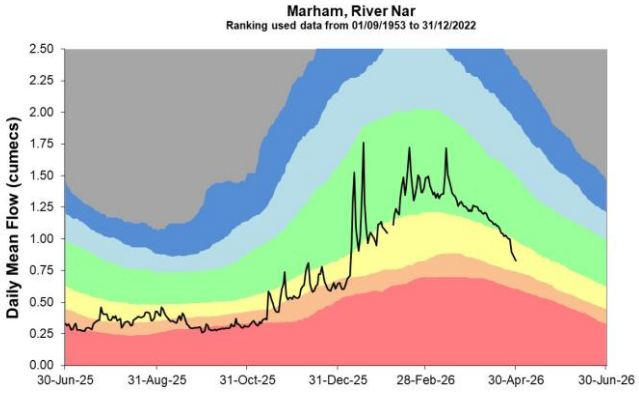

Denver, ELY OUSE
Ranking used data from 01/11/1971 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
30-Jun-25
31-Aug-25
31-Oct-25
31-Dec-25
28-Feb-26
30-Apr-26
30-Jun-26

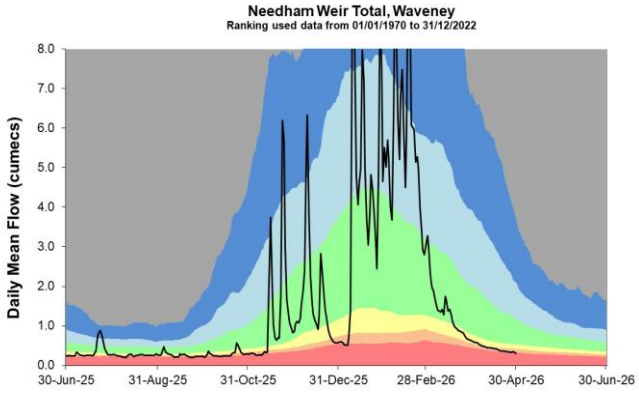

Dernford, CAM
Ranking used data from 21/02/1949 to 23/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
6.00
5.50
5.00
4.50
4.00
3.50
3.00
2.50
2.00
1.50
1.00
0.50
0.00
30-Jun-25
31-Aug-25
31-Oct-25
31-Dec-25
28-Feb-26
30-Apr-26
30-Jun-26

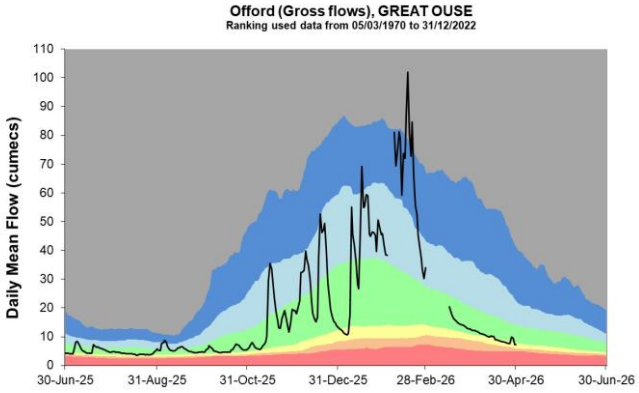

Heacham, HEACHAM
Ranking used data from 01/11/1965 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
0.30
0.25
0.20
0.15
0.10
0.05
0.00
30-Jun-25
31-Aug-25
31-Oct-25
31-Dec-25
28-Feb-26
30-Apr-26
30-Jun-26

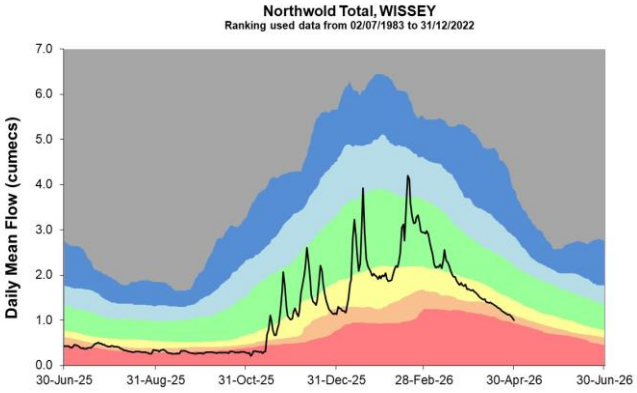

Ingworth, Bure
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
3.0
2.5
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
30-Jun-25
31-Aug-25
31-Oct-25
31-Dec-25
28-Feb-26
30-Apr-26
30-Jun-26

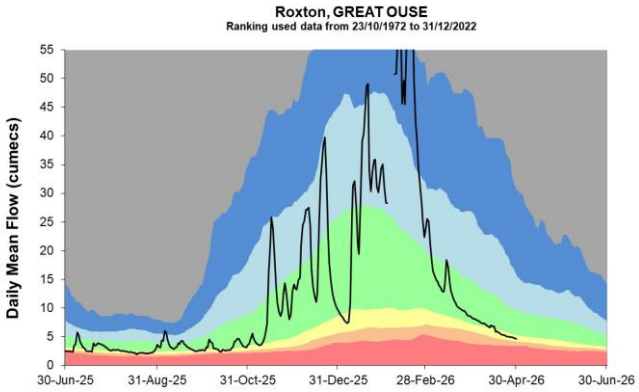

Lexden, Colne
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
5.00
4.50
4.00
3.50
3.00
2.50
2.00
1.50
1.00
0.50
0.00
30-Jun-25
31-Aug-25
31-Oct-25
31-Dec-25
28-Feb-26
30-Apr-26
30-Jun-26

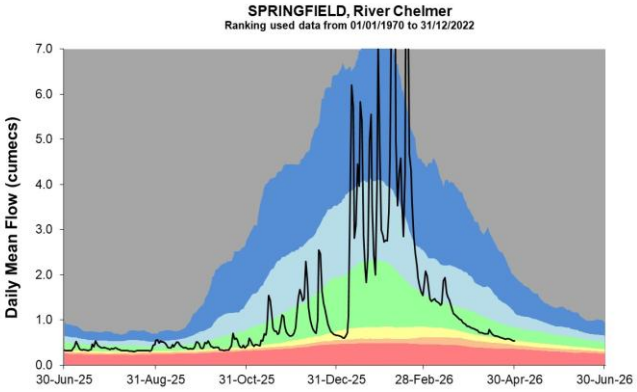

Marham, River Nar
Ranking used data from 01/09/1953 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
2.50
2.25
2.00
1.75
1.50
1.25
1.00
0.75
0.50
0.25
0.00
30-Jun-25
31-Aug-25
31-Oct-25
31-Dec-25
28-Feb-26
30-Apr-26
30-Jun-26

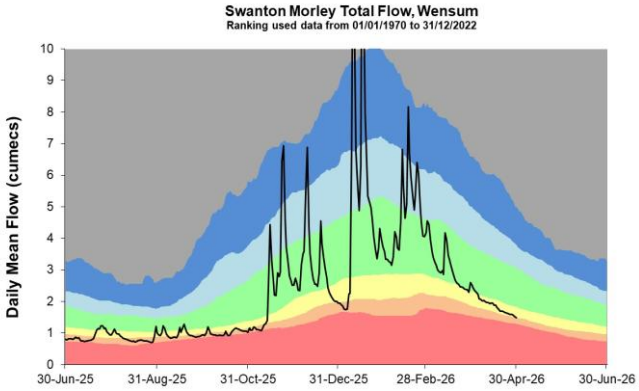

Needham Weir Total, Waveney
Ranking used data from 01/01/1970 to 31/12/2022
Daily Mean Flow (cumecs)
8.0
7.0
6.0
5.0
4.0
3.0
2.0
1.0
0.0
30-Jun-25
31-Aug-25
31-Oct-25
31-Dec-25
28-Feb-26
30-Apr-26
30-Jun-26

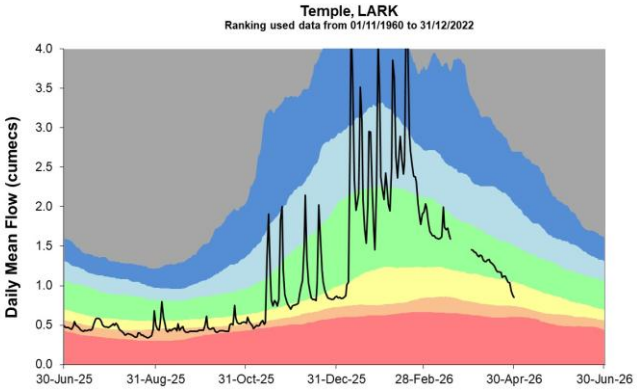


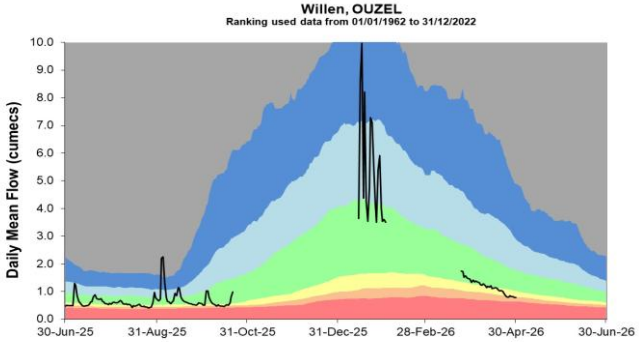










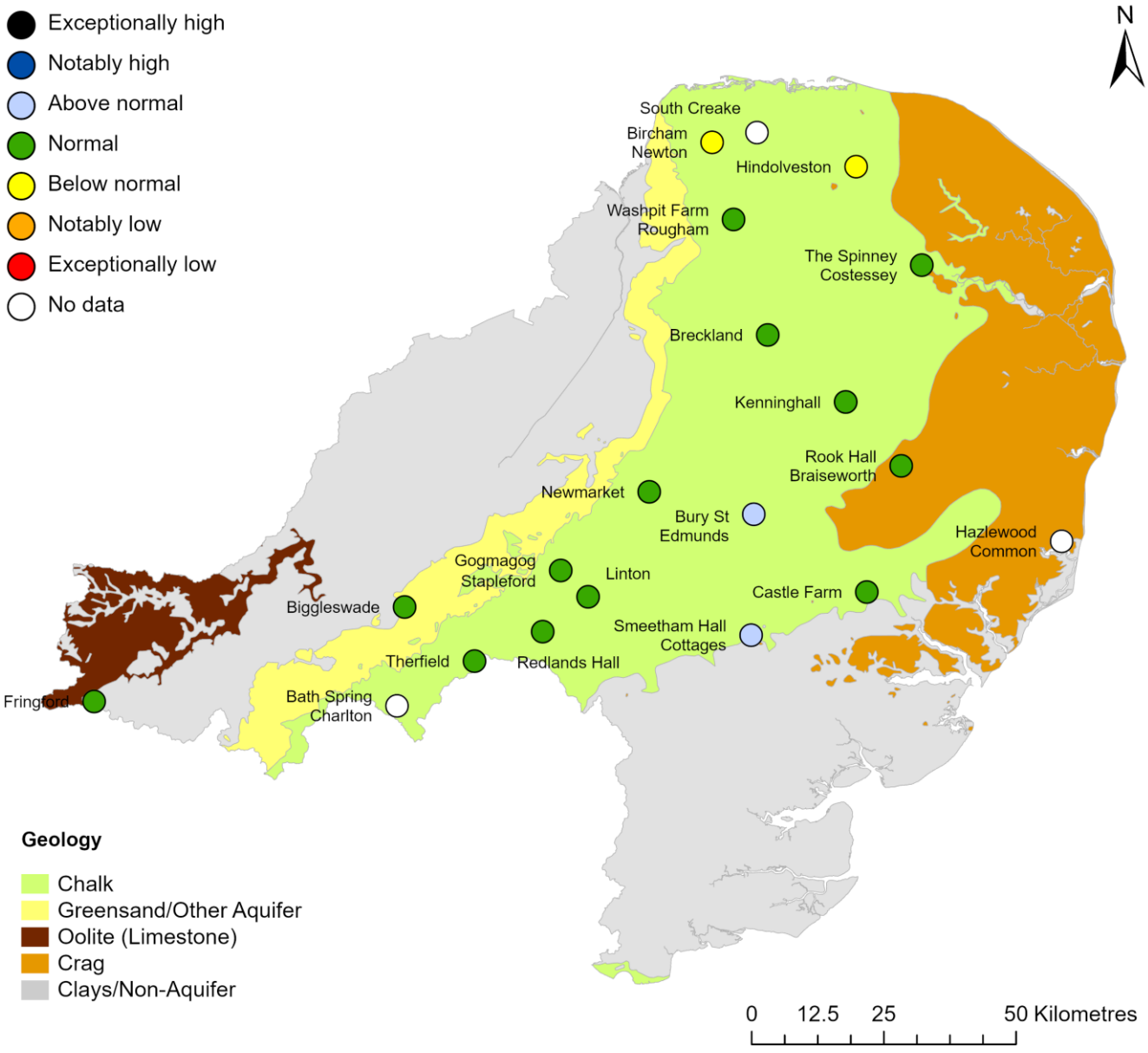


Source: Environment Agency.

5 Groundwater levels

5.1 Groundwater levels map

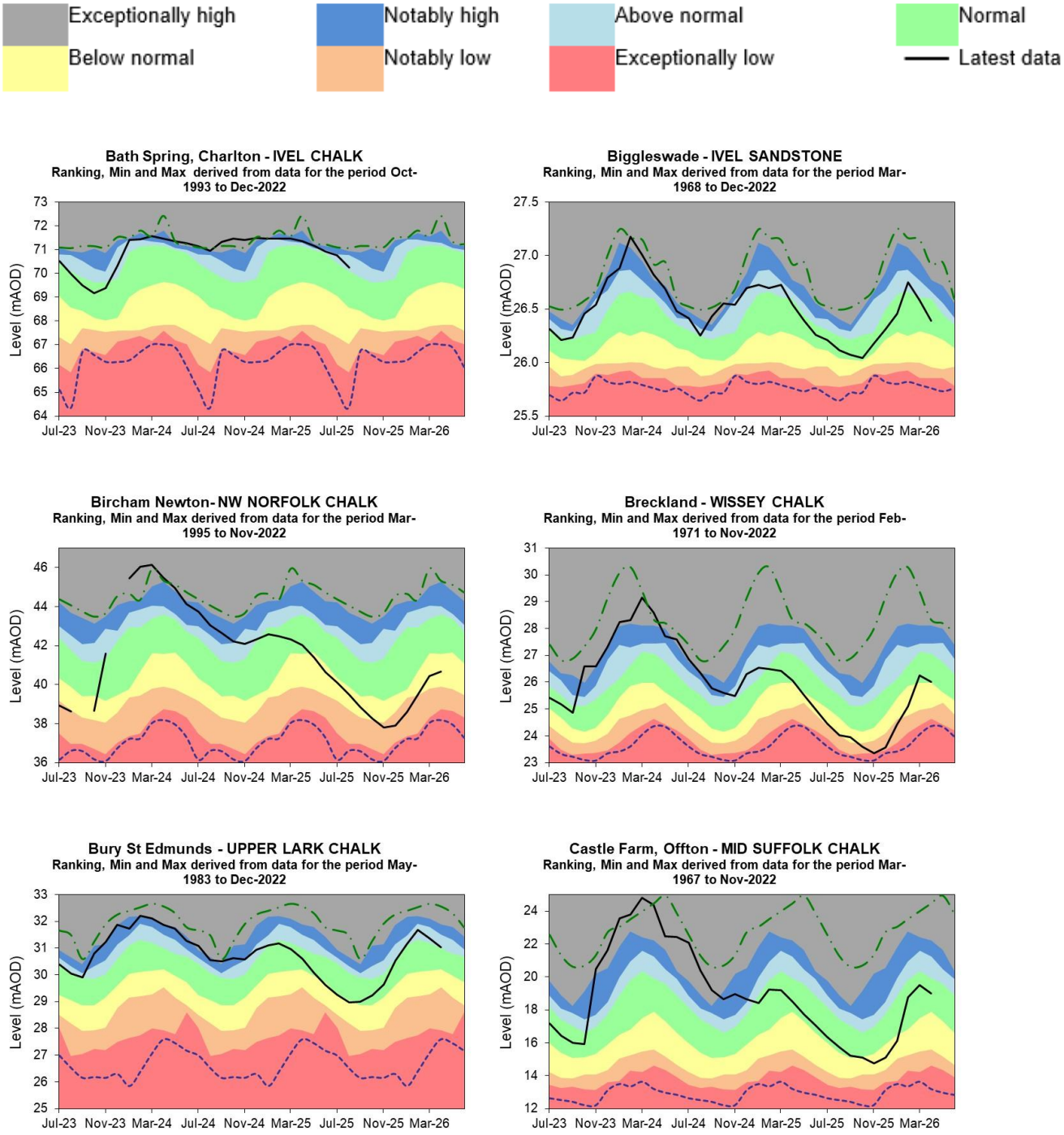
Figure 5.1: Groundwater levels for indicator sites at the end of April 2026, classed relative to an analysis of respective historic April levels. Table available in the appendices with detailed information.



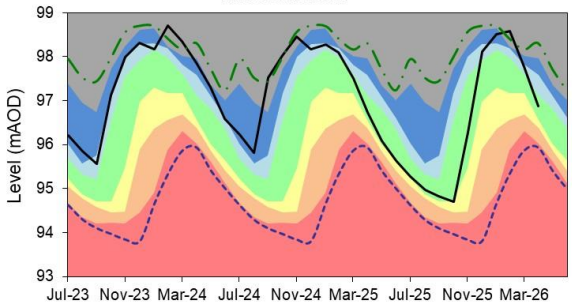
(Source: Environment Agency). Geological map reproduced with kind permission from UK Groundwater Forum, BGS copyright NERC. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2026.

5.2 Groundwater level charts

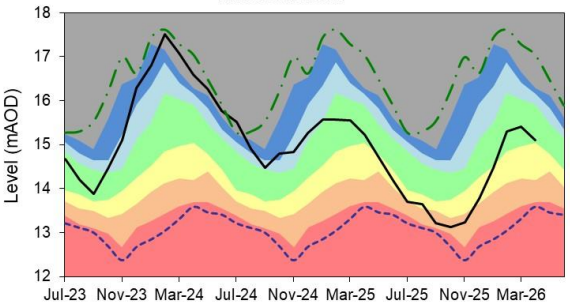
Figure 5.2: End of month groundwater levels at index groundwater level sites for major aquifers. 22 months compared to an analysis of historic end of month levels and long term maximum and minimum levels.



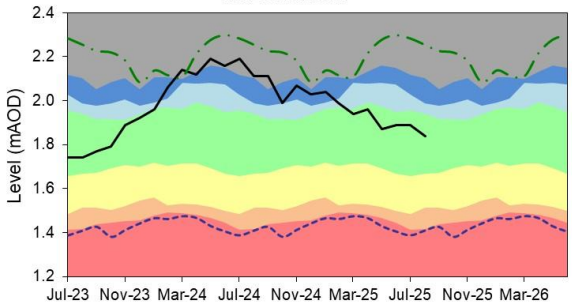
Fringford - GREAT OOLITE
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Sep-1980 to Dec-2022



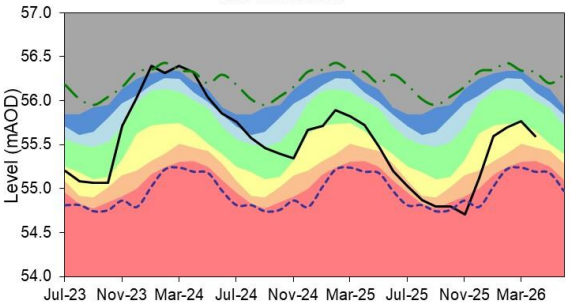
Gog Magog, Stapleford - CAM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Jan-1980 to Dec-2022



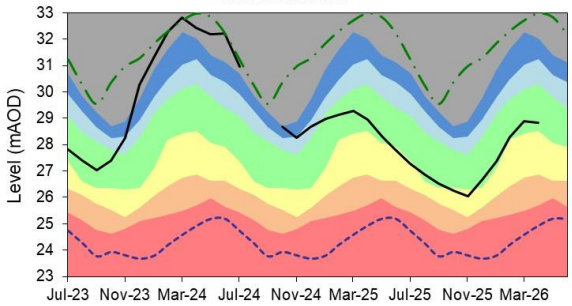
Hazlewood Common - SUFFOLK CRAG
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Oct-1988 to Nov-2022



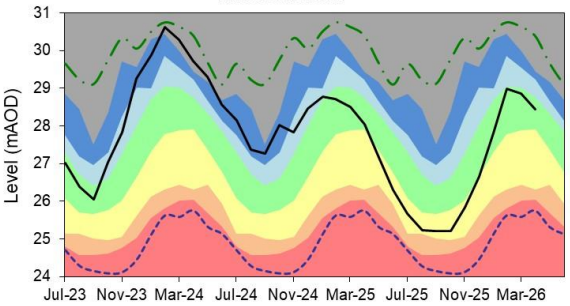
Hindolveston - NORFOLK CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Sep-1984 to Nov-2022



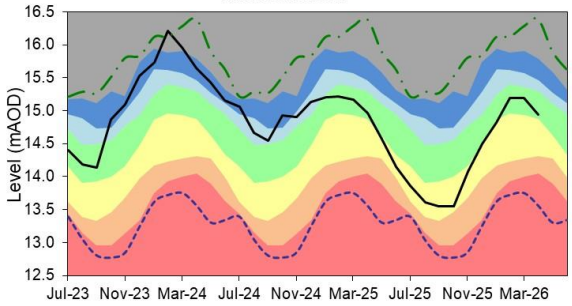
Kenninghall - LITTLE OUSE CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Aug-1973 to Dec-2022



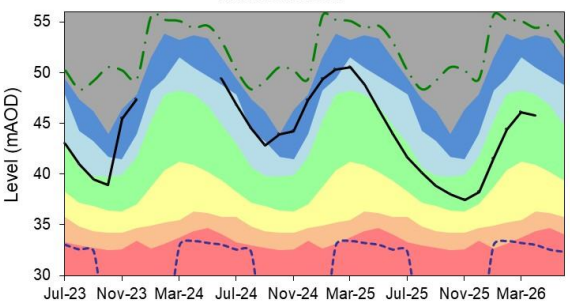
Linton- CAM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Jan-1980 to Dec-2022

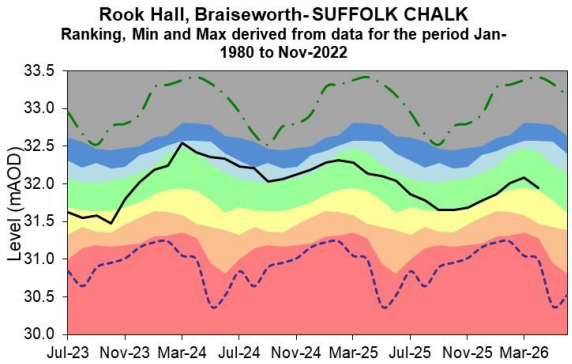


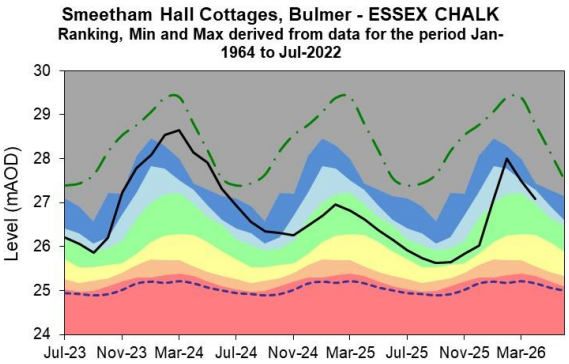
Newmarket - SNAIL CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Feb-1983 to Dec-2022

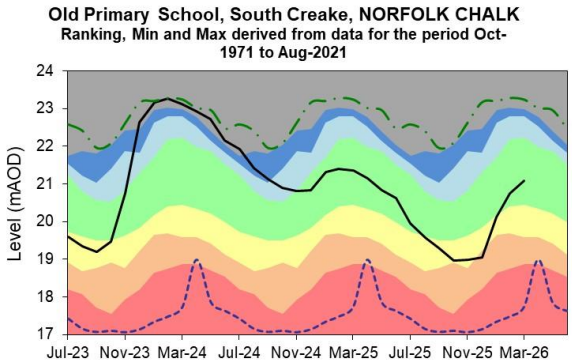


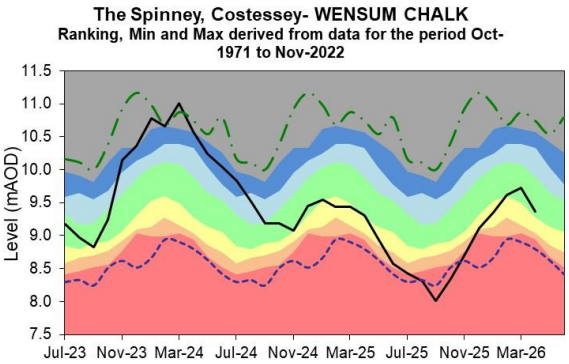
Redlands Hall, Ickleton - CAM CHALK
Ranking, Min and Max derived from data for the period Aug-1963 to Dec-2022







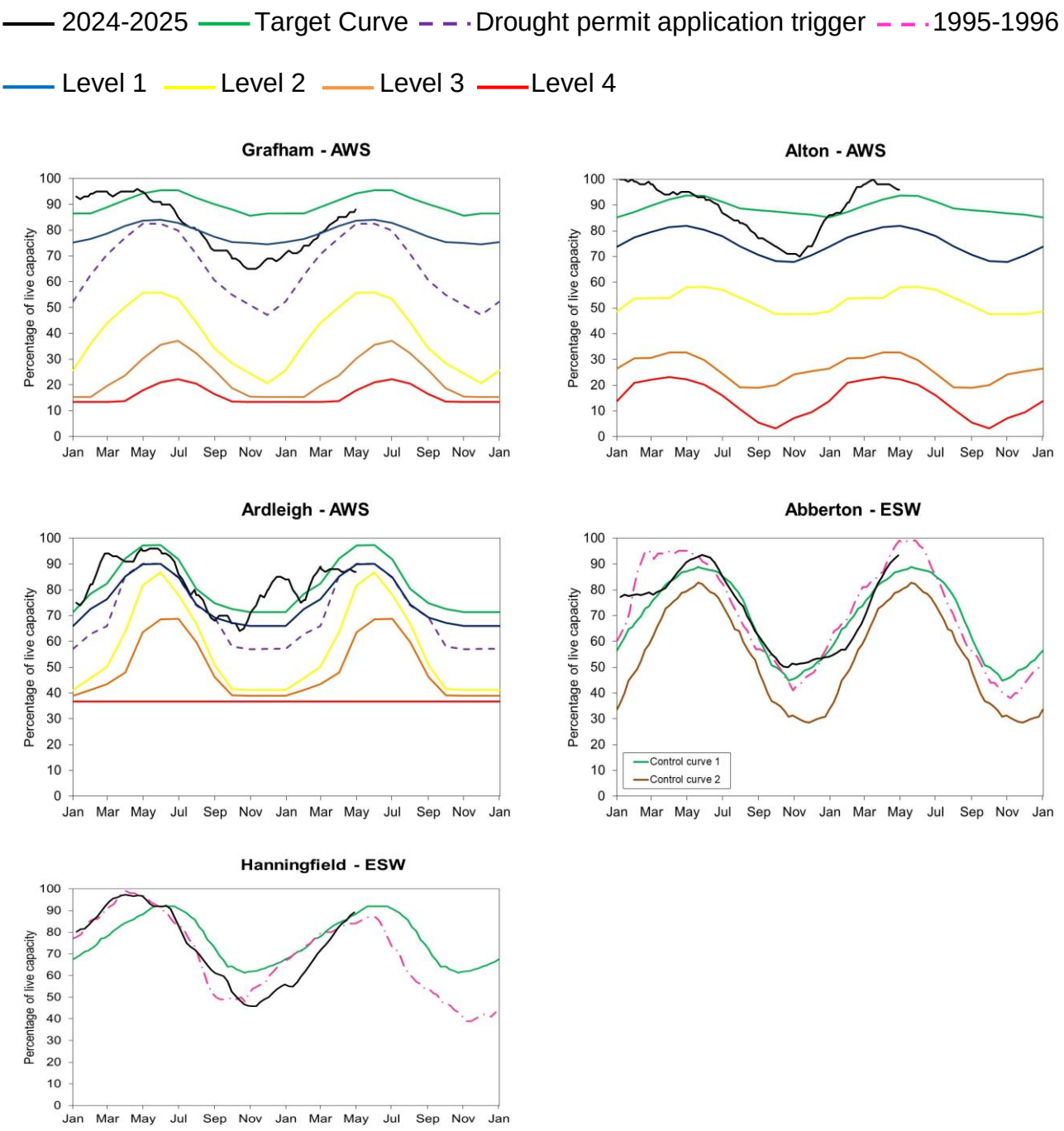




Source: Environment Agency, 2026.

6 Reservoir stocks

Figure 6.1: End of month regional reservoir stocks compared to the target curve, drought permit application trigger and dry 1995-1996 stocks. Note: Historic records of individual reservoirs and reservoir groups making up the regional values vary in length.



(Source: water companies. For more information on Anglian Water's reservoir levels, please view their Drought Plan)

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	Apr 2026 rainfall % of long term average 1991 to 2020	Apr 2026 band	Feb 2026 to April cumulative band	Nov 2025 to April cumulative band	May 2025 to April cumulative band
Broadland Rivers	15	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Normal
Cam	10	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Below normal
Central Area Fenland	6	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
East Suffolk	12	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
Little Ouse And Lark	11	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Above normal	Normal
Lower Bedford Ouse	7	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
North Essex	12	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Above normal	Normal
North Norfolk	14	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Below normal
Nw Norfolk And Wissey	10	Exceptionally Low	Below normal	Normal	Normal

South Essex	5	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Normal	Below normal
Upper Bedford Ouse	14	Exceptionally Low	Normal	Notably high	Normal

8.2 River flows table

Site name	River	Catchment	Apr 2026 band	Mar 2026 band
Abbey Heath	Little Ouse	Little Ouse	Below normal	Normal
Blunham	Ivel	Ivel	Below normal	Normal
Bramford	Gipping	Gipping	Below normal	Below normal
Burnham Overy	Burn	Burn	Normal	Normal
Burnt Mill	Rhee	Rhee	Below normal	Normal
Cappenham	Tove	Tove	Normal	Normal
Colney	Yare	Yare	Notably low	Normal
Denver	Ely Ouse	Cutoff and Renew Channel	Notably low	Normal
Dernford	Cam	Cam	Below normal	Normal
Heacham	Heacham	Heacham	Normal	Normal
Ingworth	Bure	Bure	Notably low	Normal
Lexden	Colne	Colne Essex	Normal	Normal
Marham	Nar	Nar	Normal	Normal
Needham Weir Total	Waveney (lower)	Waveney	Notably low	Below normal

Northwold Total	Wissey	Wissey	Notably low	Below normal
Offord (gross Flows)	Great Ouse	Ouse Beds	Below normal	Normal
Roxton	Great Ouse	Ivel	Below normal	Normal
Springfield	Chelmer	Chelmer Upper	Normal	Normal
Swanton Morley Total	Wensum	Wensum	Below normal	Normal
Temple	Lark	Lark	Normal	Normal
Willen	Ouzel	Ouzel	Below normal	Below normal

8.3 Groundwater table

Site name	Aquifer	End of Apr 2026 band	End of Mar 2026 band
Biggleswade	Ivel Woburn Sands	Normal	Normal
Bircham Newton	North West Norfolk Chalk	Below normal	Below normal
Breckland	Wissey Chalk	Normal	Normal
Bury St Edmunds	Upper Lark Chalk	Above normal	Above normal
Castle Farm, Offton	East Suffolk Chalk	Normal	Normal
Gog Magog, Stapleford	Cam Chalk	Normal	Normal
Hazlewood Common	East Suffolk Crag		
Hindolveston	Norfolk Chalk	Below normal	Normal
Kenninghall	Little Ouse Chalk	Normal	Normal
Linton	Cam Chalk	Normal	Normal
Newmarket	Snail Chalk	Normal	Normal
Old Primary School, South Creake	North Norfolk Chalk		Normal

Redlands Hall, Ickleton	Cam Chalk	Normal	Normal
Rook Hall, Braiseworth	East Suffolk Chalk	Normal	Normal
Smeetham Hall Cottages, Bulmer	North Essex Chalk	Above normal	Above normal
The Spinney, Costessey	Wensum Chalk	Normal	Normal
Washpit Farm, Rougham	North West Norfolk Chalk	Normal	Normal
Therfield Rectory	Upper Lee Chalk	Normal	Normal
Fringford P.s.	Upper Bedford Ouse Oolitic Limestone (great)	Normal	Above normal